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Venezia dai demoni, Gallerie dell'Accademia di Venezia

# The Tempest in *The Tempest*: Art and Ecology Across the Disciplines

## Abstracts

**Monday 18 November 2024**

Gallerie dell'Accademia, Campo della Carità, Dorsoduro 1050, Venezia  
[www.gallerieaccademia.it](http://www.gallerieaccademia.it)

**Tuesday 19 November 2024**

Warwick Venice Centre, Palazzo Giustinian Lolin, San Marco 2893, Venezia  
<https://warwick.ac.uk/about/campus/venice/>

## Organizing committee

Shaul Bassi is Professor of English literature and Environmental Humanities at Ca' Foscari University of Venice. He is the co-editor of *Venice and the Anthropocene. An ecocritical guide* (2022) and the author of *Pianeta Ofelia. Fare Shakespeare nell'Antropocene* (2024).

Lucio De Capitani is a postdoctoral researcher at Ca' Foscari University of Venice. He is the author of *Ethnographic Narratives as World Literature. Uneven Entanglements in European and South Asian Writing* (2023).

Fabiana Fazzi is a PostDoc Research Fellow in Educational Linguistics at Ca' Foscari University of Venice. Her most recent publication is "Researching the benefits of integrating language and museum education on students' linguistic, cognitive, affective, and intercultural development" (2024), with Claudia Meneghetti.

Giulio Manieri Elia is Director of the Gallerie dell'Accademia in Venice since May 2019. His work in the field of restoration is presented in the volume *Capolavori restaurati: le Gallerie dell'Accademia and Save Venice Inc.*, (2010). He has recently curated the exhibition and the catalogue *Il capolavoro veneziano di Giorgio Vasari* (2024).

Luca Molà is Associate Professor of History at the University of Warwick and the Director of the Warwick Venice Centre. He is the author of *The Silk Industry of Renaissance Venice* (2000). His most recent book is *Tutte le perle del mondo. Storie di viaggi, scambi e magnifici ornamenti*, co-authored with Maria Giuseppina Muzzarelli and Giorgio Riello (2023).

Michele Nicolaci is curator of the 17th and 18th-century collections at the Gallerie dell'Accademia in Venice, where he is also responsible for educational services. He is a scholar of 17th-century painting. He has co-curated with Giulio Manieri Elia the volume *Il Seicento e il Settecento alle Gallerie dell'Accademia. Nuovi Studi* (2024).

## The Tempest in *The Tempest*: Art and Ecology Across the Disciplines

International Symposium - Venice 18-19 November 2024

This interdisciplinary event explores the multiple ways in which European art can offer valuable insights into our contemporary environmental condition, providing both historical perspectives and forward-looking hope. Experts and practitioners from various fields—history, architecture, art history, literature, creative writing, oceanography, climatology, linguistics, and environmental activism—have been invited to select a painting from the Accademia collection. They will engage with it to analyze its ecological themes, implications, and entanglements.

Our aim is to show that art can serve both as a diagnosis and an inspiration for understanding the climate crisis engulfing our planet, while demonstrating how Venice offers a unique vantage point for observing and finding solutions to these challenges. The goal will be an 'ecocritical' itinerary at the Gallerie dell'Accademia, to be published by wetlands press as part of a new series devoted to the nexus between Venetian art spaces and ecology. Keynote speakers include Alan C. Braddock, author of *Implication: An Ecocritical Dictionary of Art History*; Peter N. Miller, President of the American Academy in Rome and author of *The Weather on 9/9/01*; and bestselling author Olivia Laing, who will discuss her new book, *The Garden Against Time*.

The event is part of the Erasmus+ project "Ecostories" (*Eco-Storytelling: A Digital Toolbox for the English Classroom for Building a Climate-Just Future*)<sup>1</sup>, coordinated by the University of Graz (Austria), with participation from Ca' Foscari University of Venice (Italy) and the University of Malaga (Spain). Ca' Foscari participates through the Department of Linguistics and Comparative Cultural Studies, a centre of excellence in the study of cultural, literary and language adaptation, employing the key concept and anthropological framework of Adaptation/Adaptability for its five-year project ICARHUS. The symposium is co-organized by Gallerie dell'Accademia and the University of Warwick Venice Centre and benefits from the prestigious collaboration with the American Academy in Rome.

We also acknowledge NICHE – The New Institute Center for Environmental Humanities and the MA in Environmental Humanities at Ca' Foscari, where many of the speakers offer their courses. The idea of the symposium

The organizers are grateful all the people and institutions who have contributed to the event, and in particular: Marcella Menegale, Gioia Ghezzi, Alberto Parolo (Ca' Foscari University of Venice), Chiara Farnea Croff (Warwick Venice Center) and Luca Cosentino (wetlands books).

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<sup>1</sup> "Erasmus+ project "Eco-Storytelling: A Digital Toolbox for the English Classroom for Building a Climate-Just Future" CUP H73C23000840006 funded by the European Union. The opinions expressed here are solely those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union or the Erasmus+ National Agency - INDIRE. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.



Paolo Veronese's *The Feast in the House of Levi* (1573)

### **Alan Braddock**

'Places infected by heresy': Political Ecologies of Disease and Difference

Scholarly interpretations of Veronese's *Last Supper (Feast in the House of Levi)* and the artist's famous interrogation by the Inquisition have focused on his negotiation of Counter Reformation standards of decorum, Venetian religious institutions, and the European geopolitical context. Such interpretations have greatly enriched our knowledge of the painting, the artist, and the Cinquecento, but they have overlooked an important dimension of political ecology embodied in one inquisitor's reference to "Germany and other places infected by heresy." The metaphor of *infection*—which continues to function as a powerful tool of xenophobia today—invites consideration of how the ecology of disease intersected with discourse about human difference and religious conflict during the Renaissance in Europe. Thus, my presentation will explore the following questions: How did Veronese's painting prompt the inquisitor to invoke the metaphor of infection, and which biological infections of the period likely informed this association with heresy?

Alan Braddock is Associate Professor of Art History and American Studies at The College of William & Mary (USA). His most recent books are *Implication: An Ecocritical Dictionary for Art History* (2023) and *Nature's Nation: American Art and Environment*, with Karl Kusserow (2018).



Giorgio Vasari, *Faith* (1542)

## Jane Da Mosto

### Beyond Faith

Unable to find any paintings depicting the lagoon in its natural form, *La Fede* by Giorgio Vasari has been chosen for its representation of a key feature of a healthy lagoon system, i.e. dynamic equilibrium. By considering the circumstances of the original commission, as part of the ceiling decorations at Palazzo Corner Spinelli on the Grand Canal, in the mid 16th century, through to its recent return to Venice, it is possible to review the most significant phases of the lagoon's evolution from tending towards sedimentation to risking becoming a bay of the sea. Lagoons, by definition and without human intervention, are ephemeral. Depending on the relative influence of the incoming rivers and adjacent sea, lagoons either gradually become more marshy until the ground consolidates into solid land or they are consumed by the marine currents that incrementally wash away sediments until everything has eroded away and the waters merge. The arc of time represented by *La Fede* begins with the period in which the main rivers connected to the Venice lagoon were re-routed north and south to prevent the channels from completely silting up. This was crucial for the Venetian Republic to remain a maritime power and continue developing its unique amphibious civilisation. The time the painting was in England corresponds to the opposite trend in lagoon progression, when a major shipping channel was excavated and, together with other large infrastructural interventions, the system was taken onto the opposite trajectory towards becoming more marine in character. The human subjects in the painting will animate a reflection on the interplay between policy decision making, ecological consequences and the effects on society with specific reference to Venice's current challenges and the role of civil society.

Jane da Mosto is an environmental scientist and activist, co-founder of We are here Venice ETS ([weareherevenice.org](http://weareherevenice.org)). The organisation is focused on developing solutions for ensuring Venice remains a living city, especially by preserving and enhancing its environmental sustainability.



Bernardo Bellotto, *The Rio dei Mendicanti and the Scuola di San Marco* (1741)

### **Carlo Barbante**

#### Is the Lion Drowning?

In this presentation, I draw inspiration from the artwork of Bernardo Bellotto, particularly his masterpiece *The Rio dei Mendicanti and the Scuola di San Marco*, to discuss the pressing issue of sea-level rise and its potential impact on Venice. Bellotto's depiction of Venice, with its intricate canals and historical landmarks, offers not just a glimpse into the city's rich cultural heritage, but also an evocative entry point for reflecting on the fragility of the lagoon in the face of climate change. In parallel, I will reference another significant artwork, *Saints Mark, George, and Nicholas Save Venice from the Demons* (Burrasca in mare), which presents a powerful allegory of Venice under siege by nature's wrath. This painting serves as a fitting metaphor for the intensifying and more frequent extreme weather events threatening the city. With rising sea levels and increasingly violent storms, the symbolic question—"Is the Lion drowning?"—becomes a literal one. Through this dialogue between art and environmental science, I aim to underscore the urgent need to address climate-related challenges to safeguard Venice, a jewel of human civilization, from the very elements that have sustained it for centuries.

Carlo Barbante is professor at the University of Venice, founder and former director of the Institute of Polar Sciences of the National Research Council (CNR). He is mostly known for his works on paleoclimatic reconstructions in Polar regions. He has been professor at the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei and is an elected member of the Accademia delle Scienze detta dei XL and of the Istituto Veneto di Scienze Lettere ed Arti.



Antonio Canaletto, *Perspective View with Portico* (1765)

### **David Gentilcore**

#### Canaletto's Wells: Venice's Fresh Water Supply in the 18th Century

Canaletto is known primarily for his depictions of saltwater, the boat-filled canals that made (and make) Venice famous throughout the world. This talk will focus on a lesser-known aspect of Canaletto's work: his depiction of the city's fresh water resources, in particular the well-heads that were a crucial element of the city's unique fresh water supply system into the twentieth century. Starting with his *Perspective with Portico*, and continuing with his preparatory sketches (also in the Accademia collection) for the painting *The Campo Santa Maria Formosa* (Woburn Collection), my paper discusses Canaletto through the prism of Venice's "cistern system" and its evolution during the eighteenth century.

David Gentilcore is Professor of Modern History at Ca' Foscari University of Venice. His recent books include *Pellagra and Pellagrous Insanity during the Long Nineteenth Century* (2023) and *"Cose rare e ammirande del nuovo mondo". Le piante commestibili americane nell'editoria veneziana tra Cinque e Settecento* (2024).



Antonio Canaletto, *Perspective View with Portico* (1765)

### **Anthony Acciavatti**

#### Well-Built Cities

Peering down the portico in Canaletto's painting, we see the repetition of columns and beams. These structural members not only support the ceiling and cuts that allow us to view the upper stories, but they also transfer the weight of the building to the ground to avoid collapse. If these architectural elements allow buildings to stand and commerce to thrive within its portico and sky parlors, then between the first and second column is another repetitive structure that prevented the city from collapsing: a water well. In saltwater lagoons with scarce freshwater, piazzas and courtyards double as roofs of cisterns fed by rainwater. The ratio of outdoor space to buildings not only structures the city's urban form and civic identity, but also establishes a deep vertical section to the hydrological cycle. For centuries, Venetians transformed rainwater into groundwater to sustain life. Today, in a world where nearly half the global population imbibes water from privately owned wells, and metropolises from Jakarta to Mexico City sink at rates comparable to Venice, what might a deep sectional approach to water and civic space augur for how we might reconstruct our relationship to groundwater?

Anthony Acciavatti is Diana Balmori Assistant Professor at Yale University and a current fellow at the American Academy of Rome. He is the author of *Ganges Water Machine: Designing New India's Ancient River* (2015) and, in 2025, will publish *The Values of Imprecision: Tools for Navigating Environmental Uncertainty*.





Jacopo Bassano & Bottega, *Rest on the Flight into Egypt* (late XVI c.)

### Jonathan Skinner

#### Rest on the Flight into Egypt: Ecological Vision in Bassano

Bassano's 'down to earth' biblical-pastoral paintings, in their rendering of everyday country life and domestic animals set in the landscapes of the Veneto, capture the eye of today's viewers as much as they characterized the workshop's prodigious output. Art historians have offered accounts of Bassano's work as a painter and reader of Scripture, as well as of his role in the development of Mannerism, that place him alongside his contemporaries celebrated for painting works of religious and historical import, and not just as "a clever painter of goats and lambs, bullocks and dogs, rabbits and pigeons and all sorts of other animals and birds" (Giambattista Roberti). Yet, for today's viewers Bassano's attention to the more-than-human world seems prescient: in a time of unravelling ecosystems and anthropogenic mass extinction, to depict "Noah's Ark" with such individualising attention in fact addresses the most urgent theme of our age. And yet Bassano's scriptural readings and spiritual message bring compositional tension to the painting in ways that exceed depiction of nature. In the "Rest on the Flight to Egypt" (late 1560s) we can read themes that speak to the turbulent climate of our times, while offering a place of visual rest. Ecological vision is not, I argue, only or even primarily thematic. Drawing on J.J. Gibson's ecological theories of visual perception, and on studies of turbulence in Mannerist painting, this talk offers a reflection on what it means to see ecologically, on whether, and in what ways, art, and specifically Bassano's painting, can impart ecological vision.

Jonathan Skinner is Reader in English and Comparative Literary Studies at the University of Warwick. His publications include the poetry collection *The Archive* (2024) and the essay "Blockade Chants and Cloud-Nets: Terminal Poetics of the Anthropocene" (2021).



Bonifacio Veronese, *The Parable of the Rich Man (Dives) and Lazarus* (1535–1540)

### **Olivia Laing**

in conversation with Livia Senic-Matuglia & Shaul Bassi

The lavish Renaissance garden in Bonifacio Veronese's painting is the backdrop of the New Testament parable (Luke 16:19–31) of the rich man who refused succour to the beggar Lazarus, an allegory of how the rich waste their resources without dedicating their efforts to the public good. This timely parable will be the starting point for a discussion of Olivia Laing's most recent book *The Garden Against Time*. In 2020 the best-selling author began to restore a walled garden in Suffolk, an overgrown Eden of unusual plants. The work drew her into an investigation of paradise and its long association with gardens. Moving between real and imagined gardens, from Milton's *Paradise Lost* to John Clare's enclosure elegies, from a wartime sanctuary in Italy to a grotesque aristocratic pleasure ground funded by slavery, Laing interrogates the sometimes shocking cost of making paradise on earth, a sobering reminder of how an increasingly artificial nature can be unsustainable.

Olivia Laing is an internationally acclaimed writer and critic, the author of seven books, including *The Lonely City*, *Everybody, Funny Weather* and *The Garden Against Time*. Laing's books have been translated into twenty-one languages and in 2018 they were awarded the Windham-Campbell prize for non-fiction.

Livia Senic-Matuglia, born in Venice and trained as an archeologist, is the store manager of Rizzoli Bookstore in New York.

Shaul Bassi is Professor of English literature and Environmental Humanities at Ca' Foscari University of Venice. He is the co-editor of *Venice and the Anthropocene. An ecocritical guide* (2022) and the author of *Pianeta Ofelia. Fare Shakespeare nell'Antropocene* (2024).



Marco Ricci, *Landscape with Woodcutters and Two Horsemen* (1715-1725 c.)

### **Vicky Macleroy**

Hurt not the trees

This talk examines the scene of the woodcutters as they sit astride a felled tree and climb the branches of a tall sinewy deciduous tree overlooking the scene. This theme of the cutting down of trees connects with the destruction of our ancient woodlands. The artist spent time in Venice and London and this talk seeks to make connections across these cities and their lost woodlands of alder, larch, oak, pine, elm and spruce. Moving back in time, the city of Venice was built on alder tree piles – 10 million tree trunks and the ships of England used majestic oak trees – a large ship needed 3,000 trees. Advocating an ecological stance towards citizenship, I argue here that ‘extending affective ties with the human and more-than-human through storytelling is key in redressing the inseparable environmental and geopolitical crises we face. This talk connects with poetry and stories that have been written about the destruction of our trees. I look at the poem ‘The Trees are Down’ (Charlotte Mew, 1920s) with the lines, ‘They are cutting down the great plane-trees at the end of the gardens ... hurt not the trees’ which is about Euston Square Garden, London. The talk then moves onto ideas of hopeful education and how trees can be given spaces to grow again within our cities taken from various projects. Finally, I argue that reflecting on the woodcutters in the painting and shifting the focus to the trees ‘renders us open to ethical, perhaps grace-full encounters with more-than-human assemblages’ (Houston et al., 2018).

Vicky Macleroy is a Professor of Language and Literacy at Goldsmiths, University of London. She co-edited the volumes *Liberating Language Education* (2022) and *Multilingual Digital Storytelling: Engaging creatively and critically with literacy* (2016).



Marco Ricci, *Landscape with Woodcutters and Two Horsemen* (1715-1725 c.)

### **Davide Zanchettin**

What noise does a falling forest make?

Forests are special places for humans. For our ancestors, they were the ultimate place of learning and growth, of dangers and fears. Forests represented the quintessential unknown and a place of darkness with echoes of terror; they have often populated metaphors and narratives of lost travellers, where loneliness allowed to finally find yourself. But, forests have always been also an invaluable resource for humans, where long-lasting human exploitation brought distortion and often decimation of primary forests. In Europe, primary forests are now rare, small and fragmented; so far and inaccessible that they lost part of their grip in collective imagination as an iconic place for primordial contact with nature. Yet, the anthropized Italian landscapes captured by modern photographs are often remarkably similar to the past Italian landscapes portrayed in renaissance and later paintings, like in “Landscape with Woodcutters and Two Horsemen” by Marco Ricci. Our opportunities to experience wild forests may have therefore not changed drastically in the course of the past few centuries. But, we are now more aware than in the past of the vital role of forests for the planet and of the risks deforestation bears for the global ecosystem; we now look at forests as cradles of biodiversity and mitigators of climate change, and, apparently, we care more about their fate. Inspired by Marco Ricci’s artwork and drawing from scientific data, I will explore the connection of humans with forests since the preindustrial times and discuss how past land-use changes and human pressures contributed shaping forests worldwide, and may continue doing so in the future.

Davide Zanchettin is Associate Professor of geophysics at the Ca’Foscari University of Venice. He has co-authored *Riscaldamento globale: la fine. Gli ultimi mesi: ritorno al passato o addio per sempre?*, an award-winning book on climate change, in 2010.



Alessandro Magnasco and Antonio Francesco Peruzzini, *The Large Forest* (1705-1706)

### **Hermine Penz**

Ecolinguistic explorations of human-trees/forest relations

Trees and forests have always been intricately connected to human and nonhuman lives. It is thus not surprising that the manifold relations between trees/forests and human beings have been expressed in various discourses and cultural representations throughout history.

This presentation takes the painting “Il Grande Bosco” as a starting point for discussing how human-forest relationships have been constructed discursively. It is grounded in ecolinguistics, which studies the relations between language, human and non-human beings and their natural environment. Ecolinguistics has a particular interest in studying the impact of language(s) on life-sustaining relations. While human-animal relations have become a strong focus in ecolinguistics, human relations to plants, and trees and forests, in particular, have not received much attention. However, these relations are manifold and express economic, social/societal, cultural/symbolic, spiritual, aesthetic and emotional relations. They manifest themselves in the vocabulary and phraseology of languages, including metaphors, yet are also reflected in a variety of discourses. The data for this study are based on the discourses of various fields, among them forestry, ecology, tourism, folklore, literature, religion and other forms of spirituality.

Hermine Penz is Associate Professor of English Linguistics at the University of Graz. She co-edited *The Routledge Handbook of Ecolinguistics* (2018) and *Intercultural Encounters in Education* (2014)



Giambattista Cima da Conegliano and Studio, *The Lion of Saint Mark flanked by Saints John the Baptist, John the Evangelist, Mary Magdalene, and Jerome* (ca. 1506-1508)

### **Camilla Pietrabissa**

On the Threshold: Painting Territoriality and Directionality in the Serenissima

The political significance of this large panel, originally installed in the offices of the magistrates in charge of collecting taxes on property, resides in the relation between the group of Saints flanking the Lion and the landscape setting in the background. The lagoon-shaped waterscape, with fortress towns overlooking its expanse, occupies the center of the image. A small figure of Saint George, placed on the shore between land and sea, evokes the sense of place in the Serenissima as a threshold space. Terms such as territoriality and directionality, which define corporeal orientation and geographic awareness, have become particularly relevant in ecocritical art history to define images of place beyond topographic reference. This paper examines the painting's articulation of Venetian territoriality, of the Saints' agency, and of the historical ideal of spatial politics to question the notion of a divide between water and land.

Camilla Pietrabissa is Adjunct Lecturer in Art History at Università IUAV di Venezia. Her forthcoming book is entitled *Rococo landscapes. Painting urban nature in eighteenth-century Paris*.



Annibale Carracci, *Saint Francis* (c. 1585-1590)

### **Valentina Ciciliot**

In respect of all peoples and all creation: Saint Francis and his many representations

St. Francis is one of the most famous saints of the Catholic Church, but also one of the most globally known religious figures. He has been interpreted in different ways throughout history, both from a political and ecclesiological point of view but also, consequently, from an iconographical and cultural one. Through his depictions and hagiographies - passing through Annibale Carracci's 16th-century painting *St. Francis* - the interpretative gaps will be highlighted up to the current one, St. Francis as the patron saint of ecologists.

Valentina Ciciliot is Associate Professor at Ca' Foscari University of Venice. She is the author of the book *Donne sugli altari. Le canonizzazioni femminili di Giovanni Paolo II* (2018) and *The Catholic Charismatic Renewal and Pope Francis between Pastoral Openness and Ecclesiastical Centralization* (2023).



Palma il Vecchio and Paris Bordon, *Saints Mark, George, and Nicholas Free Venice from the Demons (Sea Storm)* (c.1528-1534)

### **Luca Molà**

#### **A Shipwreck in Venice: Thunderstorms, Technology and the Myth Overturned**

This *telero* (a part of a large narrative painting cycle) made for the Scuola di San Marco is connected to the one depicting the Doge receiving the ring for the wedding to the sea. The central theme revolves around the storms in the lagoon or at the harbor entrances and the uncertain management of these by Venice, a city that claimed to dominate the Adriatic. I will primarily discuss a lesser-known case, almost silenced by the government but well-known across the rest of Europe. It centers on a brand-new, highly expensive super-galleon intended to combat pirates in the Mediterranean, which in 1559 sank in the harbor mouth due to a storm before even reaching the open sea. A gigantic machine was built at the Arsenal to recover it, but a second storm caused the machine to fail, and together with the galleon, they blocked one of the harbor entrances. Venetian sources are evasive about it, while ambassadors wrote back to their courts, amused by the situation. After several failed attempts by unlikely characters, an Armenian from Syria arrived with his own technique and succeeded in clearing the harbor, becoming famous in the city.

Luca Molà is Associate Professor of History at the University of Warwick and the Director of the Warwick Venice Centre. He is the author of *The Silk Industry of Renaissance Venice* (2000). His most recent book is *Tutte le perle del mondo. Storie di viaggi, scambi e magnifici ornamenti*, co-authored with Maria Giuseppina Muzzarelli and Giorgio Riello (2023).





Lorenzo Lotto, *Portrait of a Young Man* (c.1530)

### **Roberta Maierhofer**

#### The Presence of an Absence: Environmental Entanglements

The English translation provided by the website of the Gallerie dell'Accademia, "Portrait of a Young Man or Portrait of a Gentleman in his Study," clearly positions the painting's focus on an inside location. The detailed description provided gives insights concerning the historical references, the cultural representations of the times of production and reception, and an art historical background of the painting. In my reflections, I will approach the painting from a present, uninformed, immediate perspective with the question of where do nature and culture meet. Are there juxtapositions? Can we even talk about an 'eco-story,' when the focus of the painting is a dark study with an elaborate and detailed depiction of man-made materiality in terms of clothes, furniture, books, and a person centrally positioned? Is the room itself an environment? Or is the painting more about the glimpse of the outside that we can see in the left-hand corner of the painting? The provided interpretation guiding our perception is that it is a 'coming-of-age' story, a young man on the brink of entering an adult life with its concrete and burdensome commitments, leaving behind the carefree joys of his youth symbolized in the lute and the hunting horn in the background. Symbolic resonances are the rose petals, the ring, the letters, the women's shawl, and – quite surprisingly – a green lizard. Nature visible to us as viewers are referenced in abstract terms as symbols. In my presentation, however, I will concentrate on the left-hand corner, where light and air, clouds and a landscape are faintly visible, and discuss the relationship between the abstract and the concrete, between human and nature, and the presence of an absence, which makes us painfully aware of the cultural, social, and historical embeddedness of our current climate crises.

Roberta Maierhofer is Professor of American Studies at the University of Graz, Austria. She has recently co-edited *Masculinities Ageing between Cultures. Relationality, Kinship and Care in Dialogue* (2024) and the upcoming book *Mediating Social Challenge. Art, Storytelling, and Critical Pedagogies* (2025).



Francesco Guardi, *Fire at the Oil Depot at San Marcuola* (1789)

**Graeme Macdonald**

“As of Pluto’s realm....it was amazing to see.” Petroculture and the Pyrocene

This talk views Guardi’s painting from the perspective of petroculture. A significant remit of this emergent academic field explores the cultural histories and aesthetic representation of oil and fossil fuels as a critical means to rethink modernity’s dark energy ecology. My reading will engage the painting with other notable petrocultural texts and images and consider how it resonates with the burning horrors of climate’s Pyrocene.

Graeme Macdonald is Full Professor of English and Comparative Literary Studies at the University of Warwick. He is co-author, with the Warwick Research Collective, of *Combined and Uneven Development: Toward a New Theory of World Literature* (2015), and he is co-author/contributor to the collective volumes *After Oil* (2015) and *Solarities* (2022).



Giorgione, *The Tempest* (1502-1503)

**Peter N. Miller**

Giorgione and George R. Stewart: the Presence of History in Environmental Arts and Humanities

Giorgione's *La Tempesta* is one of the great paintings of the Renaissance and the first and greatest representation of a storm as the subject matter of a painting. More than 400 years later, the American writer, George R. Stewart, Jr., published a book entitled *Storm* (1941) that makes a storm, named "Maria" (it is from this book that storms received names), the central character in a novel. We follow its birth, growth and death from Siberia across the Pacific and then the Continental United States, and its—from the point of view of the storm—collateral impacts on human beings. A few years later, Stewart turned his attention to *Fire* (1948); the wildfire is no longer the main character, but it is depicted with unusual attention to its interplay with nature and weather. Stewart's fiction, like Giorgione's painting, open our eyes to the role of weather in history, but also, and much more uncommonly, weather as history. Tracing out some of the implications of this for the current practice of history will be the conclusion of the paper.

Peter N. Miller, a historian and educator, is President of the American Academy in Rome. His publications include *History and Its Objects: antiquarianism and material culture since 1500* (2017) and *The Weather on 9/9/01* (2024).

