

Panel A: Abstracts and Speaker Biographies

Samuel Bradley, 'Queer Dyschronia: Derek Jarman and Dungeness as "Scurf Space"'

'The gardener digs in another time.' So says Derek Jarman, in his 1991 memoir of queer placemaking *Modern Nature*. For Jarman, the garden becomes a space *outside* time, 'without past or future,' and the space of the garden one of queer safety and retreat. But how does this space/time of safety operate when its boundaries 'are the horizon' – when it is open to the unique and ecologically complex littoral landscape of Dungeness?

This paper considers the unique existence of Dungeness as a locus of multiple temporalities and investigates how Jarman chooses to situate himself within, and interact with, these temporalities in a queerly productive way. Using Mark Fisher's description of the Ness as a 'scurf space,' and Brian Dillon's of the landscape as a form of architectural palimpsest, I propose that these layerings of time serve as a hospitable environment for both Jarman's queer identity and his artistic praxis. I argue that the uncanny juxtapositions of this strange coast find an echo in Jarman's written work and in his works of visual art. And using Jim Ellis's concept of 'the temporality of dirt' I propose that these temporal ecologies of the Ness allows Jarman to inscribe it directly with his own hauntological presence, allowing him to exist uncannily as another layer of scurf upon the shore.

Samuel Bradley is a fourth-year PhD student at King's College London. His PhD thesis, tentatively titled 'Cruising Landscape: Artists and Writers in English Queer Ecologies,' interrogates different modes of perceiving and inhabiting non-urban space in twentieth-century gay literature and visual art. He lives and works in London.

María Belén Caparrós, 'Because the river asks for a body: Rewriting Femicide, Muddy Trans-Corporealities and Fluvial Wastelands in Dolores Reyes' *Cometierra* (2019)'

In times of #NiUnaMenos mass marches to protest femicides and the struggle for the rights of sexual minorities in Argentina, Dolores Reyes publishes her first novel: the coming-of-age story of a young medium from the Buenos Aires *conurbano* who ingests soil and murky water to communicate with missing women. This paper argues that Reyes' novel depicts how the right to becoming *speaking beings* (Rancière 2010) of the victims of femicide has been historically vetoed. Moreover, horror and the supernatural surface as critical tools to propose a fictional means of resolving their spectral condition. Through a globalized revitalization of the *rioplatense* fantasy gothic, this presentation examines how it figures *muddy trans-corporealities* (Alaimo 2012) that share flesh and voice with the unburied and their open graves to highlight how silenced others can return to combat hate speech that have prevented them from participating in the public spheres. Finally, we will explore how the novel undermines traditional fictional tropes and landscapes of violence. If river shores and swamps have always been eerie literary territories where the remains of patriarchal brutality could be hidden, in

Cometierra the fluvial wastelands awake to redefine frameworks of recognition and accomplish a broader scope for the field of human.

Alaimo, S. 2012. "States of Suspension: Trans-corporeality at Sea". *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, Volume 19, Issue 3, Summer 2012, Pages 476-493.

Rancière, J. 2010. *El desacuerdo. Política y filosofía*. Buenos Aires: Nueva Visión.

Reyes, D. 2019. *Cometierra*. Buenos Aires: Sigilo.

Belén Caparrós (she/her) is a Film and Literature Professor. She is also a Ph.D. candidate in Latin American Literature and Cultural Studies at the Universidad de San Andrés, Buenos Aires and a CONICET (Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas) fellow. Her research examines contemporary Latin American horror and fantasy literature and film from a gender perspective, focusing on its relations with feminist movements and the struggles of sexual minorities of the 21st century in Argentina and other countries in the region. She is currently a visiting student at the University of Oxford as part of her doctoral research activities and is a member of the Oxford Latin American Graduate Network (OLAGN) Organizing Committee.

Barbara Franchi, 'Polluting Memories: Coastal Landscapes, Debris and Palimpsests in A. S. Byatt's Northern Fiction'

Best known for her highbrow metafiction and historical novels, Sheffield-born author A. S. Byatt explored the link between coastal landscapes, haunting memories and the climate crisis throughout her whole career. Indeed, she frequently returned to her Northern roots, writing how Yorkshire littoral spaces are shaped by human activities, storytelling and art-making, while at the same time being at the forefront of coastal erosion, species extinction and pollution.

From talismanic Whitby jet stones symbolising the ghosts of past writers haunting the present in *Possession* (1990), to the wind-swept Jurassic landscapes of Filey Beach preventing verbal communication in the (neo-) Victorian *Bildungsroman*, *The Virgin in the Garden* (1978), and the polluting plastic bottles in 'Sea Story' (2013), the Yorkshire coast exemplifies how human hubris is always coterminous with human finitude before non-human elements.

This paper examines the haunting presence of the Yorkshire coast across Byatt's fictions and argues how it is on the coast that material embodiments, human stories, individual and collective memory, and non-human actants intersect. While in Byatt's earlier work, postmodern and neo-Victorian nostalgia allow for a human-centric resolution, this paper argues how, in her later fictions, the urgency of the climate crisis necessitates 'trans-corporeal' (Alaimo 2008) perspectives, where 'storied matter' (Oppermann 2016) allows humans and non-humans alike to make meaning of a world on the verge of environmental destruction.

Barbara Franchi is Teaching Fellow in Postcolonial and World Literature at Durham University. She works on contemporary women's writing, material feminism, and ecocriticism, and she is particularly interested in how human travel practices, landscapes and 'natural' environments are inscribed within, and by, the legacies of imperialism. She is currently developing a project on seas of empire as places of trauma

and memory, as well as habitats for human and non-human actants. Her publications, talks and conference papers have covered authors such as A. S. Byatt, Amitav Ghosh, Sarah Moss, Eleanor Catton, Rose Tremain, and David Mitchell, and she is currently co-editing a special issue on material feminisms for *Contemporary Women's Writing*. She sits on the steering group of the Newcastle Postcolonial Research Group.

Mark Fryers, 'Shifting Seascapes, Sexuality, Gender and Authorial Identity in Timberlake Wertenbaker's *Do Not Disturb* (1991)'

In 1991, playwright Timberlake Wertenbaker and filmmaker Nicholas Renton followed in the footsteps of MR James to the tidal and 'alluvial' landscape (Bacon and Whybray, 2021) of East Anglia. Written as part of BBC2's strand of feature-length anthology drama series, *Screen Two*, it remains a little-seen text of literary and lyrical complexity, focused on a couple who give guided literary tours of the Norfolk coast (Blakeney Marshes) for enthusiasts of the fictional supernatural writer Eleanor Mont.

It is as the protagonists navigate these shifting and unrelenting seascapes that hidden truths are revealed and repressed feelings are brought to the surface as lives unravel. Gender and sexual politics are invoked (Wertenbaker's 'phallogocentric criticism,' Kurtuluş, 2022) as the characters delve into Eleanor's biography and the nature of identity becomes as obscured, shifting and elusive as the environment that threatens to swallow them. The North Sea and ebb tide haunt the drama and its protagonists as they have done throughout English history (e.g., Armitt, 2018). This paper will elucidate these themes, suggesting this as an exemplar of the gothic maritime – one with a complexity that invites contemporary reappraisal.

Dr **Mark Fryers** is Lecturer in Film and Media at The Open University. His research examines the intersection of maritime subjects, identity, and visual culture. He has published widely on a number of topics related to literary and visual culture, including in the *Journal of Popular Television* and *Gothic Nature*.

Rachael Murray, 'Styx and stones: submarine spaces and illusory drowning in garden grottoes'

Among the more popular follies of the 18th century landscape garden was the grotto: typically, a shell-studded imitation cave, ideally encompassing streams or lakes but at least damp enough – as Samuel Johnson pointed out with his usual charity – to offer a comfortable climate only if one happened to be a toad. Drawing on contemporary accounts of visits to grottoed gardens, I will argue that these sites offered the opportunity to imaginatively journey to the undersea through a multi-sensory recreation of this environment, then unreachable to the living.

Noting the grottoes' deathly as well as aquatic subtext, I will also explore the potential of certain grottoes – like Pope's in Twickenham – to use mirror-based optical illusions to create pointedly unsettling Gothic effects: claustrophobically enclosing waters, disorientating and displaced reflections, and, of course, visitors' doubles. Through this uncanny replication and perilous blending of reality and illusion, I contend

these mock-aquatic spaces begin to offer not just a sense of watery immersion, but also an opportunity to seemingly experience one's own drowning through a mirrored self. As a result, garden visitors could feel all the fear of falling into watery graves without ever getting their feet wet.

Rachael Eleanor Murray (she/her) is a Carnegie PhD Scholar at the University of Glasgow with an interest in all things dark, deathly, and disconcertingly liminal. Her thesis project, 'Dead Water: The Aqueous "Beyond" in Romantic and Victorian Gothic', focusses on watery imagery in articulations of death across 18th–19th century women's Gothic writing, and was awarded the Robertson Medal for Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences by the Carnegie Trust in 2022. Her EcoGothic reading of Eliza Cook's seaweed can be found in *Litteraria Pragensia*. r.murray.1@research.gla.ac.uk.

Tsvetelina Petkova, 'Shoreline Spaces and (Non)Human Connections in *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820)'

This paper engages with the theme of shoreline spaces in *The Tale of the Indian*, a specific section of the Gothic novel *Melmoth the Wanderer* by Charles Maturin. The analysis centres on the island and the sea as key elements in constructing the Irish national space. I argue that these elements are connected by a coastal "third space"—a realm defined by change, resistance, and otherness—which serves as the backdrop for the evolution of Irish identity.

Tsvetelina Petkova (she/her) is a PhD candidate in the Department of English and American Studies at the University of Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria. Her thesis examines early-nineteenth-century representations of Irishness in the works of Sydney Owenson (Lady Morgan) and Charles R. Maturin. Tsvetelina's other research interests include watery romanticism, sea literature and postcolonial ecologies in the context of Ireland.

Emily Robinson, 'Weird History, Eerie Folklore, and the Lost Island of Ravenser Odd'

Ravenser Odd was a short-lived medieval island, just off Spurn Point. Some accounts place it in the North Sea, others in the Humber. The island was formed of accretions around 1230 and annihilated by floods during the 1340s and 1350s. Within these few decades, it became a Royal Borough, a naval powerhouse, and a wealthy and ruthless commercial port. When the island flooded, the Chronicler of Meaux Abbey described it as fitting punishment for its 'wicked works and piracies'.

While this is a dramatic story, it is not well known — even within the local area. It is, however, enjoying something of a resurgence. Once confined to local history pamphlets, it is now circulating online, and in fiction, poetry, art, and music. These retellings tend to repeat a handful of details from the medieval sources, including bodies being washed from their graves, and some that have accumulated more recently, particularly focused around its name -- said to derive from the Old Norse for Raven's Tongue.

This paper draws on interviews with artists and writers who have drawn on the story of Ravenser Odd. It asks what their works tell us about the place of the weird and the eerie in contemporary cultures of popular history and folklore, and explores the particular resonance of the strange and shifting littoral landscape of Spurn Point and the Holderness coast.

Dr **Emily Robinson** is Reader in British Studies at the University of Sussex, and the author of three monographs (one co-written) on cultures of history, tradition, and feeling in modern British politics. She is now researching the history and afterlives of Ravenser Odd, in collaboration with Dr Kathryn Maude of the National Archives. In spring 2024, they are producing a public exhibition and a series of creative workshops and events with Hull History Centre and Hull Maritime Museum, entitled *Hull / Ravenser Odd: twin cities, sunken pasts*.

Yichun Zhang, 'Neo-Victorian Underground Waterways in Matthew Kneale's *Sweet Thames* (1992) and Clare Clark's *The Great Stink* (2005)'

In this talk, I explore the haunting nature of the underground networks of waterways represented in two Neo-Victorian novels, Matthew Kneale's *Sweet Thames* (1992) and Clare Clark's *The Great Stink* (2005), set in mid-century Victorian London. I propose to discuss the Gothic tropes of the underground sewer pipes as sites of murder mysteries, dream or hallucination and "[the] hidden haunts of vice" (Ackroyd 5). I argue that in *Sweet Thames* and *The Great Stink*, there is an overarching setting of the underground waterways as a symbol of labyrinth and madness. Both texts portray the netherworld of slum-dwellers, toshers and other like. Therefore, I argue that rather than providing us with an uncritical nostalgia for Victorian imperial narratives of modernisation, the two texts inspire us to think of the margins as "the spectrally human" (Butler 131) and their little-known histories as ghostly and offer an alternative historical account of Victorian London. Drawing on Kristeva's idea of "abjection," I will also examine Kneale and Clare's representations of the city as body through the lens of contamination. Specifically, I will examine the relationship between rivers, sewage and body fluids in the texts. These anthropomorphic descriptions of the city expel "what disturbs identity, system, order" (3–4).

Yichun Zhang is a PhD candidate in Comparative Literature at Centre for Multidisciplinary and Intercultural Inquiry (CMII), University College London. Her current PhD project focuses on the Gothic cityscape and waterscape in contemporary fiction. She is interested in haunted spaces in neo-Victorian fiction, with a special focus on the spatial quality of literary texts.
