

# Layers: Physical and Cultural Constructions of Space in the English-Speaking World

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## Book of Abstracts

### Camille ADNOT (ENS Paris) - Volcanic Strata and the Tracings of Deep Time

This paper explores the role of volcanology in the development of geology in the second half of the eighteenth century, focusing on Sir William Hamilton's *Observations on Mount Vesuvius, Mount Etna, and Other Volcanoes* (1772) and *Campi Phlegraei* (1776), illustrated by Pietro Fabris. Situating Hamilton's work within shifting theories of the Earth (Thomas Burnet, John Whitehurst, James Hutton), it examines his empirical approach to analysing volcanic strata, particularly on Vesuvius and Etna. Volcanoes, as the critic James Hamilton has noted, are linked to narrative-making, as they offer "the first faint distant tracings of narrative on human memory" (*Volcano: Nature and Culture*, 2012). Drawing on Noah Heringman's *Deep Time: A Literary History* (2023), this paper follows William Hamilton's retracing of the soil around Vesuvius to "a period certainly of a most remote antiquity," even as archaeological excavations at Herculaneum and Pompeii recovered the historical past. By reading the Earth's layers as records of time, Hamilton opened an imaginative dive into a period "so very ancient, as to be far out of the reach of history."

The paper also examines Pietro Fabris's visual renderings of volcanic layering, through his depictions of lava flows, craters, tufa, scoriae, pumice, and his placement of human figures within volcanic landscapes. Fabris's images minutely engage with the hybridity and stratification of volcanic material, probing its history. Thus, the paper shows how Hamilton and Fabris's reconstructions of space enabled journeys into deep time – what Heringman calls "an extension of memory into prehistory" – alongside other contemporary scientific, poetic, and visual manifestations of the geological imagination.

Bio: Camille Adnot holds a PhD from Université Paris Cité, and is a Senior Lecturer in English at École Normale Supérieure de Paris. Her research interests include eighteenth- and nineteenth-century poetry and visual arts, with a focus on William Blake and on Romanticism approached through material and ecological perspectives. Her recent publications include chapters in *Water and Sea in Word and Image* (Brill, 2023), *Milton Across Borders and Media* (OUP, 2023), and *Global Bunyan and Visual Art* (2025). She co-hosts "Romanticism Across Borders," an online seminar which welcomes transversal approaches to the Romantic period.

She is co-organising two events that will take place soon: a conference on the notion of Explicitness at Université Paris-Est Créteil (23-24 October) as well as a one-day conference on *Tristram Shandy* at Université Paris Cité (7 November).

### Cristina BENICCHI (*Università degli Studi Internazionali, Rome*) - Palimpsestic Spaces: Linguistic, Spatial, and Cultural Layering in Wide Sargasso Sea

*Wide Sargasso Sea* by Jean Rhys is analyzed as a postcolonial palimpsest that reconfigures Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* through the deliberate layering of linguistic, spatial, and cultural

elements. This analysis draws upon two intersecting theoretical frameworks: postcolonial studies on spatiality, particularly Homi Bhabha's concepts of location and relocation, and literary and linguistic theories developed by Julia Kristeva, Mikhail Bakhtin, and Gérard Genette. The novel constructs a multifaceted textual space in which colonial, racial, and gendered discourses are intricately interwoven. The linguistic layering is evident in the interplay between Caribbean creole and the Victorian English of Jane Eyre, thereby exposing the tensions inherent in colonial encounters. Spatial layering emerges through the shifting locales from the Caribbean plantation to the English estate, destabilizing established notions of home and otherness. Moreover, the ideological and cultural layering is manifested in the re-centering of Bertha Mason's voice – a character traditionally relegated to the margins – thus challenging the imperial assumptions embedded within the canonical narrative. By treating the text as an assemblage of overlapping strata, the analysis reveals how the deconstruction and reassembly of narrative elements serve to uncover the latent violence of empire. *Wide Sargasso Sea* functions as a potent act of creative resistance, rearticulating the dynamics of power and cultural identity. This analysis situates *Wide Sargasso Sea* within broader postcolonial discourse, illustrating how its intricate layering of language, space, and ideology not only disrupts traditional narratives but also redefines cultural representation in the modern era.

Bio: Cristina Benicchi is an Associate Professor of English Language and Translation at the University of International Studies in Rome – UNINT. Her research activity – conducted in Italy and abroad, according to methodologies inspired by post-colonial studies, comparative studies, and linguistic translation studies – is predominantly focused on Anglophone post-colonial literatures – with particular attention to the Caribbean area and the complex cultural and linguistic dynamics in the formation and transformation of identities in processes of dislocation and re-location – Comparative Literature, and Translation Studies. She has authored a considerable number of scholarly articles in esteemed national and international journals, in addition to a significant monograph that explores Anglophone Caribbean literature: *La letteratura caraibica contemporanea. Modelli, Forme e Autori* (BUP, 2010). She is a member of the Italian Association of Anglistics (AIA) and the Italian Society of Comparative Literature (SICL).

### **Chloé BOUR-LANG (Université de Strasbourg) - Layers of Spectrality in Barbara Kingsolver's Novels**

As identified both by Lawrence Buell and Amitav Ghosh (*The Environmental Imagination*, 2; *The Great Derangement*, 73), the environmental crisis entails a representational one: how is literature to engage with a pervasive and often invisible force that invades and shapes our world? While contemporary American author Barbara Kingsolver is often acclaimed for successfully overcoming such a challenge, I argue that critics have almost consistently overlooked one of the strategies responsible for said success; that is, her use of spectrality. This paper thus proposes an overview of my doctoral research, offering an analysis of the sporadic presence of spectral elements – from literal ghosts to more nuanced hauntings – in Kingsolver's work, examining spectrality as a key representational strategy in her U.S. based novels. I suggest that the latter operate through a layering of generic modalities, including the Gothic, ecoGothic, and the ecospectral, which notably allows for a literary exploration of the redefinition of spaces in the Anthropocene. I use spectrality as a lens to analyse two seemingly distinct spaces, that of the house and that of landscapes, as composed of an accumulation of layers. On the one hand, they bear aesthetic traces of the Gothic through entropy and decay, and on the other, the pellicle of spectrality that envelops them adds a political layer to their representation. Eventually, I contend that the domestic and wilderness merge, thereby mirroring the instability created by the Anthropocene. This discussion will allow for an analysis of the novels' hauntings, uncovering what role human and nonhuman ghosts fulfil in these narratives.

I therefore tackle spectral representations as subverting spatial, but also temporal units, for hauntings reveal what “refuse[s] to stay neatly contained in the past” (*Ecospectrality*, 1).

**Bio:** Chloé Bour-Lang is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Strasbourg, France. She is working on a thesis entitled “‘They were *ghosts*!’: Spectral Representations in Barbara Kingsolver’s Environmental Novels,” in which she analyses the use of spectrality in the author’s fiction. Her research in Environmental Humanities is at the crossroads between Spectrality Studies, Animal Studies and Gender Studies, and examines representational strategies for environment-related issues in contemporary North American literature.

### **Gwen CRESSMAN (Université de Strasbourg) - Visualizing the layers of oil extraction**

As inherently spatial and temporal objects, landscapes bear witness to the histories of extraction. In her 2014 book on capitalism and climate change, Naomi Klein defines extractivism as “a non-reciprocal, dominance-based relationship with the earth, one purely of taking” (Klein 2014, 148). Discourses of progress, economic growth, and technological fixes as well as practices aimed at subtracting extractive activities from public view all contribute to invisibilizing the “sacrifice zones” of mineral exploitation that Klein describes. The perceived or actual remoteness of extraction sites in Canada, such as the Alberta tar sands, further diminishes the visibility of both these sites and their long-term impacts on local communities (Sörlin 2022, Szeman and Boyer 2017). Open-pit mining and subsurface drainage operations have led to large-scale deforestation, the destruction of wildlife habitats, and severe water and air contamination. However, as Rob Nixon argues, capitalism maintains an “innate tendency to abstract in order to extract, intensifying the distancing mechanisms that make the sources of environmental violence harder to track” (Nixon 41).

I understand extraction as a material and metaphorical layering process, with visual, ethical, and epistemological dimensions. Within this framework, this paper examines a corpus of contemporary photographic works depicting the tar sands extractive industry, including Warren Cariou’s *Petrographs* (2016), Imre Szeman and Maria Whiteman’s *Oil Imagin(e)aries* project (2012), and Andriko Lozowy’s research-creation project exploring the intersections of oil and community. These projects not only reveal the materiality of the geological layers at work in the tar sands but also address the social, political, and colonial layers of extraction. In doing so, they highlight the “involvement, association, entanglement, or inculcation of art in extractivism” (Fornoff 2023, 40) — and by extension, our own complicity.

**Bio:** Gwendolyne Cressman est Maîtresse de conférences en études anglophones à l’Université de Strasbourg. Sa recherche porte sur la photographie à la croisée de l’enquête scientifique, du documentaire et de l’art conceptuel aux Etats-Unis et au Canada avec un intérêt particulier pour le paysage, les identités et la nation. Elle a récemment publié sur la photographie de paysage contemporaine au Canada chez *Sillages Critiques* (2023) et codirigé plusieurs volumes chez *Polysèmes* (2022), *Ranam* (2023) et *Interfaces* (2023). Elle codirige la revue *Ranam* ainsi que la collection « Etudes Anglophones » aux Presses Universitaires de Strasbourg.

### **Anna Maria CIMITILE (Università degli studi di Napoli “L'Orientale”): Reading early modernity: Ways of engaging layers of time in history, literature and architecture**

The ways we read or engage the past and its strata, *i.e.* the passing of time as it manifests itself in culturally-shaped layers of material ‘deposits’ — both in the archaeological original sense and here adapted to mean the human-made architectural environment as it lives through ages and uses —

and as it emerges in the alternation of historically-bound ideas, worldviews, beliefs, or even as it is marked by natural changes, are the context of this paper. With a focus on the early modern period as an object of investigation, I would like to consider three different ‘spaces’ of such engagements. The first one is the approaches we employ to read/analyse and even ‘experience’ the past, for which I shall briefly discuss the examples of cultural history, microhistory and living history as ways of reading (through) layers of meaning or attempts at subtracting layers of time; the second is the way literature engages historical natural events: my example is the representation of the sixteenth-century Great Frost in Virginia Woolf’s *Orlando*, for which I shall comment on the way the transformative powers of the literary imagination shape the natural disaster, in the novel, to ask questions about the writing and reading of history that is suggested by that interaction; finally, I shall turn to architecture, with the example of Palazzo d’Avalos in Procida, built in the 17th century, bought by the Bourbons in the 18th c. to become their royal residence on the island, and later turned into... a prison. The unusual repurposing of this historic building prompts questions about what it means to ‘read history’ in, for example, present and future projects of architectural restoration.

**Bio:** **Anna Maria Cimitile** is a Professor of English literature at the University of Naples “L’Orientale”. Her fields of research range from Shakespeare, early modern English literature and culture to contemporary anglophone literature, cinema and the visual arts. Interested in the history of ideas, material culture and microhistory, more recently she has reflected on the possibility of researching early modern book history with a microhistorical approach. Her work has appeared in *Anglistica*, *AION*, *Cahiers Élisabéthains*, *EJES*, *RANAM*, *XVII-XVIII*, and in collections of essays published by Bloomsbury (Arden Shakespeare) and Routledge. She is the Regional Editor for the MIT digital archive Global Shakespeares and is currently a member of the Board of ESRA-European Shakespeare Research Association.

**Nour DAKKAK (Gulf University of Science and Technology, Kuwait) - “I have seen you, I have touched you, I belong to you”: Unearthing the Layers of Soil and Self in Elizabeth-Jane Burnett’s *The Grassling* (2019)**

Elizabeth-Jane Burnett’s *The Grassling* (2019) is a hybrid work of memoir and landscape writing that intertwines personal memory with cultural history through the lens of ecological transformation in the British landscape. Burnett navigates her own sense of loss through an attempt to reclaim a connection to a place which she feels, despite her genealogical ties to it, excluded from due to her mixed-race background.

By layering visual memory with embodied encounters in her village of Ide in Devon, Burnett explores how geological changes in the landscape parallel the shifting cultural layers that shape her identity and belonging. Throughout the book, she anthropomorphises the natural world, as she expressed a desire “to hear the stories of the soil; not just as human support, or as host, but as consciousness linked to a place always, unless moved by another.” It is in these moments, I argue, that Burnett grants agency to the nonhuman world and constructs a fluid sense of identity by connecting her body to the land’s ever-changing layers.

This paper will also examine *The Grassling* in relation to other works by women of color in British landscape writing through attending to the ways in which Burnett expands the concept of belonging beyond genealogical roots. Through drawing works influenced by neomaterialist thinking and nonrepresentational theories, I argue that Burnett’s work is evidence of how embodied connections with the material landscape can foster a more dynamic and relational experience of belonging that is built on temporary yet affective intra-actions with place (Barad, 2007)

Bio: Nour Dakkak is Assistant Professor of English Literature at Gulf University for Science and Technology in Kuwait. She is the author of *E. M. Forster's Material Humanism: Queer Matters* (Routledge 2023), and the co-editor of *Sandscapes: Writing the British Seaside* with Jo Carruthers (Palgrave 2021) and *Anticipatory Materialisms in Literature and Philosophy, 1790-1930* with Jo Carruthers and Rebecca Spence (Palgrave Macmillan 2020). She has published several papers on walking, mobility and modernity, and her research interests include twentieth-century British literature and culture, environmental humanities and place writing.

### **Jeremy Davies: The Layers of the Land: Stratigraphy and Interpretation**

Stratigraphy is the physical science of layers. It maps the differences among the units that make up the Earth's crust. Stratigraphy's preoccupation with alterity, distinction, and variance has enabled geologists to develop a methodical account of the 'Anthropocene' epoch as a new chapter of Earth history. Loose and essentialistic invocations of a supposed 'human age' are habitual among contemporary scholars of the arts and society. The geological Anthropocene is something else: a rigorously systematic alternative to those fashionable commonplaces. The Earth's own layered, self-differentiating character means that there are similarities between the ways that works of art, on the one hand, and the planet itself, on the other, call out for interpretation. This lecture will suggest that interpretation might be thought of as the act of registering or attuning oneself to layers of difference, via a discussion of Charlotte Smith's stratigraphic poem *Beachy Head*.

Bio: Jeremy Davies teaches in the School of English at the University of Leeds. His books include *The Birth of the Anthropocene* (California, 2016). More recent work includes *Writing of the Industrial Revolution, 1770–1830*, an edited special issue of *Studies in Romanticism* (2022); and a book in progress on British Romantic literature and environmental change.

### **Léa Fourure (Aix-Marseille University / Tübingen University) - Layers of meaningful substance: how bodies mean and matter in Charles Dickens's *David Copperfield***

As he navigates the temporal layers of his own story, just as an archaeologist would (Prest, 2015), David simultaneously works through the layers of meaning of the bodies that inhabit his reminiscences, through his memory and the verbal signs that transcribe it. The pro-posed paper will explore the substance of remembered bodies as David progresses from one layer to the next, through signs — hovering between Dr Strong's preoccupation with seeking the "roots of words" and Mr Dick's flying words on his kite "with a delight for which there are no words".

Thus, the physical construction of space will be considered here through the perspective of "body language" which is "an important signifying system in the literary text" (Korte, 1997), and a particularly complex and unstable one: body meaning is prone to take different directions and interpretations. The expressiveness of the signs representing bodies in David's writing similarly takes diverse paths as he goes through his life memories, creating layers of meaning.

This paper will examine the body as a physical space re-created through the unravelling of multiple layers of meaning conveyed by David Copperfield's narration in Charles Dickens's eponymous novel. Looking back on his life, David recalls the bodies of his loved ones: such remembered bodies reincarnate themselves in David's memories and in his writing. The transcription of his souvenirs into verbal signs upon a page offer a space to David where absent bodies not only take shape again but are also expressive of various layers of meaning.

Bio: Léa Fourure-Reynaud is a third-year PhD student, working under the joint supervision of Professor Nathalie Vanfasse (Aix-Marseille University) and Professor Angelika Zirker (Tübingen

University). Her dissertation studies body expressiveness in a corpus of Dickens's later novels and is more precisely interested in the instability and complexity of the link between body and meaning in such texts. She analyses the textual signs used to represent bodies through close readings, drawing on nineteenth-century British culture and sociological and medical discourses tackling the Victorian body.

### **Lucie Genay (Université Grenoble Alpes) - Layered Soil, Buried Waste, Contaminated Water, and Inhabited Caves: A Study per Stratum of the Idaho National Laboratory**

In the morning of October 28, 1983, an earthquake measured at 7.3 on the Richter scale provoked by the Lemhi fault shook southeastern Idaho, killing two children in Challis, injuring others, and damaging over two hundred homes. Some of the damage included cracks in buildings at the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory about a hundred kilometers from the epicenter. This event dealt a substantial blow to the theory that the nuclear site was safe “because it sits atop a shock-absorbing ‘cake’ of horizontal rock layers.” Established by the United States Atomic Energy Commission in 1949 as the National Reactors Testing Station to develop the peaceful applications of atomic science, notably the production of nuclear electricity for the first time in the world in 1951, the facility now known as the Idaho National Laboratory has been the nexus of a complex environmental and social history, which this paper will explore with specific attention on the underground. Aside from the various roles played by the series of porous volcanic lava and sand layers in the soil – to which the Gem state owes its world-famous potatoes – other strata have proven crucial in the establishment and history of this unique facility: water from the Snake River Plain aquifer to cool down reactors, vaults and trenches built to bury radioactive waste, and natural caves that yielded an archeological treasure trove of Native American artifacts. The objective of this study per stratum will be to render visible the typically discarded or unforeseen human and non-human forces at play in the narratives that surround nuclear sites.

Bio: Professor of US civilization (20th and 21st centuries) at the University of Grenoble Alpes in the research team ILCEA4, Lucie Genay defended her PhD on the nuclear weapons industry in New Mexico in 2015. She is the author of *Land of Nuclear Enchantment: A New Mexican History of the Nuclear Weapons Industry* and *Under the Cap of Invisibility: The Pantex Nuclear Weapons Plant and the Texas Panhandle* (both published by the University of New Mexico Press in 2019 and 2022 respectively). She also co-edited a multidisciplinary book on countermapping with Diane Bracco: *Contre-cartographie le monde* (University Press of Limoges, 2021). Her current project is a monograph on the Idaho National Laboratory as the birthplace of the “green atom” (i.e., nuclear science as a solution to a variety of environmental woes).

### **Ercan Gürova (University of Ankara) - Buried Histories and Resurfacing Memory in Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Buried Giant***

Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Buried Giant* (2015) explores the processes of historical erasure and resurfacing through a postcolonial and memory studies framework. Set in a mythical post-Arthurian Britain, the novel depicts a landscape where collective memory has been obscured by a mystical fog, symbolizing both political amnesia and the layers of conquest, violence, and cultural assimilation that shape national identity. This paper examines how Ishiguro's novel engages with the notion of historical layering, particularly in its portrayal of Britain as a contested palimpsest of Saxon and Briton histories. The journey of Axl and Beatrice through the mist-laden countryside reflects the resurfacing of forgotten traumas, both on a personal and collective level. As the fog lifts, suppressed histories re-emerge, raising questions about the ethical implications of remembrance and forgetting in the formation of national narratives. By situating *The Buried Giant*

within postcolonial and geohistorical perspectives, this study argues that Ishiguro reconfigures Britain's past as an unstable terrain where history is constantly rewritten. The novel's meditation on memory and landscape ultimately challenges the idea that reconciliation can occur without acknowledging the deep layers of historical violence that continue to shape the present.

**Bio:** Ercan Gürova has worked at Ankara University, at the School of Foreign Languages since 2005. He graduated from Hacettepe University, in the English Language and Literature Department. He received his M.A. from Anadolu University, from the Turkish Language and Literature Department. He received his Ph.D. from Atılım University, from the English Culture and Literature Department. His recent works are: "Mars and the Martians as Others in Philip K. Dick's Story and Its Film Adaptation" in *Science Fantasy* by Lexington Books; "Human Vulnerability in Jack London's 'The Scarlet Plague'" in *Depictions of Pestilence in Literature, Media, and Art* by Cambridge Scholars Publishing; "After the End: Post-Apocalyptic Features in The Road and The Survivor" in *Crossing Boundaries: Contemporary Readings in Comparative Literature* by Duvar Publishing; "Kuşlar, Doktor Faustus, Bir Halk Düşmanı ve Çılgın Kadın'da Ekokibir" in *Ekodrama: Çevreci Tiyatro, Performans ve Sahne Ekolleri* by Kriter Publishing. He is also the translator of the recently published book *Freshwater – Virginia Woolf* and *Elizabeth Barrett Browning – Selected Poems*. His research interests are Science Fiction, Apocalyptic Narratives, Robot Ethics, Animal Studies, and Translation Studies.

### **Inna Hakkinen: (University of Helsinki) - Layering as a Decolonial Act: Decoding 'Layers' of Fictionalizing Laguna Pueblo Uranium Mining in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead***

Standing in stark contrast to narratives of discovery and progress and challenging the traditional Eurocentric narrative surrounding Columbus's arrival in the Americas, anti-'uranium mining' narratives reveal the continuous exploitation and harm for Native American communities via appealing to the theme of 'destroying the idea of 1492' (Dussel 1991, Childs 1995, Liebmann 2016, Koch 2019). Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* (1991) is a literary response to nuclear colonialism, ecological devastation and apocalyptic consequences of uranium mining for Indigenous communities. Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* takes an explicit and expansive narrative approach to the devastating effects of uranium mining operations on the Laguna community and their land during the Cold War, via emphasizing nuclear industry's effect on the environmental degradation and cultural disruption of the region. The presentation aims to analyze of 'layering' as thematic (uranium mining as a cultural clash) and symbolic (codes and revelations to parallel Indigenous resistance) frameworks to outline nuclear colonialism via reasserting Indigenous epistemologies in Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*. The presentation also intends to highlight the narrative structure as layered accretion via historical reclamation (the novel creates a palimpsest of exploitation, emphasizing continuity between past and present oppression) and collective storytelling (over 70 characters and subplots create meaning through repetition and juxtaposition) with the appeal to the layered structure of 'the almanac' itself for reflecting the accretion of Indigenous survival strategies. Via appealing to *environmental hermeneutics* (van Buren 1995; Drenthen 2017) and *intermedial ecocriticism* (Bruhn 2020) perspectives, the presentation emphasizes the multilayered decoding of fictionalizing 'uranium mining' as the long-standing pattern of exploitation and deception of Native American community in *Almanac of the Dead*, where the novel's layering narratives serve as a decolonial act not only to expose and critique broader historical and political issues of nuclear colonialism, but also to invite readers to participate in Indigenous modes of knowledge and recognize the interconnectedness of resistance, nuclear awareness and energy justice within the Nuclear Anthropocene.

**Bio:** Inna Häkkinen (née Sukhenko) is a visiting researcher of Helsinki Environmental Humanities Hub, the Department of Cultures, the University of Helsinki. Her current project is focused on researching the narrative tools of emoting nuclear energy in nuclear fiction for children and young

adults. After defending her PhD in Literary Studies (Dnipro, Ukraine), she has been a research fellow of Erasmus Mundus mobility programs (Bologna, 2008; Turku, 2011-2012), Cambridge Colleges Hospitality Scheme (2013), Open Society Foundation (Warsaw, 2016-2017), JYU Visiting Fellowship Programme (Jyväskylä, 2021), PIAS Fellowship Program (Warsaw, 2022), iASK Fellowship Program (Köszeg, 2023). She coordinates and (co-)teaches courses 'Chornobyl Studies', 'East European Nuclear Heritage' as well as 'Nuclear Narratives in East Central Europe' at the University of Helsinki. Her general research interests lie within environmental humanities, energy humanities, ecocriticism, nuclear criticism, literary energy narrative studies, world energy literature, nuclear fiction, Chernobyl fiction, energy ethics.

**Garin Hay (University of California, Davis) - "Space is a stand-in for complexities of relations among 'things' that happen:" Reading for Animism's Cosmic Ecology in Mei-meï Berssenbrugge's *A Treatise on Stars*"**

As part of my ongoing study of manifestations of animism in contemporary American poetry, in this paper I analyze Mei-meï Berssenbrugge's 2020 *A Treatise on Stars* to examine how relational ontologies can transcend anthropocentric perceptual "layers," allowing human participation in an ecological cosmos. Building on radical pragmatists Alfred North Whitehead, Erin Manning and Brian Massumi, I extend foundational theories of animist perception by Tim Ingold and Nurit-David Bird to consider the relationship between space and animistic relationality. Modernized humans typically attend to their world under capital's salience, ignoring "irrelevant" activity of non-humans both proximate and remote who participate in the world's ongoingness. By contrast (and even counterintuitively) Berssenbrugge attends to the most seemingly irrelevant beings—the stars—to explore functionally ecological modes of being that emerge when this seemingly remote layer of the cosmos is treated as an array of intimates. Berssenbrugge engages space as a relational rather than absolute phenomenon and a process ontology in which entities are events rather than stable identities persisting through time. Rejecting the gradations of relevance typically built into the capitalist framework of absolute space, she shows that categories of personhood, contact, and ethics transform when stars are animistically related to as kin. I argue that Berssenbrugge provides examples of what I call "transversal propositions," or modes of relating across conventional, ontic layers of relevance to form animist saliences. Besides animist studies, this paper contributes to scholarship on how the subject-destabilizing formal imperatives of post-Language poetry can be utilized to articulate ecological ontologies.

Bio: Garin Hay is a PhD candidate in English Literature at the University of California, Davis where he studies at the intersections of contemporary ecopoetics, animistic ontologies, process philosophy, and decolonization. His dissertation is entitled, *Ecological Animism in American Poetry 1945-Present: Poetics, Decolonization, and Relationship with Nonhuman Persons*. In the 2025-2026 academic year he is a fellow at the Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz through the Obama Institute of Transnational American Studies. He also earned his MFA in Poetry at Mills College.

**Émerence Hild (IUT Henri Poincaré, Longwy) - *L'essor du street art comme levier de mutation urbaine en Écosse***

L'objet de cette communication sera de proposer quelques éléments de réflexion autour du phénomène de l'essor du street art institutionnalisé en Écosse, le street art étant compris ici dans une acception restreinte comme un geste artistique qui consiste à recouvrir un support mural dans l'espace public d'une ou plusieurs couches de peinture en vue de créer une oeuvre picturale. Dans un premier temps, il s'agira de proposer un état des lieux des projets de street art initiés ou soutenus



par les autorités publiques écossaises depuis une vingtaine d'années et des conditions de réalisation de ces oeuvres. Cet état des lieux nous permettra de mettre en évidence l'accélération du déploiement de fresques murales autorisées à travers l'Écosse et l'évolution progressive du paysage urbain écossais qui en résulte. Dans un second temps, en nous basant sur l'analyse de sources diverses (documentation officielle, articles de presse, sites promotionnels, etc.) en lien avec une sélection de projets en cours, nous examinerons les enjeux des politiques culturelles visant à promouvoir l'installation d'oeuvres de street art dans les territoires concernés. Nous verrons ainsi en quoi l'essor du street art institutionnalisé dans ces territoires reflète la reconnaissance croissante à travers l'Écosse du street art comme outil de régénération (physique, économique et sociale) et de reconversion (fonctionnelle et symbolique) des espaces urbains.

Bio: Emerence Hild est professeure agrégée d'anglais à l'IUT Henri Poincaré de Longwy et docteure en études anglophones. Auteure d'une thèse portant sur la dimension identitaire des supports de campagne du Scottish National Party soutenue en juillet 2023 à l'Université de Strasbourg, ses travaux de recherche s'inscrivent dans le domaine de la civilisation écossaise contemporaine.

### **Max Kaario (artist-researcher) - Clam Garden Renaissance: the aesthetics of reemergence on the Pacific Northwest coast**

This paper examines the recent reemergence of clam gardens along the Pacific Northwest coast of North America, exploring their significance as both an ecological and traditional cultural practice of various Indigenous communities. Dating back thousands of years as a practice, clam gardens are created by moving larger rocks down the beach slope to form pools that enhance the clam population, enabling communities to harvest clams at low tide, much like a vegetable garden. While the ecological benefits of clam gardens, including the increased clam population, have been scientifically well-documented, this paper shifts focus to their aesthetic dimensions. By drawing comparisons to monumental architecture and land art, the paper situates clam gardens within a broader discourse on wilderness, the colonialist gaze, and a subtle shift in the visual landscape.

Referring to the philosophical framework of Gilbert Simondon's aesthetic theory and the writings of artist Robert Smithson, the design and engineering of clam gardens evoke a delicate yet formidable aesthetic experience. The paper highlights potential analogies to be made between clam gardens and a broader sweep of art and technology that bridge the gap between nature and culture, offering insights into the layered temporalities of human and non-human spaces. The recent reemergence of clam gardens is a sign that the colonialist gaze - asserting the narrative of a pure and untouched wilderness - is being dismantled, a visual reminder of the increasing awareness that Indigenous peoples have had an essential stewardship role on the Pacific Northwest coast for thousands of years.

Bio: Max Kaario is an artist-researcher originally from Vancouver, Canada. In 2022 he completed a doctorate in art practice at the Pantheon Sorbonne university. An active musician, Parisian event organizer, and writer, he has published several essays on aesthetics and design, as well as a novel. His current research focusses on urbanism, radical aesthetics, and the socio-cultural history of the Pacific Northwest. He teaches English, art history, and visual art at various Parisian universities.

### **Béatrice Laurent (Université Bordeaux-Montaigne) - Sopwith, Strata and Schemata**

When Thomas Sopwith (1803-1879) combined the woodwork practice he had acquired from his father who was a cabinet-maker with his geological observations and expertise, he produced one of the most original and significant teaching tools of his time. His pedagogical cases of wood

blocks, where the layers of rock are represented by various kinds and colours of wood, explain stratigraphy in a straightforward, tangible way. These sets of geological models for classroom usage became quite popular and resulted not only in a greater understanding of geology: they trained the eyes and minds of the observers to look at things differently, not from the outside, but in a cross-sectional way. Moving away from the birds' eye view of map-makers, or the frontal view of artists, Sopwith proposed a schematic internal view of a landscape.

The ocular and epistemological shift prompted by Sopwith's interpretation of geological stratas contributed to a new understanding of buried layers underneath the surface of the visible world. I would suggest that it consolidated the idea that layers were an overall ordering principle of Nature. The stratigraphic, cross-sectional model created by Thomas Sopwith was recuperated in myriad theoretical fields, and served to present all things – from plants and animals, to human beings, cultures and societies – in a layered and hierarchical way.

This paper will argue that Sopwith's innocuous geological models legitimated – and were a manifestation of – a vision that sought to organise the visible and invisible worlds in superposed stratas. These layers could be understood as classes of upwardly sophisticated/modern systems and were essential in the conceptualisation and dissemination of many nineteenth-century hierarchical stratifications, concerning class, gender, or race.

Bio: Béatrice Laurent is Professor of Victorian Studies at the Université Bordeaux-Montaigne, France. She has written numerous book chapters and articles in refereed journals. In her books *Sleeping Beauties in Victorian Britain: Cultural, Literary and Artistic Explorations of a Myth* (edited, 2015) and *Water and Women in the Victorian Imagination* (2021) she explores the interaction between visual art, literature and theoretical discourses. More recently, her edited volume *Mouvements protestataires, contestations politiques et luttes sociales en Grande-Bretagne 1811-1914* (2024) delves into British radicalism during the Victorian period.

### **Anne-Sophie Letessier (Université Jean Monnet-Saint Etienne) - “Earth measure, / rock measure”: Geological Poetics in Don McKay’s *Strike/Slip* (2006) and *Paradoxides* (2012)**

Canadian poet Don McKay's fifteenth collection *Paradoxides* (2012) is a continuation of the earlier *Strike/Slip* (2006). The titles, borrowed from paleontology and geology respectively, are indeed suggestive of a common engagement with the physical layers of the earth surface and the strata of time. Perhaps surprisingly, given the numerous references to geological epochs in the two books, the word ‘anthropocene’ only appears once, in a poem in which the poetic persona is distracted from the “petrified deep time” under his bare feet and “Googl[es] vainly in the Zenosphere.” While self-conscious, sometimes clownish poetic speakers are a recurring feature in the poems, Don McKay does not offer an explicit critique of the contemporary ecological crisis. Nevertheless, “poetic attention,” one of the foundational concepts he develops in his essay “Baler Twine,” resonates with Estelle Zhong Mengual and Baptiste Morizot's stance on what they term the “illegibility of landscape” (2018). If the collections abound in landscapes, as the cover of *Strike/Slip* promises, the poems entice readers to ponder what the very notion might encompass and offer. It has become a mainstay in criticism on the self-proclaimed nature poet to analyze the ways in which his texts belie “the project of evoking the natural world through verbal surrogates and thereby attempting to bond the reader to the world” (Lawrence Buell). I propose to reorient the discussion on McKay's phenomenological geopoetics and the way it strives to articulate the pregnancy of spaces inhabited by humans and more-than-humans.

Bio: Anne-Sophie Letessier is a senior lecturer at the University Jean Monnet-Saint Etienne, where she is affiliated to the research group ECLLA (Etudes du Contemporain en Littératures, Langues, Arts). Her PhD dissertation, which focused on the politics and poetics of intermediality in Canadian novelist Jane Urquhart's landscape writing, won the 2018 SEPC Award for best PhD thesis in the

field of postcolonial studies. She has presented and published papers on issues relating to the perception and representation of space in contemporary English Canadian literature.

**Klara Machata (University of Freiburg) - “Living with Water”: Constructed landscapes, adaptation, and environmental catastrophe in Anthropocene fiction**

Within the last decades, it has become increasingly clear that humans have fundamentally transformed the planet over the course of centuries. Nevertheless, the focus on future consequences of climate change that dominates EuroAmerican environmental discourse and climate fiction still frequently overlooks the extent to which past environmental transformations have already reshaped landscapes and societies. In the proposed talk, Jim Shepard’s 2009 short story “The Netherlands Lives with Water” serves as an example of contemporary Anglophone climate short fiction which explores the complex relationship between a longstanding tradition of re-shaping and managing the land- and waterscape in the Netherlands and the limitations of adaptability and control over the environment in light of climate change. By tracing the long history of flooding and the gradual transformation of the environment through water-management, the story conveys a sense of how fundamentally the landscape has been reshaped over the course of time. It captures the profound loss of agency and the identity crisis that can result from the realisation that the deconstructive force of climate change resists attempts at control. Despite the setting in the near future, the story thus creates an uncomfortable sense of proximity and points towards the entangled nature of past, present, and future environmental transformation.

Bio: Klara Machata is Ph.D. candidate and Research Associate in English Literary and Cultural Studies at the University of Freiburg. Her doctoral dissertation is concerned with space, place, and the Anthropocene in contemporary Anglophone literature with a focus on South Asia and Southeast Asia. Her research and teaching is informed by her studies in geography and English literature and explores the intersection of several disciplines within the environmental humanities: ecocriticism, postcolonial theory, and political and cultural geography.

**Laurent Olivier : Les Formes du temps. Dépôt, Répétition, Transmission**

Confrontée aux temporalités enregistrées dans la matérialité, l’archéologie a fondamentalement affaire au présent, dans lequel le passé est incrusté, comme présence absente ; c’est-à-dire comme empreinte. Aussi, l’archéologie ne décrit-elle pas tant l’instant présent du passé, comme événement, que sa temporalité, nécessairement multiple, voilée, équivoque – car portée par les traces, qui s’accumulent sous la forme de strates.

Aussi, ce présent vu depuis l’archéologie est-il fondamentalement multi-temporel ou hétéro-chronologique. Le passé est révolu ; il ne reviendra plus, mais il continue néanmoins à occuper l’actuel, comme présence matérielle, et à se transformer. Il se transforme tout en se transmettant, dans des mécanismes de *transmission*, où il apparaît masqué, alternant des périodes de latence et de soudaines réapparitions. Quelque chose est là, qui n’est plus ; quelque chose, que l’on ne connaît pas, continue à travailler, par-delà le manque et la disparition.

Ce temps de l’archéologie, qui est celui de la mémoire matérielle du présent, n’est en rien le temps de l’Histoire. Ce temps diachronique, foncièrement cumulatif, se révèle désormais dans la Grande Accélération de l’Anthropocène, qui écrase à la fois passé et futur dans un présent sans issue, lequel devient mémoire et dont l’archéologie apparaît comme la révélation.

Bio: Laurent Olivier est Conservateur général des collections d’Archéologie celtique et gauloise au Musée d’Archéologie nationale de Saint-Germain-en-Laye. Son activité de recherche intéresse principalement l’histoire et l’épistémologie de la discipline archéologique, le rôle de l’archéologie

dans la construction des identités collectives, ainsi que l'anthropologie des sociétés celtiques et gauloises. Il se consacre actuellement à l'archéologie des traumatismes collectifs du passé contemporain liés à la colonisation.

**María Jesús Perea Villena (Camilo José Cela University, Madrid) - The Brain as a meaning maker: Historical and literary layers in the representation of archaeological landscapes in Peter Ackroyd's *First Light***

Peter Ackroyd's *First Light* (1989) presents a layered representation of archaeological landscapes, intertwining history, literature, and science to explore how the human mind constructs meaning and is able to uncover the various strata of information embedded in these topographic spaces. Therefore, this paper applies "geocriticism", particularly the theories of Bertrand Westphal (2007) and Robert Tally (2013), to analyze the novel's spatial and temporal complexity. Additionally, Christopher Tilley's (2017) anthropological and phenomenological approach to landscapes and archaeology will similarly inform an examination of how physical spaces embody cultural memory.

Accordingly, the aim in this analysis will be to foreground how Peter Ackroyd's novel exemplifies an interdisciplinary dialogue where neuroscience, history, archaeology, and literature converge to reveal the brain's role in shaping perceptions of place. Through the characters' encounters with ancient sites, *First Light* illustrates how landscapes function as palimpsests, where historical and literary traces coexist. The paper argues likewise that the novel not only reconstructs lost pasts but also questions the cognitive processes by which we interpret and inscribe meaning onto our surroundings.

Consequently, this study will integrate geocriticism, phenomenology, and cognitive approaches to highlight the role of literature in shaping our perception of space, time, and our memories, ultimately, demonstrating in *First Light* how archaeological landscapes far from being merely physical remnants, are dynamic constructs shaped by both human experience and narrative imagination.

Bio: Graduate in English Philology (2002), Graduate in Literary Theory and Comparative Literature (2005) from the University of Granada. Diploma in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (2007). She has completed a Master's Degree in "Linguistics and Literature in English" and a Master's Degree in "Translation, Society and Communication", both at the University of Granada (2002/04). For 4 months, she did a research stay at the University of Westminster, London, (UK) to obtain a European doctorate (2004). She has attended numerous national and international conferences since 2004 on the English language and culture, modern and contemporary English literature, literary semiotics, multiculturalism and (de)construction of identities in multilingual environments. Associate Professor in the Department of Language and Literature, in the Faculty of Education, at Camilo José Cela University (Madrid), since 2008. Associate Professor in the Master in "International Education and Bilingualism" at UCJC since 2012.

**Joshua Physick (Université d'Orléans) - Une lecture anticoloniale de l'anthropocène à travers les strates épistémologiques et temporelles de *Carpentaria* d'Alexis Wright**

L'Anthropocène désigne étymologiquement la nouvelle période des humains, l'âge de l'Homme ; ce terme implique cependant des questions d'identité et d'agentivité qui restent encore largement impensées. En outre, le rejet du terme « anthropocène » par l'Union Internationale des Sciences Géologiques (IUGS) et l'absence de consensus sur le début de cette ère géologique illustrent la polémique que ces questions d'identité et d'agentivité suscitent. Notamment, est-il possible de comprendre le rôle des humains, dans la dévastation écologique, à travers le paradigme

universaliste de l'anthropocène ? Dans le cadre de cette conférence, « strates : constructions physiques et culturelles de l'espace dans le monde anglophone », cette communication propose une lecture anticoloniale de *Carpentaria* d'Alexis Wright afin de mettre en exergue la manière dont les strates épistémologiques et temporelles de la narration pluralisent les histoires que nous racontons de l'humain. *Carpentaria* porte sur l'histoire des autochtones du golfe de Carpentaria en Australie. Le roman de Wright, une autrice Waanyi, est un exemple du genre transnational du réalisme magique, qui s'écarte des modèles occidentaux de narration car elle adopte la temporalité du « temps du rêve » aborigène ou « dreamtime ». *Carpentaria* est donc un travail de réflexion sur les différences, en ce que celles-ci nous fournissent un point de départ pour reconceptualiser notre rapport au monde.

Bio: Ancien étudiant de l'Université de Manchester, Joshua Physick est en deuxième année de thèse à l'Université d'Orléans sous la co-direction de Pr. Kerry Jane Wallart et Pr. Fiona McCann. Il est rattaché au laboratoire de REMELICE (Université d'Orléans) et VALE (Sorbonne Université). Sa thèse porte sur les diffractions de l'anthropocène dans la littérature anglophone contemporaine sous un prisme anticolonial et néomaterialiste.

**Céline Planchou (Université Sorbonne Nouvelle Paris Nord) - The Indian Child Welfare Act and Tribal Rights over Dependent Minor Members: Unearthing Legal Layers of Tribal Authority in the Best Interest of Tribal Children.**

According to US geographer Natchee Blu Barnd, “indigenous geographies have quietly overlapped and coexisted in tension with the geographies of the settler colonial state. They have been submerged, but not eliminated”, and can thus resurface at times. Reservations can be seen as an example of colonial geographies since they were imposed containers set up to demarcate clear-cut boundaries and restrain indigenous movements. Yet, as they were established through treaties signed between nations, they also reflect a legal order that predates and exceeds the United States. They are territories attached to treaty rights and over which tribal law applies and tribal institutions exercise their remaining authority. Because of this ambivalence, federal and state institutions have consistently attempted to overflow reservations. To put it differently, reservation boundaries were fixed to better organize their own future dissolution. One way to do this was to open reservations to settlement and to gradually let state territorial divisions eat away at treaty land. In order to counter these colonial patterns of erasure, Native Americans have rapidly made these new legal layers of territory their own and consistently mobilized legal discourses which enabled these layers to emerge.

In this presentation I would like to focus on child welfare as an example of such efforts. Until the adoption of the Indian Child Welfare Act in 1978, the legal and administrative maze surrounding the public responsibility towards indigenous dependent children progressively erased reservations as legally and politically meaningful spaces. State jurisdiction took precedence and tribal institutions were excluded from the decisions affecting their minor members, which encouraged the massive removal of children from their families by state courts and child welfare services. In 1978, the federal legislation recognized exclusive tribal jurisdiction over children residing on reservations and concurrent state-tribal jurisdiction on off-reservation procedures. Using a couple of tribal case studies, I will show how child welfare has sometimes enabled tribes to flesh out territories and institutions that “had been submerged, yet not eliminated”.

Bio: Céline PLANCHOU est Maîtresse de Conférences en civilisation nord-américaines à l'Université Sorbonne Paris Nord (USPN). Elle est membre du laboratoire Pléiade (UR 7338) et s'intéresse aux tenants de la spécificité autochtone aux Etats-Unis et travaille sur les relations entre l'État fédéral, les nations amérindiennes et les États membres ainsi que sur les questions reliant les villes et l'autochtonie.

## **Jillian Royal (Université Paris Cité) - A “Wild Erratic Fancy”: Unsettling the Bush and the Legacy of a National Myth**

Since British colonisation began in the late 18th century, settler Australians have sought to understand their place on the vast continent. Historian Russell Ward famously wrote that it was the nationalist fervour of the 1890s, which saw the political and literary invention of the so-called Bush myth, claiming that it was the stories and representations from this period that demonstrated how the harsh natural landscape of Australia supposedly helped to shape the national character. Yet, the continued mythologising of the colonial frontier experience also helped to legitimise a white supremacy over the continent, anchoring it in a kind of atemporal imagined space. Thus, the Bush myth functioned not only as a benign narrative, but also as a tool of domination, shifting the focus from the legal fiction of terra nullius and onto this narrative of struggle as a foundational identity, just as Indigenous people and their history were forced to the margins. Today, the veracity and substance of the Bush myth have been widely critiqued. Graeme Davison has suggested that it was, and continues to be, a fantasy of urban intellectuals projected onto Australia's rural spaces. However, that is not to say that it has not left its mark on how the rural is perceived as a concept. In this paper, I propose to examine the place of the myth in the national discourse, as questions of environmental disaster and a slow process of reconciliation and decolonisation continue to shape contemporary Australia. What is left of the myth in this imagining of the future?

Bio: Jillian Royal is a doctoral candidate at the Université de Paris Cité currently working as a teacher at the Université Paris-Sorbonne. For her thesis, she is exploring the changing socio-environmental attitudes of urban-rural migration from 1970-2010 in Australia. Her broader interests include the representations of identity and place in the cultures of Britain and the Commonwealth.

## **Richard Somerset (Université de Lorraine) - Layers of being, trajectories of becoming: ontological tensions in the natural and cultural exploration of deep time**

The organicist conceptualisation of nature and culture as related entities participating in a shared developmental narrative has historically been understood in a variety of ways. Traditional ‘history of science’ tended to focus on ‘the discovery of deep time’ in the work of late-18<sup>th</sup> century geologists, a discovery so potent as to transform existing disciplines (natural history, philology), or to foster the creation of new ones (anthropology, sociology, psychology), and even – at the farthest remove – to influence the output of poets and novelists. An alternative tradition, anchored in Foucauldian structuralism, made the change more conceptual, a change in paradigm whose very structure was responsible for the disciplinary reorganization already mentioned. Finally, the ‘cultural history of science’ tradition that emerged in the 1990s has pushed the cursor ever further in the direction of epistemological relativization, with the contingent ‘values of culture’ tending to come to the foreground at the cost of the hitherto dominant ‘facts of science’, no longer deemed historically credible as definitive markers of meaning. But this ‘push-back’ does not have to be played out as a zero-sum game. Before institutionalization made ‘Science’ independently powerful, it was self-evident that interactions with the realm of culture were mutually beneficial at least some of the time.

Early manifestations of organicist thought such as Cuvierian comparative anatomy complexified questions of ontology by reconfiguring ‘le vivant’ as a hierarchy of interdependent relations; so that the living thing was no longer just ‘one thing’ defined by its surface appearances but a whole series of Russian-doll-like layers of being that whose interactions intimately shaped its identity. Nor was the relationship static, since the layers of being could be thought of as progressively accumulated concretions. This relationship was formalized by Haeckel as the principle that ‘ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny’, which grew into a far-reaching ‘adaptationist’

logic that read anatomical form as an index of abstract function, and reconstructed fixed taxonomies as progressive typologies of emergent complexity.

This paper proposes to consider the prehistory of organicist thought, seeking to show how writings on the peripheries of 'science', relating to cultural as much as to natural categories, helped develop the incipient outlook. The corpus is not yet fixed, but will probably include a variety of late 18th- and early 19th-century writings in English which in one way or another engage with encounters with a 'primitive other'. The likely focus will be the meeting ground between the conjectural developmental histories of the Scottish Enlightenment and contemporary accounts of exotic encounters in newly-explored territories.

**Bio:** Richard Somerset is a lecturer at the Université de Lorraine. He is primarily interested in the concept of historicity in the nineteenth century as manifested in the fields of natural science, historiography and literature. This interdisciplinary work naturally led to an interest in the history of disciplines and disciplinarity, and to the co-editing of two collections of essays: *Mapping Fields of Study: the Cultural and Institutional Space of English Studies* (Presses universitaires de Nancy, 2019) and *Ordering Knowledge: Disciplinarity and the Shaping of European Modernity* (Presses universitaires de Strasbourg, 2023). He has also published articles on evolutionary thought and evolutionary popularisation in France and in Britain, and on illustration and narrative form used as argumentative strategy in popular science and popular history writing; as well as pieces on specific 19th-century authors, both French and British.

### **Danielle van der Merwe (Heidelberg University) - Isolation and Confinement: Rinterpreting Space in *Lady Macbeth***

During the nineteenth century, the ancestral estate was initially seen as “an ideal and a model” due to its imposing stature and “internal division of gendered and class spaces” (Pichler 42), before later being reinterpreted as an asylum-prison-like-structure that entraps and corrupts its female occupants by isolating them from the public sphere (Raphael 202-203). Nowadays, several revisionary works that aim to rewrite well-known, fictional madwomen have shifted their attention to the motif of entrapment and the role space plays in recontextualising female madness.

By focussing on one such case in particular, this talk intends to examine how the retelling of Nikolai Leskov's *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* (1865) adds new layers of interpretation to the initial story of its murderous madwoman through perpetuating discussions surrounding the psychological effect different spaces, e.g. confinement in her husband's manor house, have on the character's psyche. The adaptation, simply titled *Lady Macbeth* (2016), shifts the narrative focus to the broader theme of women's subordination in 19th century Europe. In the film, spatial control is used as an essential way to reinforce themes of oppression and isolation, as well as gender and class discrimination. By analysing the film's portrayal of the Lester (Ismailov's) estate, in combination with its effect on Katherine's (Katerina's) mental state, this talk attempts to understand how representations of isolating and oppressive spatial structures are used in expanding the narrative themes of madness and criminality.

**Bio:** Danielle van der Merwe is a PhD student, currently enrolled in Heidelberg University, Germany, and majoring in English literature. Her research focus is on literary adaptations involving madwomen – particularly narratives told through the madwoman's perspective. The research is a continuation of her M.A. thesis titled “Representations of Female Madness: From Shakespeare to Dickens.” For the last couple of years Danielle has played an active role in the department working as a literature tutor and, recently, teaching seminars.

## **Effie Yiannopoulou (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki) - The eerie landscapes of post-imperial Englishness in Olivia Manning's *The Rainforest***

Bringing together concerns around the impact of imperial practice on contemporary postcolonial cultures and the environment, this presentation will examine the connection between representations of landscape and the gendered critique of (post-)imperial Englishness that Olivia Manning's postwar fiction carries out. The focus will be primarily on the English author's 1970s novel *The Rain Forest* and the ways in which its depiction of landscape, from gardens to mountains and rainforests, speaks to the anxieties marking post-imperial Britain at a moment of crisis (the end of empire in this case). As a postcolonial eco-gothic novel, Manning's text carries out its critique of a self-enclosed, fenced-off-from-the world notion of Englishness developing in the course of decolonisation by constructing the colonial landscapes of the fictional island of Al-Bustan (where the action is set) as a geographical, political and ecological place that invokes the eeriness of an "elsewhere", of other lands, cultures and histories or a deadly virus, all of which remain largely unknown, disavowed or wilfully ignored. If the eerie speaks of an unknown dimension in time and space which disturbs "the very structures of explanation that had previously made sense of the world" (Mark Fisher), Manning's representation of the island landscapes as uncanny, double and unpredictable, imprinted by layers of colonial history and intervention (Arab and European) as much as by the agentic powers of an uncontrolled natural environment, suggests the fragility of (post)imperial Britain's (interpretive and political) hold on itself and the land that it rules, and the need to acknowledge cross-cultural, cross-species co-dependence as a way of achieving human and national survival. This presentation will draw especially on phenomenological accounts of place and mobility and theories from within the postcolonial environmental humanities.

Bio: Dr. Effie Yiannopoulou teaches English and Anglophone literature and cultural theory at the School of English at Aristotle University, Greece. She has an interest in twentieth-century women's writings, Black-British and British-Asian literature, postcolonial and cultural theory, and the environmental humanities. More specifically, her teaching and research address questions of mobility (including migration), embodiment, race, national identity and community-building especially in relation to gender structures. She has published her work in international journals and collections of essays and has co-edited *Metaphoricity and the Politics of Mobility* (Rodopi Editions, 2006), *The Flesh Made Text Made Flesh* (Peter Lang, 2007) and *The Future of Flesh: A Cultural Survey of the Body* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009). She is currently Director of The Laboratory of Narrative Research ([www.enl.auth.gr/lnr](http://www.enl.auth.gr/lnr)) which is based at the School of English at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and has co-ordinated its academic activities and events for the past seven years. For a fuller CV see <http://www.enl.auth.gr/staff/yiannopoulou.htm>