

## ABSTRACTS

### **Robert Macfarlane**

#### *A Counter-Desecration Phrasebook*

In autumn 2004, AMEC filed an application to build what would have been the world's largest on-shore windfarm, on the Isle of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides. The proposal was met with strong local opposition, and the dispute was eventually ruled on by the Scottish Executive early in 2008. Much of the debate concerned the use-histories or uselessness of Mòinteach riabhach Leòdhais\*, the so-called "Brindled Moor of Lewis" -- the self-similar peatland that makes up most of Lewis's interior, and on which the farm would have been sited. This paper is about the strikingly different mappings and visions of the Moor that emerged in the course of the AMEC conflict. It is interested in AMEC's desire to disavow 'original memory' and 'authentic trace', and in the Lewisian's creation of a 'counter-desecration phrasebook', by means of which the Moor might be read, described or decrypted.

### **Jules Pretty**

#### *This Luminous Coast: Walking and Memory*

Over the past year, I have been walking the coasts of Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk, completing so far some 350 miles on foot in 37 days, and another 65 miles by various forms of boat. On one continuous ten day summer walk, I found that the rhythm of walking and seeing the details of places changed my sense of time. Each day became much more than a few hours that might otherwise have passed with little of note. You begin with grand scope in your eyes, but soon come to focus on the graffiti on the river wall, a scuttling lizard, sunlight on the molten water, a piece of cork or a stone with a hole. The land shrinks as you walk. At the same time, you become more responsive to the rhythms of the tides, high on sea walls at certain times, far towards the horizon on mudflats at others.

Walking also becomes the thread that links places, some known, others mysterious, all eventually in-weaved to the same linear experience. Time warps, and so do places. You come to think it takes a day to get from one place to another, and then someone says, I'm just driving over there this evening, and your first thought is, how can that be possible? It has taken me a whole day. Such disjunctions become common, and this on a coastal route no more than an hour and a half's drive at any point from my own home.

After those ten days of walking, I carry with me an impression that the sun is holding position somewhere slightly behind my right eye. I was heading east, north, occasionally west inland, and east again, and so the light is almost always ahead or off to starboard. It leaves me with a sense of imbalance, and a feeling that this luminous shore is lit from only one side. When dark clouds are over the water, it turns slate grey and menacing. But when the sun comes out again, the water becomes a mix of shimmering silver and mercury, and you find you are lit from below as well as above. When the tide recedes across the wide mudflats, distant container ships elevate as mirages, or sink into perfect reflections. In every part of East Anglia, local people say

their place is distinctive because of the huge skies. It is a special part of the region, bringing space and freedom and the sense of a land that is both near and far.

It is in these liminal landscapes that malaria was last a threat in these isles, where land and water daily intersect, and the marshes and saltings bring a distinctive character to the coastline. It is land full of food and potential tastes. Here are burbling calls of curlew, piping of redshank, clamour of geese, and whistling of wigeon. All these birds were once regularly eaten, but today only the wigeon is unprotected and can be quarry for the few remaining wildfowlers. In the creeks are oysters, once food for the masses but now exclusive, and migratory eels, swimming free as tastes have changed and now no one wants to eat them. On the mudflats and sea walls are sea beet and purslane, crisp and tangy in salads, and glasswort (marsh samphire), now resurgent in fish restaurants and “*redolent of iodine and sea breezes*”, as Richard Mabey has written. On reclaimed grasslands are wiry marsh sheep, and behind the borrow dykes, modern wheat and lucerne fields. These remote places are defined in part by their wildness, but also by the foods we obtain from them.

And this is what is partly distinct about this coast. You can feel wild and remote just around the corner from civilisation and domestication. Some take wildness to mean places untouched by humans, though in truth there are very few such places in the world. Wildness, to me, means a place where nature and the elements are predominant for our senses. We see, hear and feel natural rather than man-made things. The wild, therefore, can be both near and far, and large and small. You can find wildness in nearby nature, as well as in distant forests, plains or mountains. You can find it in sweeping landscapes as well as in the grain of a stone picked from a beach.

### **Sahayl Saadi**

*Quejío! Scream!*

A partial understanding of the interweaving ontologies of language, memory, time and place forms the basis of any creative literary endeavour. Mapping this process as a practitioner is a complex, perhaps impossible, task, but it can lead one down intriguing and unpredictable byways as one begins to reveal to oneself the possible rubrics of truth. Even when composed in a ‘single’ language, texts are as unstable as radioisotopes, and if an attempt is made to destabilise them even further through the use of mischievous linguistic polyvalency, as writers and readers, both, we begin to engage in an etymological spider-dance, the wailing, street-corner rendition of history’s mind, otherwise known, euphemistically, as everyday life.

### **Ihona Secacz**

*Place – Word – Sound – Music*

Fusing the real and the created - how to bring imagined places to life in the theatre. Listening to the man in the street tell his story, and what to do with it once it’s on tape.

Singing, the new urban guerilla weapon.

**Claire Preston**

*Big Dig: The Rhetoric of Fen Drainage*

This discussion of the poetics of drainage considers the imagined fenland of East Anglia in the poetry and polemical tracts produced in the pamphlet wars of the 1630s-60s, when the projects to drain the district were undertaken and completed.

**Richard Mabey**

*Against Stewardship: Nature as Colony*

A contrarian view of *The Rings of Saturn* as a supreme example of occupation and appropriation of a landscape and its people for the colonialist's own ends.

**Kenneth Worpole**

*Weak power: landscape and democracy*

Who makes decisions in the countryside today, and what forms of local knowledge can be marshalled in support of landscape character and history? Some thoughts on the re-imagining of post-industrial Essex.

**Grace Lau**

I will show old Victorian photographs taken by 19th century travellers to China, representing the 'exotic' Orientals, from my forthcoming book *Picturing the Chinese*. In comparison, I will show examples of my own work (recently exhibited at Tate Britain and on tour) on 21st Century types, which are portraits taken in my reconstructed Chinese portrait studio, during the summer of 2005 in Hastings. These portraits are of locals and visitors, forming my version of an 'exotic' archive of 21st century British types. It's a sort of role reversal, a Chinese photographer making portraits of the former-Colonialists.

**Charles Fernyhough**

*Travelling with the Young Doctor Who*

My aim in this talk is to consider how the themes of the conference can be illuminated by the study of memory development in childhood. I am particularly interested in how the cognitive and neural foundations of autobiographical memory are shaped by the child's life experiences and developing facility with narrative. I will discuss two kinds of mediation of memory: mediation by re-remembering and mediation by language. The neural bases of these phenomena will be outlined, and I will conclude by considering how the multiple cognitive capacities implicated in autobiographical memory underpin the relation between memory and imagination in childhood and beyond.

**Amanda Hopkinson**

*Location, Locomotion (and a Locomotive): W G Sebald's "Rings of Saturn"*

This paper sets out to look at place and time in two aspects of WG Sebald's *Rings of Saturn*. While photography famously seeks the 'decisive moment' and 'freezes the

instant', translation means 'to circulate, to transport, to disseminate'. The interplay between images that do not illustrate the text and a language in transition (from Sebald's written German original into the English versions provided in collaboration with his translators) – plus a Chinese train that goes nowhere but attains symbolic, event mythic status, in Sebald's peregrinations through East Anglia – are what interest us here.

### **Hazel Marsh**

*At the Atchin Tan: Gypsies, Music and Memory in East Anglia and South-East England*

The positive impact that Gypsies have had on the economic & cultural Life of South East England and East Anglia often goes unacknowledged. This paper focuses on the major contributions Gypsies have made as carriers and preservers of traditional songs.

### **Joy Gregory**

*Land & Language*

N/u is one of the oldest languages of humankind and is essentially moribund despite various efforts to revive it. After a particular research trips I to concentrate on the story of two sisters I met who were exhibits in the Johannesburg 1936 Empire exhibition. I have a very strong rapport with both the women immediately upon meeting and their story and journey through life seemed to personify the demise of the language and the breakdown of the community all of which are embodied in the politics and history of colonisation of South ~Africa. The plan is for the language to live on in the landscape which will also be a focus in my presentation and the final work.

### **Kevin Jackson**

*Grey Matters: The Tao and the Buddha on Maid's Causeway*

Cambridge is celebrated, and justly so, for its triumphs of rationality. Yet it has long been a centre for more esoteric, mystical and occult practices and conceits: John Dee, Newton as alchemist, Crowley, M.R. James... In this paper, part of a much longer work-in-progress about the shadow life of Cambridge, I would like to resurrect two often neglected twentieth-century Cambridge mystics: Wei Wu Wei (also, more prosaically known as Terence Gray) and T.C. Lethbridge. Before adopting the persona of a Chinese philosopher, Gray had been the director of the Cambridge Festival Theatre, in its day perhaps the most advanced centre for drama anywhere in Europe; T.C. Lethbridge, now remembered mainly by occultists, was in charge of the Cambridge Museum of Archeology and Anthropology. My hope is that an examination of these two unconventional careers, and the sites in which they unfolded (including the Gog Magog hills and the building which now houses the Buddhist Centre on Newmarket Road) may add some new and quite unexpected dimensions to standard cultural histories of the town."

**Patrick Wright**

*Are the Ming Tombs really in Wangford, Suffolk? On Stanley Spencer's visit to China*

The English painter Stanley Spencer visited the People's Republic of China with a British cultural delegation in 1954. It was widely thought at the time that he never really got there, since he never stopped talking about his home in the Thames-side village of Cookham. I will suggest that, thanks to his apparently deranged parochialism, he actually got a lot closer than other western visitors who tried to engage with 'New China' at the level of political ideology alone.

**Bernardine Evaristo**

*When Africa Meets Europe*

How people, place and history are remembered and re-invented in the novels *Blonde Roots*, *Soul Tourists* and *The Emperor's Babe*.

**Dan Fern**

*On High Bright Hills*

An audio-visual presentation by artist and mountaineer Dan Fern, describing how a place called Die changed his life.

**Adrian May**

Adrian May was once a professional songwriter and performer on the English folk scene. Now a writing teacher at the University of Essex, the county of his birth, he will perform a short set of songs from and about that 'half-enchanted place', as one of his songs has it.

