

Humanities Seminar Series 2012-2013

A joint programme between the Smith School of Enterprise and the Environment, and the Humanities Division, University of Oxford

The Smith School of Enterprise and the Environment and the Humanities Division launched in October 2012 The Humanities Seminar Series. Our speakers in this series brought together the many different perspectives on the environment and science provided by the humanities in thought-provoking ways. Eight seminars ran across two terms. This was an unmissable opportunity to hear from leading thinkers from the fields of literature, philosophy, music, art and history, and to participate in cross-disciplinary panel discussions and performance workshops. A Symposium is planned for the Autumn of 2013.

This series was generously made possible by a grant held by [Prof Sally Shuttleworth](#) from the John Fell Fund.

Seminar 1 – 16 October 2012 - "MIND THE GAP – SCIENCE, THE HUMANITIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT" with Prof Jonathan Bate

Summary: Emerging environmental challenges urge a change in the relationship between human beings, the sciences and the planet. The humanities must surely be at the core of any such paradigm shift for they are interwoven through every aspect of society, science and the environment. Yet, Prof. Bate argued that 'the values with which the humanities have taught us to regard humankind have rarely been extended to the material world which the sciences examine and technology transforms.' Literature, philosophy, music, classics, art, history and the like have much to say on this question individually.

Speaker Biography: Professor Jonathan Bate CBE is a Fellow of both the British Academy and the Royal Society of Literature, Provost of Worcester College, academic, critic, biographer and broadcaster, and author of several outstanding books including *The Song of the Earth*, *Soul of the Age*, *The Genius of Shakespeare*.

Seminar 2 – 30 October 2012 – "ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE THROUGH HISTORY – THE CONSTRUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE" with Prof Michael Hume and Dr. Ayesha Mukherjee

Summary: Emerging environmental challenges urge a change in the relationship between human beings, the sciences and the planet. The humanities must surely be at the core of any such paradigm shift, but without the knowledge science affords, the humanities cannot be the force for change we know them to be. The construction and reconstruction of the human knowledge that is often a catalyst for ideological, political and ethical change is only likely to happen when the sciences and the humanities intersect. In this seminar we bring together knowledge and experience in the fields of applied climatology, and early modern English literature and cultural history as we seek to cross the gap between the sciences, the humanities and the environment.

Speakers Bios: Professor Michael Hulme Professor Michael Hulme is a Professor of Climate Change in the School of Environmental Sciences at UEA, and was the Founding Director (2000-2007) of the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research. His work explores the idea of climate change using historical, cultural and scientific analyses, seeking to illuminate the numerous ways in which climate change is deployed in public and political discourse. He is founding Editor-in-Chief of the academic reviews journal Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews. His two most recent books are (2009) *Why We Disagree About Climate Change* and (edited with Henry Neufeldt) (2010) *Making Climate Change Work For Us*, both published by CUP. His next book *Exploring Climate Change Through Science and In Society* is due in 2013 with Routledge/Earthscan. Professor Hulme was co-ordinating Lead Author for the chapter on 'Climate scenario development' for the Third Assessment Report of the UN IPCC, as well as a contributing author for several other chapters. Earlier in his career he worked on the evaluation of climate models, the development of global and national observational climate data sets, and climate change and desertification in Africa. He was jointly awarded the Hugh Robert Mill Medal in 1995 by the Royal Meteorological Society for work on global precipitation, delivered the prestigious Queen's Lecture in Berlin in 2005 and won the 2010 Gerald L Young prize for his book *Why We Disagree About Climate Change*. For 12 years, he wrote a monthly climate column for The Guardian newspaper

Dr. Ayesha Mukherjee is a Lecturer in English at the University of Exeter. Her research focuses on famine, dearth, and environmental change. She is currently completing a book titled *Penury in Plenty: Dearth and the Making of Knowledge in Early Modern England*. This book explores British cultural responses to economic and environmental crises at the turn of the 16th century by simultaneously analysing literary accounts, economic evidence, and practical experiments which were conducted at the time by the scientist Sir Hugh Platt. Dr Mukherjee is also researching her next project: a comparative study of cultural responses to famines in 17th- and 18th-century England and India, which will use English and vernacular Indian sources to investigate shared and/or conflicting ethical understandings of environment and ecology across the two countries in this historical period. Mukherjee was Principal Investigator for a research network titled "Early Modern Discourses of Environmental Change and Sustainability" (2010-11) funded by the AHRC under the Landscape and Environment programme, and supported by English Heritage and the Peninsula Partnership for the Rural Environment (PPRE). The network brought together scholars from across the humanities and social sciences, including specialists working on regions other than Britain, to consider the expression, negotiation, and transformation of notions of environment and sustainability over time and place.

Seminar 3 – 6 November 2012 – "INTERPRETING GLACIOLOGY – THE SCIENTIST, THE DRAMATIST, THE MUSICOLOGIST" with Dr Trista Patterson, Steve Waters and Chris Garrard

Chair

Dr Kirsten Shepherd-Barr – University Lecturer in Modern Drama and Tutorial Fellow

Summary: Emerging environmental challenges urge a change in the relationship between human beings, the sciences and the planet. Nowhere is this clearer than in the different relationships between human beings and the environment in the context of ice bodies. From one perspective we see power, beauty and fragility in the ice itself. From another we see a disordered response to the science of glaciology in which (recalling Bate, 2001) the 'values with which the humanities have taught us to regard humankind' do not appear to be

extended to the ice bodies examined by the science and transformed by technology. From yet another perspective, inhabiting ice-bound landscapes reveals the music formations they embody.

Speaker Biographies: Dr Trista Patterson is an economist and policy analyst, a regular contributor to international journals, national and international congresses in Europe, North and South America, the Caribbean and Asia. She served as a lead author on the recently released United Nations Global Environment Outlook GEO5, and is a Visiting Fellow of the Smith School of Enterprise and the Environment, a Fellow of the (Global Governance and Human Security) at the University of Massachusetts, Boston and an Economist (Ecosystem Services) with the US Forest Service. She hails from Sitka, Alaska.

Steve Waters is a working playwright and writer for radio and screen. Titles include *The Contingency Plan* (a double bill consisting of *On the Beach* and *Resilience* (2009)), *Fast Labour* (2008), *Out of Your Knowledge* (2008) and *The Unthinkable* (2004). In between productions he finds time to be a lecturer in Creative Writing at UEA.

Chris Garrard is a composer, musicologist and curator in the finishing stages of a doctorate at the University of Oxford. Chris has composed instrumental and electroacoustic music, which has been performed at The Sage – Gateshead, St John’s – Smith Square and at the HighScore Festival in Italy. Next March, Oxford Philomusica will give the premiere of his orchestral piece, *Broken Thumbs*, which reflects upon the 2011 climate change negotiations in Durban. As a musicologist, his work focuses on musical aesthetics and he is currently researching the Ukrainian composer, Valentyn Silvestrov, in relation to the photo paintings of Gerhard Richter and processes of glacial morphology.

Seminar 4 – 27 November 2012 – “*LISTENING TO LANDSCAPE, THE LANDSCAPE OF LISTENING*” with Tom Service

Summary: In an earlier seminar in this series, Chris Garrard compared Valentin Silvestrov’s music with post-glacial landscape formations as rich, complex systems that can be inhabited, decoded, and interpreted. Writing in the *Guardian*, Tom Service observes that pieces of music often seem to embody the closeness of connection between music and landscape. Music embodies closeness and proximity in many senses. Could it therefore be instrumental in changing the relationship between human beings, the sciences, and the planet in the context of looming environmental challenges?

Speaker Biography: Tom Service regularly presents *Music Matters*, Radio 3’s flagship classical music magazine programme, with topical in-depth interviews, features and discussions on the big ideas driving today’s music world.

Tom was born in Glasgow. He studied music at the University of York, took a Masters at the University of Southampton, and completed a doctorate there on the music of John Zorn. He writes about music for the *Guardian*, and is a regular contributor to the BBC *Music Magazine*, *Opera*, and *Tempo*. His articles have appeared in books and music dictionaries, and in journals in France and Germany. He teaches at Trinity College of Music, and has given pre-concert talks and written programme notes for many of the festivals, orchestras, and opera companies in the UK. He began broadcasting on Radio 3 on *Hear and Now* in 2001, becoming one of the show’s regular presenters, and has presented *Music Matters* since the autumn of 2003.

Seminar 5 – 22 January 2013 – “CLIMATE MATTERS” with Prof John Broome

Summary: A central question of rationality is its connection with what we ought to do. Ought we to be rational? Ought we (individuals, scientists, humanists, environmentalists, enterprise) to protect the environment from the impacts of the consumer society or can we leave that to the “invisible hand”? Does rationality require us to intend to do what we believe we ought to do? As John asks in his latest book: are emissions and injustice? To whom? Is cost-benefit analysis a rational approach to sharing the burden?

Speaker Biography: For much of his life John has worked on the value of human life, which concerns both moral philosophers and economists. His research on this topic took him backwards to its theoretical foundations and forward to its practical applications. The practical applications include medicine, since doctors and health services have to weigh extending people’s lives against improving people’s lives, and climate change, because it will kill millions of people. He has worked in both these areas, and acted as a consultant to the World Health Organization and the Stern Review. He is a Lead Author of the next assessment report of the Intergovernmental panel on Climate Change.

Seminar 6 – 5 February 2013 - “THE TIGER IN THE SMOKE: THE FOG OF MODERNITY IN 1950’S LONDON” with Prof Lynda Nead

Chaired by **Prof Sally Shuttleworth, Professorial Fellow in English, St Anne’s College**

Discussant: **Dr John Davis, University Lecturer in Modern History**

Seminar Summary: Professor Lynda Nead examines the London fog of 1952 and its legacy in terms of the history of environmental politics and its shaping of subsequent pollution control. More particularly, it uses the fog as a motif or metaphor for an interdisciplinary study of British culture in the post-war period. It seeks to develop a new kind of study of what might be called environmental or meteorological aesthetics, that is the representation of weather and its somatic and emotional affects. It is a study of both the textuality and the visuality of fog in the 1950s.

Speaker Biography: **Prof Lynda Nead** is Pevsner Professor of History of Art at Birkbeck College, University of London. She has published widely on aspects of feminist art history and nineteenth-century visual culture and her publications include *The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity and Sexuality* (1992); *Victorian Babylon: Paintings, People and Streets in Nineteenth-Century London* (2000); and *The Haunted Gallery: Painting, Photography, Film c.1900* (2008). She has an ongoing interest in the visual culture of boxing, and another in the interface between art history and other disciplines and has collaborated with colleagues on books relating to art and law; art and cultural history; and art and geography. She describes the history of art as a profoundly interdisciplinary field of research and observes that some of the most exciting work comes from pushing at the boundaries of conventional disciplines.

Dr John Davis works on modern London: initially on the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but now on the post 1945 period. His recent work has been on race and housing, on anti-motorway protests and on ‘failing schools’ in the 1960s and 1970s. He has also carried out comparative research recently on London and Berlin, concentrating on squatters and the early women’s movement in the two cities.

Seminar 7 – 19 February 2013 – “WORKSHOP AND DISCUSSION: SCIENCE AND THE ENVIRONMENT – NARRATIVE AS A FORCE TO CHANGE” with Dr. Richard Kerridge and Dr Joe Smith

Seminar Summary: Emerging environmental challenges urge a change in the relationship between human beings, the sciences and the planet. As eco-critic Jonathan Bate (2001) observes: ‘The values with which the humanities have taught us to regard humankind have rarely been extended to the material world which the sciences examine and technology transforms.’ As a consequence advances in technology in many fields that have vastly improved quality of life for millions have been at the cost of environmental degradation, driven by the modern, consumer-driven economy. A number of films have engaged with this issue, eliciting a powerful public response. Hence, Roland Emmerich’s 2004 climate change movie *The Day After Tomorrow* grossed no less than US\$542,771,742 at the box office, and the TV firm *Burnup* won the Gemini Award for “Best Dramatic Mini-Series” in 2009. In this seminar, which combines panel discussion and work-shopping, we explore the challenge of ‘story telling’, and the power of narrative as a force for change, in the context of this complex topic.

Speaker Biographies: Dr. Richard Kerridge has been involved in research into eco-criticism and environmental writing for about twenty years, having founded one of the very earliest undergraduate programmes in eco-criticism, *Writing and the Environmental Crisis*, in 1992. He has also chaired and is regularly involved with ASLE (the Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment). Key publications in the field of eco-criticism include *Writing the Environment* (1998).

Dr. Joe Smith’s work focuses on the need for better understanding of – and action on – global environmental change issues. This breaks down into three linked areas of research and commentary: public engagement and the media, the politics of consumption, and contemporary environmental history. Research projects of note include the experimental public engagement and research project *Interdependence Day* (1996 onwards) and the broadcast online learning and research project *Creative Climate* (2009 onwards).

Seminar 8 – 5 March 2013 – ‘CHASING ICE – FILM AND DISCUSSION’

For the eighth and final session in this series please join us for the screening and panel discussion of multi-award winning documentary *Chasing Ice* www.chasingice.com Discussion will be led by three respondents representing respectively the humanities, the physical sciences, and the social sciences.

Respondents: Dr. Daniel Grimley, University Lecturer in Music, Oxford.

Rachel James, Graduate Research Student, Oxford, focusing currently on the implications of global warming for the African climate.

Dr. Patrick McSharry, Head of Catastrophe Risk Finance, Smith School, Oxford

Film Synopsis: In the spring of 2005, acclaimed environmental photographer James Balog headed to the Arctic on a tricky assignment for *National Geographic*: to capture images to help tell the story of the Earth’s changing climate. Within months of that first trip to Iceland, the photographer conceived the boldest expedition of his life: *The Extreme Ice Survey*. With a

band of young adventurers in tow, Balog began deploying revolutionary time-lapse cameras across the brutal Arctic to capture a multi-year record of the world's changing glaciers. His hauntingly beautiful videos compress years into seconds and capture ancient mountains of ice in motion as they disappear at a breathtaking rate. *Chasing Ice* depicts a photographer trying to deliver evidence and hope to our carbon-powered planet.