

Age and Care Graz 2023

September 22, 2023:

11.00-12.30 Keynote 4: Amelia DeFalco

“Imagining Mycorrhizal Aging and Care”

This presentation explores mycorrhizal frameworks for imagining posthuman aging and care. ‘Mycorrhiza’ refers to the symbiotic association between plant roots and fungal mycelia in which the two organisms are conjoined in a mutually beneficial arrangement, exchanging nutrients and chemical messages. ‘Mycorrhizal networks’ reflects material and symbolic manifestations of interdependence that model more-than-human ways of relational being. This presentation analyzes Hiromi Goto’s 1994 novel *Chorus of Mushrooms*, which imagines the mycorrhizal dimensions of human life and conveys the networked capacities of aging bodies as relational organisms. Goto’s novel positions human beings mycorrhizomically and organismically, as entangled and interdependent, depicting her characters as both material entities and narrative subjects enmeshed in dense, vital worlds teeming with more-than-human life. As Goto’s novel demonstrates, the theorization of aging and care can benefit from posthumanist approaches that engage the vicissitudes of embodied vulnerability in their modeling of relational being. Attending to ‘mycorrhizal networks’ assists in the interrogation and dismantling of ‘the human’ as a discrete, autonomous individual, and highlights the ubiquity and integrity of care across the life course.