



The Centre for Research on Children's and Young Adult Literature  
at the University of Wrocław has the honor to invite you to the 30th lecture  
in the series "International Voices in Children's Literature Studies"

**Prof. Elly McCausland**

**'No one wants to read about a barnacle':  
Reframing 'uncharismatic' marine life in children's literature**



**DATE:** 20 May 2025

**TIME:** 18.00 (CET)

**VENUE:** MS Teams

If you are interested in taking part  
in the lecture, please register  
[here](#)



This talk examines the efforts of recent children's literature to cultivate empathy for aquatic bodies and forms that are particularly – literally and metaphorically – slippery. Habitually 'othered', ignored or even denigrated in popular discourse – to a far greater extent than other non-human animals such as mammals – barnacles, coral, anemones and their relatives are nonetheless increasingly recognised by scientists as vital to the health of our oceans and global ecosystems. 'Blue extinction' discourse frequently advocates that we cultivate more inclusive and empathetic relationships with such animals as a matter of urgency. Children's literature is increasingly part of this attempt. This paper argues that by framing and fixing these 'uncharismatic' forms centre stage as spectacle, in the contained space of the aquarium or tide pool, children's literature fantasises in microcosm the reparation of an environmental catastrophe whose very size and scale might otherwise render it overwhelming or inaccessible, particularly to younger readers.

**Elly McCausland** is Associate Professor of English Literature at Gent University. She works predominantly on children's literature, but her interests also include the environmental humanities, Victorian literature, adaptation, and medieval literature. She is the author of *Malory's Magic Book: King Arthur and the Child, 1862-1980* (2019) and *Risk in Children's Adventure Literature* (2024). She also teaches a course on literature and the music of Taylor Swift, and has published two books on the topic (January 2025; forthcoming November 2025).