

Panel 18
Images and Graphic Elements in Poetry

Zaffar Kunial's *England's Green* and the Nature of the New Pastoral

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In their recent anthology *Contraflow: Lines of Englishness 1922-2022* (Renard Press: 2023) John Greening and Kevin Gardner argue for a new 'de-toxified' understanding of Englishness made possible by a new form of pastoral. Their anthology puts recent contributions to the genre in dialogue with the poets of the early twentieth century to expose both continuities and discontinuities in the verse selected across their chosen century. Zaffar Kunial is one of the more recently published writers represented in the anthology. His second full collection from Faber, *England's Green* (as its title suggests) is itself in complex dialogue with the English literary past. My paper explores Kunial's latest collection in order to calibrate and question its contribution to a wider contemporary poetics which challenges extant ideas of English national identity and of its relationship to contemporary versions of the pastoral. Kunial's poetry opens up a rich dialogue between the English literary past and our contemporary society as well as engaging in its own distinctive way with the sound structures of the English language. In its unique celebration of greenness it makes its own challenging contribution to the poetry of 'environment'. This paper addresses reconfigurations in the pastoral and the writing of environment in contemporary English poetry.

Biography

John Whale is Professor in the School of English, University of Leeds and the author of numerous articles and books on Romantic period writing. He is also a poet and the managing editor of the international journal *Stand*. His latest collection, *Darwin & the Cuttlefish*, will be published by Carcanet in 2026.