

Re-Reading British and Irish Landscapes in the 21st Century: Nature, Networks, Identities

International Workshop
University of Mannheim, 14-15 June 2024

“Globalized Rural Landscapes in Daisy Hildyard’s *Emergency* (2022) and Vron Ware’s *Return of a Native: Learning from the Land* (2022)”

Friday, 14 June, 9:45-10:45, EO 382

In *Death of a Discipline*, Gayatri Spivak calls the rural the “forgotten front of globalization” as the way globalization is spectralizing the rural – by turning it into a “database for pharmaceutical dumping, chemical fertilizers, patenting of indigenous knowledge, big dam building and the like” – remains largely unnoticed from perspectives on globalization that center the urban. While Spivak situates this spectralization of the rural in the Global South, it also affects rural areas in the Global North. In this lecture, I argue that, in the UK, because of the lingering tendency to conceive of rural landscapes as properly idyllic or pastoral, it is particularly difficult to make visible the longstanding spectralizing impact globalization has had on such landscapes, which are entangled with colonial and industrial histories that have left deep scars on the land and on the human and more-than-human lives unfolding on and in it. It seems that recognizing these scars is often only possible in retrospect, from a position of having been or being at a spatial distance from the rural. Through a comparative close reading of Daisy Hildyard’s 2022 novel *Emergency*, in which a woman caught in a city apartment during a Covid lockdown looks back on her childhood in a rural – but in hindsight far from idyllic – village in Yorkshire, and Vron Ware’s autobiographical *Return of a Native: Learning from the Land*, in which the author returns to the village in Hampshire where she grew up, aiming to “read the signs” present in the landscape there of past and present crises, I explore how the spectralization of the rural by globalization may be highlighted so that the rural is no longer mistaken for a refuge from globalization.

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