

Layered Landscapes in Twenty-First Century British and Irish Literature

29-30 September 2025

Institute of English Studies, Jagiellonian University in Kraków

One of the multiple and the most obvious meanings of landscape is “scenery,” or “the (visual) manifestation of the territorial identity, which is depicted in the visual arts.” However, its etymology in the Germanic languages refers to the human effort of making, creating and organising land (Antrop 2019: 1-2). Hence, as Tim Ingold argues, rather than the detached and reflective perception that the former meaning connotes, the original concept of “shaping” land stemmed from “an immediate, muscular and visceral engagement” with it (2012: 198). Nevertheless, there are definitions of landscape that leave out the anthropogenic component or make it optional. According to the European Landscape Convention of 2000, landscape is “an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors” (qtd. in Antrop 11). Accordingly, approaches to landscape vary greatly, which is reflected in the very diverse and often interdisciplinary research devoted to it (cf. Mueller, Lothar, and Frank Eulenstein [eds.]. *Current Trends in Landscape Research*, Springer 2019).

For the purposes of this conference, we would like to narrow down the multiplicity of meanings attached to landscape and concentrate on depictions of specific, real and material landscapes of the British Isles in twenty-first century British and Irish literature. As a follow-up to our 2024 conference on “Landscape and Identity in Contemporary British and Irish Literature,” we would like to expand and slightly re-focus our interests. We wish to go beyond landscape as scenery and explore what is beneath the surface, the hidden layers – of the earth, of history and human artefacts – that writing and reading may uncover. In his contribution to *The Routledge Handbook of Literary Geographies* John Wylie compares landscapes to books – both communicate messages and meanings, and both can be read and interpreted (Wylie 2025: 115). He further likens landscape to a palimpsest “because it is literally fashioned through sequential processes of erasure and re-inscription” (116). In proposing the theme for our conference, we take inspiration from Wylie’s metaphor, but prefer to refer to “layers” of landscape in order to extend the scope of our discussion to the non-human factors and forces that contribute to particular landscapes.

Works Cited

- Antrop, Marc. “A Brief History of Landscape Research.” Howard, Peter, et al. *The Routledge Companion to Landscape Studies*, 2nd ed., edited by Peter Howard et al. Routledge, 2019. 1-15.
- Ingold, Tim. “The Shape of the Land.” *Landscapes beyond Land: Routes, Aesthetics, Narratives*, edited by Arnar Árnason et al. Berghahn Books, 2012. 197-208.
- Wylie, John. “Landscape.” *The Routledge Handbook of Literary Geographies*, edited by Neal Alexander and David Cooper. Routledge 2025. 113-122.

Confirmed plenary speaker: Professor Rod Mengham (University of Cambridge).

The event will take place on 29-30 September 2025 at the Institute of English Studies,
al. Mickiewicza 9, Jagiellonian University in Kraków, Poland.

We invite contributions on twenty-first century British or Irish literature that include but are not limited to the following topics:

- landscape and natural sciences
- landscape and geology
- archaeology and excavations
- landscapes and environmental histories
- landscape and regional and/or national histories and identities
- cultural meanings of landscapes
- landscape and literary history
- landscape and personal memories
- walking and travelling in landscapes

Please send a c. 200-word abstract and a short bio to landscapes2025@uj.edu.pl by **1st July 2025**. Notifications of acceptance will be sent by 10th July. There is no conference fee.

Organisers:

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