Energy perspectives on children's and YA literature, CfP

You are invited to submit an abstract for a paper to a conference / works in progress seminar on "**energy perspectives on children's and YA literature"** in Bergen, Norway, hosted by the research group NaChiLitCul, at Western Norway University of Applied Sciences (HVL).

Time & place: 26-27 November 2026, in Bergen, with an opening for online papers

Have you ever paused to consider the energy infrastructure supporting the adventures of Anne in Lucy Mongomery's *Anne of Green Gables* (1908)? As an avid walker, Anne probably has a relatively low carbon footprint. Over a century later, in Maja Lunde's *The End of the Ocean* (2017), struggles over energy development has become a central literary topic, underscoring the message of the UN Secretary General António Guterres, who at COP 30 urged that "The fossil fuel age is ending. Clean energy is rising. Let us make the transition fair, fast, and final" (United Nations, 2025).

In its broadest sense, energy is "that which can make something happen" (Bøe, 2025, our translation) and "energy" is here understood both as the energy infrastructure used to power modern societies and as what Synne Movik and Jeremy Alloche (2020) has termed "energy imaginaries", which include "the set of institutions, logics, values, and visions that spur ideas around what sources of energy and forms of energy governance best foster development" (p. 1). This definition includes energy in the form of thoughts, ideas, and the actions of humans or other living beings.

Drawing on perspectives from the energy humanities, and, like Heidi C. M. Scott in *Fuel: An Ecocritical History* (2018), this CfP takes a broad view of energy cultures, and invites mapping and discussion of the energy imaginaries in children's and young adult literature that surround not just petrocultures but also energy sources like hydro-, wind-, nuclear and solar power, asking: **How are energy imaginaries present and presented in fiction and non-fiction for children and young adults?**

Analyses of the entanglement of energy and cultural history have developed as a subfield within the energy humanities in the past couple of decades, propelled by literary and culture studies scholars. An early overview is provided by *Energy Humanities: An Anthology* (2017), edited by Dominic Boyer and Imre Szeman. So far, research has "mostly focused on the significance of oil as the dominant or 'hegemonic' form of energy in the 20th and early 21st centuries" (Grewe-Volpp, 2020, p. 273). Coined by Amitav Gosh (1992), the label "petrofiction" has thus established itself as an important term designating fiction in which oil is the dominant energy source. Examples of research centered on petroculture are Stephanie LeMenager's *Living Oil*: *Petroleum Culture in the American Century* (2014), exploring the aesthetics of, and the affective resonances created by, the presence of oil in a variety of cultural artefacts, including poetry, fiction, novels, and memoirs, and the later *Oil Fictions: World Literature and Our Contemporary Petrosphere* (2021), edited by Stacy Balkan and Swaralipi Nandi Soley.

Recently, the anthology *Power Shift: Keywords for a New Politics of Energy* (2025), edited by Szeman and Jennifer Wenzel, has contributed to the discussion of "the connections between new energy sources and new modes of social relation and cultural imagining" (p. 8). Within energy humanities, it is precisely this awareness of energy - and ability to imagine -

that is at stake. Some scholars who have already focused on examining energy imaginaries in children's literature for children are Lara Saguisag (2022), Catherine Lammert (2024), Rikke Frøyland (2025), Kathleen Forrester (2025), and Reinhard Hennig (in press).

Given that the consumption and use of energy is entangled with diverse sets of cultural and material forms of life, changes in energy infrastructure confront us with a series of dilemmas, or what has been termed "wicked problems". In sustainability research, the concept of 'wicked problems' is used to describe issues of "a high degree of scientific uncertainty and deep disagreement on values" (Balint et al., 2011, p. 2). It has become increasingly apparent that industrial energy demands met by fossil fuels contribute to both global warming and to habitat losses for multiple species, resulting in what is known as the 6th extinction (Kolbert, 2014). Issues concerning energy and sustainability are therefore complex and multiple questions arise with regard to required solutions, where disparate concerns are not necessarily compatible (Frøyland, 2023, p. 2). The analysis of energy structures in narratives for children and young adults may address such dilemmas – or portray different energy sources without problematizing their origin, distribution, or use.

Several genres, formats and media may invite discussion from an energy perspective, including petrofiction, climate fiction, solarpunk and utopian fiction, poetry and novels as well as children's non-fiction, picturebooks, videogames, and films. This CfP calls for analyses of various sources of energy in children's and young adult literature. Topics may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- How are energy imaginaries present and presented in fiction and non-fiction for children and young adults?
- What energy sources are significant in early and later children's and young adult literature?
- How do energy-related "wicked problems" manifest in children's and young adult literature?
- How may perspectives from research on energy humanities inform the reading and teaching of children's and young adult literature?
- What are the various energy solutions envisioned in solarpunk, and other utopian or dystopian texts?
- What are the didactic potentials of literature that address energy dilemmas?
- What kinds of interdisciplinary approaches may literary depictions of energy imaginaries prepare for?

Abstracts of around 300 words should be sent to: **NaChiLitCul-konferanse@hvl.no**, by June 1st, 2026. Please include the term "energy perspectives CfP" in the subject line.

Languages: English and Scandinavian languages**. Notification of acceptance** by June 30iet 2026**. For updates on the conference / works-in-progress seminar see**: Energy perspectives on children's and YA literature - Western Norway University of Applied Sciences

Anthology submissions: For those interested, the deadline for full chapters to an anthology on representations of energy in children's and young adult literature is June 1st, 2027.

References

Balint, P. J. (2011). *Wicked Environmental Problems: Managing Uncertainty and Conflict*. | Springer Nature.

Balkan, S. & Solay, S. N. (2021). *Oil Fictions: World Literature and Our Contemporary Petrosphere.*Penn State University Press.

Bøe, M. V. (2026, February 24). *Energi*. Store norske leksikon. Access April 23, 2025, https://snl.no/energi.

Forrester, K. (2025). "Beyond the Animacy Divide with *We Are Water Protectors* : A Guiding Story for Kin-making in Fraught Times". In T. Doughty, J. Deszcz-Tryhubczak & J. Grafton (Eds.). *Children's Literatures, Cultures, and Pedagogies in the Anthropocene* (pp. 91-101). Bloomsbury.

Frøyland, R. (2023). «Klimafiksjonens dialoger. Energi- og bærekraftdilemmaer i romanene *Anna* og *Blå*». *Barnelitterært forskningstidsskrift*, *14* (1), 1-11. https://doi.org/10.18261/blft.14.1.8

Frøyland, R. (2025). *Litterære dialoger om energi og bærekraft: Bidrag til en økokritisk litteraturdidaktikk*. [Doktorgradsavhandling]. Høgskulen på Vestlandet. https://hdl.handle.net/11250/5319227

Gosh. A. (1992, March 2). "Petrofiction: The Oil Encounter and the Novel*". The New Republic,* 29-33. Ghosh Petrofiction | PDF

Grewe-Volpp, C. (2020). "Petrocultures". *Ecozon@*, *11*(2), https://ecozona.eu/article/view/3535

Hennig, R. (forthcoming): "Taking Young Audiences Offshore: Petroleum Extraction in Norwegian Children's Literature." *Ecozon@ 17*(1).

Kolbert, E. (2014). *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History*. Henry Holt & Co.

Lammert, C. (2024). "'Credible, but not really reliable': teachers' responses to children's literature on energy production and the environment". *Literacy* (Oxford, England), *58*(1), 92–101. https://doi.org/10.1111/lit.12347

LeMenager S. (2014). *Living Oil: Petroleum Culture in the American Century*. Oxford University Press.

Movik, S. & Allouche, J. (2020). "States of power: Energy imaginaries and transnational assemblages in Norway, Nepal and Tanzania". *Energy Research and Social Science*. *67*, Article 101548. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2020.101548

Saguisag, L. (2022). "Blood in the Water: Jewell Parker Rhodes's *Bayou Magic* as Children's Petrofiction"**.** *Jeunesse: Young People, Texts, Cultures*, 14 (1)**.** https://doi.org/10.3138/jeunesse-14.1.04

Scott, H. C. (2018). *Fuel: An Ecocritical History*, Bloomsbury.

Szeman, I., & Wenzel, J. (Eds.). (2025). *Power Shift: Keywords for a New Politics of Energy*. West Virginia University Press.

Szeman, I., & Boyer, D. (Eds.). (2017). *Energy Humanities: An Anthology*. Johns Hopkins University Press.

United Nations (2025, November 7). *UN Secretary-General's remarks at the Belém Climate Summit's energy transition roundtable*. https://unfccc.int/news/un-secretary-general-s-remarks-at-the-belem-climate-summit-s-energy-transition-roundtable.

Vetleseter, 2023 Bøe, M. V. (2026). «Energi». *Store norske leksikon*. Read 23. April 2025. https://snl.no/energi.