

<b>Institution:</b> Aberystwyth University		
<b>Unit of Assessment: 27:</b> English Language and Literature		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Sustainable Utopias: Changing attitudes and approaches to community-building, heritage consumption and food ethics		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2014–2020		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Dr Jacqueline Yallop	Lecturer; Senior Lecturer	1 September 2012–present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2014–2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> No		
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)		
<p>Yallop's research on urban and rural utopian visions has enabled readers of her writing, and participants in associated projects, to make sustainable lifestyle changes for themselves and their communities. Her interdisciplinary work led to enhanced public awareness of ways in which utopias are constructed and expressed, which has in turn inspired new public activities and festivals, changed heritage consumption and inspired a revision of personal food ethics. Broadcast and print media have actively engaged with the research ideas represented by Yallop's work.</p>		
<b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)		
<p>Yallop's research reveals the motives behind a range of utopian projects of the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries in order to explore how we understand and express the utopian ideal now, and how this might change attitudes to the built and rural environment today.</p> <p>The first element of the research addresses the utopias of the past and the motives of those who constructed them. Published works [3.1, 3.2] interrogate the reasons for the growth and decline of planned workers' villages, considering what lessons can be learned from these utopian experiments. The research offers an insight into rural estates and their associated villages, establishing a critique of the mid-twentieth-century decline of social cohesion and responsibility, as well as examining key examples of the utopian village throughout Britain from the long nineteenth century. Combining first-person narrative with accounts by cultural and social historians, architects, industrialists and residents, the research expresses new interdisciplinary links and uncovers a number of common threads linking utopian projects of the past. These are then revisited in contemporary contexts through impact activity.</p> <p>The second element of Yallop's research investigates competing ideas of a rural utopia (social, literary, philosophical), raising debate about sustainable living [3.3]. It examines Yallop's personal experience of raising and slaughtering animals in the context of changing landscapes and rural habits. This research draws in particular on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century archives to explore ways in which an understanding of the motives of the past can influence a sustainable future. Insights into land use and ownership, as well as changing notions of social responsibility, have informed impact activity, particularly with schools and the Ruskin-in-Sheffield project.</p> <p>Yallop's research draws extensively on her work on the writing of nineteenth-century critic, John Ruskin, to underpin discussion of social justice and political change. Her interdisciplinary approach highlights the breadth of Ruskin interests from art and literature to geology and economics, finding ways to make his ideas relevant and meaningful today [3.4]. Her research has made a key contribution by exploring Ruskin's writing through a contemporary creative lens</p>		

– through fiction and creative non-fiction – which allow a range of audiences to engage with complex debates.

### 3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

3.1 Jacqueline Yallop, *Marlford* (London: Atlantic Books, 2014)

3.2 Jacqueline Yallop, *Dreamstreets: A Journey Through Britain's Village Utopias* (London: Cape, 2015) [Submitted to REF2]

3.3 Jacqueline Yallop, *Big Pig, Little Pig: A Tale of Two Pigs in France* (London: Fig Tree, 2017) [Submitted to REF2]

3.4 Jacqueline Yallop, 'And now, come with me': A closer look at Ruskin's language', *Journal of Art Historiography*, no. 22, June 2020 [available at <https://arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2020/05/yallop-.pdf>]

### 4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Yallop's research informed public understanding by drawing attention to the ways in which utopias were constructed and expressed, which, in turn, led to new perspectives on the built environment, sustainability, food consumption and active community-building. She also inspired artists, makers and writers to new forms of creative practice.

A series of public lectures, discussions and readings, as well as a number of radio features, introduced Yallop's research to an extensive audience. Her books have been translated into Dutch and German. *Dreamstreets* featured in a BBC Radio 4, 'Start the Week' discussion (June 2015), and in a Radio 4 series *Streets Apart: A History of Social Housing* (July 2017). An abridged version of *Big Pig, Little Pig* was broadcast as BBC Book of the Week (June 2017) with an estimated reach of 3.2 million listeners [5.1]. Yallop was invited to give more than twenty public talks and lectures at bookshops and literary festivals, reaching audiences amounting to over 500 members of the public. Her research also formed the basis of a series of public masterclasses held at the Faber Academy and *The Guardian* newspaper between October and December 2014 and January and February 2015 [5.2].

Responses to Yallop's research – conveyed in letters, emails and tweets to the writer, and in website posts – evidence the work's ability to impact on the reader. A common theme in these responses is the research's significance in challenging readers to think differently or to reconsider their habitual approaches to life. In response to *Marlford*, one reader said: '*Her questions linger long after the book has been read*' [5.3]. A reader of *Dreamstreets* wrote: '*thank you for the book. It made me think*' [5.4]. In turn, this challenge to ways of thinking has led to a variety of changes in behaviour. One reader explained how their approach to, and consumption of, history was changed by reading *Dreamstreets*:

*'I hope to convey the feeling that I am compelled to learn more of the scenery that you provide ... by treating myself to visits to the mills and mines, and now villages, of which I read.... Please accept my compliments for the joy I find in sharing your sense of adventure ... If only history could have been so well expressed in my schooldays - but perhaps if it had been I might not be enjoying the excitement that I am experiencing today'* [5.5].

*Big Pig, Little Pig* in particular raised a heated debate among readers and radio listeners who fully engaged with the issues raised by the research: '*Thought provoking ... Your own views are constantly challenged ... If you're looking for a book that forces you to ask yourself some pretty tough questions then I can't recommend it highly enough*' [5.6]. This challenge to established thinking resulted in concrete lifestyle changes. One Twitter exchange between readers debated the issues around food and husbandry revealed by the research and concluded with one of the

readers adopting a new dietary practice: *'This book finally gave me the push I needed to become a vegetarian'; 'But isn't that amazing? The power of books to change a life'* [5.7].

A series of exhibitions, community activities and workshops also linked utopias of the past to current social debates and reached a new and extensive audience. Yallop's work informed the thinking behind a series of exhibitions at the Millennium Gallery in Sheffield (held between 2013 and 2016) exploring utopian visions for a sustainable post-industrial society and which centred around the work of the nineteenth-century critic and writer, John Ruskin [5.8]. The Ruskin Collection went on to inspire a programme of events across Sheffield – 'Ruskin in Sheffield' – initiated by the Guild of St George and Museums Sheffield (held between 2014 and 2019). Funded by Heritage Lottery and the Arts Council of England, the project revisited Ruskin's aspirations for the city and provided widespread practical and creative opportunities. The Secretary of the Guild of St George noted how Yallop's ideas:

*'originally sparked the Ruskin in Sheffield project which has now rippled out from its original activity and scope ... what started as a single project is now self-sustaining, helping all kinds of communities in their efforts to make people's lives better and to understand and improve the environment they live in'* [5.9].

The project worked with local museums services, communities, cultural organisations, artists, environmentalists, historians and activists to create pop-up museums, performances, festivals and new displays in the Ruskin Collection. Through these activities, over 24,000 people have engaged with their Ruskin heritage, craftsmanship, drawing, good livelihoods, utopian thinking, nature, social justice and their local community. Responding to Yallop's research, a variety of local and community artists then developed their own practice, often sharing this through public activity. Highlights included: the 2016 focus on practical craft, 'Make Good in the Woods' and 'Use and Beauty Parlour', attracting 4,500 visitors; a community play, 'Boots, Fresh Air and Ginger Beer' (June 2015); the 'Contra Flow' poetry walk encouraging new writing (June 2015); 'Crafting the Land' linking craft projects to biodynamic gardening (July 2016) [5.10]. Yallop's research also facilitated a creative exchange between a woodworker and an artist, 'What You Do; Where You're From; Who You Know', which was funded by Arts Council England and cited for public interaction in the exhibition 'In the Making: Ruskin, Creativity and Craftsmanship' which reached 54,000 visitors. Yallop's discussion of the research framework and interpretation of the piece is featured on the Museum's public blog [5.11].

A series of public and school workshops, *Imagining Utopias*, launched in August 2019 and based on *Dreamstreets*, further explored the ideals of utopian living and encouraged participants to construct workable contemporary utopias. The project included a national competition for creative interpretations of utopia, and social media activity, including the popular #ModelVillageMonday series which reached 8,000 Twitter impressions over 28 days. Feedback from the workshops (October, December 2019) evidence a change in conceptual understanding, from not recognising the word 'utopia' at all to identifying the principle of *'community and environment ... an ideal place to live'*. Indeed, the overwhelming majority (89%) of participants noted how the sessions had led to an increased awareness of how they understood and expressed the utopian ideal. Discussions were considered *'inspiring'*, *'fascinating'* and *'thought-provoking'* [5.12]. Engagement with the project's Twitter account evoked similar reactions. One entrant to the competition noted how the project had prompted her:

*'to create new artwork, which allowed me to re-think the ways in which I can portray a utopia. Consequently, Imagining Utopias has provided me with an opportunity to develop and better understand my artistic practice'* [5.13].

This correspondent is an educator at a secondary school, and has changed several of her lesson plans to incorporate the research themes of *Imagining Utopias*.

**5. Sources to corroborate the impact** (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- 5.1** For corroboration of the listening figures see  
[https://downloads.bbc.co.uk/radio/commissioning/Book\\_of\\_the\\_Week\\_audience\\_pack.pdf](https://downloads.bbc.co.uk/radio/commissioning/Book_of_the_Week_audience_pack.pdf)
- 5.2** Links to the Faber Academy and *The Guardian* workshops can be found at  
<https://membership.theguardian.com/event/how-to-plot-your-novel-13678961141>,  
<https://membership.theguardian.com/event/how-to-write-creative-nonfiction-14894703459>  
and <https://www.faberacademy.co.uk/tutors/jacqueline-yallop/>
- 5.3** Reader comment on Amazon website, 21 August 2014 (<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Marlford-Jacqueline-Yallop/dp/0857891065>)
- 5.4** Email to the author, 30 April 2016
- 5.5** Email to the author, 16 January 2019
- 5.6** Reader comment on Amazon website, 21 August 2017 (<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Big-Pig-Little-Tale-France/dp/0241261414>)
- 5.7** Screenshot of Twitter exchange between person 1 and person 2, 13–23 July 2017
- 5.8** Email from retired Director of the Guild of St George, 3 April 2020
- 5.9** Email from Secretary of the Guild of St George, 8 May 2020
- 5.10** Impact summary for the Ruskin-in-Sheffield project, Guild of St George  
(<https://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/media/1923/rins-impact-summary.pdf>)
- 5.11** Museums Sheffield blog, 'What You Do; Where You're From; Who You Know', 22 February 2016 (<https://www.museums-sheffield.org.uk/blog/2016/2/what-you-do;-where-you%E2%80%99re-from;-who-you-know1>)
- 5.12** Questionnaire feedback and follow-up emails, October–December 2019
- 5.13** Letter of corroboration from artist educator, 3 April 2020