



ASLE-UKI

One-day symposium

Literature and Sustainability

in collaboration with
INSPIRE

**Programme
and
Speaker abstracts and biographies**

8.15-9.00am	Registration. NB 1822 is open for teas / coffees from 8.30am		Old Building
9.00-9.10am	Introduction / welcome Louise Squire		Old Hall
9.10-9.30am	Reflection on Sustainability Jane Davidson (University of Wales Trinity Saint David)		Old Hall Chair: TBC
9.30-10.30am	Keynote 1: Adeline Johns-Putra (University of Surrey) Caring about the Future: The Affective Ethics of Sustainability		Old Hall Chair: Richard Kerridge
10.30-11.00	BREAK – Teas and coffees		Old Building
11.00 – 1.00 Panels Session One	<i>Panels 1a & 1b Old Hall</i> Chair: Carl Lavery	<i>Panels 2a & 2b Wolfson</i> Chair: Jerry Williams	
<u>11.00-12.00</u> 2 x 20 min papers Questions Short break	<u>1a. Disruptive textualities:</u> Mandy Bloomfield: 'Unsettling Sustainability: A pot-equilibrium poetics?' Richard Kerridge: 'Sustainable and Unsustainable Literature'	<u>2a. Communities:</u> Adrian Tait: 'Hardy's 'Wessex' as Sustainable Community' William Welstead: 'The role of culture in the sustainable use of a 'cultural landscape': a case study from the Hebridean machair'	
<u>12.00-1.00</u> 2 x 20 min papers Questions Short break	<u>1b. Contemporary poetry:</u> Lucy Collins: 'Sustainability and Poetic Practice: Mary O'Malley's Valparaiso' Chisty Weyer: "[W]hat is written in the weathering of our bodies?" Ageing and Sustainability in Antjie Krog's <i>Body Bereft</i>	<u>2b. Recycling and waste:</u> Hannah Ryley: 'Waste Not Want Not: Recycling and the Medieval Manuscript' Catherine Bates: 'Landfill Meditations and Turtle Shells: Waste, Sustainability and Indigeneity in Canada and the US'	
1.00-2.00	LUNCH		Refectory
2.00-3.00	Keynote 2: Claire Colebrook (Penn State University) Via VC Sex and the (Anthropocene) City		Old Hall Chair: John Parham
3.00-3.30	BREAK – Teas and Coffees		Old Building
3.30 – 5.30 Panels Session Two	<i>Panels 3a & 3b Old Hall</i> Chair: Catherine Bates	<i>Panels 4a & 4b Wolfson</i> Chair: Mandy Bloomfield	
<u>3.30-4.30</u> 2 x 20 min papers Questions Short break	<u>3a. Activism:</u> Chris Maughan: 'Sustainable activism? – Literary representations of environmental activism'. Amy Staniforth: 'Traces of sustainability: the Centre for Alternative Technology archive 1973 - ...'	<u>4a. Migration and wandering:</u> Reuben Knutson: 'Reinventing sustainability: Exploring utopian images of the past in the Welsh landscape' Rebecca Welshman: "'Vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods": Literature, Communication and Rural Sustainability'	
<u>4.30-5.30</u> 2 x 20 min papers Questions Short break	<u>3b. Politics of Production and Food:</u> Jerry Williams and Michelle Williams: 'Consciousness, Boredom, and the Loss of the Lyrical as a Consequence of the Treadmill of Environmental Destruction' Richard Marggraf Turley, Jayne Archer, Howard Thomas: 'A Kingdom Of Corn: 'Three Miller's Tales''	<u>4b. Aspects of performance:</u> Carl Lavery: 'Sustainable Futures: Enjoyment, Play and Metabolism in Townley and Bradby's The Bowthorpe Experiment' Richard Downing: 'Time Out: setting the Fractal Clock(s)'	
5.30-5.55pm	Roundup / plenary discussion: Matthew Jarvis		Old Hall
5.55-6.00pm	Announcement of INSPIRE competition winner		Old Hall
7.00	CONFERENCE DINNER		

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Claire Colebrook

Review
Claire Colebrook is Edwin Erle Sparks Professor of English at Penn State University, US. She has authored a notable range of books and articles including *Deleuze and the Meaning of Life* (Continuum 2010), and *William Blake and Digital Aesthetics* (Continuum 2011). She co-authored *Theory and the Disappearing Future* with Tom Cohen and J. Hillis Miller (Routledge 2011), and co-edited *Deleuze and Feminist Theory* with Ian Buchanan (Edinburgh University Press, 2000), *Deleuze and History* with Jeff Bell (Edinburgh 2008), *Deleuze and Gender* with Jami Weinstein (Edinburgh UP 2009) and *Deleuze and Law* (Palgrave) with Rosi Braidotti and Patrick Hanafin. She has written articles on visual culture, poetry, literary theory, queer theory and contemporary culture. She is completing a book on human extinction.

Adeline Johns-Putra

Adeline is Reader in English Literature at the University of Surrey, and current Chair of the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment, UK and Ireland (ASLE UKI). Her research interests include Environmental Criticism and Romanticism, especially women's writing. Her publications include *Process: Landscape and Text* (Rodopi, 2010; co-edited with Catherine Brace) and "Ecocriticism, Genre, and Climate Change: Reading the Utopian Vision of Kim Stanley Robinson's Science in the Capital Trilogy". *English Studies* (2010). Grants include 'From Climate to Landscape: Imagining the Future' (2009-12, co-investigator – European Social Fund). Adeline is presently guest-editor for a forthcoming issue on critical theory and climate change in the journal *Symploke*.

Jane Davidson

INSPIRE @ TSD

Jane is Director of the Institute of Sustainable Practice, Innovation and Resource Effectiveness (INSPIRE) at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David, and was the Minister for Environment and Sustainability in Wales (2007-2011). She holds honorary fellowships from CIW (Chartered Institute of Waste) and CIWEM (Chartered Institute of Water and Environmental Management) and is Patron of IEEM (Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management) and TFSR (Tools for Self Reliance Cymru). She is a member of WWF's UK Council of Global Ambassadors, President of Ramblers' Cymru and has been awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of Glamorgan for her work.

Panel 1a: Disruptive technologies

Mandy Bloomfield

Unsettling Sustainability: A post-equilibrium poetics?

As the CFP for this symposium indicates, sustainability is 'notionally a catalyst for change'. But it can also be argued that sustainability rests on profoundly conservative values, which not only risk perpetuating 'business as usual', but also rely on deeply-embedded notions of ecological stasis. Broadly speaking, to sustain is fundamentally to seek a state of equilibrium. So too, the literary genres most often discussed in relation to environmental questions – the pastoral and apocalyptic narrative – depend, in different ways, upon ideals of an essentially stable environment. Given that anthropogenic environmental change is now indisputable and that the sciences of ecology have long since moved on from static models of ecosystems to more dynamic models of disequilibrium, are such notions of 'sustainability' sustainable? How might we find alternative, more dynamic conceptual models that nevertheless retain an ethical dimension? This paper will explore literary

modes which privilege flux, instability and incompleteness in their engagement with ecological questions. I will examine the very different ecological poetics of two contemporary British innovative poets: Maggie O'Sullivan and Allen Fisher. Whereas O'Sullivan adopts shamanistic approaches to the natural world, Fisher's poetics draws on scientific ideas and languages. Most especially on a formal level, the work of both poets embodies principles of dynamism and uncertainty which usefully shift the focus away from unsustainable ideals of ecological stability.

Biographical note

I am currently a Lecturer in English at the University of Bedfordshire. My research interests encompass poetry and poetics, experimentalism, ecology, place and transnational imaginaries. I have articles on contemporary modernist poetry in journals such as *Textual Practice* and *The Journal of British and Irish Linguistically Innovative Poetry* and my monograph, *Archaeologies of the Material Page*, will be published with the University of Alabama Press next year.

Richard Kerridge

Sustainable and Unsustainable Literature

In this paper I want to think about the literary implications of the idea of sustainability. My two starting-points are that "sustainable" practices of production and consumption are those that are compatible in the long-term with efforts to protect biodiversity and avoid disastrous climate change and pollution, and that at present we face an impasse - a collective inability to act on what we know. In the face of this impasse, it can be argued that there is a literary imperative to refuse to accept literary business-as-usual. For writers, one way of interpreting this imperative is to say that we should produce texts that resist normal consumption. My reading of Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* finds in the novel a strategy of deliberate intolerability, amounting to an ultimatum to readers: until you change, the traditional readerly satisfactions are on hold. For teachers of literature, the imperative might be to rethink the model of consumption of texts that much of our teaching imposes: the rapid consumption of large numbers of books rather than the slowly developing integration of a few texts into the reader's continuing life. I will look briefly at some texts - J.H. Prynne and, in a very different way, J.A. Baker - whose literary form seems to be determined by a wish to obstruct rapid consumption as much as possible.

Biographical note

Richard Kerridge lectures in English Literature and Creative Writing, leads the MA in Creative Writing and is Co-ordinator of Research and Postgraduate Studies in the School of Humanities and Cultural Industries at Bath Spa University. He was founding Chair of the Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment (UK & Ireland), and the first non-American to be elected to the Executive Council of ASLE in the USA. One of the first scholars to teach environmental criticism in the UK, he has recently completed *Beginning Ecocriticism*, a general introduction to the field, for Manchester University Press, and has published ecocritical essays on a wide variety of topics, including contemporary fiction and poetry, contemporary nature writing, ecothrillers, literature and climate change, ecocritical theory, Shakespeare and Thomas Hardy. His nature writing has been published in BBC Wildlife, Granta and Poetry Review. He was awarded the 2012 Roger Deakin Prize by the Society of Authors, and has twice received the BBC Wildlife Award for Nature Writing. Currently he is writing a nature writing memoir about the British reptiles and amphibians, to be published by Chatto & Windus.

Panel 1b: Contemporary poetry

Lucy Collins

Sustainability and Poetic Practice: Mary O'Malley's *Valparaiso*

In 2007 Irish poet Mary O'Malley spent time aboard the marine research ship the *Celtic Explorer*—an expedition that proved the starting point for her latest collection *Valparaiso* (2012). At the centre of this book is “Resident at Sea”, a sequence of five poems investigating the poet’s journey from her native Galway far out into Atlantic waters. In this work O'Malley uses the dynamics of distance and proximity to illuminate the acute social and economic change Ireland is undergoing. Questions of sustainability lie at the core of this exploration: O'Malley records the depletion of the ocean’s resources, and its pollution from toxic waste, at the same time as she considers the corruption and ambition that brought an end to Ireland’s Celtic Tiger economy. The sustainability of both natural and human communities is suggestively linked here to the sustainability of the writing self, as O'Malley addresses the representational challenges offered by these experiences, and their destabilising effects on the perceiving subject. Through the lens of this poetry sequence, my paper will address the ways in which the concept of sustainability addresses the place of poetry in the contemporary world.

Biographical note

Lucy Collins is a lecturer in English Literature at University College Dublin, Ireland. Educated at Trinity College Dublin and at Harvard University, where she spent a year as a Fulbright Scholar, she teaches and researches in the area of twentieth-century poetry and poetics. Recent and forthcoming publications include *Poetry by Women in Ireland: A Critical Anthology 1870–1970* (Liverpool, 2012) and *The Irish Poet and the Natural World: An Anthology of Verse in English from the Tudors to the Romantics* (with Andrew Carpenter), due for publication in 2014.

Christy Weyer

“[W]hat is written in the weathering of our bodies?”: Ageing and Sustainability in Antjie Krog’s *Body Bereft*

In contemporary western society, biological ageing – the process and pattern of physiological change over time – has come to be dominated by the discourse of medicalisation, which posits ageing as a ‘disease’ that needs to be treated, it not completely cured. Ageing is thus socially-constructed as that which is unsustainable. From the medicalised perspective, all age-related physiological transformation is degeneration and narratives of ageing as disintegration have therefore become culturally entrenched.

In *Body Bereft*, South African poet Antjie Krog responds to and interrogates these narratives of ageing by developing new narratives and images of sustainable ageing. Working from a confessional and fully embodied perspective, Krog examines “what is written in the weathering of our bodies” – with “weathering” ambiguously expressing both ageing-dependent bodily change and bodily fortitude and endurance. In this examination, Krog not only works to reconstruct ageing as sustainable and inhabitable, specifically from the perspective of the menopausal woman, but in doing so, she reflects on the ethics of sustainability.

This paper will consider how the concept of sustainability can be productively used within the field of gerontology, and particularly in literary explorations of ageing. The argument will proceed by discussing the effects of its absence, and then examining its presence within Krog's revisionary narratives of ageing in *Body Bereft*.

Biographical note

Christy Weyer has just completed her PhD thesis in the English Department of Stellenbosch University, South Africa. Her research is focused on women's poetry of the body that is written in the confessional mode. She has published articles on the work of South African poet, Antjie Krog.

Panel 2a: Communities

Adrian Tait

Hardy's 'Wessex' as Sustainable Community

Well over a century after Hardy disinterred the word 'Wessex' to describe the 'partly real, partly dream-country' of his novels, it has become so synonymous with the region that tourists mistake it for an actual entity. It may yet become one: there is a 'Wessex Regionalist Party' intent on securing home rule for the region. But is it also possible that Hardy's complex and compelling creation anticipates the modern concept of the bioregion, or what Bate calls 'a self-sustaining, self-sufficient natural *oikos*'? Hardy's insistence on returning to the region an older interpretation of its size and scale suggests something more profound than the simple desire to impress the imaginary on the actual: it suggests a conscious respect for a slow, silent process that involved generations and flowed directly from the interactions between and the involvement of every element within an eco-system. *This* Wessex reflects an evolving accommodation between the biotic and abiotic elements within it, rather than an identity artificially imposed from without. To quote from *The Mayor of Casterbridge*:

Thus, Casterbridge was in most respects but the pole, focus, or nerve knot of the surrounding country life; differing from the many manufacturing towns which are as foreign bodies set down, like boulders on a plain, in a green world with which they have nothing in common.

Is this simply to revisit the well-worn emphasis on Wessex as a vision of organic unity? Or can we detect in a rereading of Wessex as bioregion a potentially fruitful – but also problematic – insight into the concept of a sustainable community? How can a settled, static society survive in a dynamic world-economy? How can local be squared with global, and a bioregion's eco-footprint be made coincident with an actual, geophysical entity? Above all, does 'Wessex' provide a sustainable template for modern living, or an anachronistic reminder of its impossibility?

Biographical note

Adrian Tait is a practicing eco-critic and member of the Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment. His primary focus is what might be described as Thomas Hardy's 'poetic vision of the environment', a subject that has prompted articles for *Green Letters* (2010, 2013), and several conference papers. This continues the work of his doctoral thesis, which systematically analyzed Hardy's verse collections from *Wessex Poems* to *Time's Laughingstocks*.

William Welstead

**The Role of Culture in the Sustainable use of a 'Cultural Landscape':
A Case Study from The Hebridean Machair**

The floristically rich machair plains of the Atlantic coast have long been valued for their beauty and fertility. Flower-rich grassland, once common in Britain and Ireland, is now drastically reduced by agricultural intensification. Sustainable use of machair grassland depends on traditional crofting practices, where neglect is as likely to reduce biodiversity as overuse. This paper takes the example of writing from the Hebridean Isle of Tiree to explore the potential role of culture, particularly the island's historically rich heritage of Gaelic poetry, story-telling and music, in predisposing the crofting community to the sustainable use of this fragile 'cultural landscape'.

The paper is a close reading of English translations of Gaelic verse, both contemporary and from the nineteenth-century. It explores the way that machair has been represented, the longing of the Tiree diaspora for the machair of their native island and the cultural burden placed on Tiree as machair becomes an ecological refuge for species that are no longer common on the mainland. Poetry from Tiree is set in the context of the celebration of biodiversity by poets from other machair islands, from rural Wales and from the wider literary canon. The techniques of ecocriticism are used to explore the scope for a two-way conversation between literary critics and ecologists who are concerned about sustainable land-use.

Biographical note

Bill Welstead graduated originally in metallurgy and over the course of his career has worked as a steelworks metallurgist, teacher and management consultant. Returning to study part-time with Birkbeck College, University of London and the Open University, he followed an eclectic choice of subjects taking in ecology, biology, earth sciences, environmental justice, social studies and post-colonial literature. In 2004 he took on a hill farm in North Wales, including responsibility for 25 acres of Atlantic oak wood, where he lived and worked while at the same time completing a PhD at Aberystwyth University. His thesis, entitled *'Braided Narratives': an Ecocritical Reading of Contemporary Welsh Poetry in English*, was accepted in 2012. Bill now lives on the Hebridean Isle of Tiree where he continues to follow his research interests in the interlocking narratives of ecology and literature and the place of both in social cohesion and sustainability.

Panel 2b: Recycling and waste

Hannah Ryley

Waste Not Want Not: Recycling and the Medieval Manuscript

The recycling of physical and literary material in late medieval manuscripts is the focus of my doctoral research. Situating this investigation within the work of the ecocritical movement and within the history of the book provides intriguing contexts for what we might today envisage as 'sustainable' aspects of medieval book producing behaviour. It is time to better appreciate the recycling and re-use inherent in the material manuscript. In our conversations about the origins and ends of manuscripts, the deeper origins and the composite and fragmentary state of existence of many manuscripts is often forgotten.

I will build on Bruce Holsinger's proposals – which move towards an ethical assertion of the animal behind the manuscript – by fully describing the production of manuscripts, in particular parchment,

made from skins.¹ Manuscripts were expensive, luxury items, made from animals whose flesh could otherwise have provided meat in a lean economy. The production process can be characterised as a surprisingly economically-minded exercise in efficiency. The 'waste not want not' attitude towards the re-use of manuscript materials is one of the most visible elements of 'sustainability' in the Middle Ages. I will mention case studies and provide visual examples of both this animal physicality and material recycling.

Finally, I will look to the digital future of manuscript access and consider how it might be deemed to be sustainable.

This conference provides the ideal opportunity to examine contemporary notions of 'sustainability' by thinking through the recycling of medieval manuscripts and the discipline of manuscript studies itself.

Biographical note

Hannah Ryley started her doctoral research this year. She is a member – and a Warden – of Worcester College, University of Oxford, having previously studied at Durham University. Her current work focuses on the evidence for recycling of physical and literary material in a selection of late medieval manuscripts, held in the Bodleian collections.

Catherine Bates

Landfill Meditations and Turtle Shells: Waste, Sustainability and Indigeneity in Canada and the US

In Gerald Vizenor's story 'Landfill Meditations', the trickster storyteller Martin Bear Charme conducts lectures about waste to the tribe. These address two main issues affecting contemporary indigenous cultures in Canada and the US: first, that many tribal nations have been pressurised to accommodate landfills on their reserved land in order to maintain financial sustainability; second, that the persecution and neglect indigenous peoples have experienced and still suffer has had the effect of figuring them *as* waste: discarded objects to be excluded from the nation state. Charme tells us "There was never refuse like this on reservations," he told his seminar, because, he said, walking backward to the window, "on the old reservations the tribes were the refuse. We were the waste, solid and swill on the run, telling stories from a discarded culture to amuse the colonial refusers. Over here now, on the other end of the wasted world, we meditate in peace on this landfill reservation." (101). Charme suggests that the best way to avoid being figured as refuse is to face the realities of garbage and its presence in their lives. Moreover, as Gay Hawkins tells us, 'The minute you start paying attention to waste you enact a different relation with it.' Using an examination of famous legal battles such as the Cache Creek landfill case and the Campo Landfill war to contextualise the discussion, this paper will consider the notions of environmental and cultural sustainability Vizenor's story raises. Brian Jungen's sculpture, *Carapace*, a giant animal shell artefact made out of garbage bins, provides further material with which to consider the complicated relationship between indigenous peoples in North America, and refuse. It works as a reminder that the sustainability of the cultural practices and traditions of America's first peoples is dependent upon a concentration upon environmental sustainability, but just as importantly, a creative approach to dealing with the persistent and chronic issue of waste disposal.

¹ Bruce Holsinger, 'Of Pigs and Parchment: Medieval Studies and the Coming of the Animal', *Theories and Methodologies* 124.2 (2009): 616-623.

Biographical note

Catherine Bates is a Research Fellow at the University of Huddersfield. She has particular research interests in Canadian literature, autobiography, figurations of the urban, and waste. She has published articles on the work of bpNichol, Robert Kroetsch, Marian Engel, Alice Munro and Michael Ondaatje and is working on two monographs provisionally entitled: *Alibis, Decoys and Backdoors: Robert Kroetsch's Subversive Life-Writings* and *Regarding Discard: Representing Waste in Contemporary Canadian and US Literature*. She is the Treasurer for the British Association for Canadian Studies and the founder of the Yorkshire Network for Canadian Studies. She also runs an environmentalist reading group in Yorkshire called Green Reads Leeds.

Panel 3a: Activism

Chris Maughan

Sustainable Activism? Literary Representations Of Environmental Activism

Sustainability in the developed world is a serious issue. If everyone consumed at the rate of the average American we would need five earth's worth of resources to cater for that demand. Yet no account has been made of the sustainability of tactics, strategies, and movements which seek to narrate, contest, and alter this unsustainable behaviour. This paper will examine the health of environmental activist movements through the medium of their literary depiction and question whether things can go on as they are.

Recent work which has attempted to measure the success of social movements has indicated if success has come at all it has been slow, hard-fought, and never without the aid of mainstream political support. The bleakness of these findings has also been reflected in a number of high profile literary publications (Ian McEwan's *Solar*, Jonathan Franzen's *Freedom*, Ruth Ozeki's *All Over Creation*, etc.) where the experience of activism has been characterised by moral confusion, disillusionment, and failure. Whilst some of these texts have been criticised for undermining efforts to effect real political change, I will argue rather that the story is not one which needs correcting. Instead, we should listen to these messages and respond to them appropriately. I will draw on a number of social movement theorists to substantiate these claims (Gene Sharp, Doug McAdam, Pierre Bourdieu, *et al.*) and suggest that the knowledge of how to counter this trend has yet to be assimilated by activists themselves.

Biographical note

Chris Maughan is currently reading for a PhD in English from The University of Warwick after obtaining full funding from the 'Warwick Post Graduate Research Scholarship'. His particular focus is the intersection between environmental activism and contemporary environmental literature. This focus is reflective of years spent as a campaigner in a number of capacities, though with specific emphasis on environmental issues. Chris is currently a co-ordinator of the Warwick chapter of Giving What We Can, the 'Warwick Food Co-op', the University allotment, and the Animal Ethics Society.

Amy Staniforth

Traces of sustainability: the Centre for Alternative Technology archive 1973 - ...

I grew up in Mid Wales and can remember being taken on the water powered cliff railway into what was then an 'eco' visitor attraction by non-plussed parents – now at the Centre for Alternative

Technology (CAT) I sift through guides, minutes, diaries and correspondence; remove staples, read about reed bed consultation projects, puzzle over time sheets and wryly smile at yet another discussion about management practice.

The first Visitor's Guide in 1975 introduced CAT in terms that seem familiar to us today: "This project has been set up by people who believe that we need to adapt to a way of life which avoids many of the problems facing Western Society. We aim to show that people can live happily on limited resources, producing a minimum of waste and pollution, but without returning to the hardships of the past."

At a moment when CAT's future is uncertain and its key characteristics – alternative energy production, for example, and cooperative management – have been lost, the records of the organisation tell us a great deal about how it got to this point, and perhaps more significantly, how a community established to model, experiment and preach 'sustainability' has lasted nearly 40 years. In this paper I will ask what these archival traces, and all the contradictions, conflicts, and ever present humour they describe, might tell us as we struggle with the term today.

Biographical note

An – almost qualified –archivist, Dr Amy Staniforth went to Reno, Nevada to do her MA in Literature and Environment before returning to do her PhD on the history of the discovery of human origins in East Africa. Now, Amy works for academic services at Aberystwyth University's library and works freelance as an archivist and oral history interviewer and transcriber.

Panel 3b: Politics of Production and Food

Jerry Williams

Michelle Williams

Consciousness, Boredom, and the Loss of the Lyrical as a Consequence of the Treadmill of Environmental Destruction

Today humans are faced with global environmental problems on a truly frightening scale. Problems such as global warming, energy shortages, deforestation, and pollution will no doubt cause substantial changes to all human societies. It seems appropriate that we should understand how we got to this point. One particularly salient explanation for our predicament is what we might call the mode or treadmill of production argument. From this perspective, the current environmental crisis results from the inherent tendency in capitalism toward over production. Driven by competition and falling profit, the exploitation of the environment results from evermore production, a resulting downward pressure on profit rates, and yet increased levels of production. The result is a self-negating treadmill of production with pervasive environmental consequences.

In this analysis we address the role of the treadmill of production in creating environmental damage and in transforming human consciousness. We argue that capitalism is a potent cause of environmental damage because the economic surplus it generates creates a self-sustaining dynamic destruction. By creating economic surplus the system concurrently creates human boredom and the means by which that boredom is satisfied – unchecked consumerism. Most importantly the treadmill of production also lessens our ability to appreciate what Albert Camus called lyricism – the music of life. In contrast to the logic of the naïve rationalism implicit in the treadmill of production, sometimes in order to see and to know what is true we must, as American poet William Stafford believed, look with "eyes squinted." We argue, with support from the writings of John Dewey, Albert Camus, and William Stafford that if sustainability is to be realized, a sense of the lyrical must

be reintroduced in our educational systems and thereby the everyday sensibilities of people living their daily lives.

Biographical notes

Jerry Williams is a professor of sociology and poet working at Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, Texas. He is the author of *The Rise and Decline of Public Interest in Global Warming: Toward a Pragmatic Conception of Environmental Problems* (2001); coeditor and author of *Toward a More Livable World: Social Dimensions of Sustainability* (2012). He has also published numerous environmental essays in such journals as the *Journal of Gaming and Simulation*, *Human Studies*, *Free Inquiry in Creative Sociology*, *Human Ecology Review*, and *Sociological Inquiry*. He has organized conference sessions on sustainability and is cofounder of the Center for a Livable World. His current research interests involve community development and public perceptions of environmental problems.

Dawn "Michelle" Williams holds a doctorate in Educational Leadership from Stephen F. Austin State University. She taught special education for 20 years, and served 10 years as a middle and high school administrator. She is currently an assistant professor at Stephen F. Austin State University in the Department of Elementary Education and coordinates the Middle Level Grades Online Completer Program. Her research involves middle level education with a particular interest in social justice.

Richard Marggraf Turley, Howard Thomas and Jayne Archer

A Kingdom Of Corn: Three Miller's Tales

William Camden (1551-1623), historian of the British Isles, claimed that Britain was so abundant in wheat, she must once have been home to Ceres herself. In maps commissioned by Camden and his contemporaries, the land of Britain is figured not simply as an inert landmass of certain location and dimension. She is a living incarnation of the corn goddess – a rich garner capable of feeding many more than her own population. John Keats, writing over two hundred years later, was also able to imagine a 'Kingdom of Corn', albeit one no longer associated with a particular place in the present, but one seemingly lodged in the mythical past: the golden age of a Vigilant Autumn. Keats's *Apollon* addresses the three Graces:

Which of the fairest three
To-day will ride with me?
My steeds are all pawing at the threshold of the morn:
Which of the fairest three
To-day will ride with me
Across the gold Autumn's whole Kingdom of corn?

Embedded within these seemingly abstract and timeless visual and literary references is an urgent and determinedly time-bound politics of food supply. Camden and Keats were writing not in times of abundance, but dearth. They write following successive failed harvests, and amid spiralling food prices and ongoing (and largely unsuccessful) government attempts to control the production, distribution and consumption of food – unsustainable times, with uncanny similarities to our own.

An important, but often neglected site in the story of Britain's politics of food supply is the mill. The mill, more so than the arable field, was the true 'Kingdom of corn': it was the point at which food entered most transparently and immediately into the world of politics and governance. It was a

complex site within and through which communities were created and negotiated through economic as well as material relationships. The skilled miller, sifting through the grain, was an important guard against the corruption of the food chain through the presence of toxic agents such as ergot and darnel. The mill made it possible for the owners of smallholdings to work their land and feed themselves. In the mill, the ongoing conflict between country and city – and their very different appetites – is played out. It is a place of urgency and contention, in which weights and measures – customary and standardized – are debated and resisted. In short, the mill played an essential role in the formation of pre- and early modern communities – it enabled them to be self-sustaining; it made the people and their land sustainable.

The mill is a site of intense scrutiny in British culture, and the stories we have told about our mills tells us about our own loss of the land as a sustaining, meaningful presence in our lives. Just as much as the loss of common ground to successive waves of enclosures, the loss of the mill as a centre of food production – owned and operated by and for the community – marks a fault line, a profound trauma in British history. This paper tells the stories of three mills, actual and (re-)imagined: Trumpington Mill in Cambridgeshire, setting for Chaucer's *Reeve's Tale*; Flatford Mill in East Anglia, often associated with John Constable's 1821 painting now known as 'The Hay Wain'; and Felin Ganol Mill in Llanrhystud, Ceredigion, recently restored to working order by Anne and Andy Parry. The stories of these mills, their loss and recovery, tells us of important (sometimes inconvenient) truths about our fraught relationship with the land and reminds us of the central role of the creative arts in reimagining alternative, more sustainable relationships with that land.

Biographical notes

Richard Marggraf Turley is Professor in Romantic and Victorian Literature and has recently been appointed Aberystwyth University's first Professor of Engagement with the Public Imagination. He has published widely on Romantic literary and sexual culture, with particular focus on John Keats. He is author of three monographs: *The Politics of Language in Romantic Literature* (Palgrave, 2002), *Keats's Boyish Imagination* (Routledge, 2004), and *Bright Stars: John Keats, Barry Cornwall and Romantic Literary Culture* (LUP, 2009). He has also published three volumes of poetry; in 2007, he won the tenth-anniversary *Keats-Shelley Prize* for poetry. His most recent collection, *Wan-Hu's Flying Chair*, was published by Salt in 2009 and won the 2010 Wales Book of the Year 'People's Choice' award (sponsored by Media Wales). He teaches in the Department of English and Creative Writing at Aberystwyth University.

Howard Thomas is Emeritus Professor of Biological, Environmental and Rural Sciences at Aberystwyth University. He has held visiting professorships at universities in Switzerland and the United States. His research interests include investigation and modification of cellular, biochemical and evolutionary mechanisms of plant senescence and death, with special emphasis on pigment and protein metabolism. He has also been active in the application of imaging and machine-learning methods for the non-destructive analysis of plant development and gene flow, and the remote field to landscape-level monitoring of crops and ecosystems. He has a long-standing commitment to exploring the cultural significance of scientific research and promotion of links between science and the arts. He was one of the first recipients in 1997 of support under the Wellcome Sci-Art Scheme, followed by a NESTA pioneer award to develop imaging methodology in collaboration with the artists Heather Ackroyd and Dan Harvey. Subsequently he received a Leverhulme Emeritus Fellowship to support work on music and evolutionary thought, and ongoing research on literary responses to agricultural and ecological change.

Jayne Archer is lecturer in Medieval and Renaissance Literature in the Department of English and Creative Writing, Aberystwyth University. She is an Associate Fellow of the Centre for the Study of the Renaissance, University of Warwick, where she spent four years as AHRC postdoctoral Research

Fellow on the John Nichols Project. She is co-editor of *The Progresses, Pageants, and Entertainments of Queen Elizabeth I* (Oxford University Press, 2007), editor of Volume 3: The Verse Treatises in OUP's *Complete Works of Sir Fulke Greville*, and has published articles on Elizabethan and Jacobean masques, early modern women's receipt books, and alchemy in early modern literature.

Panel 4a: Migration and wandering

Reuben Knutson

Reinventing sustainability:

Exploring utopian images of the past in the Welsh landscape

This paper presents a practice-based approach towards identifying tropes of 'sustainability' in connection with a history of counter-cultural, urban-to-rural, migration into West Wales during the 1970s. The paper will show how a tripartite approach to re-enactment, history, and theory are integrated. I will use multi-media references to show how I am working through a process of creating material from archive footage, oral history testimonies, and group dialogue, to construct a re-enactment event, which both commemorates and critiques that history.

While this is not eco-criticism in a literary sense, it engages with notions of textuality to offer an alternative and open-ended historiography of sustainable living. The migration in question sought a return to a socially, and materially, sustainable landscape. It looked forward with revolutionary intent, while drawing on deeply 'traditional' values and structures of community, family and nature, as well as colliding with the land itself. These ideas of sustainability can be positioned within a back-to-the-land ideology, which has been summoned regularly throughout history to provide answers, and problems, for models of living in the future. Specifically, I examine this retrieval of the past to inform the future through the lens of Walter Benjamin's notion of the dialectical image, which provides a framework within which I attempt to locate fragments of utopian 'images' and abandoned 'images' – images that provided a generation with the inspiration and motivation to attempt a sustainable future. Can those images be relevant still?

Biographical note

Reuben Knutson is currently undertaking a practice-based PhD at Aberystwyth University. Previously, he worked in Bristol, creating films and live events as part of the artist duo *Artic*; and for the national arts organization *Axis* presenting artists' work, producing critical reviews, and conducting discussion events with visual artists, curators and critics.

Rebecca Welshman

"Vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods":

Literature, Communication and Rural Sustainability

In 'Tintern Abbey', smoke rising from the valleys suggests to Wordsworth 'vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods/ Or of some Hermit's cave, where by his fire/ The Hermit sits alone.' Wordsworth's imaginings infer a degree of perceived distance between the civilised poet and the rural inhabitants. This gap was widened by the Industrial Revolution and the associated ideology of progress, and until well into the nineteenth century isolated rural communities were poorly understood. Newspaper accounts of a man named Jem-the-Slipper living in a cave in Monmouthshire with his family in the

1860s, and the efforts of locals to help change the way they lived, suggest that such close affinity with the landscape was perceived to be improper. However, that Jem became a tourist attraction also suggests the increasing popularity of the outdoors; a movement epitomised by Richard Jefferies who in 1886 recognised the ecological value of 'the gypsy [who] was born on the earth in the tent, and ... has lived like a species of human wild animal ever since.' Critically considering changing literary representations of lone wanderers and nomadic communities, who lived in accordance with the natural world, this paper explores why such figures have traditionally been marginalised. In light of increasing ecological change, the paper questions the validity of distinguishing between conventional and alternative ways of living. Increased social mobility and improved global communication technologies are bringing communities closer together, encouraging 'sustainable living' to be more widely understood as progressive. Literature as a form of communication – from the succinct lines of Twitter to the descriptive and self-revealing blog – affords new opportunities to explore and demystify sustainable ways of life.

Biographical note

I am completing a PhD in English at the University of Exeter, titled 'Imagining Archaeology: Nature and Landscape in the Late Nineteenth Century'. My publications include *Richard Jefferies: an Anthology, An Illustrated Guide to Thomas Hardy and the Jurassic Coast*, and a chapter in *Mysticism, Myth and Nationalism*, ed. by Marian Gibson and Shelley Trower. I work with various trusts and charities to promote opportunities for the study of landscape and literature.

Panel 4b: Aspects of performance

Carl Lavery

Sustainable Futures: Enjoyment, Play and Metabolism in Townley and Bradby's *The Bowthorpe Experiment*

The Bowthorpe Experiment, designed by the conceptual artists Townley and Bradby for the Norfolk and Norwich Festival, was a site-specific bike tour that took place in Norwich over 3 nights in May 2011. The aim of the performance was to celebrate Bowthorpe, a housing estate that had been planned by forward thinking architects over 40 years ago in the south of the city, for its green spaces, mixed tenancy occupancies and copious bike paths. Aided by the eco-collective Magnificent Revolution and their mobile cinema unit, Townley and Bradby figured their performance as an untimely but humorous journey into the future, an attempt to 'retro-fit the city' by celebrating the past. Although the word sustainability was never mentioned at any point during the performance, *The Bowthorpe Experiment* offered a complex and embodied reflection on how sustainable futures might be performed in the present. In this paper, I intend to think through the different meanings and subtle practices of sustainability afforded by the performance by concentrating on three interrelated lines of enquiry – pragmatics, aesthetics, and politics. To do that, I use Marx's notion of metabolism – the material exchange between labour and nature – to theorise how sustainability is not simply about reducing carbon emissions, but rather demands a more radical transformation of our notions of urban ecology. In line with the corporeal ontology of performance, the paper pays particular attention to what it means to possess a 'sustainable body', and does that by stressing the role of enjoyment and play in sustainability, as opposed to the usual premiums placed on efficiency and conservation. In this way, I hope to offer an alternative take on eco-criticism, in which the materiality of performance might make a useful contribution to current debates in literature, philosophy, and 'green theory'.

Biographical note

Carl Lavery teaches Theatre and Performance at Aberystwyth University. He is the author of several books, including *Jean Genet Politics and Performance*, with Clare Finburgh (2006), *Sacred Theatre* (2007), *Walking, Writing and Performance: Autobiographical Texts by Dee Heddon, Carl Lavery and Phil Smith* (2009), *The Politics of Jean Genet's Late Theatre: Spaces of Revolution* (2010), *Contemporary French Theatre and Performance*, with Clare Finburgh (2011), *Good Luck Everybody. Lone Twin: Journeys, Performances and Conversations*, with David Williams (2011), and the editor with Nick Whybrow of a special issue of *Performance Research* 'On Foot' (2012). He has contributed many articles on performance and ecology to leading journals, and has been involved in several AHRC funded projects exploring the relationship between ecology and landscape

Richard Downing

Time Out: setting the Fractal Clock(s)

This paper argues the case for scenography (the expressive organisation of space) to be considered as a type of expanded text: a mode of writing which is corporeal and experiential and of a common and deeply understood grammar. At root, living, sustainably or otherwise, might be considered a spatial/temporal (re)negotiation of which, by default of our presence, we are all a part, contributing through each action or stillness to the common meta-text. Given this, what might the adoption of scenography as a cultural optic, contribute to current debates surrounding issues of ecology, including those pertaining to sustainability? The paper proposes that sustainability is intrinsically linked to awareness, whilst our environmental awareness is a matter of corporeal, embodied apprehension rather than, primarily, an intellectual assembly (perhaps of distressing facts and figures). Specifically, the paper explores emergences from the dialogue between scenography and fractal geometry (described by Mandelbrot as 'The Geometry of Nature'). What is the spatial/temporal geometry of that which we may wish to sustain? In what ways do we apprehend or 'read' this text? How might this inform spatial/temporal aesthetic responses, and what might be the 'benefit' of these? The paper considers these questions with reference to a series of artworks in preparation by the author, an ecology of globally dispersed, geometric installations, symbiotically linked as a spatial text.

Biographical note

Richard Downing lectures in scenography at Aberystwyth University. His creative practice as a performance and installation maker has represented the UK (Prague Quadrennial, 2007) and been exhibited broadly (V&A, London, 2008). His concern with spatial expression in both teaching and practice resides in the notion of design *as*, rather than design *for*.