

Mycomorphism: Fungi and the Literary Imagination

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Fungi are mind-altering—and not just the hallucinogenic kind. They have long had the capacity to change the way that humans think, to disrupt the ground of established conceptual repertoires. Historically, fungi have precipitated paradigm shifts with regards to taxonomy, speciation and organism individuality. Contemporary advances in mycology continue to demand reconfigurations of ecological thought. Despite the extraordinary imaginative potential of fungi, they have so far occupied a relatively marginal position in the Environmental Humanities and Literary Ecocriticism.

Mycomorphism examines the ways in which the curious nature of the fungal kingdom has interacted with and influenced the human imagination through literary history. The study will trace the appearance of mushrooms and fungi in Anglophone literary texts from the Early Modern period to the present, and examine how these representations reflected or affected the mycological understanding of the time. Through ecocritical readings of these texts, the project will also explore how the place of fungi within the human imagination interfaced with or shaped human self-conceptions and understandings of the nonhuman world. The ecological challenges of our time demand a recognition of invisible interconnectivities and a focus on transformation and regeneration—that is, qualities that are also characteristic of the fungal world. The project will demonstrate how *thinking fungally* can precipitate the radical conceptual changes we so urgently need. *Mycomorphism* will trace a literary-historical answer to the questions: *How have fungi changed our minds? How might they continue to do so?*