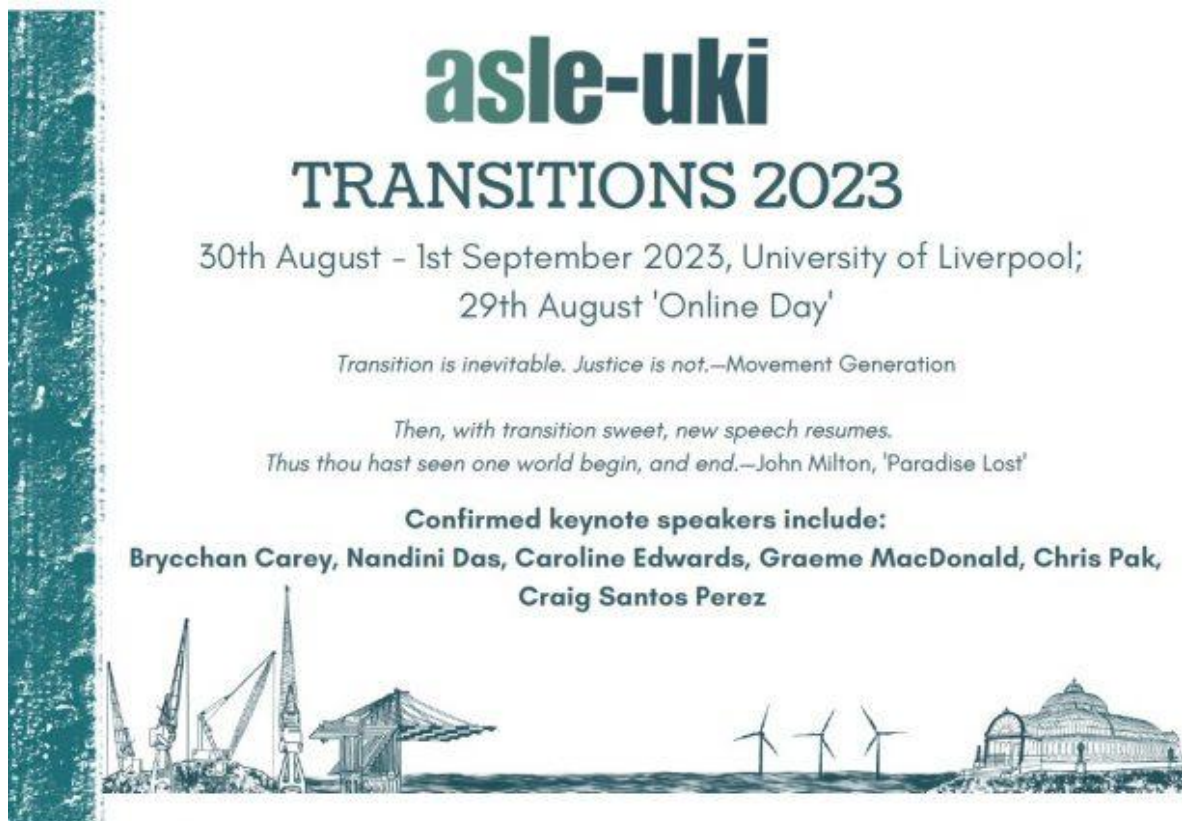




**Association for the Study of Literature and Environment, UK
and Ireland, Biennial Conference 2023**

‘Transitions’

30 August – 1 September 2023, University of Liverpool

**Keynote Speakers: Brycchan Carey, Nandini Das, Caroline
Edwards, Graeme MacDonald, Chris Pak, Craig Santos Perez**

The 2023 conference for the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment, UK and Ireland (ASLE-UKI) will be hosted by the [Literature and Science Hub](#) at the University of Liverpool. ASLE-UKI welcomes participation from scholars, readers, and creative practitioners interested in the relationships between literatures, environments and cultures – past, present, or future from anywhere in the world.

The theme of the 2023 conference is “**Transitions**”. At a moment of linked geopolitical and environmental emergencies, the sense of existing in a moment of transition is increasingly pervasive. But even if a transition is inevitable, its nature is not. Transition to where? How? For whom? What sorts of futures are possible or even imaginable against the negativity of apocalypticism or the ecocidal business-as-usual of capitalist realism? What can be learned from past articulations of cultures and ecosystems undergoing radical change – either voluntarily or through violence? What can traditional indigenous knowledges or transcultural stories of metamorphosis teach us about the possibility of reconfiguring self or environment?

As with previous ASLE-UKI conferences we are happy to receive papers on any aspect of literature, culture, and environment, but we particularly welcome responses to the following provocations:

A transition is a movement between places, a passage. This sense of transition has a particular resonance with Liverpool as the site of the conference: an imperial city built on the profits of enslavement, a major commodities port for the Industrial Revolution, and a key site in the ongoing history of crude oil and the petrochemical industry. We welcome papers that address histories and geographies of transit, travel and transmission – the still-unfolding consequences of the movement of peoples, commodities, and species: whether they be the drastic shifts in world-ecology instantiated by the transition to plantation monocultures and fossil capital; the movement of zoonotic diseases and toxins across bodies and borders as part of the slow violence of environmental injustice; or stories of intercultural encounter from the classical to the present.

Transitions are movements across time: across political moments, conceptual paradigms, energy regimes and geological ages. The University of Liverpool is home to the Olaf Stapledon Centre for Speculative Futures and the Science Fiction Foundation Archive, the second-largest SF collection in the world and a vast repository of imagined futures. With this in mind, we invite contributions on transitions-to-come: what sorts of social or, technological adaptations might emerge? How have past visions of the future shaped our sense of the possible? How will justice and ethics function in these managed (or cataclysmic) transitions?

Transitions are a change in state or being: We welcome papers – particularly about older periods and non-Eurowestern traditions – on what narratives of moral, infrastructural, bodily, climatological, or psychological change do for our understanding of ecology. How might they foster new ways of looking and feeling towards human and non-human others or at environments that are themselves in transition? What sorts of feelings and behaviours (e.g. solastalgia, petromelancholia, joyful militancy, doomer prepping, anticipatory grief) emerge as the affective correlatives to individuals and societies experiencing transition?

Critical and aesthetic transitions: What do different modes and genres (from the medieval dream vision to Hopepunk) offer in terms of imagining transition? What new formal innovations (e.g. ecopoetics, iDocs) arise in response to a world in transition. How is the field of ecocriticism itself transitioning due to its engagements with different critical traditions, institutional drivers, and ethical demands? What sorts of new critical formulations and scholarly practices (including, of course, “Transecology”) have and might emerge?

Location

The conference was held in the 502 Teaching Hub at the University of Liverpool. If you are walking from the station/city centre then the easiest way is to head up Brownlow Hill and turn right when you get to University Square or up Mount Pleasant and turn left when you get to Abercomby Square.

Twitter/X

Twitter/X hashtag: #ASLEUKI2023

ASLE-UKI 2023 Conference ‘Transitions’: Outline Programme

Tuesday 29 August 2023

9.00am Opening remarks and housekeeping
9.15am Online Panel 1
11.00am Break
11.15pm Keynote: Craig Santos Perez
12.15pm Lunch break
1.00pm Online Panel 2
2.45pm Break
3.00pm Online Panel 3
4.15pm Closing remarks

Wednesday 30 August 2023

8:30am Registration and Refreshments
9.15am Welcome
9.30am Plenary 1 – Roundtable Future Transitions
10.45am Break
11.00am Parallel Panels 1
12.45pm Lunch Break
1.30pm Parallel Panels 2
3.00pm Coffee Break
3.15pm Parallel Panels 3
4.45pm Break
5.00pm ASLE-UKI BGM
6.00pm Wine Reception
7.00pm Poetry Reading

Thursday 31 August 2023

8.30am Registration and Refreshments
9.00am Parallel Panels 4
10.45am Break
11.00am Plenary 2 – Nandini Das
12.30pm Lunch Break
1.30pm Excursions
6.30pm Conference Dinner and Drinks - Leaf, Bold Street

Friday 1 September 2023

08:30am Registration and Refreshments
9.00am Parallel Panels 5
10.45am Break
11.00am Parallel Panels 6
12.30pm Lunch Break
1.30pm Plenary 3 – Brycchan Carey
3.00pm Coffee Break
3.15pm Raffle and Closing Remarks

Online Programme: Tuesday 29 August 2023

Date: Tuesday 29 August 2023

Time: 9am – 4.30pm UK time (British Summer Time/BST)

We are delighted to offer an online conference day, also included in our in-person conference registration fees as well as available to attend separately. You do not need to be an ASLE-UKI member to attend the online conference, although we encourage you to [join us](#) if you are not a member.

9.00 – 9.15am: Opening Remarks and Housekeeping

Speaker: Dr John **Miller** (The University of Sheffield) President of ASLE-UKI

9.15 – 11.00am: Panel 1 – Troubled Waters

Chair: Vera **Fibisan** (University of Sheffield)

Călina-Maria Moldovan (Babeş-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca, Romania) Liquid Ontologies and Planetary Assemblages. Representations of Water in Contemporary Norwegian Literature

Carolyn Lau (Department of English, Chinese University of Hong Kong) Relational Ethics in End Times: A Posthuman Reading of Alan Moore's *Saga of the Swamp Thing*

Saba Pirzadeh (Lahore University of Management Sciences) Glacial Decline and Indigenous Livelihood in Uzma Khan's *Thinner Than Skin*

Mars Briones (Multidisciplinary Environmental Studies in the Humanities (MESH), University of Cologne) Tracing Transitions: Turns in Disaster Discourses and Tropes of Catastrophe

15 minute BREAK

11.15am – 12.30pm: Panel 2 – Transitions, Transformations, and the Nonhuman

Chair: Jasmin **Kirkbride** (City, University of London)

Domonique Davies (University of Reading) Breaths of Mountains and Man in Wallace Stevens's 'Chocorua to Its Neighbour'

Seda Bahar Pancaroglu (Çankaya University) Embracing the Inevitable: Arboreal Perspectives on Death and Transformation in Contemporary Fiction

Veronika Arutyunyan (University of Hamburg) Transformations of Lyric Voice in Contemporary Ecopoetry

45 minute LUNCH BREAK

1.15pm – 3.00pm: Panel 3 – Farm and Field

Chair: Sofie **Schrey** (Northumbria University)

Pippa Marland (University of Bristol) From land stealers to land healers: transitions in contemporary farming and agrarian literature

David Robinson (University of Johannesburg) Man's best friend in Craig Higginson's *The Dream House*

Simon Ryle (University of Split) Old Rendering Plant: Marx's gelatine & Levinasian flesh

Holly Nelson (University of Michigan) Absolving Matelda: Engaging with Ecofeminism in Dante Alighieri's *Purgatorio*

15 minute BREAK

3.15pm- 4.15pm: Keynote – Craig Santos Perez: Transitions and Poetic Thresholds

For this keynote, Pacific Island author and scholar Craig Santos Perez will read poetry from his award-winning book, *Habitat Threshold*. This collection addresses themes of indigenous ecological knowledge, climate change, human-animal relations, environmental justice, and the anthropocene. These poems explore what it means to live in thresholds and entanglements of our transitional and precarious times.

4.15pm – 4.30pm: Closing Remarks

Programme: Wednesday 30 August 2023

All events take place in 502 Teaching Hub, University of Liverpool.

8.30am: Registration and Refreshments (Upstairs Social Space — all refreshments will be held here throughout the conference)

9.00am: Welcome Address (Lecture Theatre 2)

A welcome from the President of ASLE-UKI, John **Miller** (University of Sheffield), and the chair of the conference organising committee, Sam **Solnick** (University of Liverpool).

9.15am: Plenary 1 (Lecture Theatre 2)

Roundtable: ‘**Future Transitions**’ – **Caroline Edwards** (Birkbeck, University of London); **Graeme Macdonald** (University of Warwick) and **Chris Pak** (Swansea University)

Chair: **Will Slocombe**

10.30am: Break

11.00am: Parallel Sessions 1

1.1 (Re)processing Animals

Time: Wednesday 30 August 2023, 11.00am – 12.45pm

Chair: **Brycchan Carey**

Room: Lecture Theatre 1

Armelle Blin-Rolland (Bangor University) Mobilities and immobilities in French postcolonial zoos

David Tierney (University of Liverpool) Talking Animals and Silent Humans

Delphine Gatehouse (King’s College London) A Woodworm Approach

Shasha Cai (University of Leeds) The Liminality of Fox Spirits in Chinese Zhiguai

1.2 Hydrocarbon Landscapes and the Petro-Imaginary

Time: Wednesday 30 August 2023, 11.00am – 12.45pm

Chair: Fred Carter

Room: Lecture Theatre 2

Anne Schmalstig (Texas A&M University at Qatar) Postpetroleum Ecologies:

Reimagining Sea and Landscapes in Nnedi Okorafor's *Lagoon*

Zuhmboshi Nsuh (The University of Yaounde I, Cameroon) Environmental Terrorism and the Human Condition in Postcolonial Narratives: Reading Helon Habila's *Oil on Water* and Imbolo Mbue's *How Beautiful We Were*

Abiodun Fakemi (Keele University) Exploring Juvenile Somaterratic Experience in Christie Watson's *Tiny Sunbirds Far Away*

Maria Sledmere (University of Strathclyde) 'A cinder signal': Petromelancholia and Anthropocene Gurlisque

1.3 Transitional Landscapes

Time: Wednesday 30 August 2023, 11.00am – 12.45pm

Chair: Terry Gifford

Room: Lecture Theatre 3

Paul Knowles (University of Manchester) Transiting from the Edenic-pastoral to the post-pastoral in Kevin Barry, Colin Barrett, and Danielle McLaughlin's short stories

Amy Le Grys (Bath Spa University) Writing the Mountainscape: Literary Impressionism, Changeability and Aesthetics in Late Modern British Mountain Literature

Rosamund Paice (Northumbria University) From Whittlesea Mere to the 'Pond on Witting Heath': Mildmay Fane and Familiar Waters

1.4 I Follow Rivers: Fluvial Transitions

Time: Wednesday 30 August 2023, 11.00am – 12.45pm

Chair: Vera Fibisan

Room: Teaching Room 5

Gemma Curto (The University of Sheffield) Living at Scamander's Water Edge in David Markson's *Wittgenstein's Mistress*

Aim King (Aberystwyth University) Transmateriality and walking with other-than-human river ecologies

Jemima Matthews (King's College London) "as Water mill, made rags and shreds to sweate": Fluvial bodies and fluminous geographies

1.5 Text/Image/Archive/Action: Creative Engagements with Past, Present and Future Environments (Roundtable)

Time: Wednesday 30 August 2023, 11.00am – 12.45pm

Chair: Harriet Tarlo

Room: Flex 1

Participants:

David Borthwick (University of Glasgow)

JR Carpenter (University of Southampton)

Lucy Burnett (Lancaster University)

Mike Collier (The University of Sunderland)

Judith Tucker (University of Leeds)

1.6 Eco-Medievalisms I: Landscapes of Apocalypse, Flood, and Wilderness

Time: Wednesday 30 August 2023, 11.00am – 12.45pm

Chair: Catherine Evans

Room: Teaching Room 6

Emma Nuding (The University of York) Reading Fenland with the Monastic Ecopoetics of Henry de Avranches' *Vita Guthlaci*

Lynn Butzlaff (The University of York) Re-thinking Wilderness in the Poetic Edda

Abigail Bleach (Manchester University) Navigating the Eco-Medieval with Paul Kingsnorth's 'The Wake'

Carl Kears (King's College London) The Boat-as-Archive: The Poetic and Scholarly Journeys of Bill Griffiths

1.7 Wild Margins: Spaces for Transition

Time: Wednesday 30 August 2023, 11.00am – 12.45pm

Chair: Matthew Griffiths

Room: Flex 2

John Miller (The University of Sheffield) The Psychedelic Ecology of Lee Sung Jin's *Beef*

Carolyn Böttcher (Friedrich-Schiller-University Jena) The Circle of a Year: Time and the Environment in Kerri Ní Dochartaigh's *Cacophony of Bone*

Sundhya Walther (University of Manchester) Unwilding: Denizen Futures and the End of the Wild

Cathy Turner (University of Exeter): Tea's transitions in UK-based performances.

1.8 Tipping Points: Discourse, Narrative, Politics (Roundtable)

Time: Wednesday 30 August 2023, 11.00am – 12.45pm

Chair: Ben Smith

Room: Teaching Room 4

Participants:

Leo Steeds (University of Glasgow)

Clementina Gentile Fusillo (The University of Sheffield)

Giulia Champion (University of Southampton)

Theo Aiolfi (CY Cergy Paris University)

Mekhala Dave (TBA21 Academy)

12.45pm: Lunch

1.30pm: Parallel Sessions 2

2.1 Eco-Anxiety and Environmental Loss

Time: Wednesday 30 August 2023, 1.30 pm – 3.00 pm

Chair: David Higgins

Room: Lecture Theatre 1

Niall Oddy (The Open University) Environmental Anxiety in the Middle of the Sixteenth Century? The Example of Rabelais' 'Fourth Book'

Jasmin Kirkbride (City, University of London) The writer's fragments: navigating the role boundaries of Creative Writing teacher, editor, and therapist in climate literature

Matthias Stephan (Aarhus University) Narratives of the Anthropocene: Affective Responses to Climate Trauma

2.2 Re-Situating Ecopoetics

Time: Wednesday 30 August 2023, 1.30 pm – 3.00 pm

Chair: Sarah Daw

Room: Teaching Room 4

Veronika Arutyunyan (University of Hamburg) Transformations of Lyric Voice in Contemporary Ecopoetry

Laoighseach Ní Choistealbha (Ollscoil na Gaillimhe, Éire) Tradition and Transition in Modern Irish-Language Poetry

Rosie Dymond (Bangor University) ‘Hon ydyw’r afon’: Transitions in place-time in the later poems of R. Williams Parry

2.3 Beastly Capital and Extractivist Ecologies

Time: Wednesday 30 August 2023, 1.30 pm – 3.00 pm

Chair: Hannah Boast

Room: Lecture Theatre 2

Arush Pande (Princeton University) The Beasts of Capital, the Ghosts of Nature: Environmental Justice in Tillie Olsen’s *Yonnondio*

Bushra Mahzabeen (University of Warwick) Rampant Capitalism and Violent Modernism of Angolan Oil Extraction Zone in Pepetela’s Narrative

Julia Ditter (University of Konstanz) Extractive Ecologies and Industrial Tourism in the Nineteenth-Century Periodical Press

2.4 Transition and Environment in Local Communities in Wales

Time: Wednesday 30 August 2023, 1.30 pm – 3.00 pm

Chair: Andy Webb

Room: Flex 1

Linden Peach (School of Traditional Arts) Ely Cardiff Not Cambridge: Peter Finch’s Environmental Writings

Francesca Brooks (York University) ‘Falling into precipice and monastery’: local Welsh environments in Lynette Roberts’s wartime writing

Jamie Harris (Aberystwyth University) Transition and the environment in new town settlement in Raymond Williams’s *The Fight for Manod*

2.5 Fantastic Entanglements and Latourian Legacies

Time: Wednesday 30 August 2023, 1.30 pm – 3.00 pm

Chair: Peter Sands

Room: Teaching Room 5

Philip Dickinson (Lancaster University) Terrestrialising the Novel: Williams, Latour, and *The Swan Book*

Tarn MacArthur (University of St Andrews) Bitumen: Karen Solie’s Mapping of a Modern Hybrid

Hilary Bowling (University of Liverpool) ‘tower or tunnel?’: weird border transgressions and climate change in Jeff VanderMeer’s *Southern Reach* Trilogy

2.6 Varieties of Religious Experience

Time: Wednesday 30 August 2023, 1.30 pm – 3.00 pm

Chair: Kennedy Dragt

Room: Flex 2

Enaie Maire Azambuja (School of Advanced Study, University of London) Zen-inflected transitions in E. E. Cummings' ecopoetic imagination

Alfie Howard (University of Leeds) Snake Words in Estonia: Andrus Kivirähk's 'The Man Who Spoke Snakish'

Catherine Evans (University of Manchester) Glass beehives: Making the synthetic "natural" in Early Modern England

2.7 Terraqueous Mappings

Time: Wednesday 30 August 2023, 1.30 pm – 3.00 pm

Chair: Susanne Ferwerda

Room: Lecture Theatre 3

John Wedgwood Clarke (University of Exeter) Red River: A River in Pieces: the poetics of becoming disrupted in a long river poem

Mandy Bloomfield (University of Plymouth) "From the Open Sea": Muriel Rukeyser's ecopoetics of the shoreline

Ben Smith (University of Exeter) Ghost Nets and Phantom Islands: Mapping the Anthropocene

3.00pm: Coffee (Room TBC)

3.15pm: Parallel Sessions 3

3.1 Speculative Nature Writing: Feeling for the Future

Time: Wednesday 30 August 2023, 3.15pm – 4.45pm

Chair: Jos Smith

Room: Lecture Theatre 1

Jos Smith (University of East Anglia) Speculative Form: Affect, Anticipation

Hetty Saunders (University of London) Speculative Nature Writing: Editing the

Anthology

Richard Kerridge (Bath Spa University) Truelove's Tiger: Nature Writing Deranged

3.2 Energy Transitions in Long Modernity

Time: Wednesday 30 August 2023, 3.15pm – 4.45pm

Chair: Greg Lynall

Room: Lecture Theatre 3

Tiffany Werth (University of California-Davis) Fuelling Space Travel Before Fossil Fuels

Liam Lewis (University of Liverpool) Bio-Acoustic Energy in Medieval Bestiary and Song

Todd Borlik (University of Huddersfield) Monstrous Energy in Forbidden Planet

3.3 Won't Somebody Think of the Children

Time: Wednesday 30 August 2023, 3.15pm – 4.45pm

Chair: Demi Wilton

Room: Flex 2

Jane Ekstam (Østfold University College, Halden, Norway) The climate crisis: A complex, all-ecompassing and fast-moving phenomenon. How stories can help us to understand and act

Sara Shahwan (Goldsmiths, University of London) Becoming-with the 'Breeze': The Flow between Self and Space in the Imagination of Migrant Young People

Helen Moore (University of Gloucestershire) and **Rowan Middleton** (University of Gloucestershire) ECOPOETIKON: Global ecopoetries as transition towards regenerative cultures

3.4 Displaced Futures

Time: Wednesday 30 August 2023, 3.15pm – 4.45pm

Chair: Christie Oliver-Hobley

Room: Flex 1

Ray Davenport (Plymouth University) Climate Trauma: Reclaiming Equanimity in James Bradley's *Clade* and Sequoia Nagamatsu's *How High we go in the Dark*

Demi Wilton (Loughborough University) Environmental Displacement and Anthropocenic Futures in Contemporary Chinese Fiction

Karl Kristian Swane Bambini (Østfold University College) Norwegian Futurisms: Posthumanism and the Norwegian Nordic Model in Tor Åge Bringsværd's *Du og Jeg, Alfred* and *Alfred 2.0*

3.5 Eco-Medievalisms II: Avian Landscapes, Languages, and Travels

Time: Wednesday 30 August, 3.15pm – 4.45pm

Chair: Francesca Brooks

Room: Teaching Room 6

Becca Drake (The University of York) The Avian Journeys and Environments of ‘Örvar-Odds saga’

Jessie Summerhayes (The University of York) Occupying Bird-Space in Anglo-Saxon Literature

Shona Turner (The University of York) Cuthbert’s Interactions with Birds in the ‘Vitae’

3.6 Feeling Scared Yet?: Gothic and Horror Ecologies

Time: Wednesday 30 August 2023, 3.15pm – 4.45pm

Chair: John Miller

Room: Lecture Theatre 2

David Ingram (Independent scholar) Folk horror as eco-horror: energy transition and taboo in ‘The Feast (Gwledd)’ (2021)

Madeleine Sinclair (University of Warwick) “The city’s great garbage can”: Slow Violence and Lovecraftian Horror in Mariana Enríquez’s “Under The Black Water”

Samantha Walton (Bath Spa University) EcoGothic Atmospherics: On air, terror, and gothic ecopoetics

3.7 Soil and Stone

Time: Wednesday 30 August 2023, 3.15pm – 4.45pm

Chair: Jude Piesse

Room: Teaching Room 5

Jim Scown (Cardiff University) Unstable Views of Nature: Beyond the Whole in Humboldt’s Romantic Ecology

Chris Pak (Swansea University) Speculating About Agricultural Catastrophe in A.G. Street’s *Already Walks Tomorrow* (1938)

Anne Elvey (Monash University and University of Divinity) Ancestries of stone: poetic inquiries

3.8 Ambulatory Environmentalisms

Time: Wednesday 30 August 2023, 3.15pm – 4.45pm

Chair: Anna Burton

Room: Teaching Room 4

Nikolemma Polyxeni Dimitriou (The University of Sheffield) Walking in the Dark as a Form of Transition in Nan Shepherd's *The Living Mountain: A Celebration of the Cairngorm Mountains of Scotland* (written 1940, first published 1977)

Rachel Dowse (Independent Scholar) Digital Transitions: How video games recreate the nature walk

Kat Waters (University of Leeds) Radical Heritage and Environmental Protest in Nick Hayes' *The Book of Trespass*

4.45pm: Break

5.00pm: ASLE-UKI Biennial General Meeting (Lecture Theatre 2)

All members of ASLE-UKI are encouraged to take part in the BGM.

BGM Zoom Link: <https://liverpool-ac-uk.zoom.us/j/91948020137?pwd=QjJUY2tsaEZ5blpRaCttR3ZqWFlxUT09>

Meeting ID: 919 4802 0137

Passcode: C#8yS.fb

6.00pm: Wine Reception (Upstairs Social Space)

Drinks kindly sponsored by Liverpool University Press in celebration of the launch of their new [Literature and Environment book series](#). Reception includes the announcement of the winners of the *ASLE-UKI Book Prize*

7.00pm: Poetry Reading (Lecture Theatre 2)

A medley of readings of poetry on environmental themes from ASLE-UKI members. Free and open to all. Bring your glass of wine in from the reception!

Programme: Thursday 31 August 2023

8.30am: Registration and Refreshments

9.00am: Parallel Sessions 4

4.1 Knock on Wood: Arboreal Explorations

Time: Thursday 31 August 2023, 9.00am – 10.45am

Chair: Cathy Turner

Room: Lecture Theatre 1

Anna Burton (University of Derby) Planting for “posterity”: Wordsworthian Tree Planting in the English Lake District

Ilka Tampke (La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia) Written by the forest

Roberta Sala (University of Turin) Semiotic Transitions through the Forest-Border. An Ecocritical Analysis of “Kollektivnye Dejstvija”’s Early Actions

Amal Al-Rowisan (University of Birmingham) A Tree Telling of Orpheus’: A Narrative of Transition and Evolving Consciousness

4.2 Questions of Travel

Time: Thursday 31 August, 9.00am – 10.45am

Chair: Julia Ditter

Room: Teaching Room 4

Lauren Cullen (University of Oxford) Wilkie Collins’s Extraterritorial Plots: Heart and Science and “the wilds of Canada”

Laura Albertini (University of St Andrews) Narrating the River Po – Discussing Transitions in Personification of Water

Leah Miller (Iowa State University) Unsettled Settlers: Uncanny Travel of Home-Sick Westerners via *Midsommar* and *Fauna*

Ava Siena Cohen (Trinity College Dublin) Anti-Ocularcentric travel: the importance plausibility over visibility in Ariosto’s *Orlando furioso* (1516/32) and Calvino’s *Le città invisibili* (1972)

4.3 Apocalypse When

Time: Thursday 31 August 2023, 9.00am – 10.45am

Chair: Richard Kerridge

Room: Flex 2

Edith Hall (University of Durham) The Homeric Iliad as poem of Crisis and Transition

Charlotte Lancaster (Bath Spa University) The Biblical Flood Myth Revisited:

Representations of Flood and Deluge in Climate Fiction

Jane Hibbert-Nicolov (Birkbeck College, University of London) The Lost Village: Yordan

Radichkov's *Memories of Horses* and the destruction of Kalimanitsa village in the

building of the Ogosta Reservoir

Adrian Tate (Independent Scholar) and **Terry Gifford** (Bath Spa University) Transitions:

A Critical and Creative Response to D. H. Lawrence's Apocalypse

4.4 Speculative Friction

Time: Thursday 31 August 2023, 9.00am – 10.45am

Chair: Julia Hoydis

Room: Lecture Theatre 3

Denise Baden (University of Southampton) Thrutopia: a fictional roadmap to a sustainable society

Adam Maric-Cleaver (University of East Anglia) From a hi-fi to a lo-fi ecology: noise, mediation, and environmental collapse in John Christopher's *The Death of Grass* and Anna Kavan's *Ice*

Oliver Case (University of Worcester) Imagining the Future in Virginia Woolf's 'Between the Acts' and Vita Sackville-West's 'Grand Canyon'

Kennedy Dragt (Université catholique de Louvain) An Inquiry Into the Strangeness of Things: Indigenous Speculative Fiction, Humour, and Faith in Louise Eldrich's *The Future Home of the Living God*

4.5 Green & Blue Transitions I: Thinking Back with the Ocean & Unlearning Marine Science Epistemes (Roundtable)

Time: Thursday 31 August 2023, 9.00am – 10.45am

Chair: Alison Glassie

Room: Lecture Theatre 2

Participants:

Susanne Ferwerda (Utrecht University)
Rhys Madden (London School of Economics)
Meghan Judge (Stellenbosch University)

4.6 On Mermaids and Metamorphosis: Underwater Women in Anthropocene Writing

Time: Thursday 31 August 2023, 9.00am – 10.45am

Chair: Mandy Bloomfield

Room: Flex 1

Lisa Billard (Independent Scholar) Welsh Mermaids and Tidal Ecolinguistics: a Poetic Enquiry

Melanie Ebdon (Staffordshire University) Ecomagical Transformations in *Our Wives Under the Sea* (J. Armfield) and *The Mermaid of Black Conch* (M. Roffey)

Philippa Holloway (Staffordshire University) 'You Know Where You Are With Water': Short fiction

Athira Unni (Leeds Beckett University) Transitions and Oceanic Posthumanism in *The Mermaid of Black Conch* (2020)

4.7 Welsh Fictions: Extraction, Energy, and Environmental Justice

Time: Thursday 31 August 2023, 9.00am – 10.45am

Chair: Jamie Harris

Room: Teaching Room 6

Elizabeth Edwards (Centre of Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, University of Wales Trinity St David) Racial and Environmental Justice: Ann Julia Hatton's Gonzalo de Baldiva (1817)

Aidan Byrne (Wolverhampton University) History, Memory and Injustice: contemporary fiction about Tryweryn

Andy Webb (Bangor University) Welsh Petrofictions

4.8 'Verse with wings of skill': Examining Transitions Between Literary and Practical Texts in the Early Modern Period

Time: Thursday 31 August 2023, 9.00am – 10.45am

Chair: Jemima Matthews

Room: Teaching Room 5

Edward Stein (University of Cambridge) ‘Turning and returning’: Adapting Genre and Evolving Mentalities in John Taylor’s *Verses on the Mine at Culross* (1618)

Emily Naish (The University of Sheffield) Transforming fenlands into poetry in Michael Drayton’s *Poly-Olbion*

Todd Borlik (University of Huddersfield) Shakespeare and Snake Handlers

Chloe Fairbanks (University of Oxford) ‘Experience by view, and due observation’: perambulation and embodied knowledge in *Henry IV* and *King Lear*

10.45am: Break

11.00am: Plenary 2: Nandini Das

Time: Thursday 31 September, 11.00am – 12.30pm

Chair: Rosamund Paice

Room: Lecture Theatre 2

12.30pm: Lunch

1.30pm: Excursions or free time

Excursions will leave at 1.30pm sharp from the main entrance to 502 Teaching Hub apart from the Burton Mere bird trip which will leave at 1pm. All the excursions are outside so you are reminded to dress appropriately!

If you are attending Hidden Environmental Histories of Merseyside you are encouraged to bring headphones and download this [Spotify playlist](#). (if you unable to do so don’t worry: it won’t impact on your experience of the tour in any significant way). There are also some text and images here that we’ll be looking at on the walk (no need to look at this in advance).

6.30pm: Conference Dinner and Drinks at LEAF on Bold Street

Programme: Friday 1 September 2023

8.30am: Registration and Refreshments

9.00am: Parallel Sessions 5

5.1 Gardeners Whirled

Time: Friday 1 September 2023, 9.00am – 10.45am

Chair: Daniel Abdalla

Room: Teaching Room 4

Jude Piesse (Liverpool John Moores University) Darwin's ecological vision and the garden at The Mount

Alice Burns (University of Liverpool) The Transformation of Beatrix Potter: Author, Landowner, Conservationist

Benjamin Ong (University of St Andrews) From Kew to Kiew: Habits and habitats in transition

Andrea Raso (Roma Tre University, Rome, Italy) Com-posting New Ecological Memory: Derek Jarman's Modern Nature as a Sympoietic Transition towards Death

5.2 Ecopoetic Energies

Time: Friday 1 September 2023, 9.00am – 10.45am

Chair: Harriet Tarlo

Room: Flex 1

Sarah Daw (Cardiff University) Quantum Physics and Concrete Ecopoetics: Eric Mottram and Allen Fisher

Martin Schauss (University of Edinburgh) Transitioning Ecopoetic Energies

Fred Carter (The University of Glasgow) Forms of Exhaustion: Poetry, Entropy, & Kinetic Aesthetics

Marc Charron (University of Ottawa) Recycling Translations as an Eco-Responsible Creative Practice

5.3 Transitional Aesthetics

Time: Friday 1 September 2023, 9.00am – 10.45am

Chair: Enaie Maire Azambuja

Room: Flex 2

Helen Tookey (Liverpool John Moores University) Thinking with the Swerve: Carola Luther's Poetics of Engagement

Matthew Lear (The University of Edinburgh) Rewriting as Transition: Thick Language and the Ecological Stuplime in Juliana Spahr's *Well There Then Now* (2011)

Sreya Chatterjee (University of Leeds) An Ocean of Stories: Tentacular Thinking in Amruta Patil's *Adi Parva*

Aedín Ní Loingsigh (University of Stirling) Hedged in? Branching out? The hedge as symbol of transition in Jean-Loup Trassard's *L'Homme des haies* [*The Hedges Man*]

5.4 Communicating and Co-Creating Transitions

Time: Friday 1 September 2023, 9.00am – 10.45am

Chair: Jasmine Kirkbride

Room: Teaching Room 5

Hannah Little (The University of Liverpool) The Cultural Evolution of Climate Science Stories

David Shackleton (Cardiff University) Inspiring Transitions: Afrofuturist Counter-Moods and Environmental Activism

Sophia Brown (Freie Universität Berlin) Literary prize culture, ecofiction and environmental displacement: A case study of Jesmyn Ward's *Salvage the Bones*

5.5. 'Verse with wings of skill': Examining Transitions Between Literary and Practical Texts in the Early Modern Period (Moved to Thursday Morning)

5.6 Ecologies of Reparation and Maintenance (Roundtable — Cancelled!)

5.7 Green & Blue Transitions II: Thinking Forward with the Ocean for more Sustainable Futures

Time: Friday 1 September 2023, 9:00am – 10.45am

Chairs: Giulia Champion and Alison Glassie

Room: Lecture Theatre 2

Participants:

Yi Fong Loh (University of Minnesota-Twin Cities)

JR Carpenter (University of Southampton)

Anna Selby (Manchester Metropolitan University)

Julia Jung (German Marine Research Alliance)

5.8 (Un)Just Transitions: Modelling Intergenerational Climate Futures in Recent Anglophone Fiction and Non-Fiction

Time: Friday 1 September 2023, 9:00am – 10.45am

Chairs: Adeline Johns-Putra

Room: Lecture Theatre 3

David Higgins (University of Leeds) Procreation, Modelling, and Uncertainty in the Climate Essay

Julia Hoydis (University of Klagenfurt) Resilience, Routines, and the Figure of the Child to Come in Realist Disaster Novels

Roman Bartosch (University of Cologne) Teaching the Future

Imperfect: Intergenerational (In)Justice and Future-Making in the Literature Classroom

10.45am: Break

11.00am: Parallel Sessions 6

6.1 Coastal Zones and Littoral Literatures

Time: Friday 1 September 2023, 11.00am – 12.30pm

Chair: Carolin Böttcher

Room: Teaching Room 6

Jayd Green (University of Suffolk) Coastal pastoral: Exploring retreat and return in coastal towns through creative writing

Christian Schmitt-Kilb (University of Rostock, Germany) Genre and the Anthropocene: Focusing the Coast in Recent Literary Texts

Eleanor Rees (Liverpool Hope University) Stone to Sand: A Posthuman Lyric 'I'?

6.2 Temporalities of Transition

Time: Friday 1 September 2023, 11.00am – 12.30pm

Chair: Sam Walton

Room: Teaching Room 4

Adeline Johns-Putra (Monash University Malaysia) Cultural Histories of Climate: The View from China

Kathrin Bartha-Mitchell (Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany) Transitioning to Intergenerational Justice: Reimagining Generational Crises through Transcultural Anglophone Fiction

Berna Köseoğlu (Kocaeli University, Kocaeli, Turkey) The Transition from the Agricultural to the Industrial System in J.G. Ballard's *The Drought: A Novel*: Ecological Destruction, Water Crisis and Environmental Disaster

6.3 Metamorphoses and the More-Than-Human

Time: Friday 1 September 2023, 11.00am – 12.30pm

Chair: Jill Rudd

Room: Teaching Room 5

Madeleine Rose (University of Oxford) 'You can hear the whole world whispering': Transitions Between Human and Non-human Language in Charlotte Mew's Dramatic Monologues

Alison Sharrock (The University of Manchester) Hunter and hunted: metamorphic relations

Jasmine Walker (The University of York) Transecology in Emmanuelle Pagano's *Les Adolescents Troglodytes*

6.4 Migration and Diaspora

Time: Friday 1 September 2023, 11.00am – 12.30pm

Chair: Vera Fibisan

Room: Lecture Theatre 2

Stanislav Kolář (University of Ostrava, Czech Republic) Searching for the Pastoral in Anti-pastoral Environments in Jewish American Fiction

Mònica Tomàs (Rutgers University) Animal transformations and forced assimilation in Horacio Quiroga's "Juan Darién" and Karen Russell's "St. Lucy's Home for Girls Raised by Wolves"

Annie Webster (University of Edinburgh) Shadow Play and Migrant Justice at COP26: Tracing the Literary History of Little Amal Through Syria's *khayāl al-ẓill* (shadow theatre)

6.5 Infrastructures for Transition

Time: Friday 1 September 2023, 11.00am – 12.30pm

Chair: Philip Dickinson

Room: Lecture Theatre 1

Xiaoxiao Ma (University of Leeds) ‘Stately roads / Easy and bold’: Transport and Transition in Wordsworth’s *The Excursion*

Anna-Tina Jedele (Tampere University, Finland) Promising Infrastructures? Imagining the Transition to Clean Energy in Ben Smith’s dystopia *Doggerland*

Madonna Kalousian (The University of Cambridge) The Cairene Ecocide: Carers, Carriers, and the Nature of Events

6.6 Re-thinking Crisis

Time: Friday 1 September 2023, 11.00am – 12.30pm

Chair: Axel Goodbody

Room: Flex 1

Matthew Griffiths (Independent Scholar) ‘No more returning’: Djuna Barnes’ interwar p/Pastoral as stalled transition

Tanya Gautam (The European University for Well-Being, Central Office, Cologne, Germany) Lyric Vulnerability and Multispecies Kinship in Contemporary Ecopoetry

Hannes Bergthaller (National Taiwan Normal University) Falling into the Anthropocene: Taiwan’s Great Acceleration, According to Huang Chun-ming

6.7 Estranged Earth: Terraforming Beyond the Human

Time: Friday 1 September 2023, 11.00am – 12.30pm

Chair: Chris Pak

Room: Flex 2

Peter Sands (University of York) Between Hopepunk and Misanthropy: Species Revival, Terraforming and Queer Planetary Futures

Samantha Hind (The University of Sheffield) Wilderness States: Speculative Conservation Zones and Rewilding in Diane Cooke’s *The New Wilderness* (2020)

Christie Oliver-Hobley (Independent Scholar) Terra Beneath the Waves: The Earth-sculpting Aliens of John Wyndham’s *The Kraken Wakes* (1953)

6.8 Blue Humanities in Transition

Time: Friday 1 September 2023, 11.00am – 12.30pm

Chair: Rebecca Macklin

Room: Lecture Theatre 3

Hannah Boast (University of Edinburgh) Blue Humanities in Japan

Susanne Ferwerda (Utrecht University) Underwater and Outer Space: Blue Humanities in the Pacific

Ashley Cahillane (Galway/UCD) Transnational thinking with hydrofictions: keeping us grounded

12.30pm: Lunch

1.30pm: Plenary 3:

Brychan Carey “An Unnatural Trade: The Ecopoetics of Antislavery” (Lecture Theatre 2)

Chair: **Paul Baines**

This will be a condensed version of the final chapter of my forthcoming book *The Unnatural Trade* which shows how abolitionists made use of natural history writing as evidence for the antislavery cause. This paper will concentrate on three poets, the Scot James Grainger and the Liverpool poets William Roscoe and Edward Rushton. It will show how they used the three Virgilian poetic forms – georgic, epic, and eclogue – to construct an argument that the slave trade was not ‘merely’ cruel and inhuman, but unnatural as well, disturbing the natural balance in Africa and the Caribbean.

3.00pm: Closing Remarks and Raffle: Samantha Walton (incoming ASLE-UKI President) and Conference organisers (Lecture Theatre 2)

4.00 pm: Conference ends

Abstracts of Papers

These are the abstracts of individually submitted papers. They are presented in alphabetical order by surname. Abstracts of panels and online papers are given in the following sections.

Amal Al Rowisan (University of Birmingham)

Denise Levertov's 'A Tree Telling of Orpheus': A Narrative of Transition and Evolving Consciousness

Panel 4.1, Thursday 31 August, 9.00am – 10.45am, Lecture Theatre 1

This paper examines the ecological narrative of awareness, revolution, and unity in Denise Levertov's poem 'A Tree Telling of Orpheus' from *Relearning the Alphabets*. The poem is powerful in narrating the trees' painful gradual transition from observing to emerging against environmental destiny. The poem was written during the years of change and upheaval of the Vietnam War and Levertov's political activism. Levertov asserts the liveliness and vitality of trees by means of figurations through the trees' awakening consciousness inspired by Orpheus' song. The tree thus possesses human abilities to think, move, and inspire as emphasized by Material Ecocriticism. Thus, the poem embodies both Levertov's perception of environmental degradation and her recognition of nonhuman agency. Through the collective revolution of the trees, the poem alludes to Levertov's political and aesthetic revolution that motivates others to respond by a parallel act of awakening.

Besides this political consciousness and assertion of nonhuman agency, this paper examines how the transition in the poem aims for ecological unity and is manifested through poetic devices. The trees move between binary oppositions like death and life, stillness and trembling, I and they, up and down, roots and buds, and dryness and water. The transition between these extremes indicates an attempt to blur them and propose unity in the recognition of the consciousness of the tree. Levertov's employment of figuration like anthropomorphism and dendromorphism helps to achieve imaginative unity against the factual reality of division. Furthermore, various sensory images describe the stages of the transition and the affective manifestation. However, at the end of the poem, this imaginative transition is interrupted by Orpheus' absence in which trees start to retain past agonies. The return to stillness asserts that ecological crisis can never be solved through personal efforts or artistic inspiration but necessitates a collective cultural and ethical reconstruction.

Laura Albertini (University of St Andrews)

Narrating the River Po – Discussing Transitions in Personification of Water

Panel 4.2, Thursday 31 August, 9.00am – 10.45am, Teaching Room 4

With its 652 kilometers, the River Po is the longest Italian river. From its source on Mount Monviso in Piedmont, to its mouth in the Adriatic Sea, the river traverses four Italian regions. The Po's basin constitutes the major geographical feature in Northern Italy, the River Po Valley, or Pianura Padana. Despite the geographical, economic, and demographic local and national importance of the area, the River Po has long been characterised as a liminal or regional space within the national imaginary. Contrasting the scarce geopolitical relevance of this waterway, the river appears in numerous works within the Italian cultural panorama, especially from the second half of the twentieth century. A recurring strategy of representation of this waterscape is personification. Considering theoretical discussions on representation of non-human entities and agency, my paper offers a comparative analysis of a number of Italian contemporary texts – such as those by Giovannino Guareschi, Gianni Brera, Guido Ceronetti, and Paolo Rumiz – to investigate changes in the literary imaginary connected to the River Po. A chronological analysis of these texts demonstrates a transition in the interpretation of the River's agency, from a strong antagonistic force to a pre-secular entity, whose agency is negated by human actions. At the same time, the authorial use of personification as a rhetorical strategy perpetuates gendered representations of water and the waterscape, imposing binary and essentialistic distinctions to non-human entities.

-Tim Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays in Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill* (New York: Routledge, 2000)

-Bruno Latour, 'Agency and the Time of the Anthropocene', *New Literary History*, 45:1 (2014), 1-18.

-Davide Papotti, 'La navigazione fluviale nella fonte letteraria: note geografiche su due resoconti narrativi di discesa del fiume Po', *Semestrale di Studi e Ricerche di Geografia*, 1 (2019), 61-74

-Veronica Strang, *The Meaning of Water* (Oxford: Berg, 2004)

Veronika Arutyunyan (University of Hamburg)

Transformations of Lyric Voice in Contemporary Ecopoetry

Panel 2.2, Wednesday 30 August, 1.30pm – 3.00pm, Teaching Room 4

In the work of Rebecca Dunham, Craig Santos Perez, and Allison Cobb poetic voice figures as temporally and spatially situated and determined by racial, gender, and class conditions. Echoing the tenets of material ecocriticism, they portray the unstable boundary between human and non-human subjects, but their speaker does not

dissolve in a net of relations. Although their ecopoetics enacts a decentering of the human, it resists “flat” ontologies and perspectives of dehierarchized co-existence that material ecocriticism favors, highlighting instead material interdependencies between environmental conditions and people’s everyday lives in the Anthropocene. Their highly personal voice conveys the tensions embedded in the universalist implications of the Anthropocene, as the poetic persona acquires a variety of differing positions from which to perceive the Anthropocene. This is achieved through the emplacement of voice in cultural, historical, economic, and political context that foregrounds the poetic persona’s positionality to their environment and enables self-recognition that extends to the reader. This personal lyric speaker, aware of their own role in shaping the environment, does not erase but manifests the difference between the human and the non-human and adequately portrays humanity’s ambivalent position—both of having immense power and a complete lack of control. In Perez’ chants that instruct the reader to speak out loud against environmental injustice voice becomes a tool of defiance. In Dunham’s documentary lyrics the voice assumes different personas—these multiple perspectives render the inequalities inherent in the Anthropocene discourse. Cobb’s lyric address ties voice to a sensual experience of a gendered body, saturated with “streams of chemicals”. In this paper, I argue that personal voice in these poets’ work overcomes the pitfalls of Anthropocene discourse as it remains attuned to its complexities. This signals a transition in lyric poetry from a detached personal voice to a personal voice that is enmeshed in environmental relations.

Enaie Maire Azambuja (School of Advanced Study, University of London)

Zen-inflected transitions in E. E. Cummings’ ecopoetic imagination

Panel 2.6, Wednesday 30 August, 1.30pm – 3.00pm, Flex 2

E. E. Cummings is widely recognised for his use of a high level of experimentation in poems that emphasise materiality, particularly that of language. However, the relationship between this experimentation and the openness of his poetics to the realisation of a markedly spiritual experience has been little acknowledged. In *E. E. Cummings: Poetry and Ecology*, Etienne Terblanche suggests that Cummings’ poetics involves a ‘religious imagination’, namely ‘an imagination inclined to wholeness and an imaginative poetic ability to render avenues back to that wholeness’. This paper argues that such a path toward wholeness was paved by the impact of Zen and Taoism on Cummings’ poetics. It analyses the underexplored affinities between East Asian spirituality and his poetics of environmental resonance. His interest in East Asian thought and aesthetics flourished in the 1930s and 1940s, coinciding with the peak of his poetic experimentation, characterised by elements such as iconicity; non-linearity and open-endedness; active use of blank space; typographic, syntactic, and semantic deviations; and a primary focus on non-human themes. Such aesthetic transitions

engender heightened states of awareness since they demonstrate that his poetics rejects traditional uses of language and decentres the human self in favour of poetic expressions of planetary entanglement. Indeed, his contact with Zen and Taoism foregrounds his development of a cosmological and materially-grounded poetic imagination that actualises the interpenetration of human and more-than-human agencies and semiosis. Such an integrative poetics anticipates what Jane Bennett calls the agentic assemblages that exist among diverse and dynamic material beings and forces. By developing heterogeneous agentic assemblages, Cummings' cosmological vision of the poetic imagination enables processes of becoming that transform the products of the human self into a universal metamorphic effort involving all beings. These processes, I suggest, help reframe and expand current definitions of ecopoetics into what I define as cosmopoetics.

Denise Baden (University of Southampton)

Thrutopia: a fictional roadmap to a sustainable society

Panel 4.4, Thursday 31 August, 9.00am – 10.45am, Lecture Theatre 3

The impact of arts, culture and literature in the transition towards a more sustainable society can be subliminal yet powerful. Stories can shape values, trigger reflection, enable creative visioning of alternative possibilities, build democratic dialogues and challenge the power dynamics of vested interests.

Stories focussed on transitions to a new society set in the future are typically dystopian, showing us what terrible consequences will result if we don't act now. In this paper I will present my research showing how solution-focussed narratives in news, education and fiction are a more effective means to encourage pro-social behaviour change than fear-based narratives. I will also draw upon psychological theories showing how eliciting fear is more likely to result in self-protective behaviours than the desired sustainable behaviours.

This paper will discuss the concept of 'Thrutopia', a term presented by Rupert Reid to encompass the idea of stories that present positive visions of what a sustainable society might look like and how we can get there. An alternative term, analogous to science fiction, is 'social-science fiction'. Thus just as science fiction explores the possible impacts of new technologies on society, for better or worse, social science fiction allows writers to explore the more systemic socio-political, legal and economic alternatives that can steer us towards more sustainable policies and practices. These may include citizens assemblies that allow more long-term decision making; switching from the GDP as a measure of success to a wellbeing index, or personal carbon allowances to harness innovation production and consumption towards low-carbon products and activities.

In this paper I will discuss some current initiatives to encourage such writing in both the literary and film/TV space. These include the Green Stories Project, the Thrutopian Council, and Climate Spring.

Kathrin Bartha-Mitchell (Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany)

Transitioning to Intergenerational Justice: Reimagining Generational Crises through Transcultural Anglophone Fiction

Panel 6.2, Friday 1 September, 11.00am – 12.30pm, Teaching Room 4

‘Intergenerational Justice’ has become one of the leitmotifs of the 21st century and today mostly refers to the rights of future generations for a healthy environment and a stable social order. While justice between generations has emerged as a central need of our climate changing world, the academic field of Intergenerational Justice has largely been theorised in the social sciences and philosophy and evinces a tendency towards theoretical abstraction and eurocentrism. My talk will give an insight into my postdoctoral project, in which I explore an aspect of generational justice that has so far been neglected: its cultural dimension.

Starting with narratives of (post-) World Wars, spanning the 20th century, and reaching up to the present day and into the imagined future, my project aims to compare generational crises across time and place. Reading transcultural fiction from the Caribbean, Europe, Asia, Africa, Australasia and North America, I seek to show that the current environmental calamity throws a different light on previous generational crises, and vice versa. To exemplify this, I zoom in on two texts: Kazuo Ishiguro’s *An Artist of the Floating World* (1986) and Alexis Pauline Gumbs’ *Undrowned* (2020). While Ishiguro dramatises the aftermath of World War II Japan, showing uneasy relations between generations within a family, Gumbs conception of generations is broader, encompassing marine mammals, ancestors, and the yet-to-come. Comparing these two texts, I explore how they depict responsibility across different time-scales, including a responsibility both towards the future and the past. The broad societal aim here is to deepen and to complicate, as well as to strengthen the increasingly ubiquitous planetary significance of generational justice. Put differently, transitioning to intergenerational thought and practice is becoming increasingly essential.

Hannes Bergthaller (National Taiwan Normal University)

Falling into the Anthropocene: Taiwan’s Great Acceleration, According to Huang Chun-ming

Panel 6.6, Friday 1 September, 11.00am – 12.30pm, Flex 1

Current consensus in the Earth System Sciences has it that the Anthropocene began during the postwar and early Cold War period. It is during this “Great Acceleration” that patterns of life which had first been established in Europe and North America start to spread to the rest of the globe – a process that has traditionally been described as “modernization” or “Westernization.” One of the places where this process played out in an exemplary fashion is Taiwan. Under the auspices of the Sino-American Commission for Rural Reconstruction, the “Republic of China” turned from a primarily agricultural society into a modern industrialized nation over the course of a few short decades.

As Dipesh Chakrabarty has argued, established critiques of modernity tend to attribute all agency in this process to the “original moderns,” casting the newly modernized societies in Asia and elsewhere as mere imitators or passive victims of a monolithic West. But such an account obscures the degree to which modernization was embraced by many as a path out of indigence and powerlessness. In this talk, I will examine the work of Huang Chun-ming, one of the leading figures of Taiwan’s “nativist” movement in the 1960s and 70s, in order to draw a more nuanced picture of the island’s fall into the Anthropocene. In his short story “The Taste of Apples,” in particular, the exotic apples gifted to the protagonist by the Americans become a potent symbol for the profound ambivalence of modernity as both glamorous temptation and neocolonial imposition, blessing and disaster, salvation and Fall.

Armelle Blin-Rolland (Bangor University)

Mobilities and immobilities in French postcolonial zoos

Panel 1.1, Wednesday 30 August, 11.00am – 12.45pm, Lecture Theatre 2

As sites of ‘imperial ruins’ (Stoler 2013) that exhibit a performative and domesticated ‘wildness’, zoos have transitioned to the postcolonial context by reframing their exotic collections as a project of conversation for the Global South, in this way in fact contributing to the material-discursive re/production of coloniality. As sites of not only mobilities – in the movement of non-human animals and plants – but also, crucially, immobilities, zoos have also sought to invisibilise the mechanisms of carcerality at their core and to refashion the voyeurism of the Western male gaze towards caged animal bodies as educational encounters with the wild. This paper explores contemporary French zoological gardens as well as creative responses to them through a more-than-human politics of space and suggests reading zoos as examples of ‘hyper-sites’ of environmental violence. The notion of ‘hyper-site’ draws in particular on Plumwood’s concept of ‘hyper-separation’ (1993, 2001), which critiques the dissociation of the human from the environment, and Whatmore’s theorisation of ‘hybrid geographies’ that ‘recognize agency as a relational achievement’ in the co-production of space and bodies (2008), notably in topologies of wildlife (2002). ‘Hyper-reading’ zoos involves deploying an ecopolitical critique – at the intersection of transspecies, decolonial,

feminist, queer, crip and anti-capitalist ecologies – of the ideological and material violence upon which these sites are built and that they enact, as well as exploring alternative modes of more-than-human habitability and solidarity. This paper explores this with reference to the material sites Planète Sauvage, la Ménagerie du Jardin des Plantes, Zoo de Vincennes, the refuge La Tanière and the mechanical zoo Les Machines de l’Île; and artistic creation such as Agnès Rosse’s multimedia work *Le zoo vidé*, Nicolas Philibert’s documentary *Nénette*, Jürg Kreienbühl’s graphic work on *La Galerie de Zoologie*, and Kaloud’s street art as part of the Lyon-based Zoo Art Show

Carolyn Böttcher (Friedrich-Schiller-University Jena)

The Circle of a Year: Time and the Environment in Kerri Ní Dochartaigh’s *Cacophony of Bone*

Panel 1.7, Wednesday 30 August, 11.00am – 12.45pm, Flex 2

In *Cacophony of Bone* (2023), Kerri Ní Dochartaigh chronicles the year in her life after moving with her partner to a remote cottage in the heart of Ireland. Describing one of the main purposes of writing this book, she tells the reader, “I am trying to tell you about time” (5). The passage of time becomes crucial to her understanding of herself and of her environment when the world is confronted with the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020. Ní Dochartaigh writes about that first year of the pandemic marked by lockdowns and social distancing, “that time was like no other, all of us thought—but we knew it was exactly like any other, too. The swallows arrived at my new home, found safe sanctuary, and built their nests” (4). In the face of a disrupted world that confined us to our homes, she chronicles the year 2020 in her cottage with her partner. Yet, despite feeling having entered a new age, so to speak, she also tells the reader that despite the disturbances caused by the pandemic, things were actually still the same. The difference lies in rethinking time as cyclical rather than linear. Focusing on seasonal changes and the moon phases, Ní Dochartaigh grounds her understanding of time in her observations of the environment. She recognizes the influence and power of the natural world even though she hesitates to embrace this influence: “I am being reshaped by these fields and I am unsure yet if I am willing” (42). In this paper, I argue that Ní Dochartaigh’s wish to understand the passage of time is deeply rooted in the study of the natural world and how we as humans interact with it. Social disruptions allow us to refocus our attention on the relationship between humans and the natural world.

Hilary Bowling (University of Liverpool)

‘tower or tunnel?’: weird border transgressions and climate change in Jeff VanderMeer’s Southern Reach Trilogy

Panel 2.5, Wednesday 30 August, 1.30pm – 3.00pm, Teaching Room 5

It has become something of a truism that we are living in post-normal times. We are having to rethink our relationship with the environment at a time when the massive scale and complexity of climate change makes this rethinking problematic. Part of the difficulty is that anthropogenic global warming undermines habitual ways of thinking. Binary oppositions such as culture and nature, human and nonhuman are foundational concepts which modernity has long seen as separate. 'New' weird fiction can be read as a response to the requirement to rethink these dualisms. Its incongruent juxtapositions, unpredictable connections and slippery generic mix of science fiction, horror and fantasy blur the dividing lines between concepts usually seen as oppositional. This chimes with the boundary transgressiveness and global weirding of climate change and offers a means of making radical change more thinkable.

This paper explores Jeff VanderMeer's 2014 Southern Reach trilogy in the light of weird fiction's relationship to the contemporary ecological context. Using VanderMeer's use of borders and their transgression as a starting point, I will explore how the trilogy challenges habitual assumptions, classifications and dualisms. This paper will go on to discuss how this undermines attitudes to the environment that underlie and deepen today's climate crisis. Ideas from thinkers such as Bruno Latour and Timothy Morton will support a consideration of how the novel negotiates environmental anxieties, articulating insecurity and horror, but also moving beyond these negative affects to frame the new and alien in terms of their potential as sites of transformation and becoming.

Sophia Brown (Freie Universität Berlin)

Literary prize culture, ecofiction and environmental displacement: A case study of Jesmyn Ward's *Salvage the Bones*

Panel 5.4, Friday 1 September, 9.00am – 10.45am, Lecture Theatre 2

In *The Great Derangement* (2016), Amitav Ghosh contends that the ecological crisis, created and sustained by empire and capitalism, is also 'a crisis of culture'. He bemoans the lack of review coverage for works dealing with the climate crisis, while despairing that not enough writers engage with the topic and its historical and political roots. This paper takes Ghosh's frustration as a springboard for scrutinising the reception and circulation of ecofiction in order to offer new insights into what Timothy Morton (2007) describes as 'the phenomenon of environmentalism in culture', as well as into environmental displacement – a central focus of Ghosh's work. There is now an established body of work examining how texts circulate and accrue literary capital, with the most incisive work incorporating discussions of race, politics and economics (Brouillette 2007; English 2005; Sinykin 2023). Yet there has been scant analysis of the literary marketplace in relation to ecofiction, despite the implications it has for such discussions. My paper focuses primarily on literary prize culture – also a focus of

Ghosh's critique – and its treatment of Jesmyn Ward, who has twice won the National Book Award, as well as received numerous other prizes and nominations. I focus on her second novel, *Salvage the Bones* (2011), demonstrating that the literary prestige it was accorded transformed her career, while also establishing a vocabulary for discussing her work that tends to elide the ecological. I argue that we can respond to Ghosh's criticisms not by demanding more texts that are obviously categorizable as 'climate fiction', but by better recognising works such as *Salvage the Bones* as texts that narrate the entanglement of the ecological crisis with other urgent themes, such as race, class, violence and, in particular, displacement

Alice Burns (University of Liverpool)

The Transformation of Beatrix Potter: Author, Landowner, Conservationist

Panel 5.1, Friday 1 September, 9.00am – 10.45am, Teaching Room 4

This paper focuses on the private writings of Beatrix Heelis (née Potter) to examine the value of the convergence between writing, landownership and conservationism in her remarkable transition from a London-based author to Lake District landowner, sheep-breeder, and conservationist. A household name as the author of *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, Heelis has frequently been the focus of critical attention for her published works, but comparatively little scholarship has yet concentrated solely on her relationship to land. As such, and within the brief parameters of this paper, I will use her extensive letters and business correspondence (currently held by the National Trust, amongst others) to position Heelis as character of transition. One who existed in a constant state of evolution and adaptation as her literary pursuits evolved: from an enjoyable pastime, to an unprecedented commercial success, her writings set her on the path to pioneer one of the most remarkable feats of conservationism seen in modern times.

This paper will trace a rough chronological path to explore Heelis' transformation from 1905 (when she made her first purchase in the Lake District, Hill Top Farm), roughly until 1930 when she purchased the Monk Coniston estate (her largest ever purchase, and the single largest bequest ever received by the National Trust.)

Anna Burton (University of Derby)

Planting for "posterity": Wordsworthian Tree Planting in the English Lake District

Panel 4.1, Thursday 31 August, 9.00am – 10.45am, Lecture Theatre 1

William Wordsworth was a keen planter of trees—from the Dove Cottage garden to the grounds at Rydal Mount, to landed estates, friends' houses, and the local churchyard—he planted a variety of deciduous and evergreen specimens 'under [his] own eye &

principally if not entirely by [his] own hand'. This talk will explore the cultural and environmental significance of Wordsworthian tree planting in the English Lake District. It will consider how and why tree planting was meaningful to the Wordsworth circle as a public, private, and multi-generational endeavour; how William cultivated a reputation as a tree planting authority in the region; and what this living heritage contributes to our existing understanding of both the poet and the environs in which he lived. For generations, tree planting in Cumbria has been undertaken for a variety of purposes. Trees are planted in the edges and hedges of farmland, for agro-forestry and timber, for biodiversity, rewilding, and flood defences, and to retain the national park's 'picturesque' appearance. The pressing nature of the climate crisis has highlighted an urgent need to plant more trees, and respectively, this has meant that tree cover and planting in the Lake District has become a significant environmental and socio-political issue. In building a picture of Wordsworth as a planter and care-taker of trees, this talk will also reflect on how the poet's arboricultural perspectives might correlate with, and add to, changing discourses surrounding tree planting in the region today.

Shasha Cai (University of Leeds)

The Liminality of Fox Spirits in Chinese Zhiguai

Panel 1.1, Wednesday 30 August, 11.00am – 12.45pm, Lecture Theatre 2

This paper will examine the representation of fox spirits in *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*, which belongs to the historical genre called *zhiguai* (Records of Anomalies) in medieval China. The narrative unfolds against the transitional history of China which, in the seventeenth century, was marked by considerable insecurity in social, political, and economic affairs. I will, firstly, suggest that *zhiguai* is the Chinese alternative to Tzvetan Todorov's fantastic. Secondly, inspired by the Todorovian fantastic, I will argue that fox spirits walking in the middle realm in *zhiguai* help to rethink the species boundary in terms of a liminal area, which not only questions conventional definitions of humans and other animals, but also challenges anthropocentric species taxonomies. I will employ the term "liminality" to describe the fox spirits and the in-between states in both genre and species categorization. In the last decade's reclaiming of Victor Turner's unfinished legacy on the concept, Bjørn Thomassen foregrounds liminality as moments or periods of transition during which normal epistemological limits are relaxed, unleashing novelty and imagination. This aligns with Todorov's emphasis on hesitation from readers of the fantastic that is positioned between the uncanny and the marvellous on a continuum. Though Todorov takes a scientific approach to the genre, he also points out that literature functions differently from the natural sciences—it is those unconventional elements that appear not to fit into the system that challenge the overall coherence of that system. Conversely, taking a literary approach to species taxonomy, the unconventional liminal fox spirits in the same unconventional *zhiguai*

also invite us to examine the biased human-animal divide in natural sciences and more broadly all other disciplines.

Fred Carter (University of Glasgow)

Forms of Exhaustion: Poetry, Entropy, & Kinetic Aesthetics

Panel 5.2, Friday 1 September, 9.00am – 10.45am, Flex 1

In the energy humanities, the oil crisis of 1973 appears as a transitional moment for fossil capital. Yet while Marxist attempts to account for energy after growth and the critical modalities of symptomatic reading have each shaped the project of “reading energy into literature,” petrocultural criticism has seen scarce serious engagement with a parallel body of scholarship on poetic form in the long downturn. If, as Brent Ryan Bellamy and Jeff Diamanti insist, “the very fabric of today’s climate crisis is knit from the exhaust of intensive and extensive waves of capital accumulation,” then any attempt to map energy as a terrain of struggle demands a return to this conjuncture of financial instability, petroleum dependency, and anticipated resource exhaustion. Assembling an archive of radical poetry circulating throughout the 1970s, this paper traces the poetics of exhaustion and politics of refusal that emerge in the wake of intersecting crises of petroleum, productivity, and social reproduction.

Against Andrew Duncan’s recent claim that neither the energy shortages nor the prospect of “a future of zero growth” left traces in the cultural forms associated with the British Poetry Revival of the 1970s, I draw on recent work across energy humanities and Marxist literary criticism to take up exhaustion, entropy, friction, and saturation as critical “resource aesthetics” for re-reading energy crisis. In the face of its apparent failure to register such profound economic and energetic shifts, I follow Anahid Nersessian in tracing how this poetry “makes and manages its own epistemic and analytical constraints,” offering instead “a mode of countercognition or alternative processing” which variously “strains against,” struggles with, “and surrenders to the decision to be poetry instead of another kind of practice, specifically one with a systematic and penetrating relationship to crisis.” Put simply, poetry exhausts itself against the cognitive demands of mapping crisis.

Oliver Case (University of Worcester)

Imagining the Future in Virginia Woolf’s ‘Between the Acts’ and Vita Sackville-West’s ‘Grand Canyon’

Panel 4.4, Thursday 31 August, 9.00am – 10.45am, Lecture Theatre 3

My paper argues that twenty-first century visions of the future, in the context of the current global environmental crisis, may be enriched and directed by readings of novels

such as Virginia Woolf's posthumously published *Between the Acts* (1941) and Vita Sackville-West's 1942 novel, *Grand Canyon*. Both novels fixate on the looming future of non-existence which seemed likely during their conception. *Between the Acts* takes place on the brink of the Second World War in a rural village while *Grand Canyon* is an early work of dystopian fiction, set after a war won by Germany. Each text explores the dynamics of community in times of crisis, and both respond to the human violence of warfare by interrogating separations between living and dying in the context of the nonhuman world where death is not the end point of life. The landscapes of each novel are palimpsests, layered both by generations of human actions and slow ecological movements. Burrowing through these stratigraphic worlds, both texts respond to the threat of extinction by turning to what lies beneath the earth's surface in a deep past of prehuman vitality.

The value of these novels for re-evaluations of our thinking in terms of an environmental future is compounded further by consideration of Rosi Braidotti's theories of dying after the posthuman turn. Inspired by Deleuzian notions of becoming-imperceptible, Braidotti's work makes possible new understandings of *Between the Acts* and *Grand Canyon* which subtend the novels' resistance to nihilism, and their affirmative visions of a post-human future. We may thus reconceive the future by returning to the past in terms of both geological and literary history.

Marc Charron (University of Ottawa)

Recycling Translations as an Eco-Responsible Creative Practice

Panel 5.2, Friday 1 September, 9.00am – 10.45am, Flex 1

Although the CFP doesn't make any reference to the practice of translation, I would posit that translations are transitions, whether between and through languages, or between and through space and time. As "passages," both are about "movements across time and change in state or being". And so, if "transecology" is to take a foothold in scholarship, disassemble harmful discourses, and build on equitable counter-discourses, in short rethink and redraw, then eco-translation (cf. Michael Cronin, 2017) and/or eco-translatology (cf. Gengshen Hu, 2020) must be part of the endeavour.

This paper seeks to initiate that discussion by presenting the epistemological framework behind an ambitious literary translation project, that of a French rendering of Tom Comitta's *The Nature Book* (Coffee House Press, 2023), whose preface's first sentence reads: "This novel contains no words of my own". In fact, Comitta states that "[t]hrough a process of collage and constraint, I have gathered nature descriptions from over 300 novels and arrange them into a single book." And adds: "I focused only on English-language novels, because [...] I wanted to work with the original material of the

authors. I saw translations, with their inherent interpretations and reformulations, as introducing a remove from the language I wanted to investigate.”

If *The Nature Book* could be translated in much the same way as any other work, I believe that a more eco-responsible approach is in order. Instead of offering my own French rendering, I proposed to Comitta that I reassemble *The Nature Book* “through a [similar] process of collage and constraint,” using as my base material the French translations of those 300 novels, thereby recycling existing linguistic and cultural artifacts instead of adding my own voice to an already crowded discursive landscape. The idea of the project has been enthusiastically welcomed by Comitta, and the groundwork has started.

Sreya Chatterjee (University of Leeds)

An Ocean of Stories: Tentacular Thinking in Amruta Patil’s *Adi Parva*

Panel 6.4, Wednesday 30 August, 3.15pm – 4.45pm, Teaching Room 6

A Eurocentric narrative framework holds certain assumptions about the centrality of human subjectivity. Non-human consciousnesses are relegated to the periphery, or denied altogether in stories where human beings are represented as the ones with a proprietorial right to plunder. However, contemporary scholarship on ecocriticism, animal studies and environmental humanities has attempted to break away from such anthropocentric knowledge structures. Although these transitions in academia are welcome, they are by no means novel. For centuries, various non-Western cultures have spoken of the coexistence of humans with other life forms. Amruta Patil’s graphic novel *Adi Parva: Churning of the Ocean* (2012), drawing on tales from the Indian epic *Mahabharata*, speaks to this same de-anthropomorphic imagination. It creates a fantastic, mystical universe where human lives are fleeting, decentered, and inextricably tied with animal life forms, with their stories unfolding in a realm beyond their understanding. Going beyond a simplistic, Enlightenment-oriented framework, Patil’s novel questions the axiomatic superiority of human needs and desires over those of other life forms. Although the stories derive from the epic, Patil also questions other taken-for-granted hierarchies: for example, that of written knowledge over oral stories and that of the masculine over the feminine. Drawing on Donna Haraway’s theory of tentacular thinking, I will look into the radical reimagining of sustainable coexistences in *Adi Parva*. I will further show how the novel, which is thoroughly rooted in indigenous myths and legends, simultaneously subverts Eurocentric and Brahminical understanding of knowledge, power and human consciousness.

Ava Siena Cohen (Trinity College Dublin)

Anti-Ocularcentric travel: the importance plausibility over visibility in Ariosto’s *Orlando*

furioso (1516/32) and Calvino's *Le città invisibili* (1972)

Panel 4.2, Thursday 31 August, 9.00am – 10.45am, Teaching Room 4

Ariosto (1474-1533) and Calvino (1923-1995) write texts about imagined travel during transitional periods in their eras. Ariosto writes during the discovery of the New World, where the purpose of travel has transitioned; it is no longer primarily for pilgrimage and people travel to see places. This reliance on visibility or ocularcentrism is a defining feature of the Italian Renaissance, with many of its artistic and scientific artefacts being visual. Calvino, in whose work Ariosto is a strong presence, writes during a time of transition with rapid technological developments, including the invention of disposable items, and the advent of television which created an even more ocularcentric world. However, in *Orlando furioso* (1516/1532) and *Le città invisibili* (1972) respectively, Ariosto and Calvino resist these transitions and present anti-ocularcentric travel narratives; plausibility takes precedence over visibility, and one must believe something for it to exist. This paper discusses Calvino's questioning of whether it matters that Marco Polo's cities are invisible, as long as they hold meaning for those who visit them, creating an effortless transition between fiction and reality. I compare this to Ariosto's blending of an improbable but plausible method of transport, and geographically tangible locations, through the hippogriff which carries Ruggiero across the world. I then explore some of the most distant locations visited in the texts – Ariosto's moon, and Calvino's celestial cities. While unlikely to be visited, these destinations represent Ariosto and Calvino's anxieties about societal transitions. Ariosto uses his moon to criticise Italian Renaissance courts, particularly how they run on bribery while Calvino takes an ecocritical perspective to criticise how city living has become fast-paced and disposable. Both use geocriticism to present anti-ocularcentric travel; if one travels to an impossible destination, one can use it to express anxieties and criticisms of transitions in their known worlds.

Lauren Cullen (University of Oxford)

Wilkie Collins's Extraterritorial Plots: *Heart and Science* and "the wilds of Canada"

Panel 4.2, Thursday 31 August, 9.00am – 10.45am, Teaching Room 4

In an essay from *The Kinship of Nature* (1903), Canadian poet Bliss Carman speculates, "Art, if you care to say so, is all made up of metaphors, – is itself the universal metaphor of the soul. And who shall prove that nature is not a metaphor, too?" Yet Carman's spiritual figuration of the natural world, I suggest, belies the tangible, felt reality of the lands, skies, and seas in late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century North America. In response to Carman's rhetorical question, this paper explores Wilkie Collins's *Heart and Science* (1883) to probe a range of different contexts, including imperialism and travel, which ultimately recasts the Canadian landscape as tangible and dangerously exploitable in a time of social, political, cultural, and economic transition.

For Collins's protagonist, Ovid Vere, Canada becomes a place of recuperation. In contrast, for Mrs. Galilee, Canada is less a place to venture to than one to extract from: "Mrs. Galilee improvised an appropriate little lecture on Canada—on the botany of the Dominion; on the geology of the Dominion; on the number of gallons of water wasted every hour by the falls of Niagara." In the novel, Canada is a distant sanctuary, a white colonial extension of Britain – but, crucially, we never see Canada, as Ovid is "in the deserts," his narrative bracketed until his return to the metropole. This paper reads Collins's inclusion of extraterritorial scenes, as formal technique and narrative interruption, within its cultural moment to parse Canada's contradictory identity as both discursive construction and a live, physical environment. In doing so, it resituates Collins's novel within a larger network – one that reveals a dialectic of resistance and acceleration to human activities, such as tourism and extraction, that compromised "the wilds" – to underline the important role literary forms continue to play in our time.

Gemma Curto (University of Sheffield)

Living at Scamander's Water Edge in David Markson's *Wittgenstein's Mistress*
Panel 1.4, Wednesday 30 August, 11.00am – 12.45pm, Teaching Room 5

The present paper reimagines intertextual references involving Scamander River, which is originally associated with war, in *Wittgenstein's Mistress* (David Markson 1988). I argue they reinvent the Greek canon, transcending the trauma of the Trojan War. Intertextuality in this novel breaks away from a representation of past trauma associated with an individual location. A narrative of inclusion emerges when, in the novel's present, the nourishing potential of multiple bodies of water in which one could connect with nature and find inner peace is explored. Multiplicity through intertextuality is reflected in the protagonist's ruminations, her reflections include multiple voices from the past that are typed for potential future readers.

As a starting point, Markson refers to Homer's Iliad narration of the Trojan War in which Scamander River saw a great deal of conflict and is directly linked to violence, 'Achilles once almost drowned in the Scamander' (Markson 98). While the land is a space of estrangement, the actual river Scamander, other rivers and bodies of water are landmarks that will finally lead Kate, the protagonist, home by the beach and the ocean. Using rivers as reference points when travelling, Kate revisits past locations, like the location of ancient Troy, where 'the name of the river at Hisarlik is the Scamander' (Markson 13). Places to stay, from which she can see a river and drink from it, are chosen. This paper demonstrates that water becomes central in Markson's novel as a space to live and to settle, and a comforting relationship with water is discovered. A narrative of inclusion and multiplicity through intertextuality emerges, as it explores how an individual location, expands into enabling us to experience the nourishing potential of multiple bodies of water where one feels safe.

Ray Davenport (Plymouth University)

Climate Trauma: Reclaiming Equanimity in James Bradley's *Clade* and Sequoia Nagamatsu's *How High we go in the Dark*

Panel 3.4, Wednesday 30 August, 3.15pm – 4.45pm, Flex 1

This century has seen an increase in novels that depict climate change, whether as a central theme or a more peripheral backdrop, and the kind of futures that may occur due to this phenomenon. Apocalyptic texts including Claire Vaye Watkins' *Gold Fame Citrus* (2015), Liz Jensen's *The Rapture* (2009) and Oana Artistide's *Under the Blue* (2021) engage productively with climate trauma through showcasing the traumatising effects of global floods, droughts and pandemics. However, fewer novels depict characters that succeed in reclaiming a sense of equanimity following climate-induced trauma. The comparative lack of such works within the Global North may reflect, and reinforce, theories of socially constructed trauma. Alexander Jeffery, for example, suggests 'trauma will be resolved not only by setting things right in the world, but also by setting things right in the self' (*Trauma: A Social Theory*, 2012, p. 10). Climate trauma, then, fundamentally problematises this view; it is unclear, even if one sets things right 'in the self', how trauma recovery can occur where it has become impossible to 'set things right' in the world. As such, novels that move away from the tendency to depict unresolved climate trauma and portray characters that reclaim a sense of equanimity, such as James Bradley's *Clade* (2015) and Sequoia Nagamatsu's *How High We Go In The Dark* (2022), warrant close examination.

This paper examines how *Clade* and *How High We Go In The Dark* represent, with differing degrees of success, climate trauma recovery as a form of transition. Both texts engage with aspects of climate change that often initiate profound cultural and personal traumas in twenty-first century novels, including forced displacement, extreme weather and global pandemics. Despite this, through their depictions of characters that reclaim equanimity, they retain notes of hopefulness that are vital in our own real-world period of transition.

Sarah Daw (Cardiff University)

Quantum Physics and Concrete Ecopoetics: Eric Mottram and Allen Fisher

Panel 5.2, Friday 1 September, 9.00am -10.45am, Flex 1

This paper explores the influence of mid-twentieth century advances in quantum physics on the development of a 'concrete' ecopoetics within the late twentieth-century British experimental poetry of Eric Mottram and Allen Fisher. I argue that ideas derived from quantum physics, developed in the 1920s and widely popularised in the postwar period, significantly shaped Eric Mottram's theorisation of a concrete (eco)poetics that

radically reimagines the relationship between the human and environment. In Mottram's concrete poetry manifesto, *Towards Design in Poetry* (1977), and in his later poetry, I argue that Mottram debuts a new concrete ecopoetics shaped by new ideas in quantum physics and influenced by the quantum-influenced projective poetics of American avant-garde figures including Charles Olson, Robert Duncan and Muriel Rukeyser. Drawing on archival work exploring Mottram's correspondence, my paper positions Mottram as an influential figure within the transatlantic exchange of new ideas in poetry and science in the postwar period. I then go on to explore the relationship between Mottram's work and that of his fellow British experimental poet Allen Fisher, placing Mottram's work in conversation with Fisher's and reading Fisher's work as a further influential contribution to the development of an experimental British ecopoetics that is responsive to both new and older work in quantum physics. Situating both writers within my wider book project *Poetics of Entanglement: Ecopoetry and the Postwar Avant-Garde*, I argue that the work of Mottram and Fisher represent major contributions to the development of an innovative, original, and largely overlooked, strand of ecological thought emergent within the transatlantic avant-garde during the second half of the twentieth century.

Philip Dickinson (Lancaster University)

Terrestrialising the Novel: Williams, Latour, and *The Swan Book*

Panel 2.5, Wednesday 30 August, 1.30pm – 3.00pm, Teaching Room 5

In a 1983 essay on 'region' and 'class' in the novel, Raymond Williams develops an account of 'enclosed fictions' that fail to interpret the relationship between regional or class setting and the wider structures of capitalism. In our epoch, however, it appears that the vast majority of novels from the history of literature are 'enclosed fictions' from the perspective of climate. Bruno Latour's later work outlined a novel idea of terrestriality as the reality which moderns miss in the process of trying to dominate the earth. The ecological task is to encounter the terrestrial or 'face gaia', but the terrestrial is not land, locality, nation, territory, place. These words signify imaginative appropriations and alienations of the terra, which result from the drive to possession. Instead, the terrestrial is about 'fear and trembling', a radical openness or uncertainty associated with the intensifying agency of matter in the 'metamorphic zone'.

The task is to terrestrialise the novel. My example of a work that attempts to do so is the Waanyi writer and activist Alexis Wright's extraordinary text, *The Swan Book* (2013). What is most challenging about Wright's book is its effort to overturn the very grounding of the novel in setting. It confronts the novel's tendency to create dualistic formal structures by mobilising the Aboriginal ontoepistemology of the Dreaming, opening up a cognitive and terrestrial mapping beyond any given region, territory, people or language: 'How bold to mix the dreamings!'. What is crucial about the Waanyi conception of

country, Wright explains, is that it is an open conceptual system that can create meaning out of new places, histories and climates. The interwoven stories of the novel's various characters — across time, place, species, race — is an expression of the de-territorialising spirit of country for the new climatic regime.

Julia Ditter (University of Konstanz)

Extractive Ecologies and Industrial Tourism in the Nineteenth-Century Periodical Press
Panel 2.3, Wednesday 30 August, 1.30pm – 3.00pm, Lecture Theatre 2

The industrial aesthetic of carbon-powered factories and the natural-cultural subterranean environment of mineral mines provided an increasing fascination and aesthetic experience to travellers and periodical readers in the nineteenth-century. Elizabeth Carolyn Miller's concept of "extraction ecologies" captures the tensions that arise between emergent ecological thought and industrial technologies of extraction in the nineteenth century with respect to the novel (2021). The periodical form highlights these tensions even more: published alongside scientific articles about steam power, ecology, earth history and the geologic and chemical properties of coal and gas, accounts of visits to industrial infrastructures allowed armchair travellers to experience the sublimity of gas works, factories and the subterranean coal mines at home and abroad from the safety and comfort of their middle-class homes.

In the context of touristic visits of mines, factories and other industrial places of labour, social and ecological considerations merge in an industrial aesthetic that disregards the geo-/ecological impact of mining and brushes over the hardship of industrial labour by portraying both as a suitably fascinating and adventurous touristic experience of temporary duration.

In this paper, I will discuss exemplary accounts of this type of industrial travel in periodicals such as *The Leisure Hour* (1852–1905), Chambers's *Edinburgh Journal* (1832–1897) and *All the Year Round* (1859–1895) to examine how they mediate the tensions between extractive labour and ecological relations. I will consider whether accounts of industrial tourism display an awareness of the deep timescales of the earth and the geologic transformations caused by extractive infrastructures, or whether their subterranean ramblings served instead as a purely aesthetic experience. Finally, I will reflect on the degree to which the transition of extractive infrastructures into heritage sites in the twenty-first century can be linked to the nineteenth-century's aesthetic fascination with them.

Rachel Dowse (Independent Scholar)

Digital Transitions: How videogames recreate the nature walk

Panel 3.8, Wednesday 30 August, 3.15pm – 4.45pm, Teaching Room 4

In 2021, the Cairngorms National Park Authority created a scale model of the Cairngorms National Park in the video game *Minecraft*. Initially created as a learning tool for the park's Youth Action Team to model different forms of development in the park, the map is now free to download for anyone to explore the park from their PC or console.

This opens questions about the transitions which occur when a location is translated into the digital space. The *Cairngorms Minecraft map* does not ask anything of the player, other than to explore the world. While many AAA games are famous for their explorable environments, the created landscapes in these large scale, “open world” games are carefully curated to engage the player.

Meanwhile, the availability of free developer tools such as Unity allows people to create their own worlds, and small indie developers are creating their own atmospheric “walking simulator” games, such as those of *Tonguc Bodur*, who uses high level graphics to create short, atmospheric games about walking through natural environments.

However, the small, free game *Tree Trunk Brook* by indie developer The Sheep's Meow forsakes detailed graphics or perfect recreations of real places. Instead, this game inspired by walks taken during the pandemic, attempts using photo collage backgrounds to recreate the feeling of walking a trail, without attempting to perfectly replicate it visually.

This paper will seek to examine the varying ways that games attempt to recreate walking in nature, and what happens to our perception of these places when they make the transition to the digital medium. Focusing on the *Cairngorms Minecraft map*, *Tonguc Bodur's* short games, and *Tree Trunk Brook*, it will compare the different ways these games attempt to make the transition from real life to simulation, and why.

Kennedy Dragt (Université catholique de Louvain)

An Inquiry Into the Strangeness of Things: Indigenous Speculative Fiction, Humour, and Faith in Louise Eldrich's *The Future Home of the Living God*

Panel 4.4, Thursday 31 August, 9.00am – 10.45am, Lecture Theatre 3

In recent years, there has begun to be an increase in the critical attention given to Indigenous Speculative Fiction, from both decolonial and environmental standpoints. Rightly so, for Indigenous fictions, and speculative fictions in particular have long been neglected in a much of ecocriticism. Indeed, as Kyle Whyte has pointed out, many

speculative and climate fictions erase the perspective of Indigenous peoples “who approach climate change having already been through transformations of their societies induced by colonial violence.” Lousie Eldrich’s 2017 novel *The Future Home of the Living God* highlights this tension. Upon returning to her Ojibwe birth-family’s reservation for the first-time post-adoption, Cedar, the novel’s protagonist, has a conversation with her step-father about the ongoing drastic events of the climate crisis: “Indians have been adapting since before 1492 so I guess we’ll keep adapting.” “But the world is going to pieces.” “It is always going to pieces.” “This is different.”

“It is always different. We’ll adapt.” (35)

The community-based resistance of the Indigenous people on-reservation amidst a climate dystopia is a key element of the novel’s hope. This hope is deeply entangled with spiritual and religious practice. Cedar’s first visit to the reservation coincides with a tribal-council meeting concerning the dedication of a shrine to an Indigenous-catholic saint, who appears to community members in the parking lot of the reservation casino. In strange scenes like this one, Eldrich uses humour to braid together multiple forms of spirituality. Indigenous thought about descendants and ancestors comingle with quotes from catholic saints throughout the novel. Thus, in this paper I draw on ideas of humour as resistance (Thomas King) to investigate how Eldrich weaves together multiple spiritual traditions ways that disrupt stereotypes, challenge the conversation about reproductive rights and critically engage with the possible present-futures of climate crisis.

Rosie Dymond (Bangor University)

‘Hon ydyw’r afon’: Transitions in place-time in the later poems of R. Williams Parry
Panel 2.2, Wednesday 30 August, 11.00am – 12.45pm, Teaching Room 4

There is a form of time travel for beginners which involves identifying and paying attention to the prophetic voices of our past. Such voices are often disregarded because their mode of linguistic expression is out of vogue or assumed to be of little relevance to contemporary debate. Others are inaccessible to majority culture because their thought world is expressed through a minority language, albeit one spoken by many thousands in the UK today. This paper will focus on the later work of Welsh poet R. Williams Parry (1884-1956), whose sonorous compositions have served as a staple of eisteddfodic recitation for decades, but have rarely been the subject of academic engagement other than that which regards the poems as a form of cipher, the decoding of which affords access to the minutiae of the poet’s daily life.

Conscious that I have myself only recently acquired fluency in the language (and thus bring to my reading a different set of cultural assumptions from those of first language

Welsh speakers), I will focus on Williams Parry's later sonnets, seeking to demonstrate how the poet's deep awareness of human and non-human interactions, coupled with his breathtaking creativity with the Welsh language soundscape, result in a marked departure from the work of the neo-romantic poets who preceded him. In particular, I aim to show how these sonnets exemplify the conception in Welsh literature that time is not linear but layered in place. I will argue that they key into the reality of our present-day emotional reaction to the environmental crisis and invite on the part of the reader the courageous response of a deep dive into the present.

The presentation will incorporate English adaptations of poems with an opportunity to experience the Welsh language soundscape of the original.

Jane Ekstam (Østfold University College, Halden, Norway)

The climate crisis: A complex, all-ecompassing and fast-moving phenomenon. How stories can help us to understand and act

Panel 3.3, Wednesday 30 August, 3.15pm – 4.45pm, Flex 2

The present 'profoundly turbulent time' requires us 'to build up our wisdom about how we relate to our feelings inside a culture that still values capital over compassion and the well-being of the poor, the "Other", and the not yet born' (Britt Wray, 'Generation Dread', 6).

Amitav Ghosh argues that the novel allows us to 'approach the world in a subjunctive mode', enabling us to imagine possibilities ('The Great Derangement', 128). This can only be done, he argues, if we rediscover our kinship with other beings and present it in the form of 'renewed art and literature' (162). Justice and ethics are the building blocks of this new vision. As Katharine Hayhoe demonstrates, 'we must connect who we are to why we care' ('Saving Us', 19). The story is an excellent medium for raising issues, worries, and problems. It should help us to learn from the past, place us in the present and guide the future (George Monbiot, 'Out of the Wreckage', 2017). We must create new stories – stories which are not based on fear but give hope. They must be 'imagined and well told' (Per Espen Stoknes, 'What We Think About When We Try Not to Think About Global Warming', 2015).

Based on the principles outlined above, I hope to show how my recently published trilogy on the climate crisis, 'Katja's World Game' (2022), illustrates the importance of contact with nature, ethical and sustainable living, and communal action. My characters, university students from six different countries, study the environment. Inside and outside their studies they explore ways in which to live better, happier and healthier lives using stories, dance, and games. In book three, the sustainable solution they have been planning for three years becomes a reality. It is open to all, irrespective of age, gender or background.

Anne Elvey (Monash University and University of Divinity)

Ancestries of stone: poetic inquiries

Panel 3.7, Wednesday 30 August, 3.15pm – 4.45pm, Teaching Room 5

Transition seems too soft a word for colonial invasion which, where I live on unceded Boonwurrung Country in a bayside suburb of Naarm (Melbourne, Australia), continues – as it does across the continent – after multiple changes, traumatic for the people, the land and the waters. In this context, my current work, still in its early stages, inquires into the story of my human settler ancestors and their arrival on stolen lands in the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in the context of a deep time story of stone. Broader than conventional western genealogical research, my approach not only addresses everyday realities of my human ancestors' and the disturbing intersections of poverty and privilege at work in their arrival, but also engages deeper geological threads of ancestry through the trope of stone, its more-than-human longevity and agency. In this paper, I focus on stone and inquire how poets express a kinship with stone and what forms my own poetic inquiries might then take. The paper converses with Paul Celan's 'Confidence', W H Auden's 'In Praise of Limestone', Jesper Svenbro's 'A Critique of Pure Representation' and 'Material for a Geological Theory of Language', and contemporary Australian poets, Renee Pettit Schipp's 'Song for Silence' and Dan Disney's 'Dokdo' and 'peripheral fantasmal', with my own poetic responses, including 'Music and stone' and 'Stone tongue'. A focus on stone as ancestor, and so contemporary kinship with stone, suggests a conversation across continents that challenges extractivism and colonial dominations by sea, pointing to the way languages and bones share their becoming with stone. How might an accommodation to our co-being with stone open spaces for settlers' re-inhabiting the colonial space more humbly as guests, actively engaged in decolonial unsettlements?

Catherine Evans (University of Manchester)

Glass beehives: Making the synthetic "natural" in Early Modern England

Panel 2.6, Wednesday 30 August, 1.30pm – 3.00pm, Flex 2

Glass is an antithetical material: both fluid and solid, strong yet brittle, a synthetic made of the natural elements of sand and ash, "hand made" but never touched directly. The early modern period saw constant new advances in glass manufacturing, with different countries and manufacturers competing against one another to produce clearer, stronger glass, or find new ways of engraving, shaping, colouring and etching glass, closely guarding their trade secrets. All this progress came with environmental consequences. The manufacture of forest glass in England contributed to widespread deforestation as trees were felled to fuel glasshouse furnaces and provide extraordinary

amounts of wood ash used in the production of glass itself. In 1615 a Royal proclamation forbid the use of English timber in glassmaking, with the result that production moved to Ireland and Virginia, spreading this destruction out in to colonised lands.

Lady Mary Rich, the sister of scientist Robert Boyle, includes in her manuscript meditations several writings upon a “glass beehive”: a contraption that allowed curiously minded natural philosophers to perceive the marvellous workings of the bees. However, Rich’s description of the glass beehive showed that they could often be deceptive as “with what great expectation of store of honey did I looke into this fine glase beehive, but when it was opened, contrary to my hopes I found onely a little honey at the [top] and all the rest of the hive fil’d with nothing but dry, blanke cones”. This paper will examine how glass appears in early modern religious literature, exploring how the uncanny impenetrability of this material is mobilised in discussions of purity and natural sin, setting forth a relationship between glass and the human body. The paper explores how the categories of natural and synthetic shape early modern understandings of materiality.

Abiodun Fakemi (Keele University)

EXPLORING JUVENILE PSYCHOTERRATIC AND SOMATERRATIC EXPERIENCE IN CHRISTIE WATSON’S *TINY SUNBIRDS FAR AWAY*

Panel 1.2, Wednesday 30 August, 11.00am – 12.45pm, Lecture Theatre 1

The late nineteenth century and hitherto have seen the production of literary critical and creative works that comment on the state of the ecosystem by writers who are either deniers, sceptics, warners or calamists (according to categories identified by Ian McEwan). This study interrogates the overarching portrayal of the usual socio-economic and political upheaval caused by oil discovery in the Niger Delta. Existing knowledge of petro-fiction from this region provides an overview of the effects of the degradation caused by government forces, oil corporations, militants, and people from the region and other regions of the country who are complicit. It extrapolates this existing data in the Niger Delta literature holistically, challenging the positions held by a denier or sceptic, without necessarily suggesting apocalypse, to illustrate the extent that environmental devastation is causing severe physical and mental problems for children or teenagers. Glenn A. Albrecht’s purview on the negative psychoterratic and somaterratic (psychological and physical illnesses and diseases that come with polluting the natural environment) is deployed in the analysis of Christie Watson’s depiction of the consequences of the ecocidal effects of various anthropogenic activities on juveniles in *Tiny Sunbirds Far Away* (2011). This study concentrates on three characters in the novel, Boneboy, Ezekiel and Blessing, archetypes of other

children in the region who have been victims of the ecological imbalance. For instance, there are accounts of stillbirths witnessed by Blessing as she follows her grandma to attend to pregnant women in labour. Female characters like Grandma and others allude to this problem of stillbirth being caused by pollution in the region.

Keywords: somaterratic, speculative, ecocidal, psychoterratic, biosphere, archetypes

Delphine Gatehouse (King's College London)

A Woodworm Approach

Panel 1.1, Wednesday 30 August, 11.00am -12.45pm, Lecture Theatre 2

A 'woodworm approach' to literary analysis consists, according to the London University Examinations Board as it developed its criteria for good practical criticism in the mid-twentieth century, the painstaking dissection of a text: a critical method akin to boring through a substance, spitting and shitting meaning and matter. That is, a systematic and insentient approach. The LB was, of course, formulating its standards before the effects of treating the environment as insentient was fully known, when the global warming threshold was many years away, not four.

In John Clare's cottage at Helpstone, in the second bedroom of the first floor, seaweed fossils seem to spread across the beams; outside, in the fields that were brutally enclosed during Clare's lifetime, mecoprop is dumped. This paper considers how to read the beams at Helpstone, how to scan those familiar, unwanted dots and the dashes which extend into galleries where the wood has been shaved – long enjambements that stop to silence just in time to make a form, so uncannily like the 'ferns and brakes' through which Clare's badger nosed – in such a way that takes inspiration from Clare's abundant attention to the natural and the minute. The paper also reflects upon the dangers of this approach: as contemporary Irish poet Geraldine Mills suggests, it is easy to anthropomorphise the woodworm's 'tracery of destruction' which 'reads like calligrapher's script' ('This Was No Passover', 2002). Writing at a moment of transition, this paper uses Clare's letters, prose and poetry – alongside the infestations in his bedroom – to feel its way through to a different kind of woodworm approach.

Tanya Gautam (University of Cologne, Germany)

Lyric Vulnerability and Multispecies Kinship in Contemporary Ecopoetry

Panel 6.6, Friday 1 September, 11.00am – 12.30pm, Flex 1

Some recent ecocritical scholarship condemns lyricism as self-concerned and argues that this tradition and its conventions are unable to accommodate the complexities of growing environmental crises and problematize an engagement with the more-than-

human world (Griffiths 2017). In this paper, as in my ongoing doctoral research, I argue against these ecocritical demands of turning away from lyric poetry and instead explore the different ways in which contemporary ecopoetry, especially that in the lyric tradition, is engaging with more-than-human others. Focusing especially on contemporary ecopoetry's engagement with the vulnerabilities and resilience of non-human others, I will be looking at some examples from poets from the UK, Australia and the USA as well as share, if possible, one of my own spoken word poems on this theme.

In one of his poems, Jalal ad-Din Rumi wrote "there is a way of passing away from the personal, a dying that makes one plural" (Barks, 2002). It seems to me that dying to the merely personal is what any kind of sustainable future might depend upon. Therefore, some of the questions that will be explored during this presentation are: what does contemporary ecopoetry tell us about the vulnerabilities and resiliences of our non-human others? What can one learn from these vulnerabilities and resiliences so as to transition towards a pluralistic ecology of the human self in a more-than-human world? And finally a brief reflection on how lyric poetry, as a discipline, is vulnerable and resilient in these times and its importance in driving socio-ecological change and development.

Terry Gifford (Bath Spa University)

Transitions: A Critical and Creative Response to D. H. Lawrence's *Apocalypse*
Panel 4.3, Thursday 31 August, 9.00am – 10.45pm, Lecture Theatre 2

In this creative and critical paper three poems by Terry Gifford are related to the ideas that D. H. Lawrence explored in his final work *Apocalypse* (1930) in which Lawrence responds to the Revelation (or Apocalypse) of St. John. Adrian will introduce the background to this radical and neglected environmental book, arguing that Lawrence shifts the emphasis from Apocalypse as Armageddon to Apocalypse as Revelation. Lawrence opens up the possibility that we might be saved in this world, not the next and that by making radical transitions, we might save this world, and in so doing save ourselves, writing, 'What we want is to destroy our false, inorganic connections, especially those related to money, and re-establish the living organic connections, with the cosmos, the sun and earth, with mankind and nation and family' (A 149).

Gifford's three poems are then discussed as plays upon, but also deviations from, some of the notions Lawrence was demanding that we consider. 'Cretan Post-Pastoral' connects with the idea of Revelation as a right reading of the signs, which in turn links to the central message of Lawrence's interpretation – a reunification of the divided self that encompasses the spiritual and emotional and the rational. 'Hinkley G' turns towards the idea of G for gravity, a sustainable, safe source of energy that draws on what

is already right there, right in front of us. 'The Resilient Cretaceous' suggests that life on earth might be well served by our own demise, a thought intended not to induce fatalistic gestures of surrender, but to encourage its very opposite: a willingness to engage with the reality of our situation, and seek out those ways in which, as Lawrence saw it, to reconnect.

Jayd Green (University of Suffolk)

Coastal pastoral: Exploring retreat and return in coastal towns through creative writing
Panel 6.1, Friday 1 September, 11.00am – 12.30pm, Lecture Theatre 2

Contemporary discussion of the pastoral in British literature recognises the shift towards a more complicated and environmentally concerned engagement with pastoral themes. Definitions and investigations of the pastoral are in a state of transition, reflecting complex relationships with the environment and creative writing. This paper will discuss the research I am currently pursuing, in which the potential of a 'coastal pastoral' is explored.

I will argue that the key pastoral movement of retreat and return is of particular poignancy when considering coastal spaces in creative writing. My research takes the coastal town of Lowestoft as its focal point, and the myriad ways in which the retreat and return movement appears in the form and narrative of the creative writing portion of my work. The coast is a liminal and unfixed geography, and the task of articulating such a place, let alone a specific coastal town, engages language's capacity to drift, sink and crest.

This paper will provide an overview of the ways in which historical, geographical and social contexts of Lowestoft have informed my creative writing practice, as well as the ways in which working in both autofiction and short story forms works with and against coastal writing. By bringing the coastal and pastoral together, my research will open further discussion about movements of retreat and return in coast-specific contexts, and the transition of pastoral scholarship towards engagement with current environmental concerns.

Matthew Griffiths (Independent Scholar)

'No more returning': Djuna Barnes' interwar p/Pastoral as stalled transition
Panel 6.6, Friday 1 September, 11.00am – 12.30pm, Flex 1

In his 'New Critical Idiom' on pastoral, Terry Gifford claims that, 'Following the horrors of the First World War, the [Georgian] poets sought refuge in rural images that did not disturb a sense of comfortable reassurance' (1999; 71). He also maintains, that from its beginnings, the pastoral also 'exploited a tension between ... retreat and return,' (15);

which is to say, the pastoral cycle can be defined by its transitions – or failures of transition – between the urban and rural. In this case, I argue, pastoral written after the Great War assumes an ominous resonance: in retreating from one conflict, a poet implicitly anticipates the return to another.

My paper will propose that the prospect of a future war was not only present in the cultural and political imaginary, as for instance in T.S. Eliot's or John Maynard Keynes' misgivings about the Versailles treaty, but also to a greater or lesser extent implicit in all interwar pastoral, especially that of Djuna Barnes.

In her poem entitled 'Pastoral', the transition out of an imagined rural idyll becomes impossible, with the tropes of the mode compacted and overdetermined. The paper will show how Barnes achieves this formally in that poem, and in other verse from 1923's 'A Book', in part through her combination of traditional stanzas and disquieting imagery, and in part by the way her allusions to the canon and her contemporaries seek to situate her work in a transition from them that can, necessarily, go nowhere.

Equally significantly, I will argue that this stalled pastoral temporality remains relevant now – as a mode of writing that tries to hold on to a present world on the brink of a 1.5°C+ future.

Edith Hall (Durham University Dept. of Classics and Ancient History)

The Homeric Iliad as poem of Crisis and Transition

Panel 4.3, Thursday 31 August, 9.00am – 10.45am, Lecture Theatre 2

The Homeric Iliad is a foundational text in the culture not only of the Mediterranean world and Europe but of the planet. It was born during the centuries of transition from Mycenaean palace culture, through the 'dark' early iron age to the polis-centred communities of archaic and classical Greece. I have a book coming out with Yale U.P., *The Iliad, Poem of the Anthropocene*, that argues we can make the Iliad foundational to our struggle to save that planet from disaster.

The Iliad can be read to expose the deepest contradictions underlying the environmental crisis which we humans have created—it is a priceless document of the mindset of the early Anthropocene, portraying the deep social and environmental ruptures caused by radical 13th-century deforestation of the eastern Mediterranean for shipbuilding, pasturage and smelting. The fall of Troy and the notion of an apocalyptic threat to the survival of the human race have been linked in the mythical imagination since the archaic age. John Perlin suggests that these traditions are responses to the transitional experience of depopulated communities to the disintegration of the Mycenaean world under pressure from earthquakes, tsunamis, migrations, raids, climate change, disease and famine.

The Iliad contains distant memories of everything the Mycenaeans had suffered before their civilisation collapsed, expressed in mediated form such as timber-felling similes and Achilles' apocalyptic fight with the River Scamander. The visions of apocalypse look forward as expressions of anxieties about potential future catastrophe, but backward to remembered reality. This paper identifies literary means, including an idiom of gargantuan scale and boundlessness, divine perspectives and enraged wind, fire and river gods, which expose the Homeric poets' anxiety, in their transitional age, about the instrumentality of human logging, farming and metallurgical activities in the disastrous alteration to the environments over the previous few centuries.

Jane Hibbert Nicolov (Birkbeck College, University of London)

The Lost Village: Yordan Radichkov's *Memories of Horses* and the destruction of Kalimanitsa village in the building of the Ogosta Reservoir

Panel 4.3, Thursday 31 August, 9.00am – 10.45am, Lecture Theatre 2

The early and mid-twentieth century witnessed a world-wide fever for mega-infrastructure projects. This tendency, led by the United States and followed globally, particularly by the Soviet Union, produced what James C Scott calls 'authoritarian high modernism'. This policy transformed the lives of rural people in post-war Eastern Europe irreversibly, primarily through the construction of dams and reservoirs and the collectivisation of agriculture. In 1980, the Bulgarian author Yordan Radichkov published, 'Memories of Horses', recalling his native village Kalimanitsa in North Western Bulgaria, destroyed in the 1960s to make way for the massive new Ogosta reservoir. This key work recounts his return to the territory of his childhood home a few years after it was razed to the ground and is a meditation on memory, change and renewal in nature.

Radichkov was profoundly affected by the destruction of Kalimanitsa and its former life runs like a thread through his work. Disliked and distrusted by the authorities, his enigmatic style, warmth of expression and deep attachment to nature nevertheless allowed him to be tolerated as a maverick.

At a time when millions of countryfolk like the villagers of Kalimanitsa were uprooted and forced to become urban dwellers, Radichkov was perhaps the most successful of his generation to articulate their sense of displacement and the disjunction between urban life and people's roots in the timeless and traditional village at this time of transition – a trend continuing world-wide today. If in England debate frequently focussed on the loss of the natural landscapes in the construction of new human-created lakes, in Bulgaria the sense of environmental loss was for another human-made landscape, that of the village, fields, and the surrounding familiar nature and wildlife.

Alfie Howard (University of Leeds)

Snake Words in Estonia: Andrus Kivirähk's 'The Man Who Spoke Snakish'

Panel 2.6, Wednesday 30 August, 1.30pm – 3.00pm, Flex 2

Set in a fantastical reimagining of 13th Century Estonia, Andrus Kivirähk's 2007 novel 'The Man Who Spoke Snakish' tells the story of Leemet, one of the last Estonians to speak the ancient language of snakes. Under the influence of Germanic invaders ('iron men'), the rest of his people are gradually abandoning the Snakish language, along with their hunter-gatherer lifestyles and pagan beliefs, in favour of agriculture and Christianity. While the snake-hating Christians seek to bend the natural world to their will, the Snakish language subverts the distinction between human culture and non-human nature, offering an alternative to the Christians' hierarchical view of nature. Snakish is also linked to the Estonian language, which has been – and, in different forms, continues to be – threatened by international forces. However, Snakish not only allows humans to communicate with snakes; it also allows them to command and control most animals, creating an interspecies hierarchy with snakes and Snakish-speaking humans at its apex. As such, although it defies the human-nature dichotomy, the Snakish language creates its own interspecies and intercultural inequalities of power.

David Ingram (Independent Scholar)

Folk horror as eco-horror: energy transition and 'The Feast (Gwledd)' (2021)

Panel 3.6, Wednesday 30 August, 3.15pm – 4.45pm, Lecture Theatre 2

What are the affordances of folk horror in the imagining of social and ecological transition? Folk horror revives and reinvents old stories from folklore and myth to provide large scale, imaginary solutions to contemporary problems and dilemmas. One such myth is the nature taboo. In the Welsh language horror film *Feast (Gwledd)* (2021), a supernatural female figure representative of exploited and violated nature returns to punish human wrongdoing, particularly the predatory sins of greed, gluttony, pride and lust. The plot centres on a taboo on the mining of the land for minerals by an international mining consortium. The film valorises local knowledge and traditions as means of resisting unwanted economic development, even though the mining company representative claims it will use the most advanced and sustainable methods to minimise environmental harm. There is a conceptual ambiguity in the narrative around the question of whether the taboo is on mining in itself, on all modern technological development or specifically on capitalist development motivated by greed for profit. As a horror film, the narrative of *The Feast* is structured around increasingly intense displays of affect, particularly of violence, pain and disgust. Whereas more realist discourses might explore the political and psychological complexities of energy transition, *The Feast* provides instead a melodramatic allegory of taboo, violation and

violent retribution which functions as a mythical, and perhaps even paradoxically reassuring, solution to real world problems.

Anna-Tina Jedele (Tampere University, Finland)

Promising Infrastructures? Imagining the Transition to Clean Energy in Ben Smith's dystopia *Doggerland*

Panel 6.5, Friday 1 September, 11.00am -12.30pm, Lecture Theatre 1

As it becomes clear that a continued reliance on fossil fuels is not only unsustainable but also accelerates anthropogenic climate change, transitioning to clean energy is of increasing importance. The quest for a livable future fosters the development and financing of vast infrastructure projects that seek to harness solar or wind energy. Key element of such projects is the “promise of infrastructure” (Hannah Appel, Nikhil Anand, and Akhil Gupta 2018), which insists on infrastructures providing an abundance of clean energy while treating the environment responsibly. As potential answers to the ongoing climate crisis, infrastructures are therefore central to how societies imagine the transition into a sustainable future and how they create narratives of a greener world to come.

My paper investigates how Ben Smith's novel *Doggerland* (2019) engages with and critiques the promise of infrastructure. Set on a derelict offshore windfarm in the North Sea, Smith imagines a bleak and grey near future: The two protagonists struggle to maintain the crumbling wind farm and climate change has severely altered the world. In this dystopia, the infrastructural promise for a green future has therefore been broken. Nevertheless, the narrative incorporates said promise of a livable world not only in its setting but also in its plot and structure, even though any potential fulfillment is continuously deferred. This ongoing deferral produces an anxious spatiotemporal atmosphere wherein any hopes for a livable future become precarious. This is further noticeable in the narrative mode of *Doggerland*, which time and again veers into the absurd thereby intensifying the novel's anxious atmosphere. Ultimately, I argue that Smith's depiction of a derelict future windfarm produces an uncomfortable parallel between the novel's anxious spatiotemporality and the contemporary atmosphere of the Anthropocene, wherein any course of action seems uncertain and any promise seems precarious.

Adeline Johns-Putra (Monash University Malaysia)

Cultural Histories of Climate: The View from China

Panel 6.2, Friday 1 September, 11.00am – 12.30pm, Teaching Room 4

Wildfires rage, glaciers melt, and entire nations are swallowed by oceans or ravaged by floods. This is not so much transition as transilience—a leaping rather than a moving across. As we ask, “what are we going to do about this?”, we wonder, “how the hell did we get here?” Answers to the second question might help us to understand something about the first.

Those answers derive from the cultural history of climate (not the history of climate per se but of understanding—the very discursive construction—of climate). But the story of the quantification of weather into climate, or what Fleming and Jankovic (2011) call the transition from climate as agency to climate as index, is a Eurocentric one; other histories exist.

This paper sketches a Chinese cultural history of climate, elaborating on preliminary research comparing Chinese and Eurocentric histories (Johns-Putra, Liu, Cesarino, Guo, and Zhou, forthcoming). China’s unbroken, three-thousand-year tradition of climate record-keeping demonstrates the endurance of the Confucian concept of “tian ren ganying” (“heaven-human induction”). Pei and Foret (2018) have highlighted “tian ren ganying” as an organizing principle in Chinese climate history. Here, we deepen this understanding with reference to annals from the beginnings of dynastic record-keeping (mainly, Han) and the end (Qing dynasty), demonstrating the durability of the concept and the discursive uses to which it was put. Climate, under the aegis of “tian”, emerges as an all-encompassing determinant of human fortune.

The paper concludes by speculating on the relevance of this history to modern Chinese narratives of climate change, for example, its influence on Chinese discursive and literary treatments of climate change within local rather than global frames. Overall, we call for a diachronic and synchronic understanding of this crisis of transilience—a deep dive into histories, plural.

Madonna Kalousian (The University of Cambridge)

The Cairene Ecocide: Carers, Carriers, and the Nature of Events

Panel 6.5, Friday 1 September, 11.00am – 12.30pm, Lecture Theatre 1

Human extinction and the end of time in the literature of Nael el-Toukhy, Ahmed Naji, and Mohammad Rabie is tied to perceptions of the loss of mastery over human-environment relations and predicated upon the understanding of nonhuman-derived infections as natural disasters bringing about human illness. This paper examines mass civilizational collapse in *Women of Karantina*, using *Life*, and *Otared*, with the source of this collapse being a form of nonhuman life, a microscopic form of life, a next successful pandemic, or an incoming zoonotic pathogen. It explores, within a national context, the construction of the ‘superspreader’ as a character which implicates humanity in a viral process of animal-becoming, one in which “the human” becomes

the virus, and interrogates the rhetoric behind what lives become sacrificeable for the sake of securing human-environment relations.

It does so by exploring these authors' imaginaries of capitalist urban infrastructures, post-apocalyptic cross-species evolutions, and the politics which govern survival, fitness, natural selection, and the human lifespan in a divided, virus-stricken Cairo. These novels map new interspecies worlds which operate processes of evolutionary metamorphosis within a number of unmapped spaces, including sewer systems and underground tunnels. Exploring these spaces, this paper concludes with a multi-sited, multi-species investigation of what political, economic, and social implications human-animal-plant relations have for present-day Cairo. The ventures upon which their characters embark unravel physical, metaphysical, and interspecies proximities within Cairo's changing Anthropocene. The city gradually transitions into a wilderness from which human survivors are excluded, therefore affirming visions, versions, and possibilities of after-the-human worlds.

Aim King (Aberystwyth University)

Transmateriality and walking with other-than-human river ecologies

Panel 1.4, Wednesday 30 August, 11.00am – 12.45pm, Teaching Room 5

This presentation will draw upon the ecopoetics, fluidity and transmateriality of wandering and water as a way of reimagining our being with the other-than-human. It will centre on the geography and interconnected ecologies of rivers, using the gesture of walking as a way to negotiate different physical and changing entanglements with 'nature'. This research is based on my practice-led PhD that explores the relationship between filmmaking, poetry and river walking as a new method of non-binary thinking in documentary. I will argue that new forms of environmental communication are needed in a contemporary context that urge us to centre dynamism and multispecies politics. Creating space for ecopoetics in documentary filmmaking shifts modes of environmental communication in response to a world in transition. The in-betweenness of river's and their wider ecologies is explored through bringing queer and trans theory into river research. A transmaterial approach to walking acknowledges the difference and sameness between species, bodies and matter. In May 2023, I walked with the River Severn from source to sea. This 225-mile journey took three weeks. I will use intuition as a method to produce an essay film of visual and written material I collected along the way. The outcome is dependent on responses to encounters with other-than-human agents – animal, vegetal and geological. I propose to speak about and present extracts of the essay film produced.

Jasmin Kirkbride (City University, London)

The writer's fragments: navigating the role boundaries of Creative Writing teacher, editor, and therapist in environmental literature

Panel 2.1, Wednesday 30 August, 1.30pm – 3.00pm, Lecture Theatre 1

The role of an editor and a creative writing teacher are similar: both aim to improve the writer's work and pass on the elements of craft. Yet, by holding the work, both editor and teacher are also engaging with part of the writer's psyche. In this regard, both writer and creative writing teacher are also akin therapists – and yet at the same time cannot and must not fully embody a therapist's role. The editor and creative writing teacher therefore work with half-seen shards of the author that jut, often unconsciously, from their work. This paper asks how, in an age increasing eco-anxiety, editors and creative writing teachers might best navigate around – yet still encourage creative use of – these fragments, using the specific example of teaching and editing climate fiction, and the solastalgia that inevitably interacts with and gives rise to.

Paul Knowles (University of Manchester)

Transiting from the Edenic-pastoral to the post-pastoral in Kevin Barry, Colin Barrett, and Danielle McLaughlin's short stories

Panel 1.3, Wednesday 30 August, 11.00am – 12.45pm, Lecture Theatre 3

Terry Gifford, in his book *Pastoral: A New Critical Idiom*, defines the post-pastoral as 'a mature environmental aesthetic that recognises that some literature has gone beyond the closed circuit of pastoral and anti-pastoral to achieve a vision of an integrated natural world that includes the human'. I argue in this paper that the Stinging Fly Press in Dublin — set up in the early 2000s — has championed a post-pastoral aesthetic in the works of Kevin Barry, Colin Barrett and Danielle McLaughlin. The Stinging Fly Press post-pastoral aesthetic acts in opposition to the Edenic-pastoral of the Irish Free State in its construction of a rural nationalism. I argue that the post-pastoral is concerned with the Ecocentric repossession of the pastoral that symbolises a shift from the representation of nature as a theatre for human events to representation in the sense of advocacy of nature as a presence for its own sake, exemplified in the stories: 'Calm with Horses', 'Atlantic City' and 'A Different Country'. I argue that the stories use the post-pastoral to exemplify the ways in which the positioning of oneself towards nature leads inevitably to a humbling that is a necessary requirement of the shift from the anthropocentric position of the pastoral to the Ecocentric view of the post-pastoral. In the 2020s, a time of ecological crisis, I argue that The Stinging Fly Press post-pastoral aesthetic presents new ways of conceptualizing human relationships with the nonhuman world.

Stanislav Kolář (University of Ostrava, Czech Republic)

Searching for the Pastoral in Anti-pastoral Environments in Jewish American Fiction
Panel 5.3, Friday 1 September, 9.00am – 10.45am, Flex 2

This paper follows the relationship of immigrants from Eastern Europe to new environments after their immigration to the United States, as depicted in Jewish American fiction. Most of the immigrants came from the rural areas of Eastern and Central Europe; however, they predominantly settled down in urban environments (The Lower East Side in New York City, Boston, Philadelphia, etc.). Their transition to the new milieu was not easy because, as some novels, short stories, and also Jacob Riis's "muckraking" photographs document, their living and working conditions paradoxically deteriorated and proved to be a far cry from their original expectations. My paper examines to what extent they regarded their residence in urban districts transitory, or if they gradually adapted to them. The essential part of this paper consists in the exploration of the contrast between the pastoral and anti-pastoral modes of the discussed works of fiction. It attempts to answer the following questions: How does immigrant characters' nostalgia (if any) for nature get expressed in this fiction? Are these nostalgic sentiments an outcome of their difficulties in assimilating? How is a lack of verdure compensated in their lives? How did they react to unsatisfactory living and working conditions (densely populated areas, tenement housing, sweatshops, etc.)? These issues are analyzed in several works – Mary Antin's *The Promised Land*, Abraham Cahan's *The Rise of David Levinsky*, Anzia Yezierska's *Hungry Hearts and Other Stories*, Henry Roth's *Call It Sleep*, and Michael Gold's *Jews Without Money*. The paper also includes the novel *Kaaterskill Falls* by the contemporary Jewish American writer Allegra Goodman, in which pastoralism is conveyed through the establishment of a summer colony with its close-knit community of the descendants of Jewish immigrants in the countryside of the Catskill Mountains, a sort of Jewish Walden that symbolizes their search for the sublime.

Berna Köseoğlu (Kocaeli University, Kocaeli, Turkey)

The Transition from the Agricultural to the Industrial System in J.G. Ballard's *The Drought: A Novel: Ecological Destruction, Water Crisis and Environmental Disaster*
Panel 6.2, Friday 1 September, 11.00am – 12.30pm, Teaching Room 4

The transition from the classical agricultural practices to the mechanical system with the rise of the Industrial Revolution, has destroyed the world ecology and resulted in environmental devastation as a consequence of capitalistic understanding. The industrial waste leading to water and air pollution causes climate change, the extinction of some species and destabilisation of ecological order. The ecocide, which has come to the fore as a result of excessive industrialisation, production and consumption, is widespread and inevitable all around the world. Unless precautions for the protection of

nature and animals are taken, the future of the ecosystem will not be promising. Therefore, writers have been portraying the environmental destruction in their literary works in order to pay special attention to the environmental crisis. J.G. Ballard's work *The Drought: A Novel*, in this sense, sheds light on the apocalyptic dystopian capitalist society in which individuals suffer from water crisis as a result of industrial pollution and find themselves in a power struggle for water. In this paper, Ballard's reflection of ecological catastrophe will be analysed in the light of ecocritical approach. In addition, the historical background of the transition from the traditional to the industrial system will be discussed by stressing the impact of the Industrial Revolution and the movement of people to the industrial centres, upon climate change and environmental pollution. In this regard, comparing and contrasting the past vision of the future with the reality of today, the condition of world ecology under the influence of industrial developments and technological progress will be explored.

Charlotte Lancaster (Bath Spa University)

The Biblical Flood Myth Revisited: Representations of Flood and Deluge in Climate Fiction

Panel 4.3, Thursday 31 August, 9.00am – 10.45am, Lecture Theatre 2

In April 2019, Parliament Square saw a riotous retelling of the biblical flood story as climate activists converged to protest political inaction on climate change. As a piece of creative activism, *Mrs Noah*, written by Angela De Angelis, revisits the tale of rising waters, endangered animals and near human extinction as the 'original climate disaster warning'. *Mrs Noah* is one amongst many works of art to have reclaimed the biblical flood myth in response to the climate and environmental crisis. Numerous films, novels, documentaries and artworks use the biblical story to explore existential questions around human ontology and ethics in a time of environmental uncertainty, and by doing so show how myths play an important role in the ways ecological calamity is imagined and experienced. In literature, the rise of climate fiction has seen a comparable rise in novels that draw on flood imagery. So much so, that Adam Trexler, in the first book-length study of climate fiction, writes that, 'the dominant literary strategy for locating climate change has been the flood'. The question that frames this paper is, why the flood? What is the imaginative appeal of the biblical flood myth for readers of climate fiction in the twenty-first century, and why has it endured for so long in retellings of environmental disaster? I aim to demonstrate how the biblical flood myth is revisited in narrative framings of flood-related catastrophe as a metaphor. By teasing out the narrative structure and familiar motifs of the biblical flood myth in the climate novel, I ask how novelistic floods create a particular understanding of ecological catastrophe in a time of climate crisis, and in doing so, emphasise the extent to which experiences and

perceptions of so-called 'natural disaster' participate in well-worn cultural ontologies that are partially based on myth.

Amy Le Grys (Bath Spa University)

Writing the Mountainscape: Literary Impressionism, Changeability and Aesthetics in Late Modern British Mountain Literature

Panel 1.3, Wednesday 30 August, 11.00am – 12.45pm, Lecture Theatre 3

Writing the British landscape – whether through the genre of tour writing, travel guide, nature memoir, poetry or fiction – has been a long standing feature throughout the literary tradition. However, the ways in which these landscapes are depicted, or should be depicted, have dramatically changed across time and experienced various transitions. Various literary aesthetic phenomena, from the picturesque and the sublime of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, to Victorian realism, to modernist literary impressionism, all contribute to a diverse and rich cultural memory of landscapes, and especially that of mountains. For the late modernists, the mountains were not a backdrop to frame the picturesque, nor were they a masculine show of prowess to climb and conquer. Instead, many of the twentieth century writers (some are featured in this paper) who wrote on British mountain landscapes aimed at presenting a more holistic approach, taking into account the mountain's autonomy as well as the writer's own sensory experience. These writers lean into modernist characteristics, such as literary impressionism, in order to give a sensory representation of the mountainscape. In doing so, these writers attempt to bring to the fore a more nuanced understanding in navigating the relationship between humans and the physical world.

This paper, informed by ecocriticism and through the lens of literary aesthetic theory, will aim to demonstrate how a collection of writers such Chiang Yee, Eileen Molony, and Nan Shepherd (representative of a larger scope) depict British mountainscapes. The texts illustrate how perceptions of landscapes are informed and shaped by previous aesthetic traditions but also consciously move towards a less anthropocentric stance in the relationship between humans and the environment. In addition, these works highlight the important part literature, and by larger extension the humanities, play in shaping cultural perceptions about physical environments.

Matthew Lear (The University of Edinburgh)

Rewriting as Transition: Thick Language and the Ecological Stuplime in Juliana Spahr's *Well There Then Now* (2011)

Panel 6.4, Wednesday 30 August, 3.15pm – 4.45pm, Teaching Room 6

This paper will examine how Juliana Spahr's thickened language in *Well There Then Now* (2011) comes to constitute the concept of 'ecological stuplimity', in turn, fostering a more attuned awareness of our cognitive and political limits. For cultural critic Sianne Ngai, the 'stuplime' refers to the aesthetic experience in which hyperactive astonishment is paradoxically united with deadening boredom. In the transitioning age of the Anthropocene, many of our encounters with exciting yet overwhelming new concepts or datasets follow this account; vast and alarming scales of ecological damage are often met with the futile, anaesthetising experience of the stuplime.

As evident in the poems 'Things of Each Possible Relation' and 'Unnamed Dragonfly Species', I will argue that Juliana Spahr's thick language comes to directly transpose stuplimity to a realm of ecological and political precarity. Drawing aesthetic parallels with Gertrude Stein's *The Making of Americans* (1925) and Tan Lin's *Mastering the Art of French Cooking and Systems Theory* (2015), this paper will unpick how such works, in joining awe with ennui, help outline the limitations of our capacity for responding to unequally distributed environmental crises such as biodiversity loss, sea-level rise, and pollution.

That these predicaments often produce bewildered, numbed reactions, might suggest we avoid encounters with the ecological stuplime completely, or perhaps, as some ecocritics have suggested, 'art and literature might [...] shock us out of the stuplime'. This paper will instead posit that it makes sense to approach the ecological stuplime, not with supplementary bouts of shock, but rather with an open awareness of how and why we are incapacitated. As such, by embracing, rather than avoiding, the stuplime pitfalls of Juliana's Spahr's poetics, we are empowered to justly recalibrate our thinking, our art, and our political orientations towards tackling the overwhelming, amassing environmental crises of a world in transition.

Hannah Little (The University of Liverpool)

The Cultural Evolution of Climate Science Stories

Panel 5.4, Friday 1 September, 9.00am – 10.45am, Lecture Theatre 2

Storytelling lies at the heart of effective climate communication and is one of the oldest, most universal tools that humans use to understand the world around us. But why do some stories endure while others are forgotten? Findings from the field of cultural evolution have demonstrated that, with stories, information is transmitted more faithfully when it contains social and survival information, negative emotional information, or counterintuitive information. In this paper, I will introduce ongoing research funded by the British Academy that explores how storytelling is affected by the cognitive biases above in the context of climate communication. The work uses iterated learning experiments where chains of participants transmit climate-related stories with

different features (e.g. social stories, counterintuitive stories, etc.). The first participant is told a story before recalling it from memory for a new participant who, in turn, recalls the story for someone else, and so on. These transmission chains imitate the process of cultural evolution so we can measure what types of information are remembered and passed on, and how this process is affected by the content of the story given to the first participant.

I will also present results from interview data with science communication professionals where participants were asked to consider potential issues that may come about when implementing knowledge of cognitive biases within climate communication contexts. For example, communicators pointed to challenges of making stories about physical phenomena human-orientated and social, and commented that having repeated, factual narratives may make stories less counterintuitive or surprising for audiences. Participants also noted that while negative emotions can make stories about climate more memorable, this framing may contradict objectives of communication about climate science as feelings that dangers may be too large to be tackled may result in apathy, denial and inaction.

Xiaoxiao Ma (University of Leeds)

‘Stately roads / Easy and bold’: Transport and Transition in Wordsworth’s *The Excursion*
Panel 6.5, Friday 1 September, 11.00am – 12.30pm, Lecture Theatre 1

This paper will examine how in Wordsworth’s *The Excursion* (1814), the improvement of roads is presented as an ambivalent example of industrialisation, which makes transportation easier but morality worse. Customary roads and paths in the Lake District had been accessible before the arrival of the Industrial Revolution. However, the turnpike mania (1751-1772) and the parliamentary enclosure from the 1770s to the 1820s improved the road network through removal of ‘most physical traces of earlier tracks’ (Hindle, 1984:164). The new roads provoked ‘local opposition from farmers, drovers, carriers (especially in the packhorse trade) or local traders’ (Hindle, 1984:138), who thought that their common rights and interests would thus be harmed. Wordsworth in *The Excursion* described how the modernised, ‘stately roads / Easy and bold’ (Book VIII, ll. 111-112) destroyed the Pedlar’s business through the improvement of the road system, and how the revolutions of society ‘shook the Tenants out into the fields, / Like wild Beasts without home’ (Book VII, ll. 1048-1049). I argue that Wordsworth, through the allusion to Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, describes the morality of pre-modernised difficult roads, and the Fall of the easy road network produced by industrialisation. The poet also invokes parliamentary enclosure of the common wastes to suggest that agricultural improvements during industrialisation cause the disappearance of yeomen through depriving their rights of common. The paper concludes by arguing that although

the improved road network leads to the transformation of transport and the flourishing of the British empire, it contributes to humans' wider exploitation of natural resources.

Tarn MacArthur (University of St Andrews)

Bitumen: Karen Solie's Mapping of a Modern Hybrid

Panel 2.5, Wednesday 30 August, 1.30pm – 3.00pm, Teaching Room 5

Traditionally, acknowledging one's interconnectedness is portrayed as a state of positive illumination in environmental literature, however, within a system this demands that individuals possess a heightened awareness for their potential to do and perpetuate harm. Considering systems theory, and more specifically Bruno Latour's actor-network analysis, this paper will investigate how Karen Solie's poetics offers a method for mapping what Latour names hybrids, which are loosely defined as network-beings composed of both nature and culture. Latour submits that modern humans have become blind to hybrids because their pursuit of a 'modern constitution' has engaged 'the work of purification', a process that 'creates two distinct ontological zones: that of human beings on the one hand, and that of nonhumans on the other.' Through a close reading of her poem, 'Bitumen', a long and sprawling interrogation of the extraction and use of petroleum, this paper will map the ways in which human responses to hybrids require a drastic shift in scale beyond the boundaries of human and present local interactions, one which inculcates the reader into acknowledging the global network through which oil circulates and their own participation within this system. For Solie, bitumen is a generative point of departure for poetic investigation, not just because its prominent use is a threat to local ecologies and global health, but because it is so interwoven within modern life that its widespread influence has created quite possibly the most prominent hybrid in human existence. Just as the Romantic figure is stunned into silence by the sublime, Solie's poem demonstrates how the overwhelming nature of hybrids has forced humans into a state of benign 'wordlessness', and it is only through what she describes as 'imaginative responses to history, to complication and scale', that one might learn to 'reject the paralysis of inertia and despair'.

Bushra Mahzabeen (University of Warwick)

Rampant Capitalism and Violent Modernism of Angolan Oil Extraction Zone in Pepetela's Narrative

Panel 2.3, Wednesday 30 August, 1.30pm – 3.00pm, Lecture Theatre 2

In sites of resource extraction, especially in the (semi-) peripheral commodity frontiers of the world-systems, often rapid infrastructural development occurs. These transformations often affect the inhabitants unevenly as the wealthy and powerful have the luxury to dictate their lives and the marginalised people of the extraction zones turn

into urban poor, further exploited and dispossessed. Pepetela's *The Return of the Water Spirit* (1995) is a novella that portrays the rapid development of the Angolan oil frontier in the late 1980s, which unleashes slow violence and plunder on the poorer sections of the city. The violence done here to both human and non-human nature are intrinsically connected. In the name of progress, the lagoons and waterways are hastily filled up and high-rise buildings are built to accommodate the influx of people in the cities. In a terrifying yet poetic way the spirit of the water spirit comes to reclaim the land from the ruling elite who are engaged in corrupt and rampant capitalist undertakings. The novella employs petro-magic realism to register the "[...] monstrous-but-mundane violence of oil exploration and extraction, the state violence that supports it, and the environmental degradation that it causes" (Wenzel 9), which is the only way to register the petro-capitalism in its monstrous economic condition. Drawing on critical works of Jennifer Wenzel, Michael Niblett, and Michael Watts, among others to examine the rapid and violent modernism depicted in Pepetela's narrative.

Key words: sites of oil extraction, rapid uneven development, violence, petro-magic realism, rampant capitalism

Adam Maric-Cleaver (University of East Anglia)

From a hi-fi to a lo-fi ecology: noise, mediation, and environmental collapse in John Christopher's *The Death of Grass* and Anna Kavan's *Ice*

Panel 4.4, Thursday 31 August, 9.00am – 10.45am, Lecture Theatre 3

This paper makes a case for the ecological importance of mediation and noise in the midst of the ongoing climate crisis, arguing for reading ecological collapse as a low-fidelity or 'lo-fi' event whose informatic noise allows us to better acknowledge the interwoven and networked position of the human and non-human. I do this by comparing two mid-twentieth century British science fiction novels, John Christopher's *The Death of Grass* (1956) and Anna Kavan's *Ice* (1967), both of which focus on ecological apocalypses but whose collapses are mediated in divergent ways, both to the characters within the novel and to the reader.

Christopher's survivalist novel stages a stripping away of noise, a rugged individualism in which the human is defined by its ability to master the non-human. Its communication is direct, hi-fi, favouring clear borders between human and non-human. *Ice*, on the other hand, is a novel continually dissolving its characters into each other and into the show of its nuclear ice age. It mediates through informatic noise, the fuzzing and networking of the human and non-human.

I read these texts alongside the launching of communications satellites and the founding of Media theory in the late-1950s/early-1960s. Thus, I mark a transition in the mediation of environmental disaster and its relationship to information, drawing both on

the eco-theoretical work of Timothy Morton, McKenzie Wark and Jason Moore, and the media theories of Michel Serres, Eugene Thacker and Alexander Galloway, and Sybille Kramer.

Jemima Matthews (King's College London)

“as Water mill, made rags and shreds to sweate”: Fluvial bodies and fluminous geographies

Panel 1.4, Wednesday 30 August, 11.00am – 12.45pm, Teaching Room 5

This paper explores poetry written by those that worked and reworked water in early modern England. Poetic petitions by watermen are considered alongside a poem praising the erection of a paper mill. The three poets considered in this paper frame the river's 'work' as a service to the state but the labour these writers each have in mind is incompatible. Their poetry is preoccupied by obstructions, devices, and mechanical feats of engineering which force water to behave differently. Water is controlled, channelled, and harnessed. Human bodies and goods are rendered vulnerable and put at risk by these transitions. Bodies and goods are tossed, spoiled, and even drowned by the altered water. In the paper mill however, raw materials are converted into paper. This paper traces the entangled histories of bodies, river-water, paper, and sweat charting how these poems map fluvial geographies of location and dislocation.

Helen Moore (University of Gloucestershire) and Rowan Middleton (University of Gloucestershire)

ECOPOETIKON: Global ecopoetries as transition towards regenerative cultures

Panel 5.4, Friday 1 September, 9.00am -10.45am, Lecture Theatre 2

ECOPOETIKON is a new project being developed at the University of Gloucestershire to research and showcase global

ecopoetries: <https://www.glos.ac.uk/content/ecopoetikon-global-ecopoetries/>

The project responds to Craig Santos Perez's call for poets from the Global North to read and support authors from the Global South, and to teach their work.

Colonialism and industrialisation have linked people across the globe in ways never seen before. The ecological and social impact of these developments is often felt unequally. At the same time, a globalised world has brought together different cultural and spiritual traditions. Ecopoetikon seeks to explore how attending to a range of poetic voices can increase our consciousness of an interconnected Earth. Understanding different artistic perspectives, ways of relating, and modes of consciousness forms an important component of this transition.

Ecopoetikon also responds to ecopoetry's activist intention, which we define as poetry

written with engaged ecological and social consciousness. Poetry that isn't shy of revealing injustices and ecocide, or of speaking truth to power. And which encourages people to embrace an understanding of ourselves as members of the wider multi-species communities of our planet-home. To cultivate relationships of reciprocity, and to co-creatively work for the 'common wealth'.

As such, we see ecopoetry as a restorative act. One of many signposts towards emerging regenerative cultures, where citizens protect the land/bioregion they inhabit, interacting with more-than-human inhabitants as if they were community, kith and kin. This mode is familiar to indigenous peoples, amongst whom poetic expressions may not require any 'eco' prefix because their cultures inherently express this worldview.

Ultimately, we envision the term 'ecopoetry' becoming redundant. Although this may seem perverse, it's a statement of the transformation that ECOPOETIKON upholds. Collectively, we must participate in co-creating a world for which our children's children will thank us. A world where 'ecopoetry' will simply be 'poetry' again.

John Miller (The University of Sheffield)

The Psychedelic Ecology of Lee Sung Jin's *Beef*

Panel 1.7, Wednesday 30 August, 11.00am – 12.45pm, Flex 2

Recent years have seen a remarkable surge of interest in psychedelics, substances which produce an altered sense of consciousness, euphoria, hallucinations, and, potentially, varieties of mystical experience. Much of the emerging research into psychedelics has focused on their benefits as psychiatric treatments for depression, PTSD, or addiction, but there has also been – not unconnectedly – a wider exploration of the philosophical implications of psychedelics which promises multiple linkages between the psychedelic renaissance and the environmental humanities. With global capital's death drive as relentless as ever, now may be the time to tune in to the transformative, counter-anthropocentric energy of psychedelics. Sam Gandy has noted the 'capacity of psychedelic substances to enhance human-nature connection'; in more expansive terms, Richard Doyle asks if psychedelics can 'help cultivate a new and paradoxical outburst of interconnected and hence transhuman agency on Earth, one that embraces and even enhances ecological imbrication'. The longstanding association of psychedelics with counter-culture marks another point of convergence with ecological thought, while the neo-colonial appropriation of Indigenous botanical knowledge demands critical analysis from a postcolonial-ecocritical standpoint.

This paper offers an initial contribution to a psychedelic ecocriticism through a discussion of Lee Sung Jin's Netflix series *Beef*, a road-rage revenge narrative that focuses on the antagonism between its two principal characters Danny Cho and Amy Lau. The narrative foregrounds the social divisions, violence and disappointment of US

consumerism, until the resonant and surprising final episode. Just as Cho and Lau's mutual hatred appears to be moving towards a murderous conclusion, they find themselves lost in the Californian wilderness. Hungry and thirsty, they consume hallucinogenic berries (probably *Atropa belladonna* though the species is never disclosed) and discover not just personal reconciliation but also a larger redemption that suggests something of the world-changing power of psychedelics.

Leah Miller (Iowa State University)

Unsettled Settlers: Uncanny Travel of Home-Sick Westerners via *Midsommar* and *Fauna*
Panel 4.2, Thursday 31 August, 9.00am – 10.45am, Teaching Room 4

The entreaties to end profligate transit via private jet usage nevertheless simultaneously occur with a seemingly indefatigable, fossil fuel dependent global leisure travel market, even with a Pandemic-enforced pause. More than half of Americans have plans to get away in 2023, according to multiple travel market research reports; for those who must imagine escape, consumers can stream the popular *White Lotus* and Anthony Bourdain. Cultural geographer Yi-Fu Tuan writes humans as profoundly restless in his 1998 *Escapism* and that true, good escape moves participants toward a more lucid reality.

Vacations—our widely accepted and longed for escapes from the everyday—defy this lucidity with temporary feelings of power over one's environment, illusive release from time, and instant gratification: in short, environmental control and the heart of anti-environmental attitudes. These “temptations of freedom,” named by Orvar Löfgren in his book *On Holiday: A History of Vacationing*, never satisfy, frenetically reinforcing the unsustainable leisure travel market. The gap between action calls and behavior reveal a diseased relationship with home ecosystems. Gothic vacations depict this provoking agent of place insecurity to the extreme in holidays gone wrong.

Formed in the legacy of the Grand Tour, built on the ecocritical ecogothic foundations of Matthew Sivils and Dawn Keetley, and informed by the contemporary ethnography of festival and White escape by Amanda Lucia, my paper reads Western vacationing as environmental unease and leisure travelers as place insecure, acknowledging and theorizing imaginaries that could cultivate pro-home behaviors and decrease the vacation market's contribution to environmental degradation. Using Ari Aster's *Midsommar* (2019) and Christine Vadnais' *Fauna* (2018), I argue Gothic vacations viewed through ecogothic criticism and place attachment theory reveal leisure travel as an asseveration of place insecurity, a dual-edged home-sickness; moreover, they logically emerge from the restless aspirational travel culture of the modern, neoliberal West.

Laoighseach Ní Choistealbha (Ollscoil na Gaillimhe, Éire)

Tradition and Transition in Modern Irish-Language Poetry

Panel 2.2, Wednesday 30 August, 1.30pm – 3.00pm, Teaching Room 4

The Gaeltacht areas of Ireland – Irish-language speaking areas, located primarily on the Western seaboard of the country – experienced radical changes throughout the twentieth century. These radical changes, coming in the wake of modernity, included dislocation, emigration, cultural change, and the erosion of the Irish language.

Writing about the connection between the Irish language and ecology in 2019, Michael Cronin, drawing on Naomi Klein's idea of 'sacrifice zones', stated that 'Gaeltacht areas in Ireland often functioned as our own sacrifice zones', deprived, out-of-the-way areas, that lacked political power (2019: 13).

Gearóid Denvir has written of the pressure of modern tourism on these vulnerable zones after a shift from agricultural lifeways towards the tourist economy: 'the major change in the Gaeltacht was a gradual shift from traditional agriculture and the lifestyle, worldview, and value system associated with it, to an industrial, commercial and service economy, with a recent significant emphasis on tourism' (2002: 32).

These sudden changes wrought by modernity upon the lifeways and cultural practices of those of the Gaeltacht has been reflected in the poetry of some of the Irish-language's foremost contemporary poets. This paper will examine the responses to modernity found in the poetry of Cathal Ó Searcaigh (1956-) who still lives in the Gaeltacht region of county Donegal, and of Máirtín Ó Direáin (1910-1988), who left his native place on the Aran Islands to live in urban centres (Galway and Dublin) for the majority of his life.

The differing perspectives offered by their situatedness (one 'within' urbanized modernity, and one 'without'), are of particular interest in terms of the nostalgic properties of their work, as well as how landscape and people are portrayed.

Aedin Ni Loingsigh (University of Stirling)

Hedged in? Branching out? The hedge as symbol of transition in Jean-Loup Trassard's *L'Homme des haies* [The Hedges Man]

Panel 1.3, Wednesday 30 August, 11.00am – 12.45pm, Lecture Theatre 3

For Doreen Massey (2018: 154), Heidegger-derived understandings of 'place' are problematic because '[they] rel[y] on an introverted, inward-looking history' and seem 'to require the drawing of boundaries' to support their definition. Consequently, one of the ways Massey begins to work through a more progressive sense of place is by refusing to '[draw] its enclosing boundaries' (2018: 155). A study that focuses on hedges might, therefore, imply a starting point that is in contraposition to Massey. After all,

hedges, as vegetative boundaries, are not just fixed and emplaced, historically, they have also served as a means for defining the places they enclose.

Through close reading of Jean-Loup Trassard's 2012 untranslated French novel, *L'Homme des haies* [The Hedges Man], this paper combines Massery's theorizations of place with an ecocritical exploration of the hedge as symbol of transition. In its first-person portrayal of everyday life for Vincent Loiseau, an elderly farmer in Mayenne (Northwest France), Trassard's text uses the hedge, on the one hand, to mark out Loiseau's farm as a bounded, highly localized place where the latter's identity seems clear. Even if he is now retired, Loiseau is the farmer who bought 'La Hourdais' and transformed his parents' and grandparents' tenancy of the property into ownership. Nonetheless, through detailed descriptions of the meticulous, manual labour of hedge maintenance, an alternative understanding of the hedge and of place in the novel begins to open out. With Loiseau as a highly knowledgeable but largely diffident guide, the hedge is revealed to be a threshold where personal, social, environmental transition is recorded and where the dialectical relationship between the social and the natural world is clear. Above all, this paper will explore the extent to which the hedge in Trassard's novel might be useful for developing a productive approach to Doreen Massey's question of how

Niall Oddy (The Open University)

Environmental Anxiety in the Middle of the Sixteenth Century? The Example of Rabelais' 'Fourth Book'

Panel 2.1, Wednesday 30 August, 1.30pm – 3.00pm, Lecture Theatre 1

This paper uses the example of Rabelais' *Quart Livre* ['The Fourth Book of the Heroic Deeds and Sayings of the Noble Pantagruel'] to ask whether it is legitimate to speak of 'climate anxiety' or 'eco-anxiety' in the sixteenth century.

European societies experienced a great period of transition in the sixteenth century as voyages of discovery unsettled intellectual, geographical and cultural certainties, and the religious Reformation swept across the continent, shattering old beliefs and political structures. The great French writer Rabelais registered unease about the changing world in his 'Fourth Book', which is notably darker than his previous three works of comic fiction about the giants Pantagruel and Gargantua and their associates. The 'Fourth Book' narrates the journey of the giant Pantagruel and his company from France in search of the oracle of Bacbuc so that his friend Panurge can ask for nuptial advice. On their way they meet an array of fantastical characters, from hairy sausage folk to a personification of the stomach, passing through a series of invented islands, each of which is described in turn. Though the textual geography is fictive, each island

offers a recognisable portrayal of an issue facing Rabelais' changing world, such as warring Catholics and Protestants.

It is striking that these anxieties about the future are represented in climactic terms, with descriptions of how once fertile lands have become barren, while the lands of colonising forces have flourished. As such, Rabelais' 'Fourth Book' portrays environmental exploitation and competition for natural resources and raises questions about environmental sustainability in a world in transition.

Benjamin Ong (University of St Andrews)

From Kew to Kiew: Habits and habitats in transition

Panel 5.1, Friday 1 September, 9.00am – 10.45am, Teaching Room 4

Over half a century after Independence from colonial rule, Malaysia remains a country in transition. Keenness to compete on the world stage has driven Malaysia to practise a growth-oriented, technosolutionist model of development, often without being reflexive of the consequences to environment, society and cultural values.

Despite the prevalence of extant nonwestern knowledge traditions, pre-colonial, pre-industrial, vernacular traditions are othered in both 'development' and 'conservation' narratives. Fifteen years after Timothy Morton's bold provocations in texts like *Ecology without Nature*, such radical ideas remain on the fringe in biodiverse, developing Malaysia. At the same time, vernacular understandings of the sentience, identity and agency of the nonhuman persist, for example, in the widespread sacralisation of urban space. This points to the tension of habits and habitats in transition.

Where do we go from here? In this paper, I discuss opportunities emerging from disruptions wrought by Covid-19. First, by considering transgressive landscape practices in local urban neighbourhoods during pandemic-induced lockdowns—the resurgence of vernacular and traditional visions in interstitial/informal green space opening up new ecological possibilities. Second, by presenting a reading of (urban) spaces in transition against the depiction of landscape and human-nonhuman relationships in contemporary Malaysian anthologies such as L. Kiew's *More Than Weeds* and Zedeck Siew's *Creatures of Near Kingdoms*, which reimagine the place of the more-than-human. Third, by reflecting on radical, 'living lab'-oriented experiments at the Rimba Ilmu Botanic Garden, possibly Malaysia's first postcolonial botanic garden.

This paper concludes with a meditation on creativity and imagination, through the example of ImagiNasi—an embodied, emplaced, art-science intervention, where community-based (re)imaginings of urban space mirrored a quiet but remarkable transition: the regeneration, over half a century, of a colonial-era rubber plantation into

the Rimba Ilmu forest, challenging difficult histories such as the agro-economic conquest supported by institutions like Kew and other imperial botanic gardens.

Rosamund Paice (Northumbria University)

From Whittlesea Mere to the 'Pond on Witting Heath': Mildmay Fane and Familiar Waters

Panel 1.3, Wednesday 30 August, 11.00am – 12.45pm, Lecture Theatre 3

This paper is part of a project that examines literary engagements with green and blue spaces that have been lost to political upheavals, environmental change, and shifting landscape fashions. The project seeks to establish ways of 'visiting' lost landscapes through poetry in a way that is informed by practical and ethical priorities.

My focus of this paper is the private (manuscript) poetry of Mildmay Fane, 2nd Earl of Westmorland (1602-1666). From February 1644 until the Restoration, Fane maintained a facade of political detachment, dividing his time between London and his country seats (Mereworth Castle and Apethorpe Hall). During this period, social engagements in watery spaces feature prominently in his poetry. Two spaces receive particular attention: Whittlesea Mere, once the largest lake in lowland England; and the 'Great Pond' (the 'pond on witting heath') of the Burghley estate of John Cecil, 4th Earl of Exeter (1628-1678), Fane's near neighbour when at Apethorpe.

My paper argues that Fane's poetry reveals the important role that Whittlesea Mere and the Great Pond played in facilitating private interactions between friends, interactions frustrated by the (intended or unintended) surveillance that played out inside the country houses themselves. It will show the specificity of Fane's references, as well as the way in which he draws on the mutual familiarity of these waters to himself and his addressees to pursue themes of political and sexual liberty.

The liberty afforded to the privileged by open-air spaces, however, was often achieved at the expense of nature. In the second part of the paper, then, I will consider the traces Fane's poems of how estate and common waters were managed, damaged, and exploited. I will reflect on the social and environmental dynamics that he side-lines, including fen drainage and enclosure. These, too, were familiar in Fane's day.

Chris Pak (Swansea University)

Speculating About Agricultural Catastrophe in A.G. Street's *Already Walks Tomorrow* (1938)

Panel 3.7, Wednesday 30 August, 3.15pm – 4.45pm, Teaching Room 5

This presentation extends ongoing research into narratives of rural change by reading A.G. Street's *Already Walks Tomorrow* (1938) as an example of a speculative

imagination grappling with transition. The novel responds to the social and economic anxieties engendered by the effects of the 1930s American dust bowl in its portrayal of a world threatened by soil nutrient depletion. Its characterisation of rural change posits new modes of capitalist development as a primary cause of the novel's global agricultural crisis. Its response is to offer an uneasy narrative of re-establishment that speculates on social and political configurations informed by a range of agricultural experience. The novel centres its critique of contemporary agricultural systems on human relationships to the land yet struggles to imagine new agricultural practices and forms of social organisation emergent from this relationship that go beyond historical modes of organisation and governance emergent in England.

In relation to the contemporary concern over climate change and its impact on the social and economic basis of food production, *Already Walks Tomorrow* offers a social, political and economic critique that can help to contextualise debates about climate disruption to food production. Analysis of the inter-relationships between agriculture, society and politics that the novel establishes can also provide frameworks for understanding aspects of rural change in the twenty and twenty-first centuries and can help to inform the development of solutions to climate-disruption to contemporary systems of food production.

Arush Pande (Princeton University)

The Beasts of Capital, the Ghosts of Nature: Environmental Justice in Tillie Olsen's *Yonnondio*

Panel 2.3, Wednesday 30 August, 1.30pm – 3.00pm, Lecture Theatre 2

Tillie Olsen's Depression-era novel *Yonnondio* is an influential part of many working-class and feminist literary traditions in the US. Yet, the strong environmental dimension of the novel's working-class and feminist consciousness has received little scholarly attention. I am interested in exploring this neglected ecocritical aspect by analyzing Olsen's use of three closely connected tropes in the novel: the idiom of the proletarian grotesque, the creation of ecological spectres, and the use of a Brechtian narrator that makes significant textual intrusions. While most critics read these forms and symbols only as proletarian tropes, I contend that they serve, simultaneously, as the tropes of environmental justice writing in the novel.

The early 20th century, like the early 21st, was a period of great transition, even upheaval. While the large-scale transformation of lived environments under the conditions of full-scale industrial and colonialist capitalism paved the way for "modernity," it simultaneously wrought immense devastation among the lives of working-class, colored, and indigenous peoples of the world, an entanglement that has largely been written out of mainstream global environmentalisms. I am interested in

analyzing aesthetic and formal devices in *Yonnondio*, a novel of the early 20th century, as a way to think about their potential for responding to the daunting representational challenges of the contemporary environmental crisis. If, as many contemporary ecocritics, such as Amitav Ghosh (*The Great Derangement*), Dipesh Chakrabarty (*The Climate of History in a Planetary Age*), and Rob Nixon (*Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*) suggest, the environmental crisis instigates transitions in our current representational practices, could looking at how representations of labor straddle the aesthetic realm in a previous epoch of widespread environmental transition offer a window of possibility for environmental writing? By looking at *Yonnondio*, I want to dwell in the contours of this broader question.

Jude Piesse (Liverpool John Moores University)

Darwin's ecological vision and the garden at The Mount

Panel 5.1, Friday 1 September, 9.00am – 10.45am, Teaching Room 4

This creative-critical paper explores how Darwin's family garden at *The Mount* in Shrewsbury can reconnect us with Darwin's ecological vision in timely and tangible ways. Still surviving in fragments, and in an exciting transitional state following the purchase of *The Mount* in 2021 for renovation, the originally seven-acre garden was Darwin's formative green space: the place where he first encountered the natural world, played as a boy, and returned to conduct botanical experiments in the early 1840s following his Beagle expeditions.

I will introduce the garden, past and present, and show how it played a key role in shaping the ecological vision that is a crucial, but still sometimes overlooked, component of Darwin's evolutionary thought. I argue that gardens in *On the Origin of Species* (1859), articulate this ecological vision by operating as deep-rooted metaphorical figures, able to signify multi-dimensional cyclical relations within systems.

The paper draws on my personal knowledge of the site and research informing my book *The Ghost in the Garden: in search of Darwin's lost garden* (2021), which tells the garden's story through biography, memoir, history, nature writing, and other creative forms. I will conclude with a short reading from the book's last chapter, demonstrating how the garden might enable us to imagine open-ended, potentially positive futures in our moment of environmental crisis.

Anna Pilz (University of Edinburgh)

Travel Writing and Coastal Infrastructures' Narrative Promises

Panel 4.6, Thursday 31 August, 9.00am – 10.45am, Flex 2

This paper explores Maria Edgeworth's letters on her 1833 Connemara tour as a starting point to investigate the connection between Ireland's western district and the Scottish Highlands in the cultural imagination. Through Edgeworth's acquaintance with and interest in the works of the Scottish engineer Alexander Nimmo, I go on to establish the historical links between Scotland and coastal infrastructural developments along Ireland's Atlantic seaboard. I offer a focused study of the creation of the fishing village of Roundstone by analysing an archive of texts, maps, reports, and images. Travel writing, in particular, emerges as a genre that captures a place in the transitional state of becoming and enables us a view into the narrative potentials afforded by coastal infrastructures. The envisioned narratives of and for a coastal future – both in the past and present – allow an exploration of the ways in which colonial infrastructures, coastal community building, and the knowledge production of natural history are grounded in an archipelagic practice.

Nikolemma Polyxeni Dimitriou (The University of Sheffield)

Walking in the Dark as a Form of Transition in Nan Shepherd's *The Living Mountain*: A Celebration of the Cairngorm Mountains of Scotland (written 1940, first published 1977)
Panel 3.8, Wednesday 30 August, 3.15pm – 4.45pm, Teaching Room 4

Nan Shepherd's work (2014 edition) has been experiencing a renewed interest by researchers, such as Roderick Watson and Louisa Gairn, and writers, such as Robert Macfarlane. However, it is undeniable that the investigation of *The Living Mountain* has yet to interpret walking as a form of transition amidst a troublesome 'new normal' and an uncertain future. Nan Shepherd was most surely experiencing this disenchantment in 1940 when writing *The Living Mountain*. I will be examining a number of representative examples in *The Living Mountain* and will discuss how Shepherd uses walking in the mountains as a form of transition, offering resistance and an attempt to understand her context within the dystopia of World War II.

Shepherd describes how 'to walk out of the top of a cloud is good ... it is like the morning of creation'. She creates an idealised version of the landscape and the mountains become her religious 'elsewhere', a place which, in the 'disturbed and uncertain world [of the Second World War, became her] secret place of ease'. She describes how 'walking in the dark ... can reveal new knowledge about a familiar place. In a moonless week, with overcast skies and wartime blackout, I walked night after night over the moory path ... to hear the news broadcast'. Solo walking in the dark, against the backdrop of World War II, allow her to transition to the outside world but also where 'the world seems to fall away all round' ; an escape.

This presentation explores questions addressed in my PhD thesis, and will hopefully ignite a potential future interest in the topic.

Andrea Raso (Roma Tre University, Rome)

Com-posting New Ecological Memory: Derek Jarman's *Modern Nature* as a Sympoietic Transition towards Death

Panel 5.1, Friday 1 September, 9.00am – 10.45am, Teaching Room 4

In 1986, after testing positive to HIV, artist and activist Derek Jarman retired to Prospect Cottage, a beach house overlooking the North Sea on one side and a nuclear power station on the other. There, he simultaneously set out to build an eclectic garden and to self-delineate in written form the features of an equally eclectic man, remembered today as a great filmmaker, writer, and amateur gardener. The result are a sanctuary-like site accessible to visitors and the journal *Modern Nature: 1989-1990*, a memoir and artistic tribute to literature, homosexual love, and the transformative power of nature. Surely, Jarman is one among many who were creatively inspired by the vegetal world: from Virginia Woolf and Italo Calvino's oaks in *Orlando* and *The Baron in the Trees* to Robert Frost's maples and birches, literature abounds in odes to nature. However, in Jarman, we find the legacy of a new eco-aware form of memory-making. Indeed, as noted by Donna Haraway, human exceptionalism is easily overcome through the sympoietic celebration of a world in becoming, namely what she calls "com-post [...]" rich in humus, ripe for multispecies storytelling" (2016, 11). This not only validates, as Jarman writes, the potential of gardening as "a therapy and a pharmacopoeia" (2022, 25), but also gives voice to the inherent trans-ness of life, which makes of Jarman's journal a multidirectional guide for an outward-oriented becoming-with, a carrier bag of material-semiotic significance full of beginnings (Le Guin 2019, 35). By drawing on Haraway's study as well as on the lessons of feminist (Timeto 2020) and queer ecological practices (Ferrante 2016; Hume and Rahimtoola 2018), I will attempt to show how Jarman's visions, right when he was losing his sight, make of the burden of a dying body the space for the symbolic and concrete continuation of life.

Ellie Rees (Liverpool Hope University)

Stone to Sand: A Posthuman Lyric 'I'?

Panel 6.1, Friday 1 September, 11.00am – 12.30pm, Lecture Theatre 2

Drawing on a recent lyric essay of the above title, I will explore the experience of the lyric self as a state of transition from a practice and creative perspective, reading sections from the lyric prose followed by a selection of new poems. This new work builds on themes explored in my most recent book *Tam Lin of the Winter Park* (Guillemot Press, 2022). The prose lyric essay and new poems were created during my relocation from Liverpool to the Wirral peninsula where I was born, and explore the renegotiation of my relationship with Bidston Hill in Birkenhead. Over the period of this personal transition, I

have been walking the sandstone ridge of Helsby Hill and Frodsham and now the end of the sandstone escarpment is minutes from my home. I will conclude with reflecting on my current thinking and writings on the theme of transition, and the knowledge the experience of writing poetry offers as I encounter subjectivity in process within the activity of writing poetry. Poesis then is understood as an encounter between the more-than-human, animate world and the undulating porous ridge line of a subjectivity; a sleeping giant formed of sand.

Heidi Rogers (University of Waikato)

The Weight of the World on their Shoulders: Invisible Illness and Anticipatory Grief in Realistic Young Adult Cli-Fi & 'Sick-Lit' From Aotearoa New Zealand
Panel 3.3, Wednesday 30 August, 3.15pm – 4.45pm, Flex 2

Childhood, in the western world, experienced a 'turning point' with the onset of modernity. Children were positioned as malleable agents of potential, whom—if developed 'properly'—could be expected to carry forth and progress the ideals of their similarly 'developing' societies. Like children of modernity, young people today are perceived as malleable agents of change.

YA readers are, according to Alice Curry: "[O]n the brink of adulthood and soon to be called upon to maintain, or reconstitute, existing ontological frameworks." Sparking, it seems, both fear and hope in older generations. Ideas 'go viral' on social media as easily as viruses spread from one naïve immune-system to another. In a scramble to correct the wrongs of the past and create a tenable future, young people are being primed to embody a swathe of new (and recycled) ideals. Are they also being lumped with the burden of saving the entirety of humanity from ourselves?

While young adult cli-fi and 'sick-lit' blooms against a backdrop of global pandemics and climate crises, my research is concerned with how authors of contemporary YA fiction are portraying the complexities surrounding invisible illness—in the self, in others, and in wider natural environments. In particular, my paper will consider the value of "embodied and embedded" narratives that "stay with the trouble", as Alice Curry and Donna Haraway respectively suggest. Further, I will introduce the creative component of my thesis—an original realistic climate fiction, set in New Zealand, following a girl-gang imperfectly exploring their thoughts, feelings and agency while living with a dying mother and a dying Mother Earth.

Madeleine Rose (University of Oxford)

'You can hear the whole world whispering': Transitions Between Human and Non-

human Language in Charlotte Mew's Dramatic Monologues

Panel 6.3, Friday 1 September, 11.00am – 12.30pm, Teaching Room 5

As a writer, Charlotte Mew defies easy historical or cultural categorisation. Living through turn of the century upheavals, she published in such diverse venues as the late-Victorian decadent 'Yellow Book' and the quintessentially modernist 'Egoist'. This marginality is itself a key theme in her writing as she depicts characters moving between human and non-human worlds. My paper responds to Mew's focus on figures who blur the boundaries between human and non-human, as well as Glennis Byron's (2003) call to reassess the transition between Victorian and modernist dramatic monologues, taking Mew's poetry as a starting point. While she adopts many of the themes and formal conventions found in Victorian dramatic monologues, Mew's presentation of marginalised characters on the boundary between human society and the natural world challenges the human-centred convention of the dramatic monologue form.

Using Mikhail Bakhtin's concepts of dialogism and heteroglossia, as outlined in 'Discourse in the Novel' (1981), I will demonstrate how the intrusion of the natural world and non-human organisms in Mew's poetry disrupts human language. Bakhtin's work has been productively applied to both modernist poetry (Tony Pinkney, 1994) and ecocriticism (Patrick D. Murphy, 2011; John C. Ryan, 2017) and my paper combines these two critical strands to offer a new reading of Mew's use of the dramatic monologue. Through close readings of 'The Farmer's Bride' (1912) and 'The Changeling' (1913), I will show how Mew highlights the pain of transition between human and non-human worlds. Mew's presentation of speakers adapting their language to different environments challenges the coherence of their identities and speaks to emerging concepts of ecological entanglement, articulated by A.G. Tansley and others. The dramatic monologue supposedly foregrounds speech, but Mew's exploration of conflicting languages and communicative sounds more generally challenges the primacy of human language itself.

Roberta Sala (University of Turin)

Semiotic Transitions through the Forest-Border. An Ecocritical Analysis of "Kollektivnye Dejstvija"'s Early Actions

Panel 4.1, Thursday 31 August, 9.00am – 10.45am, Lecture Theatre 1

The Muscovite unofficial group Kollektivnye Dejstvija was founded in 1976 by the artists Andrej Monastyrskij, Nikita Alekseev, Nikolaj Panitkov and Georgij Kizeval'ter, in order to analyze the nature of art in a cultural system oriented by Soviet ideology. Its members organized conceptual performances in unconventional places, subsequently asking the spectators to write reports on their experience. The actions of 1976-1980, whose accounts are included in the first volume of Monastyrskij's "Poezdkij za gorod" (1998),

consist in one-day trips in the outskirts of Moscow, usually to a snowy field where the 'empty' performances took place. In order to reach it, the spectators had to walk through a small wood without knowing what was going to happen after crossing the 'forest-border'. As it emerges from the participants' reports, during the walk their perception of reality gradually changed, driving them to open their minds to the encounter with 'otherness'.

In my essay, I will analyze the forest in some selected actions of the group as a semiotic border, allowing for a transition from Soviet oppressive conceptualization of reality to new possibilities of experiencing the world independently. This passage occurs on multiple levels: first of all, it implies an aesthetic transformation, since the performances, inspired by Monastyrskij's poetry, represent the 'dissolution' of literature in everyday life (O. Esanu, "Transitions in Post-Soviet Art", 2013). Secondly, by going through the wood the spectators gradually learn new possibilities of shaping reality, relying not only on conventional language, but also on the indexical and iconic signs governing meaning-making between humans and non-humans. This process allows for the emancipation of literature from the «symbolic dominance» (T. Maran, "Ecosemiotics", 2020) of the Soviet metanarrative. Lastly, the displacement of art from the urban 'centre' of official culture to the border of non-anthropized landscapes provides marginal voices with a space for expression.

Martin Schauss (University of Edinburgh)

Transitioning Ecopoetic Energies

Panel 5.2, Friday 1 September, 9.00am – 10.45am, Flex 1

This paper draws on the ideas of "ecological force" (Niblett 2020) and "energetic materialism" (Westall 2017) to make sense of recent experiments in intermedial environmental literatures, or what we call ecopoetics. It looks at contemporary poets and artists for whom energy and resources become key issues on multiple intersecting levels: environmental (fossil capital, energy angst, scarcity, "slow violence" [Nixon 2011]...), private and public health (chronic energy impairment, eco-anxiety, "slow death" [Berlant 2011]...), and artistic (literary marketplace, precarity, "energy-of-fiction" [Macdonald 2013]...). The paper argues, in a first instance, that these poets' intermedial experiments register an anxious grappling with cultural production as ecological and energetic in nature. Poets like Caroline Bergvall and Alec Finlay reconfigure the ecopoetic space by combining digital with site-specific landscapes, by embedding immersive, multimedia environments within local communities, among many other strategies. I explore how these innovative forms and strategies speak to wider global, often longue durée concerns around energy transition and energy commons that we can find in their work. And how these concerns in turn evidence a preoccupation, always, with the transit and migration of people, communities and languages.

Anne Schmalstig (Texas A&M University at Qatar)

Postpetroleum Ecologies: Reimagining Sea- and Landscapes in Nnedi

Okorafor's *Lagoon*

Panel 1.2, Wednesday 30 August, 11.00am – 12.45pm, Lecture Theatre 1

A common thread of thought in the environmental humanities is that capitalism is so dominant that it has become inevitable, closing off the possibility of imagining alternative systems (Fisher 2009). Likewise, science fiction has a long history of examining dystopian societies, corporate control, and the negative consequences of unchecked capitalism. However, many science fiction writers address concerns about capitalism-caused environmental disaster in innovative ways that do allow for alternatives to business as usual. My paper addresses how some Nigerian science fiction radically reimagines the future of capitalism and its consequent environmental disasters. Specifically, this project examines Nnedi Okorafor's *Lagoon* to highlight how Okorafor and other Africanfuturists center their narratives of the future around human-alien and animal-alien encounters, root them in African rather than Western folkloric traditions, and entertain possibilities, however fantastical, for an end to fossil-fuel based pollution and political corruption. I argue that Okorafor's Africanfuturist petrofiction novel reworks and refocuses science fiction towards more imaginatively productive narratives that go beyond the inevitability of neoliberal capitalism. In conclusion, this project draws attention to the ways in which Nigerian science fiction suggests new ways of thinking about capitalism and its aftereffects in futurist narratives.

Christian Schmitt-Kilb (University of Rostock, Germany)

Genre and the Anthropocene: Focusing the Coast in Recent Literary Texts

Panel 6.1, Friday 1 September, 11.00am – 12.30pm, Lecture Theatre 2

The concept of the Anthropocene, or the “New Climatic Regime” (Bruno Latour), implies transition on many levels. With its key characteristic of human responsibility for an earth system modification that has led to human-induced irreversible changes in the environment, it has far-reaching consequences for the understanding of history, time-scales, and “nature”, of human and more-than-human agency, and of the entangled relations of humans with the world. In the field of literature, these consequences concern central categories such as representation and genre, e.g. the general question whether there are genres that are better or less well suited to represent and make sense of the human in an Anthropocene environment. This question can be (and has been) discussed theoretically and philosophically. The approach this paper takes is text- and theme-induced. I am going to look at a selection of recent literary texts from different

genres that share a thematic focus on coasts and shores, transitional and ideologically charged spaces that have been visibly affected by anthropogenic encroachments in many ways. New Nature Writing (from Jean Sprackland's "Strands", 2012), poetry (from Kathleen Jamie's "The Overhaul", 2012), and fictional prose (from Lucy Wood's short story collection "The Sing of the Shore", 2018): these are my examples used to investigate how genre might have an influence upon the texts' thematic focus and their representation of Anthropocene environments. In the context of the issues raised above, what are the strengths and weaknesses of different generic forms? Which aspects of the major contemporary crises do they throw into relief? The paper will not presume to give final answers, but it hopes to provide space for a discussion about the uses and limits of genre in contemporary literary responses to life in the Anthropocene.

Jim Scown (Cardiff University)

Unstable Views of Nature: Beyond the Whole in Humboldt's Romantic Ecology
Panel 3.7, Wednesday 30 August, 3.15pm – 4.45pm, Teaching Room 5

This paper examines the place of soils in the transition to organicist conceptions of nature and society in the nineteenth century. For Alexander von Humboldt, soils were the vital underpinning of a natural world where life emerged in the relationships and interactions that formed 'a living whole'. In his *Personal Narrative*, changes in soils (for example from 'clayey and muriatic' to 'dry and sandy') shape natural regions, each distinguished by their own blend of phenomena and thought to influence people as well as plant and animal life.

Influenced by Humboldt's organicist conception of nature, this interest in 'vegetable mould' was shared by Charles Darwin, a study that lasted much of his life and shaped his more famous work on evolution. Earthworms are 'a geological power', Darwin explained in 1838 as he began to think through natural selection, and as agents of soil formation a paradigmatic example of how species shape 'the conditions of life' that simultaneously act as evolutionary pressure on the organism.

Cultural historian Wilhelm Riehl took Humboldt's ideas of soil in another direction. Analysing the 'social organism' in the 1850s, he divided German lands into three regions, each separated by changes in the landscape and climate. His understanding of the links between land and people influenced George Eliot's Loamshire novels, notably *Adam Bede*, but would also lead to radically different, fascist ideas of nationhood in the 1930s, visions of mystical unity between soil and people.

By tracing this lineage of ideas about the order of nature into fascist projections of people and the land, this paper argues that soils were at the heart of nineteenth-century imaginaries of society and nature and, troubling the relationship between these

scientific and cultural discourses, questions what is at stake in organicist ideas of return to soil and the land today.

Anna Selby (Schumacher College & Manchester Metropolitan University)

Learn from the Pine: Poetics, Agency and Teaching with the More-Than-Human
Panel 6.3, Friday 1 September, 11.00am – 12.30pm, Teaching Room 5

‘The basis of art is change in the universe. What’s still has changeless form. Moving things change, and because we cannot put a stop to time, it continues unarrested.’
Hattori Tohō (1657-1730) quoting Matsuo Bashō (1644–1694) from Tohō’s *Red Book* (Barnhill, 2018)

In this time of adaptation and transition, what can we learn from and how can we collaborate, research and teach with the more-than-human in academia? Drawing from early examples of Japanese and Chinese poetry made in place, non-Eurowestern languages and indigenous ecological knowledge, this creative-critical paper will explore global languages countering colonial, speciesist, and human-centric worldviews: languages with grammar, poetics and lexicons in which the other-than-human have agency, animacy and personhood (Wall Kimmerer, 2013; Matthews, 2017; Vigil, 2023).

The paper will survey theory, practice and pedagogy, sharing examples of educational intuitions and scholars fostering new ways of looking, feeling and interrelating with multiple species and environments: from islands and atolls where academic staff teach ecological literature about climate collapse whilst students live in and with the realities of climate catastrophe (Perez, 2020); to the Bawaka Country collective from Arnhem Land in Australia: an Indigenous and non-Indigenous, human-more-than-human research collective whose work is co-authored and co-credited with the land as active participant; and finally to the UK where embodied practices and work with eco-psychotherapists now form part of new masters degrees in the environmental humanities to support researchers, students and staff with resilience, transition, and ecological grief.

David Shackleton (Cardiff University)

Inspiring Transitions: Afrofuturist Counter-Moods and Environmental Activism
Panel 5.4, Friday 1 September, 9.00am – 10.45am, Lecture Theatre 2

This paper argues that Afrofuturism maps political counter-moods that promise to inspire environmental activism. As part of his analysis of ‘risk society’, Ulrich Beck identifies anxiety as the principal affect that accompanies the anticipation of future hazards. Although anxiety can be debilitating, he notes its potential to create forms of solidarity and become a political force. By providing what Jonathan Flatley calls

‘affective maps’, Afrofuturism illustrates ways in which anxiety might be converted into political ‘counter-moods’. Such counter-moods stand as alternatives to the structure of feeling that Lauren Berlant calls ‘cruel optimism’: whereas cruel optimism involves a commitment to the future through a (misguided) belief in individual development and self-improvement, Afrofuturist counter-moods are collective and bring people together in a drive for political change.

In Sun Ra’s *Space is the Place* (1974), music creates an affective journey that is conceived of as transportation to a black planet. Drawing on black feminism, Janelle Monáe’s *Dirty Computer* (2018) mobilizes an oppositional gaze to resist the speculative logics that would turn women’s bodies into commodities, and instead explores affective connections between women in its call to ‘fem the future’. And Ryan Coogler’s *Black Panther* (2018) uses vibranium to inspire counter-moods in response to a long history of resource-extraction and underdevelopment in Africa.

Afrofuturist counter-moods resonate at a time when eco-anxiety is increasingly being converted into political activism on a global scale by environmentalist movements inspired by Greta Thunberg and Extinction Rebellion. Such movements might coalesce into a form of eco-cosmopolitanism, similar to that championed by Beck and Ursula Heise. Yet without sufficient attention to the inequities produced by racial capital, such movements and philosophies are in danger of reproducing a white future. By contrast, Afrofuturism imagines ways in which environmental anxiety might be channelled into feminist, queer, and antiracist forms of environmental activism.

Sara Shahwan (Goldsmiths, University of London)

Becoming-with the ‘Breeze’: The Flow between Self and Space in the Imagination of Migrant Young People

Panel 3.3, Wednesday 30 August, 3.15pm – 4.45pm, Flex 2

This paper looks at the ways young migrants negotiate the liminal in-betweens of their multiple identities as they explore the natural elements of place. It stems from my participatory ethnographic research with a diverse group of Arab children (aged 12-14) in Istanbul, investigating the process of ‘becoming-with’ the natural world through sensory experience and text-making (Haraway, 2008; Wright, 2014). As my young participants engaged in the activities of walking, poetry reading/writing and filmmaking, they discovered the breeze as a gentle life force capable of generating and giving form to their expressions of ecological (and migrant) identity. Using an elemental ecocritical framing that recognizes the material agency of elements (Cohen and Duckert, 2015; Oppermann and Iovino, 2015), this paper examines how the breeze could become an essential source of the material imagination that produces a variety of art forms and an affective engagement with the environment. A multimodal analysis of my participants’ textual productions (including bilingual poetry, artwork and a short film entitled

‘Breeze’) leads to a discussion of the entanglement between bilingualism and ecopoetics in the identity-making of young migrants.

Alison Sharrock (The University of Manchester)

Hunter and hunted: metamorphic relations

Panel 6.3, Friday 1 September, 11.00am – 12.30pm, Teaching Room 5

A close, even symbiotic, relationship between hunter and hunted has existed throughout the history of life on earth, becoming occluded only in the modern industrialised cultures. Indeed, many species at an evolutionary level are intertwined and co-dependent as predator and prey. From the earliest cave paintings to folktale and ritual, humanity has explored this relationship under many forms, in its attempts to make sense of the world. This paper will engage with one such literary exploration, the story of Actaeon in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. This Latin epic poem from the first decade of the current era tells stories of metamorphosis from throughout Graeco-Roman myth. Actaeon, a young Theban huntsman, accidentally stumbles across the goddess Diana, herself a huntress, while she is bathing, and is punished by being turned into a stag, though his ‘mind remains the same’. As he runs away, not realising what has happened, he is amazed at his own speed but also at his unaccustomed fear. Now Actaeon’s hunting dogs get wind of the stag and bring him down, tearing him to pieces while his erstwhile companions exult at the kill. The reader, meanwhile, is split between focalisation through the mind of the stag-Actaeon, and helpless external voyeurism. I shall attempt to draw out the close, albeit painful, affinity between the various hunters and hunted involved in the episode, as an example of the way in which metamorphosis in Ovid’s hands actualises the interconnectedness of species.

Madeleine Sinclair (University of Warwick)

“The city’s great garbage can”: Slow Violence and Lovecraftian Horror in Mariana Enríquez’s “Under The Black Water”

Panel 3.6, Wednesday 30 August, 3.15pm – 4.45pm, Lecture Theatre 2

This paper analyses the registration of transitional eco-horror in Mariana Enríquez’s “Under the Black Water”, a twenty-first century “weird tale” which repurposes Lovecraftian cosmic horror in order to critique socio-environmental toxicity in the Riachuelo River basin. It argues that Enríquez’s short story belongs to a neo-Lovecraftian “eco-conscious” strand of weird fiction identified by Sharae Deckard and Kerstin Oloff, turning back to the New Weird’s “deeply problematic forerunner”, in order to mediate the “violence, epistemes and socio-ecological relations corresponding to the eco-racial regimes of capitalism and colonialism” (Deckard and Oloff, 2020, p. 292). This paper considers how the eco-gothic tropes of the Lovecraftian “weird tale” are

subversively reconfigured in order to register ego-gothic transformation on the banks of the Riachuelo, a nodal point for industrial toxics generated by the capitalist world system. The paper first analyses Enriquez's re-inscription of the Lovecraftian ocean-dwelling monster, which renders in uncanny terms the surreal effects of toxic pollution and socially uneven forms of violence in so called "sacrifice zones". Secondly, it considers how Enriquez's focus on the slow violence of toxic exposure resonates with contemporary debates surrounding the socio-ecological impacts of neo-extractivist accumulation (mega-mining, agribusiness and the expansion of the Argentine soy frontier), reading the short-story as a commentary on the intensification of the export-driven growth model pursued in many Latin American countries since the turn of the millennium.

Maria Sledmere (University of Strathclyde)

'A cinder signal': Petromelancholia and Anthropocene Gurlesque

Panel 1.2, Wednesday 30 August, 11.00am – 12:45pm, Lecture Theatre 1

'Who is Cinder?' asks Jacques Derrida in his 1987 book *Cinders*, 'someone vanished but something preserved her trace and at the same time lost it, the cinder'. Cinder is gone, yet remains as cinders: a half-living, personified trace of presence. *Cinders* is a poetry of energetic leftovers from high-carbon lifestyles. This creative-critical paper presents new poetry from a forthcoming collection with KRUPSKAYA Books, alongside practice-based reflections on using 'cinders' as a figure for the emotional 'afterglow' of transition from a fossil-based economy. With reference to my own work, as well as ashen imaginaries in contemporary poetry and pop culture (from Lana Del Rey to fairytale Cinderella), I consider how the lyrical cinder embodies a structure of feeling whose poethical value laments and performs Stephanie LeMenager's 'petromelancholia' — an 'unresolved grieving of conventional fossil fuel reserves' (2014). Unresolved because never fully extinguished, the theatricality of *Cinders* uses a mode of what I call, after Arielle Greenberg, anthropocene 'gurlesque': voicing a camp 'ethics of mattering' (Barad 2008) felt through gender, nonhuman intimacy, excess and exhaustion.

Yielding to an elemental poetics of fire, hospitality and stress response, I ask what it means to perform the contradictions inherent to the universalising term 'anthropocene' by way of a playfully excessive linguistic viscera. To cinder is to be 'active, acute, incisive' (Derrida 1991) in the debris of citation and the temporal smudging of the lyric moment. Clustering semiotic embers of fire, femininity and consumption, I look at work which signals a petromelancholic outlook at the attention-seeking level of image and register. The poetry of cinders mobilises the desire economies of our energy unconscious without assuming growth and plenitude; premised rather on the cinder's precarity within the charnel arousals of late capitalism. *Cinders* registers the dissolve and possible rebirth of our 'energy dreams' (Marder 2017).

Matthias Stephan (Aarhus University)

Narratives of the Anthropocene: Affective Responses to Climate Trauma

Panel 2.1, Wednesday 30 August, 1.30pm – 3.00pm, Lecture Theatre 1

A great challenge in presenting climate change is its scalar effects. Climate change narratives often collapse the scale into typical conventions, such as the two-hour film, which present the problem but also present unrealistic solutions. This becomes coupled with a period of anticipatory mourning or ‘pretrauma,’ following E. Ann Kaplan, of the climate crisis, with its expected catastrophic result.

This paper argues that nostalgic narratives have the potential to focus on a medium scale, allowing the experience of reflective nostalgia (Boym) to frame both the long scope of the historical consequences, and tie that to the local affective narrative of trauma within the story. Furthermore, the paper argues that through the collapsed scale possible through the nostalgic narrative, and the acceptance of life loss in the face of climate trauma, readers can confront, accept, and ultimately react meaningfully to our changed circumstances – freeing us from the Anthropocene’s perceived paralyzing nature.

The paper will focus on readings of two novels, Emily St. John Mandel’s *Station Eleven* and Sequoia Nagamatsu’s 2022 debut *How High We Can Go in the Dark*. Through close readings, the paper demonstrates how rather than looking towards still possible futures, the focus on the loss – exploring the emotional impact of dwelling in the certainty of change and our varied responses to it – coupled with a nostalgic edge as they both deal with a postapocalyptic scenario allows us to consider how we can move forward and use our past longings for positive future change. They equally consider the responses of grief – moving past denial towards acceptance of monumental change – and explore the use of hope in such bleak and dire circumstances. The medium scale allows us to both promote active affective change and keeps the threat of climate and environmental change present and real.

Karl Kristian Swane Bambini (Østfold University College)

Norwegian Futurisms: Posthumanism and the Norwegian Nordic Model in Tor Åge

Bringsværd’s *Du og Jeg, Alfred* and *Alfred 2.0*

Panel 3.4, Wednesday 30 August, 3.15pm – 4.45pm, Flex 1

Much of the Science Fiction (SF) produced in Norway in recent years has been dystopian and focused on the future effects of climate change on society. These texts are embedded in the Norwegian cultural consciousness and respond to broader contemporary debates on Norway’s oil wealth, social welfare, consumerism, and

ecological concerns. The recent duology, *Du og jeg, Alfred: Et tidsbilde* (2020) and *Alfred 2.0* (2022), written by Tor Åge Bringsværd under the pseudonym Edgar Burås, are prominent examples of this literary trend as they extrapolate devastated visions of Norway and Europe into the year 2131, exploring both social and ecological collapse under a waning neo-liberal capitalism. As both novels mobilize characters and technologies that blur and confuse the boundaries of the human, this paper uses the posthumanist theories of Donna Haraway in interpreting their cultural and socio-political symbolism. Ultimately this paper argues that the ecodystopian setting and posthuman characters posit an intersectional diversity and multispecies kinship that challenge notions of ecological and social sustainability in the Norwegian Nordic model. This paper will first introduce Bringsværd and the core texts, then concretize the Norwegian Nordic model, followed by a review of the ecodystopian setting in light of neoliberalism and nationalism, and conclude with a discussion of posthumanism.

Ilka Tampke (La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia)

Written by the forest

Panel 4.1, Thursday 31 August, 9.00am – 10.45am, Lecture Theatre 1

Entering the distinct bioregion of a forest brings about many changes of state for a human subject—hormonal, emotional, microbial, spiritual, political, even moral. The skin between human and forest is porous. But might this permeability also extend to creative thought? As a writer whose practice takes me into tree-worlds every day, to what extent might it be said that the forest is doing the writing?

This paper will describe the process I undertook to produce a novel in which a woman is trapped and injured under a fallen tree-limb in a remote Australian forest location, undergoing a deep moral, maternal and place-based reckoning in her last twelve hours of life. The passage from life to death—perhaps the most revelatory of all transitions—creates the conditions for deep attention by which her world is truly seen for the first and last time.

Observing the constitutive powers of the forest, and the effects of transitioning from non-forest to forested spaces forms both the subject and the method of my creative work, raising questions such as: in what ways are we made, revealed, or altered by the places in which we dwell? Are our creative outputs ever really our own?

Cool-climate forests, so readily overlain with European aesthetic frameworks, are not as frequently associated with Australian literary landscapes, which are grounded, more typically, in coasts, deserts, the vast inland spaces of the ‘outback’, and the mysteriously indeterminate ‘bush’. For this precise reason, Australian cool-climate forests represent a space of hybrid poetic legacies, wherein the encounter between

European settler imaginaries and Indigenous epistemologies might be intimately explored.

In considering these questions I draw on I draw on the material poetics of Gaston Bachelard, Freya Matthew's panpsychisms, as well as other Western and Australian Indigenous materialisms.

Adrian Tait (Independent Scholar) and Terri Gifford (Bath Spa University)

Transitions: A Critical and Creative Response to D. H. Lawrence's *Apocalypse*

Panel 4.3, Thursday 31 August, 9.00am – 10.45am, Lecture Theatre 2

In this creative and critical paper three poems by Terry Gifford are related to the ideas that D. H. Lawrence explored in his final work *Apocalypse* (1930) in which Lawrence responds to the Revelation (or Apocalypse) of St. John. Adrian will introduce the background to this radical and neglected environmental book, arguing that Lawrence shifts the emphasis from Apocalypse as Armageddon to Apocalypse as Revelation. Lawrence opens up the possibility that we might be saved in this world, not the next and that by making radical transitions, we might save this world, and in so doing save ourselves, writing, 'What we want is to destroy our false, inorganic connections, especially those related to money, and re-establish the living organic connections, with the cosmos, the sun and earth, with mankind and nation and family' (A 149).

Gifford's three poems are then discussed as plays upon, but also deviations from, some of the notions Lawrence was demanding that we consider. 'Cretan Post-Pastoral' connects with the idea of Revelation as a right reading of the signs, which in turn links to the central message of Lawrence's interpretation – a reunification of the divided self that encompasses the spiritual and emotional and the rational. 'Hinkley G' turns towards the idea of G for gravity, a sustainable, safe source of energy that draws on what is already right there, right in front of us. 'The Resilient Cretaceous' suggests that life on earth might be well served by our own demise, a thought intended not to induce fatalistic gestures of surrender, but to encourage its very opposite: a willingness to engage with the reality of our situation, and seek out those ways in which, as Lawrence saw it, to reconnect.

David Tierney (University of Liverpool)

Talking Animals and Silent Humans—Reshaping the Human-Animal Boundary

Panel 1.1, Wednesday 30 August, 11.00am – 12.45pm, Lecture Theatre 2

The human-animal boundary is classically posited as an upward trajectory towards the pinnacle that is humans and with clear-cut impermeable markers. However, hybrid and metamorphized characters can be used to reconstruct it as something gradient,

porous, uncertain, and riddled with intersections. The following paper draws on the research of David Herman on the nonhuman to examine the metamorphizing of characters in my thesis novel *Ark* in which the boundaries in the perspectives of non-human animals (NHAs), robot animals, and humans are frequently crossed and blended together, and *Tender is the Flesh* by Augustina Baztericca in which certain humans are stripped of human language and are therefore treated as NHAs but at times slip into humanity.

In *Tender is the Flesh* all NHAs have become inedible, their flesh poisoned, but instead of giving up meat, humans without human language are bred to be used for food. Similar to the animalized humans in *Planet of the Apes*, this transformation shows how thin and illegitimate the boundary is between humans and NHAs. *Ark* in comparison through its first-person non-human narration explores how its human-created robot animals' umwelts are taken up both by the human and the non-human with preference often being given to the non-human sensory and mental world. A level of uncertainty is created through the use of fragmentation, hinting at the perceptual worlds and mental processes outside of human reach.

Both novels show the different strategies that Herman outlines for presenting nonhuman experiences, both allowing us to question the human-animal boundary in different ways. Through examining both novels, I plan to show how metamorphosis leads us to question the human-animal boundary and what new form it could take.

Mònica Tomàs (Rutgers University)

Animal transformations and forced assimilation in Horacio Quiroga's "Juan Darién" and Karen Russell's "St. Lucy's Home for Girls Raised by Wolves"

Panel 5.3, Friday 1 September, 9.00am – 10.45am, Flex 2

In this paper I examine the narrative continuities and chasms between two types of transitions: forced cultural assimilation in settler colonial states, and human-animal transformations. Given that the animalization of native peoples and cultural minorities has long been used to justify colonialism and assimilation, the motif of animal transformations risks reinscribing the dehumanizing use of animal metaphors to convey cultural distinctions. However, animal transformation stories may also blur species distinctions in a manner consistent with indigenous cosmologies and ecological conceptions of living with other species in a more-than-human world. Through an analysis of Horacio Quiroga's "Juan Darién" (Uruguay/Argentina, 1924) and Karen Russell's "St. Lucy's Home for Girls Raised by Wolves" (United States, 2006)—two short stories that operate in spaces of postcolonial cultural assimilation—I examine how animal transformation stories that carefully consider difference can go beyond transcending species distinctions to suggesting decolonial and feminist networks for

resilience and resistance. In the former story, Quiroga's word choices maintain the species ambiguity of protagonist Juan Darién's Amazonian-inspired animal-human transformation, which rocks a Westernized village. I will trace the indigenous and animist genealogy of "Juan Darién," highlighting how the story's conflict between human characters and "nature" accentuates the theoretical instability of the latter and blurs the limits between humans and animals. In the latter story, Russell's colorful descriptions confound the species and cultural barriers encountered by a group of girls, the daughters of werewolves, who, shunned by either species, are sent to a residential school that aims to assimilate them into human culture. Russell's playful use of language highlights both the girls' (often comical) species ambiguity and the injustice of their plight. I argue that in both stories, the overlaying of animal transformation stories and postcolonial pasts paves the way for final, tragic yet triumphant, encounters with the more-than-human world.

Helen Tookey (Liverpool John Moores University)

Thinking with the Swerve: Carola Luther's Poetics of Engagement

Panel 6.4, Friday 1 September, 11.00am – 12.30pm, Teaching Room 6

In this paper, I want to take a close look at the writing of the Yorkshire-based, South Africa-born poet Carola Luther, to explore why I – as a reader and writer of poems – have found her work so powerful and so moving as an expression of our current being-in-the-world. Using David Farrier's concept (articulated in his book *Anthropocene Poetics*) of 'thinking with the swerve', and in keeping with the focus of this conference on transitions, I shall look at the ways in which Luther uses jumps, swerves and shifts – in time, in place, in language(s), in ways of seeing – to depict what Farrier calls our 'complex, compromised' interactions with the world around us, and to move the reader in often unexpected and surprising ways. Luther's poetry, I want to argue, has an unafraid quality: her poems are unafraid to look odd or comical, to pitch into pure sound, to express love, uncertainty, and vulnerability in perception and encounter. In my paper, I shall try to show how these elements combine in her writing to create a poetics of engagement with the world in the fullest sense of that term.

Cathy Turner (University of Exeter)

Tea's transitions in UK-based performances

Panel 1.7, Wednesday 30 August, 11.00am – 12.45pm, Flex 2

This paper addresses a series of performance that address the histories of tea and plantations in contemporary Britain.

The cup of tea is considered a trope of Britishness, even though it is self-evidently not British at all. Imported from China; subsequently entwined with histories of Bengal's poppy fields and Opium wars; stolen and planted in India at cost to life and ecology; more recently planted in Kenya, and most recently of all in a small commercial venture in Southwest England, tea's history as a global commodity rarely reflects well on the British who thirst for it.

Tea's appearance in British dramatic literature has tended to confine its satire to social mores, from David Baker's 1785 skit *Twisting and Twining*, or *Tea's the Twaddle* through the reference to stale Chinese tea indicated in the naming of Widow 'Twankey', to Oscar Wilde's use of over-sugared tea as weapon in *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895).

More recently, however, we have begun to see the commissioning and curating of performances that directly engage with tea as crop and product – often from those of South Asian heritage. To an extent these performances also acknowledge the violence and exploitation of tea's colonial history and its continuing social and environmental impacts.

To what extent, however, do artists feel able to make explicit the full implications of tea's history? Does the gentleness of these performances indicate a generous engagement which invites an audience to explore further, or do they indicate some anxiety that there are limits to what a British audience is willing to accept? Or both?

This paper touches on the plantation as backstory in Sonali Bhattacharyya's *Chasing Hares* (London, Young Vic, 2022) before considering the explicit engagement with tea in Yasmin Jahan Nupur's *Let Me Get You A Nice Cup of Tea* (London, Tate Modern, 2022) and Trigger's *Teabreak* (Brighton Festival, Valley Gardens North, 2023). It also considers the representation of tea and regional histories in a tour of Tregothnan's tea plantation on the Fal Estuary, Cornwall.

Jasmine Walker (The University of York)

Transecology in Emmanuelle Pagano's *Les Adolescents troglodytes*

Panel 4.6, Thursday 31 August, 9.00am – 10.45am, Flex 2

In this paper, I offer a transecological reading of Emmanuelle Pagano's 2007 novel *Les Adolescents troglodytes*, using the text to think about how stories of transition can be constructed in relation to the natural world, rather than in opposition to it. I discuss the relationship between the representation of the natural world and the story of Adèle, a trans woman and the novel's protagonist. I begin by outlining how transecological perspectives are emerging from ongoing interaction between queer and trans scholarship and eco-

criticism to

highlight how these fields are themselves in a state of transition. I then I move onto my discussion of the text where I offer textual analysis supported by critical perspectives from

Catriona Sandilands and Nicole Seymour to argue that Pagano imagines a transecological

relationship between the natural world and Adèle's story through a reciprocal process of

naturalising the trans subject and 'trans-ing' the natural world. First, I consider the naturalisation of Adele, a subject whose trans experience is usually excluded from what is

popularly imagined to be natural. Next, I consider the trans-ing of nature through the association of natural cycles, elements, and structures with the novel's trans subject.

With

this paper I aim to contribute to the eco-critical rethinking of categories previously imagined

as fixed and stable, like 'the human' and 'the natural', I also aim to contribute to understandings of the role of literary representations, like *Les Adolescents troglodytes*, in the

reimagining of human relations with each other, the environment and non-human beings.

Sundhya Walther (University of Manchester)

Unwilding: Denizen Futures and the End of the Wild

Panel 1.7, Wednesday 30 August, 11.00am – 12.45pm, Flex 2

What is the 'wild'? Across a multitude of contemporary discourses, the wild is configured as a space, a category, a refusal of category, an action, and a way of being. This paper examines this overdetermined concept through the idea of 'rewilding'. A practice that presupposes a prior 'wild' — spatial, temporal, even spiritual — to which a place and planet can return, rewilding offers the possibility of transitioning backward, out of the crisis of the present world. But rewilding can also represent the imposition of colonial categories that circumscribe the lifeways of the beings it proposes to 'wild'.

In contrast to rewilding, this paper proposes the idea of 'unwilding' — a letting-go of the wild that might allow us to come to terms with multispecies relations as they exist in the present world. Considering the lives of denizen creatures, those whose presence in a particular place is contingent and unsanctioned, I argue that unwilding offers potentialities beyond the wild and the conjuring of futurity through an idealised past. Drawing on work by Donna Haraway, Jack Halberstam, novelist Sarah Hall, and the leopards of Mumbai, this paper sets out to envision a planet without the wild, and the

denizen futures that might arise from releasing ourselves and our others from this work of definition and limitation.

Samantha Walton (Bath Spa University)

EcoGothic Atmospheric: On air, terror, and gothic ecopoetics

Panel 3.6, Wednesday 30 August, 3.15pm – 4.45pm, Lecture Theatre 2

The paper introduces a new ecopoetic work-in-progress, which builds on ideas and conceptual framings I first explored in my pamphlet, *Bad Moon* (Spam Press, 2020). A feminist horror story about the end of the world, the inspiration for *Bad Moon* came from a sense of hopelessness and horror about the environmental emergency, and a frustration with the ecocritical narrative that if ‘we’ could only tell the right kind of story, send one big, universally legible symbol—like a bad moon—then ‘we’ could solve the climate crisis. I became obsessed with the notion of the omen, and wondered why the messages already being sent—fires, floods, viruses—are not being read as harbingers of disaster, in spite of the fact that they are not at all difficult but actually incredibly simple to interpret. The apocalyptic register of storytelling has received bad press in ecocriticism—it is seen as too fictive, too pessimistic. It was for these reasons I wanted to experiment with it within the genre of the Gothic. While the positive storytelling of ecopoetics can sometimes feel tonally naïve and self-righteously didactic, the Gothic is marked by its slipperiness and a refusal to offer simple comforts or explanations. Simon Estok has framed the ecoGothic fairly negatively, highlighting the genre’s commitment to a rampant ecophobia. In contrast, I was drawn to Timothy Morton’s ideas on eco-noir and their suggestion that melancholia and darkness are intrinsic to the earth, constituting a kind of ‘earth tone.’ I was also interested in Nicole Seymour’s work on outlawed emotions in *Bad Environmentalism* (2018), in particular how ‘negative’ and free-floating affect might be brought into the field of ecopoetics, without an obligation that bad feelings be discharged, cathected, or otherwise resolved. The Gothic appeals, then, as it is a genre that turns negative feelings and confrontations with death into grandiose, high-drama camp—a mode that offers new and interesting possibilities for dwelling within and resisting the totalising narrative of the Anthropocene.

In this paper, I develop these findings and concerns, bringing new elements of atmospheric, ambiance and air into ecopoetics. Enquiries into the chemical structures of air persisted from the Scientific Revolution of the 1700s to the late-Enlightenment, with a series of notable discoveries and inventions leading to more powerful manipulations, enclosures and uses of air as a vehicle of pressure. At the same time, 17th and 18th century scientific writing on air often lends itself to mysticism and esoteric thought. Study of atmospheric also emerged at this time, leading in the 19th century to the emergence of technologies to predict the weather. However, the term ‘atmosphere’ remains strongly coloured by cultural and aesthetic concerns, referring to intangible

and elusive qualities of mood and feeling, with significant Romantic overtones. The duality of these terms and their histories, the manner in which they hold creative and scientific, technical and metaphysical qualities in tension, have significant resonances with contemporary ecopoetry's commitment to inter- and trans- disciplinary. It also attests to the failure of the Enlightenment project of disenchantment, as both air and atmosphere have continually accrued cultural meaning, mood and tone. In this talk, I will consider how this tone may be activated creatively to bring air back into imaginative focus. In particular, I am interested in how the Gothic may be used to re-habituate ourselves in air during the climate crisis. Committed to the irrational, to fear, death, decay, and the triumph of avenging nature over dominating humanity, the Gothic has long offered a darker alternative to the more nature-worshipping aspects of Romanticism. At the heart of the genre is a commitment to fear as an aesthetic goal, a form of intelligence, a phenomenological experience and a source of pleasure. Fear motivates incident and plot in the Gothic novel and poem, but it also pervades its atmosphere, creating a negative ambience which, to admirers of the genre, becomes addictive. In my ecopoetic work-in-progress, I aim to explore how such a negative ambience might be employed to bring air into focus and visibility. The essence of life, air may also be a source of terror. So too atmosphere, as highs and lows of pressure, changing weather systems and warming climate alter our experience in our bodies and the liveability of the world. How might an ecoGothic poetics dwell profoundly with this terrifying and elusive affect, as part of a commitment to staying-with the trouble?

Kat Waters (University of Leeds)

Radical Heritage and Environmental Protest in Nick Hayes' *The Book of Trespass*
Panel 3.8, Wednesday 30 August, 3.15pm – 4.45pm, Teaching Room 4

This paper explores the different versions of heritage – official, radical, and natural – present in Nick Hayes' 2020 book, *The Book of Trespass*, in particular the use of radical heritage to draw lines of continuity between historic protests (including and especially protests over land rights) and contemporary environmental issues. Hayes engages with official narratives of national heritage, such as the country house and estate as symbols of Englishness, while establishing an alternative radical heritage as a means of galvanising a sense of belonging in nature. This paper will outline the way that different versions of heritage present in the book correspond to different national narratives, and pay particular attention to overlapping ideas of natural heritage and radical heritage. Here, I argue that the implied lineage that runs from early radicals like the Levellers to contemporary land rights activists invokes the possibility of different kinds of national identity and belonging. The physical, present-day landscape of sites like Kinder Scout, and the history and symbolism of mass trespass and protest, are offered as an inheritance for contemporary movements to claim, along with the possibility of a

national identity associated with England's past of radical protests. *The Book of Trespass* doesn't centre conservation or natural history, and instead of framing the loss of natural heritage as a matter of conservation and environmental (in)action, emphasises the lack of access and control that regular people have to a large proportion of England's woods, parks, rivers, and other natural spaces. While Hayes focuses on the hegemonic power of national heritage and explicitly denounces nationalism, his invocation of an alternative Englishness is based on a radical tradition of protest and folk culture as a means to achieve equal access to natural heritage.

Annie Webster (University of Edinburgh)

Shadow Play and Migrant Justice at COP26: Tracing the Literary History of Little Amal Through Syria's *khayāl al-ẓill* (shadow theatre)

Panel 5.3, Friday 1 September, 9.00am – 10.45am, Flex 2

One of the most controversial attendees of COP26 in Glasgow was a 12-foot puppet of a 10-year old Syrian refugee named Little Amal. Designed and built by the Handspring Puppet Company, since July 2021 Little Amal has travelled over 9000 km across 13 countries as part of their initiative 'The Walk', becoming 'a global symbol of human rights' as she followed routes taken by asylum seekers in the twenty-first century refugee crisis. However, 'The Walk' has also attracted significant criticism for the ways in which it objectifies the figure of a child refugee and trivialises the journeys undertaken by displaced people through puppet performance.

This paper traces the literary history of Little Amal and considers the particular significance of her journey to Scotland for COP26. The first part of the paper situates Little Amal in Syria's dramatic tradition of *khayāl al-ẓill* (shadow theatre), which has a long subversive history that evolved out of pre-modern Arabic narrative traditions and continues to be adapted for contemporary political satire, for example in the YouTube puppet series 'Top Goon: Diaries of a Little Dictator' by Syrian group Masasit Mati. The second part of the paper explores how Little Amal's attendance at COP26 in Glasgow was particularly significant in light of the large number of Syrian refugees who have been resettled in Scotland since 2014 across dispersed geographies of resettlement including rural and remote areas of the Highlands and Islands. I therefore argue that Little Amal's journey to COP26 constituted a significant act of 're-territorialising' artistic traditions (Cathrine Brun 2001) which highlighted the movement of displaced people from Syria to Scotland, while demonstrating the potential for historical traditions of *khayāl al-ẓill* to transition across time and space as they illuminate increasingly urgent entanglements between environmental and refugee crises in the twenty-first century.

Demi Wilton (Loughborough University)

Environmental Displacement and Anthropocenic Futures in Contemporary Chinese Fiction

Panel 3.4, Wednesday 30 August, 3.15pm – 4.45pm, Flex 1

As global warming imperils resource production and international security, nations around the world have been urged to develop sustainable, resilient infrastructure to curb and mitigate the worst effects of climate change. China has raced ahead in this process, commissioning hydraulic and green energy megaprojects to maintain the nation's economic stability in the face of environmental precarity. However, these developments have come with a high cost for Chinese citizens, permanently forcing millions from their homes. Literary and cultural responses to displacement from Chinese authors abound, dividedly praising and critiquing the state's technocratic, growth-centric response to climate change challenges. In this paper, I will compare two such works, namely Liu Cixin's short story 'Yuanyuan's Bubbles' (2015) and Ma Jian's *The Dark Road* (2013), to consider how their respective representation of environmental displacement might contribute to common critiques of the Anthropocene epoch, in relation to which mankind is often presented as both the geological force behind, and eventual answer to, global heating. Liu's work, I contend, accedes to this narrative, presenting the climate-related drought driving millions from China's arid northwest as a problem to be overcome through science and ingenuity. Conversely, Ma's novel presents large scale displacement as a temporary and violent solution to an unsurmountable crisis. Reading these texts side by side, I argue, offers unique insight into the tensions surrounding green infrastructural transitions in contemporary China, where, on both sides of the polemic, the environmental migrant functions as a symbol of the nation's uncertain social futurity.

Abstracts of Preformed Panels and Roundtables

These are the abstracts of roundtables and preformed panels . They are presented in alphabetical order by panel title.

Blue Humanities in Transition

Panel 6.8, Friday 1 September, 11.00am – 12.30pm, Lecture Theatre 3

Hannah Boast (University of Edinburgh): Blue Humanities in Japan

Susanne Ferwerda (Utrecht University): Underwater and Outer Space: Blue Humanities in the Pacific

Ashley Cahillane (University College Dublin): Transnational thinking with hydrofictions: keeping us grounded

The Blue Humanities has moved from a marginal concern in Environmental Humanities to a central theme. Its increasing importance reflects a wider acknowledgement in the social sciences and policy worlds of the centrality of water to the future of life on Earth. The UN now states that ‘climate change is primarily a water crisis’, and recently held its first freshwater conference in 50 years. If debate on water is thriving, the Blue Humanities remains loosely defined. This panel takes this as an opportunity to reflect on the meaning of the ‘Blue Humanities’ and what its key disciplinary, aesthetic and political concerns are and ought to be, including how Blue Humanities scholars might effectively intervene in public conversations about water. By bringing together scholars working on fresh and saltwater, across different geographies, the panel offers a snapshot of the field and invites a dialogue between panel and audience about the identity and future of the Blue Humanities.

Hannah Boast’s paper, ‘Blue Humanities in Japan’ uses the work of Japanese activist-writer Ishimure Michiko (1927-2018) as an entry point into reading Japanese environmental history through Blue Humanities methods. Boast shows how this context can enrich Blue Humanities thinking on hydromodernity, hydrocolonialism and hydropower at a time of transition away from megadams. Ishimure is often described as ‘the Japanese Rachel Carson’, a nickname that reflects her campaigning on Minamata Disease, a form of severe mercury poisoning that affected the city of Minamata’s fishing community in the mid-twentieth century. Ishimure published widely on Japan’s twentieth-century industrial development and its uneven impacts nationally. Her novel *Lake of Heaven* (1997, trans. by Bruce Allen) focuses on a fictional village destroyed for the construction of a dam. It addresses Japan’s status as one of the most dammed countries in the world and the impacts of this policy on Japan’s marginalised rural populations. Japan exported its enthusiasm for megadams to its colonies in East Asia, yet was also the site of Asia’s first dam removal project in 2014. This talk situates *Lake of Heaven* in relation to Ishimure’s work on Minamata, showing how both events

reflected the supremacy of hydromodernist approaches to water in postwar Japan over alternative water ontologies represented by Minamata's fishing community and the displaced villagers. These alternative ontologies resonate with contemporary Japanese efforts to decommission dams and daylight urban rivers.

The second talk, 'Transnational thinking with hydrofictions: keeping us grounded', by Ashley Cahillane, examines the manifold material and symbolic meanings of water in contemporary British and South African literature. Cahillane analyses the global imaginaries of two contemporary novels about water resources: Niall Bourke's *Line* (2021) and Damon Galgut's *The Promise* (2021). *Line* is (probably) set in England, whereas *The Promise* is set in South Africa. Cahillane argues that both novels respond to freshwater issues and imaginaries that cross local, national, and global scales. Both evoke Astrida Neimanis's (2017) notion of 'bodies of water'—water-mediated interconnections between multiple human bodies, places, nonhuman entities, and politico-economic forces. Yet freshwater in the texts also connects individuals to larger global forces of climate and capitalism. Freshwater allows these two texts to renegotiate borders: between human bodies, human communities, nonhuman entities, places, and nations. Combining world-literary and Blue Humanities approaches, Cahillane argues that freshwater inspires us to think transnationally. Freshwater is mobile: it can cross bodies, borders, and territories in its various forms. Yet Cahillane also argues that freshwater loses much of its use value for humans (and many other species) when separated too severely from land. As Jamie Linton (2010) argues, neoliberal capitalism also imagines freshwater as 'global', with detrimental effects for people, water, and ecosystems. The capitalist world-system is represented in *Line* and *The Promise*, where freshwater is also a vehicle for closing down borders—around individuals, communities, places, and nations who are left precarious or dry as a result of open trade borders. Cahillane concludes that freshwater necessitates temperate transnational thinking, attuned to the ongoing significance of keeping it tied to land.

The final paper, 'Underwater and Outer Space: Blue Humanities in the Pacific' by Susanne Ferwerda, moves to another geographical region and hydrological zone: Australian and Pacific oceanic literatures. In the Pacific region, the lived reality of rising sea levels and changing coastlines has increased attention to living with oceans in transition. Analysing contemporary writing by Gina Cole and Ellen van Neerven, Ferwerda considers the speculative potential of blue literatures in changing oceanic environments. Via Pasifikafuturist (Cole 2022) oceanic and outer space exploration, as well as resistance to continued settler colonialism, *Na Viro* (2022) by Gina Cole and "Water" (2014) by Ellen van Neerven reimagine pasts, presents and futures of oceanic life. Their work employs literary tropes well known in Western sci-fi—from tentacular creatures that rise from the sea to space ships, robots and human enhancement—from Aboriginal and Indigenous Pacific ways of thinking and being. They reframe these tropes

via the Pacific ocean to foreground elements of alien invasion, dispossession, progress and survival, which have long been part of the region's history into the present. Van Neerven's "Water" extrapolates Australian settler colonialism to offshore terraforming and Aboriginal resistance that rises from the water to entangle land and sea. And in a time of increased attention to 'blue' commercial space exploration—think Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin project—Na Viro extends the ocean into outer space via Pacific wayfinding. Ferwerda ultimately asks: how do oceanic representations and 'bodies of water' (Neimanis) in flux add to the growing Blue Humanities discourse that no longer universalizes the Western imagination, to urge us to think of worlds in which the oceanic extends even beyond imagined Earthly confines? What does Pasifikafuturism do for a Blue Humanities in transition?

These papers show the range of scholarship occurring under the heading of the Blue Humanities, looking to the diverse meanings of water as energy, scarce resource, space and symbolic connection, in the different geographies of Japan, the UK, South Africa, and the Pacific. In doing so, they invite conversation between panellists and audience about key themes and priorities of Blue Humanities and its future directions.

Ecologies of Reparation and Maintenance

Panel 5.6, Friday 1 September, 9.00am – 10.45am, Lecture Theatre 1

Henry Ivry (University of Glasgow)

Arthur Rose (University of Exeter)

Aaron Rosenberg (King's College London)

Rebecca Macklin (University of Edinburgh)

As this year's CFP makes clear, there is a dangerous understanding in many of the popular and political discourses that focus on "transition" – who, after all, is transitioning into what? In this rendering, transition is depoliticized in order to emphasize a neutral version of change, one that does not interrogate the preexisting conditions prior to transition.

Our roundtable seeks to repoliticize transition by supplementing it with two terms pertaining to the political management of transition, maintenance and reparation. Drawing on the dialectic relation between maintenance and reparation, we seek to unseat the depoliticized hegemony of transition and its accompanying vision of progress. We ask, what are the other ways of imagining a world on the brink of climatic collapse? How might terms like both maintenance and reparation, help us develop an alternate lexicon for otherwise worlds?

Through our discussion, we hope to develop ecologies of both reparation and maintenance, a way of thinking and reading with "fissures and flaws to build the

conditions for other worlds and forms of life” (Nemser and Johnson). At the same time, we also understand the need to avoid some sort of Edenic return to a pre-Anthropocene past. We take these terms to be indicative of what Steven Jackson calls “broken world thinking.” Indeed, at the center of this exploratory ecology is a way of imagining practices that seeks to both work from and outside of entrenched epistemes. This is a repair, in other words, that AbdouMalik Simone describes as “recognizing both that the brokenness cannot be fixed within the master’s domain or within his terms and how such brokenness is the very means of reestablishing a relationship with this world from an outside, from a relationship to it that is broken.”

This theoretical framework provides the backbone of our conversation as we ask questions including: What is the role of literature and/or literary studies in reparation and/or maintenance? What and where are the infrastructures of repair? What are the forms of reparation? How about the forms of maintenance? How does a politics of reparation or maintenance alternate our relations to ideas of transition?

Eco-Medievalisms I: Landscapes of Apocalypse, Flood, and Wilderness

Panel 1.6, Wednesday 30 August, 11.00am – 12.45pm, Teaching Room 6

Emma Nudding (The University of York): Reading Fenland with the Monastic Ecopoetics of Henry de Avranches’ *Vita Guthlaci*

Lynn Butzlaff (The University of York): Re-thinking Wilderness in the Poetic Edda

Abigail Bleach (Manchester University): Navigating the Eco-Medieval with Paul Kingsnorth’s ‘The Wake’

This panel steps beyond the bounds of central spaces in medieval worlds to explore their edgelands: wilderness, fenland, untethered space and post-medieval apocalyptic landscape. It finds precedent in studies such as the works of Richard Hoffman and Alfred Siewers, intersecting these environmental historical approaches with contemporary queer-eco theories, such as those of Jack Halberstam and Heide Estes. Thus, we read medieval and post-medieval ecopoetics in medieval religious narratives, in hagiography and mythology, and in spaces in and under flux, in the floating and fragile archive of Bill Griffith’s boat and the equally-fragile archetype of apocalypse in Paul Kingsnorth’s medieval-appropriated landscapes. We find new ways of understanding contemporary ecological crisis in environmental landscapes of the medieval and post-medieval, in the tensions between centre and edge that hold them together. In transitioning away from established central spaces of monastery, mythology, and traditional medievalism we ask the following questions:

How do we define edgelands in medieval texts in contrast with established centres of religious and economic power? Is it helpful to call these outer spaces ‘wilderness’ in terms of a medieval eco-poetics?

What constitutes a post-medieval eco-poetics: must this apply to medieval texts alone or might it also apply to post-medieval, neo-medieval, and otherwise mediievally-influenced texts?

What can medieval ecopoetic texts teach us about contemporary ecological crisis; and conversely how does our relationship with a fast-changing ecological environment intersect with, frame, and undeniably influence our study of medieval environments?

What fresh understandings does stepping away from more traditional ways of studying medieval texts bring to the field? What frameworks exist for these journeys away from the centre and how should we thus proceed?

Emma Nuding reads Henry de Avranches' thirteenth-century *Vita Guthlaci*, a life of the eighth-century hermit St Guthlac of Crowland, as shaped by the priorities of Crowland Abbey, the monastic community which later grew up around the site of Guthlac's hermitage. Simultaneously, she argues that Avranches' text is also shaped by the fenland landscape around that abbey, whose fertility and shifting sands resulted in endless disputes over which humans had the right to use its resources. She investigates how these two shaping factors of Avranches' text connect by arguing that the *Vita* is attuned to the actualities and particularities of the fenland landscape primarily because of such monastic agendas. Thus, the ecopoetics of Avranches' *Vita* is co-opted by a particular kind of anthropocentrism: it is a monastic ecopoetics shaped for institutional needs and desires. She argues that identifying these agendas for what they are can allow us to read beyond them to reconstruct an environmental history of the fens: in doing so, we learn much about the fenland's fishes, turves and peat, and its miraculous deepes.

Lynn Butzlaff argues that a constructed 'Wilderness' was not only a central tenet of Old Norse pre-Christian ontology but that the Poetic Edda (thirteenth century) does not offer a greener relationship with nature based upon reciprocity. In doing so she complicates Lynn White's contrast between a 'green' paganism with an environmentally exploitative Christianity. Drawing on the theories of Jack Halberstam to suggest a colonial relationship based on the marginalisation of the natural world as 'Wilderness' in the Edda's clear distinction between Midgarðr/Ásgarðr and Jötunheim, she seeks to re-shape our understanding of the Edda's 'Wilderness' to include 'another-world' rather than simply 'Otherworld'.

Abigail Bleach uses Paul Kingsnorth's controversial novel *The Wake* (2014) to think through the kinds of 'eco' thought that early medieval narratives facilitate. She argues that, rather than viewing Kingsnorth's work as an example of 'bad' anachronistic medievalism, we can instead use it as a kind of roadmap—a tool to help us work our way through the epistemological and ideological questions that accompany ecological crisis

Eco-Medievalisms II: Avian Landscapes, Languages, and Travels

Panel 6.4, Friday 1 September, 11.00am – 12.30pm, Teaching Room 6

Becca Drake (The University of York): The Avian Journeys and Environments of ‘Örvar-Odds saga’

Jessie Summerhayes (The University of York): Occupying Bird-Space in Anglo-Saxon Literature

Shona Turner (The University of York): Cuthbert’s Interactions with Birds in the ‘Vitae’

This panel turns its gaze upwards and outwards to the bird-spaces of medieval art and literature, laying its exploration at the intersection of historical ornithology and medieval cultural avian archetypes. It is preceded by the so-called ‘animal turn’ in medieval Norse studies and Old English studies, in the work of Carl Phelpstead, Harriet Evans Tang, Tim Bourns, and James Paz. We embrace the conference’s theme of ‘Transitions’ in multiple ways: by shifting our focus in reading medieval saga literature away from its traditionally held human centre, thus transitioning towards possible aviancentric readings of medieval texts; by observing the transitions of avian forms in stone through geologic time; and by considering representative acts of translation in medieval poetry for how these express avian voice. We ask the following questions:

How are avian communities represented in medieval literature and art, and to what extent is it possible to view them from a deanthropocentrized perspective? What would be the stages in such a transitional perspective?

How are birds appropriated as tools for thinking in human narrative forms and meaning?

How can eco-poetics help us to construct a view of past medieval environments in literature, and how can this view be narrowed specifically to avian habitats, cultures, and narratives?

Becca Drake proposes a new reading of the thirteenth-century Örvar-Odds saga which moves away from traditional anthropocentric readings of this text and seeks its often hidden avian worlds. She asks what avian environments lie between the lines of this typically laconic saga, as well as how this saga frames interactions between birds and humans in terms of migratory exploration and return.

Jessie Summerhayes considers the human imaginative occupations of the space of birds and the purposes and implications of that occupation in the Exeter Book. In this Old English context, such occupation often seems to facilitate mental travel – the texts presenting birds as imaginative vehicles through which the human mind is transported into otherwise inaccessible spaces, in the tradition of Classical ideas of mental flight and cosmological models found in the OE metrical translation of Boethius’s *Consolatione De Philosophiae*. She argues that in medieval literature close observations

of birds do not reflect an interest in the bird-corporeal but rather the bird-figurative and -imaginative; therefore, what kinds of blurred distinctions operate to facilitate this inter-species imagining?

Shona Turner explores the symbolism of birds in the medieval saints life *Vita Sancti Cuthberti* (seventh to eighth century), balancing this with an awareness of how this hagiographic text represents animal agency in the context of early medieval England. She asks how and why birds speak, what agency they have in Old English narrative, and whether they are beholden to divine authority for this agency. Moreover, she asks how birds fit into the medieval world order in relation to the human, and whether this is ubiquitous across bird species. Considering various species of corvids and geese, she therefore seeks to understand the role of animal agency and emotion in Old English hagiographic literature.

Energy Transitions in Long Modernity

Panel 3.2, Wednesday 30 August, 3.15pm – 4.45pm, Lecture Theatre 3

Tiffany Werth (University of California-Davis): Fuelling Space Travel Before Fossil Fuels

Liam Lewis (University of Liverpool): Bio-Acoustic Energy in Medieval Bestiary and Song

Todd Borlik (University of Huddersfield): Monstrous Energy in Forbidden Planet

This panel examines and theorizes representations (or misrepresentations) of energy use and energy crisis, and assesses the role of literary texts in narrating what we are calling “energy transitions.” To do so, we focus on integrated symbolic and representational aspects of premodern studies and highlight ways in which the study of the premodern world can contribute to and shape environmental humanities and our own perceptions of energy regimes. How were past energy transitions facilitated or resisted and by whom? How are the planet’s energy resources configured as plentiful and inexhaustible in some texts while others emphasize economies of scarcity and the need for renewability?

Todd Borlik (University of Huddersfield)

“Monstrous Energy in Forbidden Planet”

In a classic sci-fi adaptation of Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, a space cruiser from earth arrives on a remote planet where a scientist has discovered the remains of an ancient yet advanced civilization known as the Krell, who had developed a technology that enabled them to generate and transmit energy telepathically. When the scientist and Prospero figure Dr. Morbius begins to tinker with this alien machinery and transmit supercharged brainwaves, his subconscious materialises in the form of a ferocious ‘Id’

monster, and he soon concludes that the same phenomenon must have led to the self-destruction of the entire Krell civilization.

This paper reads the 1956 film as an anxious commentary on tech-driven energy transition in the mid-twentieth century. First, the Krell's achievement resembles Nikola Tesla's dream of harnessing free energy from the earth's atmosphere and transmitting it wirelessly through the Wardencliff Tower. Secondly, *Forbidden Planet* speaks to post-war apprehensions about nuclear energy. Three years before its release, President Eisenhower had launched his 'atoms for peace' program to kickstart nuclear energy development in the USA, and in 1954 Russia activated the world's first nuclear plant in Obninsk. While warning of the problems that bedevil the search for clean and affordable energy, the *Id* monster might also be interpreted as figuring forth the imperfect repression of the unacceptable consequences of our dirty energy regimes. The energy released by the combustion of coal and fossil fuels has inadvertently stirred invisible geo-climatic forces that threaten ecological stability and the long-term survival of industrial civilization. Fusing eco-historical and eco-psychological approaches, this paper considers how cultural texts like *Forbidden Planet* manifest the trauma of energy transition. (269 words)

Liam Lewis (University of Liverpool)

Bio-acoustic Energy in Medieval Bestiary and Song

In 1977 Canadian musicologist R. Murray Schafer published *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World*. This influential study of sound presents a chronicle of bio-acoustic evolutions from biblical Creation to the Industrial Revolution, and argues that natural and industrial energy revolutions can be tracked across the audible spectrum. This paper takes its cue from Schafer, asking not how we can manage sound, but rather how premodern conceptions of bio-acoustic energy can reposition our understanding of sound as a force. Exploring how acoustic ecology provides hitherto underexplored directions for thinking about energy regimes and transitions in the Middle Ages, I show how medieval 'literary' texts use sound to depict energy transitions through the concept of the breath. Premodern texts commonly depict a material conception of natural and cosmic sounds, in which human and nonhuman breath and vocalization is an integral component to making things happen with, and exercising control over, other nonhuman animals. Medieval bestiaries and songs reveal just how carefully writers listened to fantastic ecologies in which whales and sirens efficiently draw other agents into their control through breathwork, or singers imitate the spinning of the stars, rays of light, and the roars of lions. This paper places these imagined sounds into a broader energy transition, in which sounds increasingly regulated human activities, from church bells to the hue and cry. Drawing attention to imbalances in medieval ecological soundscapes I reveal how, long before Schafer's

study was published, texts and songs were already subverting sound imperialism to reimagine the possibilities of bio-acoustic energy.

Tiffany Jo Werth, UC Davis (member ASLE US)

Fueling Space Travel Before Fossil Fuels

As contemporary news headlines track the ambitions of the “billionaire space race” between Amazon’s Jeff Bezos, Virgin Group’s Richard Branson, and Tesla’s Elon Musk, to launch rockets and vehicles into space, questions about the energy costs of such missions are often downplayed amidst the competitive excitement to claim lunar and suborbital space. Yet, we might ask, what are the casualties of such energy-rich investments and how might premodern notions of biopower underlie such dreams of space? To probe the deep history of western space travel and energy costs, this paper turns to early modern accounts of reaching the moon from John Harington’s 1593 translation of Ariosto’s *Orlando Furioso* to Spenser’s 1609 *Mutability Cantos* and, finally, Francis Godwin’s 1638 *The Man in the Moon*, to track how an anthropocentric biopower undergirds the energy force needed to breach the firmament and aspire to the stars.

Estranged Earth: Terraforming Beyond the Human

Panel 6.7, Friday 1 September, 11.00am – 12.30pm, Flex 2

Peter Sands (University of York): Between Hopepunk and Misanthropy: Species Revival, Terraforming and Queer Planetary Futures

Samantha Hind (University of Sheffield): Wilderness States: Speculative Conservation Zones and Rewilding in Diane Cooke’s *The New Wilderness* (2020)

Christie Oliver-Hobley (University of Sheffield): Terra Beneath the Waves: The Earth-sculpting Aliens of John Wyndham’s *The Kraken Wakes* (1953)

As a fantasy that takes place between literature, science and philosophy, terraforming positions the earth system as a technical object available to be moulded by the ecologically attuned subject (Pak, 2016; Woods, 2019). Yet projections of “earthlikeness” often reproduce anthroponormative frameworks that see planetary futures imagined as exclusively—or primarily—for the human. In this panel, we will investigate how speculative fiction (sf) authors from transatlantic contexts since the mid-twentieth century have imagined terraforming otherwise: as a mode of transition that disrupts, displaces and decentres human ecological agency. Each of these sf works—in its own fashion—offers a vision of terraforming beyond the human. Together, our papers ask: how can nonhuman subjects be incorporated into discourses of terraforming and worldbuilding? What implications arise from recentring nonhuman ecological agency? How might we queer the futures proposed by biotechnological

projects of terraforming? What might it mean to imagine terra as “formless” (Bataille, 1985)?

Paper 1 will read two contemporary novels that present differing visions of terraformed futures through the lens of de-extinction science: Ned Beaman’s *Venomous Lumpsucker* (2022) and Annalee Newitz’s *The Terraformers* (2023). In both novels, the concept of species revival figures reproduction across multiple scales, from the ethical lives of individual animals involved in surrogacy to the planetary imaginaries of genetic biobanking. Yet while Beaman’s novel illustrates de-extinction’s investment in the fantasy that Lee Edelman (2004; 2022) describes as “reproductive futurism,” satirising the biocapitalist drive to archive genetic life in order to secure a future in which the human’s agency over the earth system is preserved, Newitz draws species revival into dialogue with a more reparative vision of ecological futurity. Drawing from discourses of queer negativity and queer theory’s turn towards lateral, reparative or ambient forms of reproductivity (Ahuja, 2015), this paper argues that Beaman and Newitz engage equally pertinent dimensions of de-extinction’s terraforming fantasies: the investment in a hopeful future conceived ultimately for the human; and the necessary reconfiguration of reproductive meaning heralded by de-extinction’s unsettling of the concept of “species.” Beaman rejects the reproductive futurism of species revival, ending his novel with a perversely affirmative depiction of human extinction as a misanthropic counterforce to de-extinction’s hopeful futurism. Newitz instead elects to reconfigure reproductivity’s capacity to mean across deep evolutionary timescales, writing a future in which biotechnological reproduction facilitates a form of “ambient queerness” whereby what Beth Shapiro (2015) describes as the “species-as-reproductively-isolated-lineages concept” is undermined in favour of constitutive hybridity across the categories of sex, gender and species. In both novels, terraforming is estranged from the “earthlikeness” that secures the primacy of hetero- and anthroponormative planetary futures.

Paper 2 will transport delegates to a world devastated by climate change, where polluted cities bloom and children suffocate on smog. Here, the only place of sanctuary for Earth’s flora and fauna is a rewilded conservation area that humans are normally prohibited to enter: the Wilderness State. This is the speculative future of Diane Cooke’s *The New Wilderness* (2020), where a climate-changed planet forces a mother and daughter to join an experimental programme in the Wilderness State, to see if humans can coexist with nature and transform their health. However, the transitions that occur within the Wilderness State are not simply physical; behaviours and relationships—personal and ecological—are in flux, among this rewilded environment. Therefore, as Earth faces a growing climate and biodiversity crisis, *The New Wilderness* envisions a mode of terraforming that seeks to create a rewilded, proto-Earth that decentres humans, encouraging us to think about what kinds of speculative conservation zones might be necessary to restore Earth’s biodiversity and tackle the

climate crisis. This paper will analyse how *The New Wilderness* explores these different “wilderness states”—both as physical environments and ecological relationships—in its speculative conservation zone. It will examine how the flora and fauna of this zone transition into a newly biodiverse ecology when humans are no longer granted unfettered access, and what kinds of relationships emerge, when humans return to—or, indeed, encroach on—the new wilderness. In order to enhance this analysis of *The New Wilderness*, the author will draw on research on terraforming (Pak, 2016) and contemporary ecologies (Morton, 2016), alongside current debates around rewilding and conservation. In conjunction, these approaches provide fruitful material for understanding how *The New Wilderness* grapples with the “wilderness states” of human and nonhuman relationships in the rewilded environments of speculative conservation zones.

Paper 3 will cast its critical gaze back to the sf of John Wyndham. Wyndham was, for decades, the most widely read British sf author (Sawyer, 1999), and his work has spawned retellings and adaptations ever since. The few scholars to have explored his works have tended to assume they contain a single authorial voice that might be excavated; Wymer (1992) and Sawyer (1999), for instance, argue that their “bleak Darwinism” vocalises the author’s post-war pessimism or amorality. Over the past four years, however, cracks have appeared in this image. The first biography (Binns, 2019) presents Wyndham as a man distrustful of any authority, and deeply morally ambivalent. Oliver-Hobley (2022) has further dismantled this tenuous consensus, reading the same ambivalence in *Wyndham’s Web* (1979). In keeping with this reappraisal, our final paper locates a non-anthroponormative example of geoengineering in another of a Wyndham’s most overlooked works: *The Kraken Wakes* (1953). Here, inscrutable aliens colonise Earth’s oceans, mining the seafloor and melting the icecaps, triggering climactic upheaval and stoking Cold-War tensions to boiling point. The aliens are eventually eradicated using new sonic weapons, but only after ocean levels have risen 120 feet. This paper reads *Kraken* as a satire of geopolitical insularity in the face of climate change, with Wyndham juxtaposing ostensibly irreconcilable national differences against the absolute inexplicability of the nonhuman invaders. Yet even as *Kraken* reaffirms “humanity” as the basis for solidarity, it estranges the anthroponormative presumption that Earth—and the universe—exist solely for humans to (re)engineer and exploit. This paper will unpack these centrings and decentrings, analysing *Kraken*’s prescient depictions of terraforming and climate breakdown across and beyond “nation” and “species.”

Green & Blue Transitions I: Thinking Back with the Ocean & Unlearning Marine Science Epistemes

Panel 4.5, Thursday 31 August, 9.00am – 10.45am, Teaching Room 5

Susanne Ferwerda (Utrecht University)

Rhys Madden (London School of Economics)

Meghan Judge (Stellenbosch University)

This ICHO-sponsored roundtable, and its sister “Green & Blue Transitions II”, propose to think with the ocean trans-disciplinarily and trans-gressively to unlearn marine science and colonial epistemes and to envision a more sustainable socio-ecological future. Both hybrid roundtables and their interventions invite the audience to question issues pertaining to the role of the ocean and marine sciences in relation to the broader theme of “transition”, from those we call “green” in decarbonization movements to gender identity. In all the interventions, participants propose to think trans-disciplinarily with the ocean across creative and scientific practices and ask how can we unlearn and re-learn with the ocean in a time of socio-ecological alienation and collapse?

The discussion opens with a very brief introduction of the roundtable’s themes and interventions, it will then be followed by Susanne Ferwerda discussion of how the prominence of the color blue in the Blue Humanities has resulted in thinking with blue as a disruption to simplistic representations of the sea as empty or only for azure tourist consumption. In this contribution, Ferwerda asks us to consider what it means to think with seawater and color and what kind of transitions does blue and green materiality call for, and how does seawater diffract the tonal relationships between transition and coloniality?

Continuing to think through “Blue” and “Green”, Rhys Anil Madden addresses the role of the ocean in decarbonization movements on the South Coast of England and coastal habitat restoration, and the role of seagrass in carbon sequestration. Following Ferwerda’s proposition to think with blue and the ocean, Madden and Meghan Judge’s contributions invite us to learn with and from the ocean as well as coastal communities whose relationship with the sea has been obstructed by colonialism and global capitalism. Madden reflects on experiences of working with volunteers on seagrass restoration projects along this coast, and how they think about the decarbonization possibilities inherent to seagrass. The thoughts and experiences of volunteers also highlight the perceived limits on future restoration that come from the ocean, the tides, and the physical make-up of the coastline. This has consequences for the ways in which the ocean’s role in transitional times is understood.

Subsequently, Meghan Judge’s contribution invites us to think and listen with the ocean waters of the Cape in South Africa. These have been in a state of transition ever since those who traditionally, had practices of relations with them were forcibly removed from its shore initially to benefit the project of whiteness. Listening to the “great African sea forests” of kelp that sway at the shoreline by these waters provides provocative and highly sensitive re-orientation points for material-affective relations, shaping the imaginary of the ocean beyond the hegemony of the knowable. Judge proposes an

ecopoetics of sonic sensing that has been gathered through a forest of practitioners who submerge themselves to listen with kelp. This listening beyond hearing critically attunes past the edges of knowability and into a relational encounter, one difficult to word when back on land.

Green & Blue Transitions II: Thinking Forward with the Ocean for more Sustainable Futures

Panel 5.7, Friday 1 September, 9.00am – 10.45am, Teaching Room 6

Yi Fong Loh (University of Minnesota-Twin Cities)

JR Carpenter (University of Southampton)

Anna Selby (Manchester Metropolitan University)

Julia Jung (German Marine Research Alliance)

Following on from “Green & Blue Transitions I”, this ICHO-sponsored roundtable continues the discussion started and expands on it by questioning issues of transitional identities and deep time by thinking forward with the ocean for more sustainable socio-ecological futures and relationships.

Yi Fong Loh’s contribution opens this discussion by thinking through a different type of grammar and linguistics, as Ferwerda’s intervention did in the first roundtable. Loh proposes an environmentally and socio-historically situated framework of translation in which mangroves are translators within the Malayo-Polynesian language family in deep time. Cultural, social, historical similarities are inter-semiotic, and the *Nypa Fructicans* – one of the first monocots in the fossil plant record of 100 million years old from the Cretaceous period of Borneo – has a grammar shared across multi-species and multi-human ecologies. Connecting land and sea, mangroves are translators of power originating from the environmental settings in deep time: drifting and stabilizing, both within and outside of an antagonism of (post)colonialism and the resistances that arise in their wake.

Then JR Carpenter’s intervention will move from the island of Borneo to that of the UK and in a similarly trans-disciplinary manner, Carpenter considers oceanic transitions on vast temporal and spatial scales, through a discussion of fossil hunting as a practice-led research methodology. First in how the fossilized remains of a coral reef in a riverbed in North Yorkshire bring a 340-million-year-old blue ocean into contact with persistent notions of the green pastoral in poetry. Second by using marine fossils as indicators of displacement through wind-powered colonialism, from echinoid fossils transported in Late Cretaceous chalk to the Thames foreshore. How do these transitory fossils transgress the boundaries of when, where, and what oceans are? What hybrid poetics emerge as a response?

Anna Selby's intervention continues this discussion as Selby asks what does it mean to have a creative practice akin to that of a marine biologist, in which poems are made in the ocean, over several years, observing marine habitats, the transition of seasons under the surface and migrations of new species? Connecting with literature such as Gumbs' *Undrowned* (2021), Selby will share extracts from her work made in and under the Atlantic Ocean, and reflections from interdisciplinary residencies and collaborations.

Thinking trans-disciplinary and trans-gressively with the ocean also means resisting and challenging heteronormative and anthropocentric ontologies as Julia Jung discusses in an intervention on oceanic queer identities. Indeed, there has been a growing recognition of the need for more trans-disciplinary collaborations to catalyze the necessary transitions towards living with the ocean in a more sustainable way, however, these efforts rush trans-disciplinary collaborations by focusing on narrow outcomes instead of the potentially transformative experience for communities and individuals that participate in these collaborations. Drawing on examples from a range of ArtScience initiatives, this contribution illustrates how we can embrace transitions on an individual level. Taking the Ocean as a concept for active identity construction is inspired by the link between queerness and the ocean that is based on embracing fluidity.

On Mermaids and Metamorphosis: Underwater Women in Anthropocene Writing

Panel 4.7, Thursday 31 August, 9.00am – 10.45am, Flex 1

Lisa Mansell (Independent Scholar): Welsh Mermaids and Tidal Ecolinguistics: a Poetic Enquiry

Melanie Ebdon (Staffordshire University): Ecomagical Transformations in *Our Wives Under the Sea* (J. Armfield) and *The Mermaid of Black Conch* (M. Roffey)

Philippa Holloway (Staffordshire University): *You Know Where You Are With Water* (short fiction)

Atthira Unni (Leeds Beckett University): Transitions and Oceanic Posthumanism in *The Mermaid of Black Conch* (2020)

The panel will explore, through creative and critical responses, the re-writing of the mermaid in the Anthropocene, specifically in eco-poetry and magical realist prose. The panel's approach is underpinned by the post-human ecofeminist phenomenology of writers such as Stacy Alaimo and Astrida Neimanis, E. K. Brathwaite's concept of 'tidalectics' and Irigarayan theory.

Part of this panel will encompass an eco-poetical digital work deploying tidal ecolinguistics to navigate liminality of place or environment, language and subjectivity which demonstrates how these ideas are embodied by Welsh mermaids. The prose

explored by the panel will consist of two published magical realist novels (Julia Armfield's 2022 novel *Our Wives Under the Sea* and Monique Roffey's 2020 novel *The Mermaid of Black Conch*) and an original magical realist short story by Dr Holloway, set in the UK's urban canal waterways during the present moment. Representative of our relationship with nature, these magical realist stories are a re-enchantment of literary realism which 'reimagine[s] the world within another integrated context, emphasising a biocentric, holistic view that acknowledges the interconnectedness of all things in the universe' (Holgate, 2019, pg.9). All three papers address, to differing degrees, the ways in which women negotiate the constraints and expectations of patriarchy at the level of the body and the outcomes of that negotiation in a time of climate emergency. Reconsidering the nature of transformation, from a Classic and Romantic notion of Mermaids, Nymphs and Sirens as 'unnaturally natural' and disturbing forces that threaten the patriarchal and commercial relations between men and water, we propose an alternative view of these Underwater Women as products of external threat. Rather than being creatures that men, and capitalism, traditionally attempt to conquer, tame or subdue, Mermaids here are shown to be 'made' by heatwaves, by patriarchal notions of womanhood, and by linguistic restrictions of formalised grammar and speech that impose a state of 'otherness' and hybrid form onto women who do not, or cannot, conform.

Dr. Mansell's poetry performance and poetic commentary explores a return to both homeland and mother tongue through a re-assessment of the mermaid in Welsh mythology and a consideration of how the mermaid embodies a transgressive liminality between languages, environments and subjectivities. The fluid borders of her seaside home, of the languages she uses, and the tidal poetics she employs to negotiate the hybridity of her practice are entangled with the politics of the mermaid as a concept: linguistic and environmental liminality has intersected with feminine subjectivity that has existed in folklore and literature since Anglo-Latin vernaculars, though Gwenhidwy of Medieval Mabinogi to sixteenth century pamphlets such as the 'Pendine Mermaid' tract. While traditional, and monoglottal, language assumes a singular, universal subject position, which often aligns with male experiences and perspectives this poetic enquiry proposes a rejection of dualism and binary opposition, influenced by Irigaray, who advocates for a language that accommodates liminality, indeterminacy and multiplicity of voices and expressions. This ecolinguistic methodology connects subjectivity to place and environment through acknowledgement of linguistic liminality between languages.

Dr Ebdon offers an ecocritical analysis of *The Mermaid of Black Conch* (M. Roffey, 2020) and *Our Wives Under the Sea* (J. Armfield, 2022). These contemporary magical realist novels depict bodily transformations of women into a mermaid and a less classifiable aquatic life-form, respectively; each metamorphosis explores the human-animal/human-nature borderlines of patriarchal, Eurocentric modern thought through

tropes of abjection, monstrosity and myth in relation to the female body. In particular, the magical realist mode employed in these novels interrogates the principles of realism, the favoured form for the novel throughout European modernity, reliant upon the principles of empirical science. In *The Mermaid of Black Conch*, the legacy of colonialism (from Columbus to the late 20th century) and its impact upon ethnicity is examined as an aspect of the human transformation. With its setting in London, the centre of the largest of the 19th-century empires, science and exploration form a counterpoint to the magical phenomenon in *Our Wives Under the Sea*. The paper examines these twin discourses of patriarchal modernity – colonisation and science – and their implications for a reassessment of human identity in the Anthropocene.

In Dr Holloway's short story, a woman on the cusp of menopause finds relief from a heatwave in the local city canal. Transgressing the status of canals as dirty and post-industrial spaces only accessible by boats, her immersion into these murky waters, and the negative behaviours of passers-by that follow, lead to her transformation into urban mermaid. Changing physically to adapt to a future that may demand such (de)evolution, is a survival move, mentally and physically: she gains relief from the negative effects of modern digital culture which perpetuate the dry and discrete myth of individualism (Neimanis, 2017) and which harm both identity and biology, and finds herself reconnected with the phenomenal world through 'the-more-than human hydrocommons' (Neimanis, 2017 p12). But this transition is not a choice, nor without its dangers – the canals are polluted by both man-made waste and behaviours, and her release is mitigated by the liminality of the canal systems as neither natural nor entirely industrial anymore, a closed system that can protect and trap the mermaid simultaneously. This story is particularly relevant to the post-industrial geography of Liverpool, which is part of the Leeds-Liverpool canal network, itself a palimpsestic map of industrial/colonial culture that now transitions from urban gentrification, through edgeland decay, and into rural 'nature spaces' re-purposed for recreation. Canals are liminal spaces, and as such serve as a locus for reflections on the rapid changes made in the UK regarding the effects of the industrial age, and the new digital revolution.

These creative and critical responses have been developed in conjunction, through regular research meetings and close collaborative working. As such they speak to each other

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- Neimanis, Astrida (2017) *Bodies of Water: Posthuman Feminist Phenomenology*. London: Bloomsbury.

Transitions and Oceanic Posthumanism in *The Mermaid of Black Conch* (2020)

Mermaids have been reclaimed in contemporary sea fiction by artists and writers of colour with scholars noting that the figure of the half-human, half-fish allows to explore the sites of slave memory, and to elicit ecological and political commentary (Mohulatsi, 2023; Nies, 2021). The fictionalized mermaid of the Caribbean seas is a triply oppressed figure in terms of race, gender and her Othered 'half-and-half' self. In Monique Roffey's captivating novel *The Mermaid of Black Conch* (2020), Aycayia the centuries-old mermaid of Taino ancestry is an emissary of precolonial indigenous history, silent witness of neocolonial extraction and powerful posthuman agent of the sea. Her association with the sea, as the carrier of sea creatures, and her nomadic posthuman agency, enables her to survive brutal violence and sexual assault while also invoking ambiguous responses of fear, disgust and desire from men. In this chapter, I use my concept of oceanic posthumanism, rooted in Blue Humanities and posthuman feminism, and Bill Ashcroft's notion of archipelagic consciousness to explore how Aycayia's transitions from mermaid to woman on the land embodies a liminal presence making her an oceanic posthuman agent capable of shedding light on terrestrial norms and resisting various forms of violence. Roffey uses the figure of the mermaid to navigate terrestrial and oceanic territories with transitions juxtaposed with the racial and cultural hybridity on Black Conch island. Roffey reclaims the mermaid lore of the Caribbean seas with references to Mama Wata and other figures of the mystic feminine to present female agency and to resurrect a precolonial indigenous history.

(Un)Just Transitions: Modelling Intergenerational Climate Futures in Recent Anglophone Fiction and Non-Fiction

Panel 5.8, Friday 1 September, 9.00am – 10.45am, Lecture Theatre 3

David Higgins (University of Leeds): Procreation, Modelling, and Uncertainty in the Climate Essay

Julia Hoydis (University of Klagenfurt): Resilience, Routines, and the Figure of the Child to Come in Realist Disaster Novels

Roman Bartosch (University of Cologne): Teaching the Future

Imperfect: Intergenerational (In)Justice and Future-Making in the Literature Classroom

The panel presents work in progress from 'Just Futures? An Interdisciplinary Approach to Cultural Climate Models' (2023-2026), a collaboration by researchers in the UK, Germany, and Austria, with funding from the AHRC, the German Research Council (DFG) and the Austrian Science Fund (FWF). The project focuses on how culture models climate futures in relation to intergenerational justice. Bringing together methodologies from literary studies, linguistics, STS, and literature pedagogy, it

addresses how texts move between seemingly neutral climate facts ('models of') and normative social values ('models for'). It understands the qualitative cultural modelling of climate change as an important complement to dominant scientific quantitative models. This panel derives particularly from the project's literature component. The first two papers examine how personal essays and novels envision intergenerational care in the context of future civilizational and environmental breakdown. The third paper builds on their analysis by investigating the role of literature in sustainability education, especially in relation to the 'intergenerational rift' created by climate injustice.

Procreation, Modelling, and Uncertainty in the Climate Essay (David Higgins)

The last decade has seen the emergence of a new subgenre of the personal essay, written from the perspective of a parent concerned about the future of their child and the ethical ramifications of procreation during a climate crisis. This paper focuses on two of the most interesting examples of the form: Eileen Crist's 'Is it OK to have a child?' (2020) and Roy Scranton's 'Raising My Child in a Doomed World' (2018). Each text has a complex relationship to climate modelling. Crist acknowledges that it is unlikely that global heating will stay below two degrees Celsius. But she also emphasises that there are uncertainties, both physical and socio-political, which means that 'the consequences of a heating climate are extremely difficult to predict'. Therefore, she has 'hope for the possibility of human flourishing in unprecedented and as yet unimaginable circumstances'. Scranton's rhetoric is more pessimistic: he suggests that 'the middle and later decades of the 21st century – my daughter's adult life – promise a global catastrophe whose full implications any reasonable person must turn away from in horror'. And yet he also concedes that the required 'revolutionary socio-economic transformation' is not impossible. In any case, he sees his role as a parent as committing to living 'ethically in a broken world' and to teaching his daughter to do the same. Both essays draw on technical climate models but move from descriptions of likely futures to prescriptions about procreation and child-rearing. They find justifications for parenthood even given the child's future carbon footprint, and the deterioration of the global environment.

Resilience, Routines, and the Figure of the Child to Come in Realist Disaster Novels (Julia Hoydis)

This paper explores narratives of survival amidst and after environmental disaster in recent prose fictions by female British authors: Kate Sawyer's *The Stranding*, Jesse Greengrass's *High House*, and Bethany Clift's *Last One at the Party*. Published in 2021 during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic – a time which brought the importance of critical infrastructures and the global interrelations between environmental, health, and other crises and questions of intergenerational justice into sharp focus – the texts deconstruct visions of the Western metropolis (London) as an inhabitable, safe space.

With their haunting depictions of once familiar environments turned hostile after the break-down of human-built infrastructures, they imagine futurity and survival against the odds by refashioning and ‘defamiliarizing’ (Levine 2022) realist modes of narration (e.g. by finding shelter inside a whale corpse). The examples deviate from other environmental crises and post-apocalyptic narratives in content and narrative form by foregrounding routines and resilience. They also present alternative visions of the nuclear family and intergenerational care while revisiting familiar tropes of hope for the future such as pregnancy and childbirth. Modelling climate futures here entails finding a narrative balance between possible world-building and world-ending, capturing the paradoxical sense of human futures premised on imagining “Living cannot go on; living will go on” (Oh 2022, 982).

Teaching the Future Imperfect: Intergenerational (In)Justice and Future-Making in the Literature Classroom (Roman Bartosch)

This presentation draws the group’s research on the personal essay and recent climate fictions together with research on educational materials and practices. It addresses the challenge that demands for sustainability education and shared future-making in school and university education are in tension with a fundamental intergenerational conflict between (older) educators and (younger) learners. This conflict, it will be argued, impacts on the authority of the educator as well as the receptiveness of learners and requires education scholars to rethink the potentials and practices of teaching (fiction) in times of climate injustices. Starting from the observation that the basic promise of education – that if learners follow the lead of educators, their future will be an improved version of the present – no longer holds, this presentation discusses the intergenerational rift in education in light of recent developments in educational research and policy. These developments suggest a wealth of new pedagogical objectives (such as resilience, flourishing, or futures literacy) and educational models of instruction and assessment. They will be analysed in light of the group’s understanding of cultural modelling and intergenerational conflict, which will help to make a case for working with creative literature in education from primary to tertiary levels and in the context of (in)justice and shared future-making.

Works Cited:

Levine, Caroline. “Realism for Sustainability.” *Realism: Aesthetics, Experiments, Politics*. Ed. Jens Elze. Bloomsbury, 2022, 191-208.

Oh, Rebecca S. “Apocalyptic Realism: A new Category of the Event.” *ISLE* 29.4 (2022): 967-986.

Speculative Nature Writing: Feeling for the Future

Panel 3.1, Wednesday 30 August, 3.15pm – 4.45pm, Lecture Theatre 1

Jos Smith (University of East Anglia): Speculative Form: Affect, Anticipation

Hetty Saunders (University of London): Speculative Nature Writing: Editing the Anthology

Richard Kerridge (Bath Spa University): Truelove's Tiger: Nature Writing Deranged

This panel will explore a fresh context for nature writing as a creative-critical practice of anticipation, inquiry and engagement with change. It will discuss recent developments in nature writing criticism by way of introducing an anthology. *Speculative Nature Writing: An Anthology* will be published in September this year, edited by Hetty Saunders and Jos Smith (contributors to this panel) and with new work by, among others, Richard Kerridge (also a contributor to this panel), Ben Smith, Anita Roy, Anna Fleming and Karen Lloyd. As well as contextualising the anthology within the nature writing landscape, the panel will examine what we mean by the term 'speculative nature writing', reflect on the intervention that this work aims to make, and showcase some of the genre-bending work that has emerged from the anthology and associated public-facing workshops.

Last year saw two landmark publications concerned with British and American nature writing. *Modern British Nature Writing, 1789-2020* by Will Abberly, Christina Alt, David Higgins, Graham Huggan and Pippa Marland, and *Nature Prose: Writing in Ecological Crisis* by Dominic Head have presented different but comparable critical appraisals of the nature writing genre that invite a fresh critical curiosity. We will argue that this invitation extends to creative responses as well offering an exciting context for experimentation and anticipation.

Stephen Benson has described the popularity of contemporary nature writing as 'the most prominent literary symptom of ecological crisis' ('New Ornaments' 16). While it would be inaccurate to reduce the work of these two monographs to the description 'symptomatic reading', there is an element here that reframes nature writing (and its popularity) as entangled within the very crises it appears to be addressing, never quite as demystificatory, nor quite as ideological, as readers sometimes assume.

Abberly et al. are sympathetic to the way nature writing is 'a conflict-ridden mode that speaks to the contradictions embedded within the modern condition'; and, as 'a crisis-ridden mode that addresses, whether directly or indirectly, some of the crises that have come over time to be associated with modernity'. There is a generosity in that phrase 'whether directly or indirectly' which is picked up in the way Dominic Head frames the nature writer in relation to crisis. As Head puts it succinctly, twentieth and twenty-first century nature writing 'emerges in a time of crisis, but which is also, in some ways, in crisis itself.' Head explores a series of narrative tensions in the modern nature writing text, often between forms of literary artifice and methods of scientific realism, not as contradictions but as 'literary effects', as what he describes as the form's 'productive paradoxical effects'.

In the editorial work, we were interested in the ways in which speculative nature writing might intensify such effects, might push at this tendency towards conflict and crisis to articulate a concern for the future that doesn't fall foul of the pull towards either utopian or dystopian work, but rather 'stays with the trouble', luring readers into ambiguous landscapes where they would have to feel their own way forward.

The anthology is a part of a wider AHRC-funded RD&E Fellowship (early career) run by Jos Smith which also includes the writing of a creative monograph of 'speculative nature writing.' Jos will introduce the wider project and the creative monograph, including some of the creative-critical context that pushes at the boundaries of mode and convention to generate anticipatory affect through 'genre trouble' (Stephanie LeMenager). He will also touch on the ways in which this research has provided the ground for some of the public-facing workshops that the project has run and end with a short excerpt of the creative work.

Hetty Saunders will follow with an account of the way in which the editorial work for the anthology sought to turn some of these questions about nature writing's past towards a meditation on its present and its possible futures, its anticipations and premonitions, its experiments and innovations. Hetty will discuss the different affordances of the term 'speculative nature writing' and the way in which we encouraged authors to test the overlap between fiction and non-fiction, push at familiar forms and conventions, explore marginalised experiences, or reach towards an uncertain future. The aim was to bring possible futures alive in unnerving, ambiguous, and provocative ways to address some of the difficult questions about value, meaning, identity, and sustainability that we face in a changing world.

Richard Kerridge will discuss his contribution of short fiction which explores the technological 'derangement' of our experience of places and wild creatures. These forms of mediation are so readily available now on television, the internet and social media, that audiences become visually familiar with them in advance of any embodied encounter. Such images include intimate close-ups that give the viewer an implied position they could not occupy in real proximity. The 'real' encounter, which is likely to be distant and momentary, interacts with these images, in anticipation and retrospect. Memories may blend the two, and even the moment of the encounter itself may be invaded by a sense of recognition and by remembered details that supplement what is immediately seen.

Such processes have to be seen in their interaction with the colonial history, in which the genre has so many roots, and with developing economic and cultural relationships between ecotourists and local people. These perspectives, in combination, place great pressure on the conventional use of narrative viewpoint, timescale and emplotment

in nature–writing: so much so, that the genre’s established practices seem no longer fully entitled to the term ‘realism’.

Terraqueous Mappings

Panel 2.7, Wednesday 30 August, 1.30pm – 3.00pm, Lecture Theatre 3

John Wedgwood Clarke (University of Exeter): Red River: A River in Pieces: the poetics of becoming disrupted in a long river poem

Mandy Bloomfield (University of Plymouth): “From the Open Sea”: Muriel Rukeyser’s ecopoetics of the shoreline

Ben Smith (University of Exeter): Ghost Nets and Phantom Islands: Mapping the Anthropocene

Panel Outline: Terraqueous landscapes are transitory zones, elementally, ecologically, historically and culturally. Charting a course from river to shoreline to sea, the three papers in this panel examine literary practices of mapping terraqueous material geographies, cartographies and imaginaries as ways of engaging with ideas about the Anthropocene, Capitalocene and world-ecological history.

Outlines of papers:

John Wedgwood Clarke (University of Exeter), *Red River: A River in Pieces*: the poetics of becoming disrupted in a long river poem

In the 1880s the Red River in West Cornwall was described as the Cornish ‘Klondike’ and a Pactolus for the immense wealth extracted in the form of tin from its ‘slimy bed’. Even now, heavy-metal laden water decants into its flow from the abandoned mines that generated these riches. In this practice-as-research paper, I will read from my recently completed long poem *Red River: A River in Pieces* and think through the way the Red River’s toxic waters and broken body offers itself as dirty, power-stained, weird, queer addition to the continuous waterways of river poetry. In making the poem, I tried to receive these complex riches into a poem whose techniques embody the river’s damaged complexity and draw on Modernist long-poem techniques to achieve this. But the river is more than a story of ecological erasure and ruins. Despite the pollution, strange biodiversity thrives in the network of tanks, ponds, leats and dams that once diverted and syphoned-off 100% of the river’s summer flow. This is river as machine; river as railway sidings; river as body transfused with poison; river as cultural artefact turbid with the sediments of human/more-than-human mingling; river as hideous sublime. Its strangeness is a way to see the impact of the Capitalocene transformed by a body of water that shows, through its bacterial growths and dragonfly hotspots, the damage we’ve inflicted and how life will evolve again without us.

John Wedgwood Clarke is a poet and associate professor in creative writing at the University of Exeter. He has published three collections of poems *Ghost Pot* (2013), *Landfill* (2017) and *Boy Thing* (2023). He has been a Leverhulme Artist-in-Residence, an AHRC Leaderships Fellow and is currently a CI on the NERC-funded RENEW project. He regularly collaborates with artists and scientists on transdisciplinary projects. For more on the Red River go to redriverpoetry.com

Mandy Bloomfield (University of Plymouth), “From the Open Sea”: Muriel Rukeyser’s ecopoetics of the shoreline

This paper will focus on how the post-war American poet Muriel Rukeyser thinks-with the transitional spaces of shorelines. Throughout the body of her work, Rukeyser uses imagery of the interface between land and sea to map out a poetics of relation and process. But the shoreline is not just a metaphor; it is a materially felt presence in both her theory and practice. I will argue that her poetry’s engagement with specific material, historical and cultural interfaces at the Atlantic shoreline are vital in her development of what we might now recognise as an politically-engaged ecopoetics. Rukeyser’s shorelines are zones of world-ecological colonial-capitalist encounter and appropriation. As such, they are also spaces that open up possibilities for an aesthetics of responsibility toward what Rukeyser capaciously terms “life.” By engaging with Rukeyser at the shoreline, I hope to sketch out a poetic sensibility which speaks to us now more powerfully than ever.

Text/Image/Archive/Action: creative engagements with past, present and future environments

Panel 1.5, Wednesday 30 August, 11.00am – 12.45pm, Flex 1

Lucy Burnett (Independent Scholar/ Writer)

JR Carpenter (Winchester School of Art)

Mike Collier (University of Sunderland)

Harriet Tarlo (Sheffield Hallam University)

For this roundtable we gather together a group of artist academics who respond to the past, present and future of places in transition through projects involving archival, site-specific research and the production of text and image. Collectively, our work shares an interest in how experiments in form/medium can reflect a changing more-than-human world in the context of varied landscapes across the U.K. Our work variously engages with the multiple environmental crises we live amongst, learns from the past in order to understand the present in forms of creative revisiting, and relates meaningfully to local and digital communities. In our conversation we will discuss methods including fieldwork and walking, archival research, exhibiting, and publishing; specificities from the histories and images of particular times, places and bioregions

such as weather, plants, birds and geologies in relation to 'The Lakes', flooding in Somerset, and the Lincolnshire Saltmarsh; community engagement through the arts and how this can contribute to future landscape decisions. In relation to the conference CFP, we address the 'fostering of new ways of looking and feeling towards human and non-human others or at environments that are themselves in transition' and 'new formal innovations in ecopoetics and art practice arising in response to a world in transition'. This curated conversation will interest delegates working on place and climate in text and image (whether as individuals or within cross or inter disciplinary projects), creating impact projects within or outside the academy or using archival research in academic, creative or hybrid work.

We look forward to exploring the commonalities and differences in our approaches: Mike Collier is an artist, writer, and curator for whom collaboration within and without the arts has been key in the production of extensive work on walking, Wordsworth and Basho and the collection *Songs in Place and Time: Birdsong and the Dawn Chorus in Natural History and the Arts*; J.R. Carpenter is an artist and researcher across performance, print and digital media whose projects *This is a Picture of the Wind* and *The Gathering Cloud* appear simultaneously in all these forms and draw on fieldwork as well as archival research into weather phenomena; Lucy Burnett is a poet, photographer and environmental campaigner whose book *Through the Weather Glass* (KFS 2016) employed hybrid forms to investigate how literature can engage with climate change away from the apocalyptic norm and whose project, *SCREE*, created a digital guidebook to reimagining the Lakeland Fells in relation to the environmental crisis; Harriet Tarlo and Judith Tucker (poet and artist respectively) have worked together now for over ten years on place-based projects in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire (Tributaries, Project Fitties, Hideaway) involving exhibitions, workshops and artists' books. They co-convened the CMIT (Cross Multi Inter Trans) ASLE UKI Biennial in Sheffield and subsequently edited a special issue of *Green Letters* Vol 23:3 (2019) on CMIT environmental art. Our chair, David Borthwick, works on Environment, Culture and Communication at the School of Interdisciplinary Studies, University of Glasgow and is a key contributor to *Songs of Place and Time*.

Tipping Points: Discourse, Narrative, Politics

Panel 1.8, Wednesday 30 August, 11.00am – 12.45pm, Lecture Theatre 1

Leo Steeds (University of Glasgow)

Theo Aiolfi (CY Cergy Paris University)

Mekhala Dave (TBA21 Academy)

Since the term was brought into climate science in 2008, 'tipping points' – 'critical threshold[s] at which a tiny perturbation can qualitatively alter the state or development

of a system' (Lenton et al. 2008) – have become widely accepted as a framework for conceptualising abrupt, self-sustaining and non-linear transformations in the Earth system that are predicted to occur in the Anthropocene.

To date, most work in this area has focused on the identification and modelling of negative biophysical tipping points (such as Amazon dieback, the shutdown of the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC) and Boreal permafrost collapse), or proposals for triggering so-called 'positive' tipping points in social systems.

Positive tipping points include the socio-technological (the shift from petrol to EV's), socio-ecological (transformations in the food system) and socio-political (changes in mindset and behaviour), all of which are presented as potential pathways for stabilising the Earth's climate and avoiding or mitigating the impacts of negative tipping points (Tabara et al. 2018, Otto et al. 2020).

Presented in this way, tipping points provide an alluring framework for policymakers, activists and communicators, offering potential intervention points for policy, social action and narrative to cut through the complexity and scale effects of the planetary climate crisis. However, as yet there is no established framework for the governance of tipping points (either biophysical or social), and the ethical and political implications of defining, let alone triggering, 'positive' tipping points are only beginning to be discussed. In the urgency to communicate research on tipping points, it is important to consider what discourses, narratives frameworks and even genres, the language of tipping points operates within and how these might impact individual, governmental and global responses.

This roundtable will bring together researchers from across the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences to begin a conversation about the discourse, narrative and politics of tipping points, addressing the following questions:

- What does it mean to define a tipping point and thus impose a 'limit' or 'threshold' on a complex biophysical or social system?
- What existing political discourses, narrative forms and genres do we operate within when we talk about tipping points?
- What does it mean to define a tipping point as 'positive' or 'negative'? 'Positive' for whom? How are such definitions problematised by issues of justice and ethics?
- How might the definition of a singular 'point' occlude marginalised voices and belie the plurality and complexity of possible futures?
- How might the language of tipping points both help and hinder wider efforts to communicate the threat of climate change and its associated crises to the public?
- As researchers answering these questions, how might we need to transition between disciplines and transgress boundaries in our own practice?

Transition and Environment in local communities in Wales

Panel 2.4, Wednesday 30 August, 1.30pm – 3.00pm, Flex 1

Linden Peach (School of Traditional Arts): Ely Cardiff Not Cambridge: Peter Finch's Environmental Writings

Francesca Brooks (York University): 'Falling into precipice and monastery': local Welsh environments in Lynette Roberts's wartime writing

Jamie Harris (Aberystwyth University): Transition and the environment in new town settlement in Raymond Williams's *The Fight for Manod*

Critical discussions of Welsh literature have long focussed on the extent to which Wales is a nation of 'internal difference' – socially, culturally, linguistically and, above all, environmentally. The papers in this panel discuss significant literary responses to three very different Welsh environments. Paper 1 examines the poet and psychogeographer Peter Finch's account of Ely, an urban suburb of Cardiff, which has changed and developed around shifting 'hypercentres'. Paper 2 considers the response in three mid-twentieth century works by Lynette Roberts to the estuarine and coastal environments of rural west Wales and considers how stories of medieval saints shaped Roberts's ecological vision. Paper 3 is focussed on transition and the environment in new town settlement in south Wales through a discussion of Raymond Williams's *The Fight for Manod* (1979), the third and relatively neglected but thought-provoking novel in Williams's trilogy that began with *Border Country* (1960). Although addressing very different works about distinctive environments, these papers share three principal themes. Each concerns a writer seeking to write themselves into a particular locality and, in doing so, unveil the complex nature of the relationship between environment and settlement as sites of transition. Each examines the ways in which different communities in their localities acquire particular visions of themselves and their environments. And each explores the precarity and sustainability of different Welsh communities when viewed from environmental, ecological and ecocritical perspectives. The panel suggests that unravelling and understanding the historical complexities of communities within their environmental contexts is essential if Wales is to have a sustainable and coherent future as a nation.

'Verse with wings of skill': examining transitions between literary and practical texts in the early modern period

Panel 5.5, Friday 1 September, 9.00am – 10.45am, Teaching Room 5

Edward Stein (University of Cambridge): 'Turning and returning': Adapting Genre and Evolving Mentalities in John Taylor's *Verses on the Mine at Culross* (1618)

Emily Naish (University of Sheffield): Transforming fenlands into poetry in Michael

Drayton's *Poly-Olbion*

Todd Borlik (University of Huddersfield): Shakespeare and Snake Handlers

Chloe Fairbanks (University of Oxford): 'Experience by view, and due observation': perambulation and embodied knowledge in *Henry IV* and *King Lear*

Early modern texts promoted and participated in intertextual, cross-generic reading, and it was not uncommon to see practical instructional texts sold alongside Shakespeare's plays in the bookstalls of St Paul's. Yet in the growing body of scholarly work on the intersection of early modern literature and environmental thinking, comparatively little attention has been paid to the ways in which these texts spoke to each other across genres. This panel aims to redress this gap, extending the parameters of literary scholarship by studying non-traditional texts alongside the established canon to yield fresh insights about the relationship between early moderns and the natural world. Reading the works of William Shakespeare, Michael Drayton, and John Taylor alongside surveying manuals and zoological treatises, the papers will explore how environmental thinking was transmitted into English literature in the early seventeenth century. In doing so, they seek to disrupt generic boundaries, demonstrating the rich interplay between 'literary' and 'practical' writing during this period. Questions considered will include:

- How did authors like Shakespeare and Spenser engage with contemporary debates about cultivation and improvement?
- Similarly, how did non-canonical authors find poetic inspiration in less respected parts of the landscape?
- What might we gain from broadening our understanding of literary source material to include equally popular instructional tracts on land management and animal husbandry?

The panel will consist of four papers, covering topics of land management and animal husbandry. Edward Stein gives attention to mines and mining, an unusual topic for poetry before the seventeenth century. This paper considers a poem by John Taylor, written on the occasion of his tour of a coalmine at Culross in Scotland. Situating Taylor's poem alongside both self-consciously literary poetic works and non-literary works which explore the question of the appropriate use of the land, the paper argues that the poem should be interpreted as an interface at which classically inspired poetry meets non-literary improvement discourse. In the process, it suggests that the history of generic change and the history of human intervention in the environment are closely related. Following on from this, Emily Naish examines representations of England's fenlands in the early seventeenth century. At the time, surveying texts depicted these marshy regions as agriculturally unproductive and their inhabitants as similarly idle. Indeed, large drainage projects were commenced in the 1630s with the intention of improving East England's Great Level. However, despite their

perceived faults, the fens were in fact fertile places of provision for their inhabitants and the neighbouring communities alike. Michael Drayton's *Poly-Olbion* (1612/1622) is unusually appreciative, and provides (the paper suggests) an early defence of a much derided part of England's landscape. Turning to the subject of animal husbandry, Todd Borlik compares early modern treatises on herpetology (most notably Edward Topsell's *History of Serpents*) that sought to cultivate scientific curiosity about snakes with literary representations of them that exploited and intensified ophidiophobia, an irrational fear of them. In stoking fears, Renaissance playwrights, the paper argues, also mimicked the strategies of itinerant mountebanks and snake handlers who cast serpents as sinister co-performers in a popular form of street theatre to terrorise spectators into purchasing their magical antidotes. Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* both parodies and pays an ambivalent homage to the snake handling tradition, and in doing so, Shakespeare re-enacts the wonder-working of snake handling and transforms it into secular theatre. The panel is rounded off with an examination of land husbandry. Chloe Fairbanks explores the problem of absentee landlords, a source of serious concern in late Tudor and early Stuart England. Her paper reads Shakespeare's *Henry IV* and *King Lear* in light of debates over land management, positioning the plays alongside contemporary surveying manuals which emphasised the importance of 'know[ing]' one's own land. It suggests that Shakespeare's engagement with surveying literature offers a way of understanding good government which is inseparable from bioregional consciousness. In doing so, it offers a caveat to scholarship that frames the cartographic revolution as pivotal in the formation of national identity.

Taken together, the papers will offer a bracing recontextualisation of early modern poetry and drama within the popular practical literature of its time, illuminating the intertextual and collaborative relationship between conventional conceptions of literary culture and practical writing.

Welsh Fictions: Extraction, Energy, and Environmental Justice

Panel 4.8, Thursday 31 August, 9.00am – 10.45am, Teaching Room 6

Elizabeth Edwards (University of Wales Trinity St David): Racial and Environmental Justice: Ann Julia Hatton's *Gonzalo de Baldiva* (1817)

Aidan Byrne (Wolverhampton University): History, Memory and Injustice: contemporary fiction about Tryweryn

Andrew Webb (Bangor University): Welsh Petrofictions

This panel focuses on texts which register social and environmental transitions caused by the extractive and energy industries. Each paper demonstrates a connection to Wales in some way. Paper one considers the links between racial

and environmental justice in an 1817 Welsh novel of intercultural encounter: Ann of Swansea's *Gonzalo de Baldiva*, set largely in a Peruvian silver mine worked by slaves trafficked from Sierra Leone. Paper two argues that the Tryweryn reservoir, constructed in the 1950s and 60s – in the face of universal Welsh opposition – to provide Merseyside with the water it needed to expand is 'a rupture of equilibrium' (Pierre Nora) in Welsh history: a site through which Welsh culture explores and refracts contemporary issues of environmental destruction, democratic deficit and injustice. Paper three traces the shape of Welsh petrofiction: it tracks the footprint in Wales of the global oil industry from the 1920s to the present, and it suggests ways in which the transitions associated with these (dis)investments are registered in the literary record: in fictions of oil-encounter modernization; in a 'petro-unconscious' in texts about devastated Welsh coal mining communities following the 'turn to oil' in the 1920s, consolidated in the 'Great Acceleration' post-World War Two; and in contemporary writing which features commodities derived from oil. Together, the three papers explore the Welsh experience in/of a globalising capitalist modernity through the lens of resource extraction, labour exploitation and (de)industrialisation. The texts they discuss are similarly 'worlded', acknowledging the complexity of issues of environmental and social justice experienced in and beyond a particular site.

Liz Edwards, Racial and Environmental Justice: Ann Julia Hatton's *Gonzalo de Baldiva* (1817)

Ann Julia Hatton, also known by her pen name 'Ann of Swansea', was a prolific novelist (and poet) writing for the popular press in the 1810s–1830s. Her 1817 novel *Gonzalo de Baldiva*, signed from Swansea in July 1816, is characteristic of her action-packed, densely plotted fictions, which tend to run several narrative lines at once in multiple and sometimes foreign locations. Even so, *Gonzalo* stands out for its colonial settings and abolitionist narrative, dedicated to William Wilberforce, the most prominent figure in the movement for the abolition of the trade in enslaved African people in the period.

Gonzalo is set in Britain, Sierra Leone, Mexico and largely Peru (actually modern-day Bolivia), where the Potosi silver mine plays a crucial role in the narrative. Perhaps the world's most infamous mining site, Potosi saw human violence and environmental contamination on a huge scale. In Hatton's novel, the mine becomes the site of an uprising of enslaved people working there, led by a small number of enslaved Africans trafficked from Sierra Leone. *Gonzalo* was published at a point in British culture when attention in the abolitionist movement was shifting from the slave trade to slavery (although the slave trade was outlawed in Britain in 1807, chattel slavery remained lawful until 1833). In this context, Hatton is an intriguing figure. She had travelled to America in the 1790s, but not to South America, nor to Africa, so her accounts of these places are imagined or armchair travelled only. In the light of that fact, this paper asks what might she have known about the scenes of her fiction, and

how might she have known them, as she shaped her novel around devastating themes of racial and environmental catastrophe.

Aidan Byrne, History, Memory and Injustice: contemporary fiction about Tryweryn

According to Pierre Nora, the acceleration of history is marked by ‘a rupture of equilibrium’ in which custom, tradition and the ancestral habits have been displaced by historical self-consciousness, crystallised in particular places which retain memories amidst environments of loss and destruction. History, according to Nora, has eradicated the lived experience of memory in the human consciousness.

In contemporary literature and cultural texts by and about Wales, Tryweryn has become the prime lieu de memoire, a fixed point of rupture whose meaning appears clear. In the wider landscape of Goggledd Cymru, sites (often associated with water) whose meanings and memories are contested by multiple individuals and communities appear frequently: reservoirs, lakes, beaches, mountains and national parks, even house names. This paper examines the frequent, almost pathological representation of specific Welsh locations and landscapes in fiction such as WG Sebald’s *Austerlitz*, Jonathan Coe’s *Bournville*, Manon Steffan Ros’s *Llyfr Glas Nebo* and in recent creative non-fiction to explore whether the dichotomy between history and memory provides readers with new ways of understanding places and cultures in constant physical and conceptual flux.

Andy Webb, Welsh Petrofictions

‘we breathe naphthalene air, the pillars of smoke writhe and the astringent sky lies pale at her sides’: this line in Lynette Roberts’ 1941 poem ‘Swansea Raid’ registers the dramatic effects of the Luftwaffe’s bombing of oil industry infrastructure in south Wales. The Llandarcy oil refinery in Swansea, founded in 1921 by Anglo-Persian, was the UK’s first, and was one of a number of oil industry installations in south Wales – including the Angle Bay oil terminal in Milford Haven, its 46-mile pipeline to Llandarcy, the Baglan Bay petrochemical site near Port Talbot, and the chemical plant in Barry, near Cardiff. While Anglophone Welsh literature is usually associated with the coal industry, this paper begins to set out a critically-neglected tradition of Welsh petrofiction. There are texts of oil-encounter modernization: texts which register the impact of the oil industry in south Wales between 1921 and the closure of most sites in the 1990s and 2000s. More subtly, and following Mark Bould’s concept of the Anthropocene Unconscious, this paper identifies petrofiction in texts which depict the devastation of communities in Welsh coal producing areas – following the ‘turn to oil’ in the third decade of the twentieth century and the ‘Great Acceleration’ in the aftermath of the Second World War. Finally, the paper identifies some modern and contemporary Welsh fiction which registers the increasing presence in our lives of products that come from the process of oil extraction.

Abstracts of ‘Online Day’ Papers

These are the abstracts of papers presented during the online day on 29 August 2023. They are listed in alphabetical order by surname.

Veronika Arutyunyan (University of Hamburg) Transformations of Lyric Voice in Contemporary Ecopoetry

Panel 2, Tuesday 29 August, 11.15am – 12.30pm

In the work of Rebecca Dunham, Craig Santos Perez, and Allison Cobb poetic voice figures as temporally and spatially situated and determined by racial, gender, and class conditions. Echoing the tenets of material ecocriticism, they portray the unstable boundary between human and non-human subjects, but their speaker does not dissolve in a net of relations. Although their ecopoetics enacts a decentering of the human, it resists “flat” ontologies and perspectives of dehierarchized co-existence that material ecocriticism favors, highlighting instead material interdependencies between environmental conditions and people’s everyday lives in the Anthropocene. Their highly personal voice conveys the tensions embedded in the universalist implications of the Anthropocene, as the poetic persona acquires a variety of differing positions from which to perceive the Anthropocene. This is achieved through the emplacement of voice in cultural, historical, economic, and political context that foregrounds the poetic persona’s positionality to their environment and enables self-recognition that extends to the reader. This personal lyric speaker, aware of their own role in shaping the environment, does not erase but manifests the difference between the human and the non-human and adequately portrays humanity’s ambivalent position—both of having immense power and a complete lack of control. In Perez’ chants that instruct the reader to speak out loud against environmental injustice voice becomes a tool of defiance. In Dunham’s documentary lyrics the voice assumes different personas—these multiple perspectives render the inequalities inherent in the Anthropocene discourse. Cobb’s lyric address ties voice to a sensual experience of a gendered body, saturated with “streams of chemicals”. In this paper, I argue that personal voice in these poets’ work overcomes the pitfalls of Anthropocene discourse as it remains attuned to its complexities. This signals a transition in lyric poetry from a detached personal voice to a personal voice that is enmeshed in environmental relations.

Mars Briones (MESH, University of Cologne) Tracing Transitions: Turns in Disaster Discourses and Tropes of Catastrophe

Panel 1, Tuesday 29 August, 9.15am – 11.00am

Regarded as “*crise revelatrice*,” disasters expose key issues emanating from specific patterns of human-environment entanglements. As such, they occasion pivotal transitions that bear upon important questions on reconfiguring socio-ecological relations and reimagining place understandings and practices. Because such recalibrations depend so much on knowledge, what counts as such, and what it “reveals”—and conceals—there is a need to trace the discursive underpinnings of disaster knowledge and the perspectival shifts that have shaped it. This paper investigates such shifts in the context of Tacloban City in the Philippines following the 2013 super typhoon Haiyan, one of the strongest and deadliest cyclones in recorded history. From disaster research in geography, environmental history, anthropology, and environmental humanities, it identifies significant discursive shifts: from natural hazards to vulnerability, from vulnerability to adaptation and resilience, from disaster response to disaster preparedness, and from western to decolonial frameworks. It then examines these transitions vis-à-vis the adoption and implementation of predominantly hazard-focused, techno-scientific projects in Tacloban that are presented as solutions to storm surges and other typhoon-related hazards. Interrogating such approaches to disasters, the paper then turns towards local concepts and poems by writers who are also survivors of the Haiyan disaster. This recourse seeks to understand how culture and creative work ideate transitions and human-environment relations in a country where hazards permeate everyday life, and how reckoning with them can foster more holistic perspectives and approaches to disaster.

Domonique Davies (University of Reading) Breaths of Mountains and Man in Wallace Stevens’s ‘Chocorua to Its Neighbour’

Panel 2, Tuesday 29 August, 11.15am – 12.30pm

Harold Bloom notes in *Wallace Stevens: The Poems of Our Climate* (1976), that Wallace Stevens’s poem, ‘Chocorua To Its Neighbour’, has been neglected by critics. The poem, published in *Transport to Summer* in 1947, is spoken from the perspective of Mount Chocorua who describes the coming of an abstract being that critics have previously interpreted as the ultimate man, or hero. However, when read alongside the later work of French philosopher, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, the poem presents a metamorphosis of human and nonhuman selves ‘without reference to their form’, enmeshed in the ‘flesh of the world’. My paper seeks to elucidate a dialogue between Stevens’s poem and Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology, presenting an alternative interpretation of this underread poem. Predicating on the ambiguity of the identities of mountain and human, I suggest that the text turns to breath and speech to bridge the unarticulated porosity between terrestrial beings and the human, ultimately revealing the unseen connections between constituents of the world. My paper will focus on the theme of breath and air,

which the poem presents as forces of creation and decreation. This emphasis on breath speaks to Louise Westling's work on Merleau-Ponty's ecophenomenology in *The Logos of the Living World: Merleau-Ponty, Animals, and Language* (2014), where Westling explains how Merleau-Ponty's later works explore the ways that human language can bubble up 'from silence and reach[ing] back into the Invisible to articulate meanings that are the lining and depth of the sensible world.' Merleau-Ponty's thinking therefore advocates for the potential of language to transform and translate experiences, beginning with the act of breathing. I hope to reveal with my readings of Stevens and Merleau-Ponty that these thinkers anticipated a language-in-transition regarding altering our consciousness and perspectives towards nonhuman agents.

Carolyn Lau (Chinese University of Hong Kong) Relational Ethics in End Times: A Posthuman Reading of Alan Moore's *Saga of the Swamp Thing*
Panel 1, Tuesday 29 August, 9.15am – 11.00am

A marsh monster co-created by comic writer Len Wein and artist Bernie Wrightson in 1971, the origins of the titular creature of *Saga of the Swamp Thing* was rewritten when Alan Moore took over the series in 1984. The man-nature hybrid is no longer the human scientist Alec Holland turned into a plant, but a plant that thinks it was a man. Moore's extensive use of gothic horror aesthetics visualises a preoccupation with contamination and toxicity, resonating with the pervasive apocalypticism in postwar environmental crisis and Cold War nuclear anxiety. Moore's revisionist approach to the creature's metamorphosis marks a transition from an Enlightenment Humanist to a posthuman understanding of subjectivity that is embodied and relational. Drawing from Moore's anarchism and utopian thinking in counterculture environmentalism, this paper argues for an affirmative reading of Swamp Thing in terms of the concept and practices of relationality.

The categorical impurity of the Swamp Thing calls into question what constitutes a normative body qualifying for subjectivity in the anthropocentric Humanist tradition. Mel Chen's queer of colour engagement with indigenous cosmological systems contests the settler colonialism logic of using the vocabulary of animacy to classify different and therefore "lesser" human beings. In particular, Moore's Swamp Thing imagines a nonhuman subjectivity, as proposed by N. Katherine Hayles's concept of "planetary cognitive ecology". The Swamp Thing's multispecies synthesis opens up ethical possibilities of "intra-action" in Karen Barad's new materialism, which traverses nature and culture, and matter and mind to destabilise the reliance on dichotomy to establish subjectivity. The Swamp Thing's desire to bond with humans, as well as the non-human environment suggests a relational understanding of existence that is not self-contained, but always dependent on our ability to respond to the Other.

Pippa Marland (University of Bristol) From land stealers to land healers: transitions in contemporary farming and agrarian literature

Panel 3, Tuesday 29 August, 1.15pm – 3.00pm

This paper explores the current shift in farming practices away from intensification towards more ‘extensified’, nature-friendly methods. It also investigates the transition in literary terms, as works dealing with forms of agro-ecology take their place once again (after a decades-long hiatus) in a tradition of British nature writing and reanimate a georgic mode of cultural production that has frequently been neglected in favour of pastoral representations. The paper takes as its case studies three farming memoirs, all published in 2022 and all written by authors who are actively involved in agriculture: Lee Schofield’s *Wild Fell: Fighting for Nature on a Lake District Hill Farm*, Jake Fiennes’ *Land Healer: How Farming Can Save Britain’s Countryside*, and Sarah Langford’s *Rooted: How Regenerative Farming Can Save the World*.

The discussion will situate these books in the context of urgent debates surrounding agriculture and the environment, including the questions raised by George Monbiot’s *Regenesiis: Feeding the World Without Devouring the Planet* (also published in 2022) in which the author states that ‘We can now contemplate the end of most farming, the most destructive force ever to have been unleashed by humans’.

As the titles of these works indicate, the perceived stakes are high: they involve fighting for ‘nature’, ‘Britain’s countryside’, ‘the world’ and ‘the planet’. As such, these agrarian narratives and Monbiot’s very different kind of outlook represent conflicting claims to a twenty-first century paradigm shift in the way food is produced and consumed. The paper will explore the articulation of agrarian transitions in terms of the material changes they describe while also bringing a critical eye to the narratives themselves, close-reading their literary discourse from an ecocritical perspective.

Călina-Maria Moldovan (Babeş-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca, Romania) Liquid Ontologies and Planetary Assemblages. Representations of Water in Contemporary Norwegian Literature

Panel 1, Tuesday 29 August, 9.15am -11.00am

In an essay from 2017, Astrida Neimanis states that fluids tend to “breach borders and invite the confluence and collaboration of things; they challenge an ordering of the world according to a logic of separation and self-sufficiency”. Water forms a global, planetary assemblage of forces and synergies, a rhizome-like structure, with no beginning, no centre, and no end: “Waters literally flow between and within bodies, across space and through time, in a planetary circulation system that challenges

pretensions to discrete individuality” (Cecilia Chen, Janine MacLeod and Astrida Neimanis, “Thinking with Water”, 2013). Human agency is set aside and no longer needed in such a system of transition and transmission, where the flow of everything precedes human intention. An ocean is an ocean, but an ocean is also a conglomerate of various independent and autonomous non-human entities or actants that communicate and operate in mutual reliance, creating a mesh-like structure which finds itself in a constant becoming. The purpose of my presentation is to investigate how this planetary water assemblage is depicted in contemporary Norwegian fiction, in novels by Maja Lunde, Morten Strøksnes, and Roy Jacobsen. I argue that these narratives disturb long-established, but slowly outdated conceptions of matter and non-humanity, and create new sensibilities and new modes of understanding the mesh of interconnected human and nonhuman realities.

Holly Nelson (University of Michigan) Absolving Matelda: Engaging with Ecofeminism in Dante Alighieri’s *Purgatorio*

Panel 3, Tuesday 29 August, 1.15-3.00pm

All at once fulfilling the roles of Mother Nature and Jesus Christ, Matelda of Dante Alighieri’s *Purgatorio* is an elusive figure that merits greater attention in critical discussion. The dichotomy of Matelda, who both exercises spiritual power yet remains a victim of patriarchy through her intimate connection to nature, features prominently in French artist Albert Maignan’s late nineteenth-century painting of her. Enshrouded in light while Dante and Virgil gaze at her from across the Lethe, Matilda emerges as goddess-like, a divine authority in Purgatory. All the same, however, gathering flowers and blending in with the floral tree in the backdrop—Matelda becomes the natural world that surrounds her—Matelda reinscribes the contemporary ecofeminist critique of women being associated with nature, and men with culture. The duality of Maignan’s representation therefore begs the question of Dante’s text; to what extent does Matelda exercise agency in *Purgatorio*? Bridging scholarship in ecocriticism and feminist studies, this study examines Matelda through an “ecofeminist” lens (d’Eaubonne). While ecofeminist criticism maintains that the nature and culture binary limits women’s power, I suggest an alternate framing of the argument. Matelda uses nature as her source of power in preparing the Pilgrim for Paradise, through her didactic exposition of the Earthly Paradise to the Pilgrim; leading him through the garden; and spiritually cleansing him. As a “guardian” of the natural landscape, then, not unlike the guards the Pilgrim encounters throughout *Inferno*, Matelda occupies a position traditionally reserved for male characters in Dante’s world, enabling her to overcome not only the implicit sexism in her association with nature, but also the explicit misogyny in Dante’s *Commedia* as a whole (Durling and Martinez, 542).

Seda Bahar Pancaroglu (Çankaya University) Embracing the Inevitable: Arboreal Perspectives on Death and Transformation in Contemporary Fiction
Panel 2, Tuesday 29 August, 11.15am – 12.30pm

This paper explores the themes of death, resilience, and ecological understanding in two contemporary eco-literary works: *The Island of Missing Trees* by Elif Shafak and *The Diary of a Tree* (*Le Journal Intime d'un Arbre*) by Didier van Cauwelaert. Despite their cultural and geographical differences, the two novels share a common thematic thread in their exploration of death, resilience, and the profound connections between humans and the natural world. Both novels offer arboreal narrators that challenge traditional perspectives on mortality and invite readers to reconsider their relationship with the cycle of life and the transformative power of nature. Drawing upon the concept of transition, this study examines how these novels offer unique perspectives on the cycle of nature and its interconnectedness with human existence. Through an analysis of the arboreal perspectives presented in the narratives, the paper delves into the characters' encounters with death, their journeys of resilience, and the transformative processes they undergo. The analysis reveals the novels' nuanced explorations of the conception of death and its meaning within ecological frameworks. Moreover, the paper examines how these narratives challenge conventional notions of mortality and offer alternative conceptions of the afterlife, rooted in the cycles of nature. Through a comparative analysis of *The Island of Missing Trees* and *The Diary of a Tree*, this paper aims to contribute to the broader field of eco-literature and deepen our understanding of how narratives of death and transformation foster ecological awareness. By illuminating the themes of death, resilience, and the cycle of nature, this study offers insights into how literature can inspire new ways of perceiving and engaging with the natural world amidst ongoing environmental transitions.

Saba Pirzadeh (Lahore University of Management Sciences) Glacial Decline and Indigenous Livelihood in Uzma Khan's *Thinner Than Skin*
Panel 1, Tuesday 29 August, 9.15am – 11.00am

Humanity owes its very existence to glaciers since they have been here during two million years of human history and have created landscapes, determined soil composition, and controlled the atmospheric and oceanic circulations that drive global weather systems. The topographical and climactic importance of glaciers is amplified in South Asia by the Himalayan glacierized watersheds which feed ten of the largest rivers in Asia and support about 193 million people's livelihoods. These cryogenic ecologies however are rapidly diminishing in volume and scale due to global warming as represented in Pakistani author Uzma Khan's novel *Thinner than Skin* (2012). Set against the background of Pakistan's Kaghan valley, the novel pays homage to Northern Pakistan, to glaciers, to the old Silk Road, and to the nomadic existence in the region.

Using an ecocritical lens to analyze *Thinner than Skin*, this paper maps the narrative documentation of climate change induced glacial melt. The looming threat of glacial disappearance galvanizes people into visiting these areas, thereby leading to tourist encroachment on glacial areas and displacement of herding families living near the glaciers. The paper establishes how indigenous people and glacial spaces are colonized by tourist imaginaries, thereby intensifying socio-ecological vulnerabilities. Offering a narrative counterpoint, this paper explicates indigenous practices as effective means of protecting glaciers and maintaining communal presence. Furthermore, the paper argues that indigenous people partake in kinship based on a reciprocity with ecosystems whereby they are respected as living worlds and not as a collection of exploitable resources, but as a set of relationships and responsibilities (Whyte 269). In doing so, this ecocritical explication of Khan's novel establishes kinship as a form of indigenous environmental justice to mitigate glacial decline and restore human-nature balance.

David Robinson (University of Johannesburg) Man's best friend in Craig Higginson's *The Dream House*

Panel 3, Tuesday 29 August, 1.15pm – 3.00pm

The Dream House is an award-winning South African novel set largely on a small-holding/farm in KwaZulu-Natal. The farm setting frames the experiences of several human characters, but also refers to many animals – birds, ponies, and several dogs. The actions of one of the humans and one of the dogs are central to a tragedy that occurred in the past, and which is foregrounded in the development of the plot.

This paper will address the relationships between human and animal characters, in Higginson's farm novel, and the attempt to control nature that is apparent in the actions of the various humans. The paper will argue that animals are seen by various humans as having a range of purposes, including as pets and guard dogs, and the human engagement with the animals does not grant animals agency.

The transition(s) in this novel include the shift of power from owners of the farm to a new owner, who was resident on the farm as a child. He is a person of colour and he has achieved a measure of financial success, which grants him the power to purchase the farm on which he was once merely the child of a servant. Another transition is that, with the passage of time, the truth emerges about the death of a servant many years ago.

The theorists whose work will inform the presentation include the following critics: Greg Garrard (2012) *Ecocriticism 2nd Edition*, Dan Wylie and Joan-Mari Barendse (eds) (2018) *Dogs in Southern African Literatures*, Wendy Woodward (2008) *The Animal Gaze: Animal Subjectivities in southern African narratives*, J. M. Coetzee (1988) *White Writing. On the Culture of Letters in South Africa*, John Bradshaw (2017) *The Animals Among Us*.

Simon Ryle (University of Split) Old Rendering Plant: Marx's gelatine & Levinasian flesh
Panel 3, Tuesday 29 August, 1.15pm – 3.00pm

The need to transition away from meat is urgent. Meat production and consumption is a central driver of catastrophic biopolitical crises, such as global warming, land degradation, and mass species extinction, not to mention accelerating rates of diabetes and obesity in human populations – which is why the UN Sustainable Development Project urges governments to promote reduced meat consumption. Yet arguably a solely ecological viewpoint misses key ethical questions of industrial meat.

Working with a broadly Levinasian framework concerning the vulnerability, nakedness, woundedness and suffering of the flesh, particularly described in Levinas's *Otherwise than Being* (1974, English translation 1998), this paper investigates the role of poetics and philosophy in culturally transitioning away from meat.

The paper centralizes Wolfgang Hilbig's novel *Old Rendering Plant* (1991, English translation 2017), which is set in the environs surrounding an industrial animal processing facility in post-WWII East Germany: in particular focussing on the narrator's hysterical fascination with the "white effluent" and "sticky tallow grease" that clings to the land around the rendering plant, and all the built surfaces of the narrator's village. Linking the ethical impulsion prior to subjectivation of Levinas's ethics with the emancipatory potential of desubjectivation described by Foucault, the paper explores the desubjectivation of Hilbig's sticky poetics. Deploying Karl Marx's concept of *gallerte* (gelatine), which Marx uses as a metaphor for the abstracted human labour of capitalism, Alex Blanchette's concept of "full vertical integration" to describe the complex material entanglements of US industrial hog commodities with contemporary society (2021), the stickiness of Jean-Paul Sartre's concept of nausea (1938), and Thomas Bernhard's notion, expressed in his novel *Frost* (1963, English translation 2006) that "the abattoir is the only essentially philosophical venue," this paper argues that Hilbig's novel constructs an ethics of desubjectivation from the sticky entanglements of contemporary society and industrial livestock flesh.
