

ASLE-UKI POSTGRADUATE CONFERENCE
5th – 7th September 2018
In collaboration with the Orkney Science Festival



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A Place On the Edge?

Islands such as Orkney are often seen as special places primarily because they are remote from centres of population and are, therefore, seen to be closer to the elements. In many ways, they are spaces that are ‘on the edge’—existing in a peripheral zone at the far margins of the weather map and beyond dominant cultural and technological developments in mainland society. Similarly, nature, the environment, and ‘green’ concerns are often seen as niche interests, marginal to the dominant narratives of 21st Century global capitalism.

Recent developments in ecocritical thinking, however, have challenged both perspectives. From ‘archipelagic thinking’ to an emergent ‘blue ecology’ which turns its attention to the oceanic—‘from the perils of shipwreck to the frustrations of navigation’—these timely new readings offer ‘powerful antidotes to pastoralism and other representations of landed stability’ (Mentz, 2009). In a world on the brink of climate change, with coastal and island landscapes, by their very definition, places on the leading edge of dramatic change, how might a shift in perspective help us make sense of this liminal period in human time? How can it challenge inherited cultural modes of thought and practice during a deeply troubling transitional period, in which hyperobjects are washing up on beaches and inhabiting our bodies yet the Anthropocene has yet to be formally declared?

Developing from our *Postcards from the Edge* event, at the ASLE-UKI Postgraduate Conference in Lincoln 2016, this conference seeks to provoke thinking about the meaning of both *Place* and *Edge* as they relate to current and emergent environmental concerns. It will examine the ways in which attention to specific ‘edge’ places—from Plumwood’s ‘Shadow Places’ to island culture, from Heise’s eco-cosmopolitan holism to the wide glocal—their ecosystems, the people who live in them, and the stories told about them, might help us better understand humanity and its planetary home. We are especially interested in papers that: explore the various ways in which literature, art, and the humanities participate in this process of

perceiving, understanding, and attending to the environment's cutting and ignored edges; and contributions which consider the extent to which imagined landscapes shape the cultural view of, and attitudes toward, physical landscapes on cross-cutting peripheries, borders, and limits.

We can perceive edges not just as marginal boundaries of separation, but as meeting places offering the potential for creative interaction—between human and non-human species, local and global, technology and nature, past and future. Orkney's place on the edge has also placed it at the centre of technological developments, from its role as 'Britain's Ancient Capital' in the Neolithic, to its current position at the forefront of developments in Marine Renewable Energy and energy storage technology. In Orkney, where the markers of human time literally shape the view of the landscape, we hope this conference will provide a space where disciplinary edges can meet and unlock the potential for creative engagement between those working in a broad field engaging with notions of periphery and centre: its present, and its future.

In this spirit, the organisers invite applications from postgraduate and early career researchers who would like to come together to exchange these dialogues across and between disciplines. In collaboration with the Orkney International Science Festival, the conference activities will include opportunities to engage creatively with other delegates, and the Orkney environment, with shared events as part of the Science Festival programme. We also welcome proposals for presentations and readings from creative writers, artists and activists, and experimental work.

Suggested topics may include, but are not limited to:

- On the edge of deep time: the turn of the epoch
- Space, place, and time: human and natural temporalities
- 'Glocal' literature
- Nostalgia, pastoralism, solastalgia and its challenges to environmentalism
- Utopias, dystopias, heterotopias
- Landscapes of fear: eco-anxiety, ecophobia, ecogothic, ecohorror
- Energy challenges/sustainability/new technology/waste/pollution
- Island ecopoetry and eco-poetics
- Coastal and island legends and mythology
- The island—or the edge—as challenge to place-based writing
- The archipelagic
- Blurring ecologies: where blue meets green
- Species extinction and animal ethics: on the edge of the 'Sixth Mass Extinction'
- Environmental law, politics, and activism: are we 'running out of time'?

Individual papers will be 20 minutes long. **Please send a 300-400 word abstract and a 50 word biography** to Rebecca Ford, Veronica Fibisan, and Michelle Poland – aplacetheedge@gmail.com – **by 1st March 2018**. Proposals for panels are also welcome: please send a 200 word summary of the rationale for the panel, in addition to individual abstracts. Any further enquires can sent to the above email address.

For more information please go to <http://www.asleorkney2018.org>

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