

The Languages of Landscape

Abstracts and participant bios

Unrooting of Imagined? – Lone Women in the Woods

Clare Archibald (University of Glasgow)

Lone Women in Flashes of Wilderness began as a collaborative project in 2017 with the aim of exploring how women experience and imagine aloneness, darkness, and wilderness. I created three sections of prose in creative dialogue with responses to my callout from women from all over the world. I then read the work at Sanctuary Lab, a visual arts event in the Dark Sky Park in Galloway Forest, one of the darkest places in Europe, in varying stages of aloneness, darkness and wilderness via portable transmitter. This led to a website hosting words, sounds, and images by women on the themes, further events, films, sound pieces, publications, and a growing network of women. Waltham Forest London Borough of Culture commissioned Lone Women to create and lead the first ever all women night-walk in Epping Forest as part of their celebrations in 2019.

Unrooting of Imagined? will explore the narrative of the forest within the history of the project, the intersections of real and imagined, urban and rural, and the translation of the ways in which women move through forest and other spaces. As part of the session I will read short extracts from the initial three pieces.

Clare Archibald is a Scottish hybrid writer who uses sound, image, and material in her work. She is currently making her practice as research film, *Can You Hear the Interim*, for her MSc in Experimental Filmmaking at the University of Glasgow. The film forms part of her experimental nonfiction project, *The Absolution of Shyness*. She is also making a site responsive album, *Birl of Unmap*, with Scottish composers, Kinbrae in relation to an abandoned Charles Jencks land art site in Fife.

Red Hoods and Silver Birches: Visualising the Fairy Tale Forest

Elizabeth Dearnley (University of London)

In 1909, Arthur Rackham's illustrated *Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm* was published, featuring watercolour woodland scenes translating the Grimms' forest-set tales for a British audience. His illustration for Little Red Cap shows a tiny red-cloaked figure beneath soaring silver birches, in an image that has since reappeared as a visual shorthand for 'fairy tale forest' in depictions ranging from Dario Argento's *Suspiria* to the opening titles of ABC's television series *Once Upon a Time*.

This presentation discusses some of the ways in which a visual language of fairy tale forests has been constructed collectively in illustration and film. Looking at the work of artists and filmmakers from medieval illuminators to Disney, Argento and Guillermo del Toro, it explores how motifs and

imagery have been translated and reimagined across geographical and temporal borders – and how these in turn can create fictional filters affecting the way we see real-life forests.

Elizabeth Dearnley is a folklorist, artist and Visiting Research Fellow at the Institute of English Studies within the School of Advanced Study, University of London. Her work explores eerie landscapes, fairy tales and horror, and she has curated several projects delving into these fields, including immersive 1940s Red Riding Hood retelling *Big Teeth* and the Freud Museum London's uncanny restaging of E. T. A. Hoffmann's *The Sandman*. She is currently writing a book about the relationship between forests and fairy tales.

A Flora Translated

Jessica J. Lee

Drawing on my book *Two Trees Make a Forest: On Memory, Migration, and Taiwan*, I'll consider the entwinement of language and landscape in my work as a nature writer. Getting to know both the landscape and flora of Taiwan drew not solely on environmental knowledge but on languages and passed-down knowledge: from Mandarin, Taiwanese, and English, among others, as well as Latin binomials, shared between my mother and me. I'll discuss the ways knowledge of place and nonhuman nature is exchanged across generations and languages, and the ways I've sought to construct meaning for myself—as Taiwanese diaspora, as mixed-race, and as an environmental historian and writer—through documenting this act of translation (and its gaps).

Jessica J. Lee is a British-Canadian-Taiwanese author and environmental historian, and winner of the 2019 RBC Taylor Prize Emerging Writer Award. She is the author of two books of nature writing: *Turning* (2017) and *Two Trees Make a Forest* (2019). Jessica is the founding editor of *The Willowherb Review*. She lives in Berlin.

Jamaica, Guyana and the Forest of Dean: The Common Language of the Land

Zakiya Mckenzie

I have always been acutely aware of how we use language to make our lives easier in the world. My father, Guyanese born, would speak with that inflection to my uncles, at his most comfortable, but would switch to Jamaican patois when speaking to his children, we who grew up in that island. Both were languages of familiarity and home, vastly different to the cockney influenced South London accent that was suppressed into more Received Pronunciation when my dad needed to wear a suit and tie. Language isn't just about the words we use, it is how we interpret the things that happen to and around us which then influence how we respond to said thing.

In my mind, this code-switching, this alternate use of different varieties can be overlaid onto geographical settings to help me better understand the systems of communication (i.e. the language) of a specific place. This is how I came to understand and especially appreciate the Forest of Dean while spending time there as 2019 Writer in Residence for Forestry England. My

interpreting of the forest - as workplaces, as places draped in myths and history, and as places to live in is entirely understood through the language of rurality in Jamaica. This session will discuss how having multiple 'languages' of place and time brought these very distinct settings together in my mind.

This session will explore translingual identities, familiarity and foreignness, understanding and miscommunication, through my own experiences of nationhood ('Caribbeanness' and 'Britishness') and cultural memory (belonging, understanding, having relevant insider info). I will show how I was able to overlay that cultural context onto to Forest of Dean which eventually led to me falling in love with a place that, at the outset, seemed so remote and unusual to a Black, Jamaican, city woman.

Zakiya Mckenzie is a Bristol-based writer and researcher. She was the 2019 writer-in-residence for Forestry England and 2017 Bristol Black and Green Ambassador. She is currently writing for a PhD at the University of Exeter researching Black British journalism in the post-war period. Zakiya is also a volunteer at Ujima 98FM community radio station in Bristol and she regularly leads nature-based art and writing workshops, including one on Caribbean storytelling for children. In the last year, Zakiya has appeared on Radio 4's Woman's Hour, Farming Today, Inside Out West and has written for Smallwoods and BBC Wildlife Magazines.

Grain Upon Grain – Recreating Orford Ness

Adam Scovell

In 2019, Robert Macfarlane and Stanley Donwood published their experimental prose poem *Ness*. Their second novella length collaboration following on from 2013's *Holloway*, *Ness* deployed Macfarlane's prose poetry and Donwood's crosshatched artwork in order to explore the shifting landscapes of Orford Ness in Suffolk. Though doused in folklore and history, the *Ness* is now most famous for housing the crumbling remains of various military and weapons testing facilities, made notable by its inclusion in W.G. Sebald's celebrated novel, *The Rings of Saturn* (1995), and open to the public thanks to the National Trust since 1995. Since then, the *Ness* has drawn artists from a range of different media, from the photographic collages of the Wilson Sisters and audio work by Chris Watson and Drew Mulholland, to the film cameras of Chris Petit and Emily Richardson alongside the poetry of Andrew Motion.

Starting in 2015, I worked on a film adaptation of *Ness* in collaboration with both Macfarlane and Donwood. Unlike typical film adaptations, *Ness* was adapted through the years in tandem with the production of the book, shooting during its evolution and edited as it shifted in emphasis and form until premiering at the launch of the book at Foyles in London, 2019. In this paper, I will explore not only how works such as *Ness* have attempted to capture and recreate this very particular and disintegrating topography but also explore the complexities and challenges in adapting a constantly shifting work about a landscape that is equally in flux.

Adam Scovell is a writer from Merseyside now based in London. He completed his PhD in Music at Goldsmiths in 2018. He now writes regularly for a variety of magazines and websites on film and culture. In 2017, his first book *Folk Horror: Hours Dreadful and Things Strange* was published by Auteur and University of Columbia Press. In 2019, his first novel *Mothlight* was published by Influx Press in 2019. His latest novel, *How Pale The Winter Has Made Us*, was published in 2020 also by Influx Press.

Planting New Traditions: Arts Practice as Action Research between Folk Art and Ecology

Lucy Wright (University of Leeds / Axis)

What can folk practices reveal about how we see ourselves in relation to the natural world? What are the new traditions required for a world in environmental crisis? How might they help to challenge the dominant hylomorphic model of human mastery over nature?

This reflective presentation details two ongoing artistic research projects which combine my practice as a social artist, my academic background as a folklorist and ethnographer and an emergent interest in the parallels between plant and human lives.

The first project, *Chasing the Harestail*, began as an oral history residency for Jersey Heritage, exploring the threatened local handicraft of ‘harestailing’, using *lagurus ovatus*—or harestail—grasses, a plant which holds the contradictory status of being simultaneously ‘invasive’ and a protected species. However, what initially appeared as a straightforward story of conflict between folk and institutional agendas soon gave way to a more complex narrative about migration, ecology and commerce, resulting in a campaign to cultivate sustainable harestail growth across the island. The second—very new—project developed from an invitation to devise a programme of activities and interventions at Malham Tarn National Trust property in response to projected tree losses as a result of ash dieback disease. Postponed in April 2020, the work gained added poignancy as our human world faced its own deadly pandemic in Covid19 and I used my sanctioned daily exercise period to devise a series of new traditions of care centred around an ash tree in my local plantation.

Moving from an interrogation of how aspects of landscape are implicated in a folk practice to exploring the possibility of creating traditions of care for the environment, I reflect on a range of recent explorations which seek to apply the mutuality of social practice to ecological concerns.

Lucy Wright is an artist and researcher. She is currently based between the University of Leeds, where she works as Practice-based Research Fellow on the AHRC project, ‘Cultural Participation: Stories of Success, Histories of Failure’. She also works as a Social Producer for the arts charity Axis. Her integrated practice of artistic research draws on her background in the English folk arts and social practice, and in 2019 her book, *21st Century Folk Art* was released by Social Art Publications.