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Earth

September 19th-20th, TORCH, University of Oxford

“Earth, Sea, Sky” is an international environmental humanities research network (<http://torch.ox.ac.uk/earth-sea-sky>). Our central aims are 1. to examine the varied and contested medieval and early modern approaches to the natural world, and 2. to consider how this archive resonates with environmental degradation and global warming in our current moment. In three linked symposia we will focus on each domain of “Earth, Sea, Sky.” We commence at Oxford in September 2019 on “Earth,” the most anthropocentric, localized, and thereby familiar of the domains.

The Careers Workshop on Day 1 is for everyone who would like to attend. We will then divide into three groups for the workshop sessions on Day 2.

Please reply by email to thomas.white@ell.ox.ac.uk and earthseaskynetwork@gmail.com with your preferred workshop group for Day 2 by **Thursday 22nd August**.

Day 1

Careers Workshop

“Finding a Niche in the Environmental Humanities: A Workshop for Early Career Scholars”

This workshop addresses issues of professional development for graduate students and early career scholars working at the intersection of medieval and Renaissance studies and environmental studies. Taking advantage of the presence of core faculty from three countries (Canada, the US, and the UK) and two disciplines (Art History and English), participants will discuss the rise of “environmental humanities” as a career trajectory and hiring category. In this roundtable session we will brainstorm strategies for entering this interdisciplinary field by 1) discussing a shared reading and reviewing an emerging canon of the environmental humanities; 2) discussing field methodology and mapping relevant publishing venues, conferences, institutions, and fellowship opportunities; and 3) networking relevant faculty with graduate students for mentoring.

The workshop leaders are Tiffany Jo Werth, Vin Nardizzi and Todd Borlik.

Day 2

Workshop Sessions

A.

“Earth's Coverings: Animals and Plants, On and Off the Page”

This workshop provides some tools for digging through medieval and early modern books and manuscripts aimed to catalogue, inventory, and collect knowledge about the creatures that cover(ed) the Earth. We take the word 'cover' in a broad sense (i.e. 'to have as a subject/take account of', 'to spread and conceal, protect, or put on/wear', 'to act as a substitute for something', or 'an area that serves as concealment for animals and humans'). Using this wide thematic umbrella, we will ask a range of questions about Latin and vernacular bestiaries and herbals across this time period: to what extent does representation in these texts cover and uncover the properties and behaviours of animals and plants? How does the depiction of different creatures cover or act as a substitute for different forms of knowledge about life on, with, and in response to earth, as an element? In asking such questions, we will compare how these texts create and 'correct' knowledge about animal and vegetable kinds. We will consider how these texts are like – and different from – one another in content, form and presentation. We will

examine relationships between local and global perspectives of different creatures, in an effort to examine discourses of comparative anatomy and ethnology. And we will explore what these books tell us about animals and plants – real *and* fabled – and about the human beings undertaking their writing and illustrating. Our discussion will include different theoretical approaches to the non- or extra-human, and ways that these intersect with the histories of race, sexuality and the ethics of representation.

The workshop leaders are Liam Lewis and Vin Nardizzi. Workshop participants will share reading, research agendas, and questions with one another before our time together.

B.

“Migration, Survival, Ecologies”

In *The Mushroom at the End of the World*, Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing finds hope for ecological survival in the “collaborative life-worlds” formed by human and non-human migrants in post-industrial Oregon, where refugees and others in precarious straits make a living by picking matsutake, gourmet mushrooms that thrive in ruined landscapes. As Tsing notes, “In a global state of precarity, we don’t have voices other than looking for life in this ruin.” This seminar will consider how the medieval and early modern periods illuminate the intersection of ecology, migration, and community survival. Participants are invited to explore cultural representations of migrations (forced and voluntary), sanctuaries, and survival strategies in their ecological dimensions. As a launch point, we will read a portion of Tsing’s book and discuss how the humanities might contribute to discourses about climate migration, refugee life, and ecological precarity that have been dominated by scientific and social scientific approaches.

The workshop leaders are Todd Borlik and Mo Pareles.

C.

“Land/Landscape”

This workshop is concerned with the emergence of landscape as a visual concept and genre in the early modern period. The detaching of landscape from traditional subject matter, and the consuming of it as a view or scene in Europe, coincides with a reconceptualization of land as aesthetically unified, identifiable in terms of geography and landmarks, characteristic of place and time, and signifying ownership and property

(in terms of history, space, identity, wealth). But the terms land and landscape are permeable and shifting, a point made especially salient by how non-Europeans navigate land, which resulted in very different sets of conceptualizations. Accordingly, we will begin with a discussion of two readings that address modes of describing land and landscape in divergent contexts, fastening onto some of the key terms the two authors highlight. Focusing on distinctive questions and terms raised by visual imagery, the session also explores mobility through terrain (people, points of view, lines, orientations), artistic mediums created from the earth (minerals, stones, copper), environmental changes (earthquakes, degradation), and new sites for pictorial representation (quarries, forests, deserts). Participants are encouraged to bring one or two ppt slides to introduce briefly one aspect of their research—an object, a critical term, a question, a section of text—to contribute to the discussion.

The workshop leaders are Lyle Massey and Bronwen Wilson.

Suggested reading—PDFs of these materials will be circulated via email after the groups have been finalised:

Dana Leibsohn “On the Limes of Landscape” from Rachel de Lue and James Elkins, eds, *Landscape Theory* (New York, London: Routledge, 2008): 242-252

Christopher Wood, “Independent Landscape,” (9-31) sections of the “German Forest” (208-237) *Worship*,” excerpted from *Albrecht Altdorfer and the Origins of Landscape* (London: Reaktion Books, 1993). ***Please read the pages noted here. Some illustrations are appended at the end of the pdf. Notes for the reading will be made available at the workshop.

Further reading:

Denis E. Cosgrove, "Prospect, Perspective and the Evolution of the Landscape Idea," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, New Series* 10, no. 1 (1985): 45-62.



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