



**The Third Biennial  
Postgraduate Contemporary Women's Writing Network  
(PG CWWN) Conference**



*Time & Space in  
Contemporary Women's  
Writing*

**Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> – Friday 9<sup>th</sup> September 2011  
University of Hull**

# *Time & Space in Contemporary Women's Writing*

## PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

### Thursday, 8<sup>th</sup> September

11:00 – 11:30	Registration
11:30 – 11:45	Conference Welcome
11:45 – 12:45	<b>Keynote 1: Prof. Ann Heilmann</b>
12:45 – 13:30	Light lunch & Refreshments
13:30 – 14:45	<b>Panel Session 1</b>
14:45 – 15:00	Refreshments
15:00 – 16:15	<b>Panel Session 2</b>
16:15 – 16:30	Refreshments
16:30 – 17:45	<b>Panel Session 3</b>
17:45 – 18:30	Wine Reception
18:30 –	Conference Dinner

### Friday, 9<sup>th</sup> September

09:00 – 09:30	Registration
09:30 – 10:30	<b>Keynote 2: Gwyneth Lewis</b>
10:30 – 10.45	Refreshments
10.45 – 12.00	<b>Panel Session 4</b>
12:00 – 13:00	Lunch
13:00 – 14:15	<b>Panel Session 5</b>
14:15 – 14:30	Refreshments
14.30 – 15.30	<b>Career Development Workshop with Professor Mark Llewellyn</b>
15:30 – 16.00	Q&A, Discussion & Conference Close

## KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

### Professor Ann Heilmann

Ann has been a Professor of English at Hull since 2005, where she directs the Centre for Victorian Studies. She specialises in Victorian to 21st-century literary gender studies and women's writing, in particular the fin-de-siècle and early 20th-century New Woman, the turn-of-the-century Anglo-Irish writer George Moore, and contemporary neo-Victorianism. Ann has authored and edited eleven books and written over thirty journal articles and book chapters on a range of topics and writers. Her publications include *New Woman Fiction: Women Writing First-Wave Feminism* (2000), *New Woman Strategies: Sarah Grand, Olive Schreiner, Mona Caird* (2004) and *Neo-Victorianism: The Victorians in the Twenty-First Century, 1999-2009* (2010, with Mark Llewellyn). She has also co-edited a scholarly edition of Moore's collected stories (2007, with Mark Llewellyn), four anthology sets and three essay collections, the most recent being *Metafiction and Metahistory in Contemporary Women's Writing* (2007, with Mark Llewellyn). She is the general editor of Routledge's *History of Feminism* and Pickering and Chatto's *Gender and Genre* series. Ann's most recent monograph, *Neo-Victorianism in the Twenty-First Century* (2010, with Mark Llewellyn) was published by Palgrave Macmillan and has received widespread critical praise.



### Gwyneth Lewis



Gwyneth Lewis was Wales's National Poet from 2005-06, the first writer to be given the Welsh laureateship. She has published eight books of poetry in Welsh and English. *Chaotic Angels* (Bloodaxe Books, 2005) brings together the poems from her three English collections, *Parables & Faxes* (winner of the Aldeburgh Poetry Festival Prize and shortlisted for the Forward Prize for Poetry), *Zero Gravity* (shortlisted for the Forward Prize for Poetry) and *Keeping Mum*. Her latest book is *Sparrow Tree*.

Gwyneth wrote the six-foot-high words for the front of Cardiff's Wales Millennium Centre (which are located just in front of the space-time continuum, as seen on *Doctor Who* and *Torchwood*.) Gwyneth's first non-fiction book *Sunbathing in the Rain: A Cheerful Book on Depression* (Harper Perennial 2002), was short listed for the Mind Book of the Year. Her adaptation of the play for BBC Radio 4 won a Mental Health in the Media award.

Gwyneth has studied at Harvard University and Columbia University, as well as working as a television documentary producer and director at BBC Wales. Gwyneth has been a Fellow at Harvard University and Stanford University; she is currently a Visiting Fellow at Girton College, Cambridge. In 2010, she was given a Society of Authors Cholmondeley Award recognizing a body of work and achievement of distinction. Gwyneth is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and an Honorary Fellow of Cardiff and Liverpool universities.

# PANEL PROGRAMME

Thursday, 8<sup>th</sup> September

13:30 – 14:45 PANEL SESSION 1

**1A: Mapping Textual Spaces (Conf Room 1)**

Rebecca Pohl, University of Manchester: 'Sexing the Labyrinth: Space and Sexuality in Sarah Waters' *Affinity*'

Nissa Parmar, Oxford Brookes University: 'The Spider and the Web in Adrienne Rich's Poetry'

James Bailey, University of Sheffield: 'Life and Death in the Tense Present: Time and Deduction in Muriel Spark's *The Driver's Seat*'

**1B: Theorising Time & Space (Tranby)**

Solomon Omatsola Azumurana, University of Lagos: 'Male-Oriented Psychoanalytic Theories and the Nigerian Feminist Aesthetics: Creating Transgressive Space in Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Children of the Eagle* and Kaine Agary's *Yellow-Yellow*'

Lucy Barnett, University of York: 'Historiographic Metafiction and Regeneration: Rewriting the Scripts of Space, the Feminine, and the Other'

Emilia Borowska, Royal Holloway: 'Beneath the Paving Stones: Kathy Acker and the Situationists'

15:00 – 16:15 PANEL SESSION 2

**2A: The Subject in Time & History (Conf Room 1)**

Allison Neal, University of Hull: 'Venus Rising in the Afterlife: Saartjie Baartman as Historical Commodity'

Rebecca Crowley, Leeds Metropolitan University: '*Faces in the Water* (1961): Bonds between Women as a Reappropriation of Intertexts?'

Ursula Hurley, University of Salford: 'Finding the *Heartwood*: Readings from an Experimental Novel'

**2B: Gendering Ecological Space (Tranby)**

Rachel Sykes, University of Nottingham: '"To surrender the idea of wilderness": The Transient Landscape of Marilynne Robinson's *Housekeeping*'

Sarah Shaw, Northumbria University: 'Space, Time and Metaphor in "Deep Blue"'

Emma Smith, University of Derby: 'Awakening Psychological Spaces by Negotiating Desert Places: An Exploration of the Psychogeographical Representations of Environmental Space in Robyn Davidson's *Tracks*'

**2C: Traumatic Times & Violent Spaces (Meux)**

Nirmala Iswari, National University of Singapore: '*Broken Verses*: The Gendered National Space'

Cristina Gamberi, University of Bologna (Italy): 'A Voyage into the Unguessable Country of Marriage: Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber*'

Veronika Schuchter, University of Innsbruck: '"You cannot imagine how much I long to have a house, a room or two, a cave of my own?": Rooms in the Contemporary Works of Jean Rhys'

16:30 – 17:45 **PANEL SESSION 3**

**3A: Domestic Landscapes (Conf Room 1)**

Lindsay Reeve, Simon Fraser University (Canada): 'Strange Fruit and Estranged Bodies: The Politics of Time & Space in *Salt Fish Girl*'

Emma Young, University of Leicester: 'Time & Space in the Works of Emma Donoghue'

Lucinda Newns, London Metropolitan University: 'The Private and the Postcolonial: A New Reading of Emecheta's *Second-Class Citizen*'

**3B: Bodily Spaces (Tranby)**

Fariha Chaudhary, University of Huddersfield: 'Hiding and Seeking Identity: "Female Body" and "Space" in Bapsi Sidhwa's "The Pakistani Bride"'

Emily Blewitt, Cardiff University: "'A look within": The Ultrasound Scan in Contemporary Women's Poetry'

Mair Rees, Cardiff University: 'The Womb & the Word: The Female Body as Cultural Space in Welsh-Language Fiction by Women'

**Friday, 9<sup>th</sup> September**

10.45 – 12.00 **PANEL SESSION 4**

**4A: Poetic and Dramatic Times & Spaces (Conf Room 1)**

Sebastian Owen, University of York: 'Jorie Graham's *Overlord*'

Alex Pryce, University of Oxford: "'Where Is She?": Binaries, Anthologies and Northern Irish Poetry'

Vanessa Dodd, University of Wales, Newport: 'Time and the Dramatic Narrative'

**4B: Spaces of War & Violence (Tranby)**

Gohar Karim Khan, University of Warwick: 'The Hideous Beauty of Bird-Shaped Burns: Transnational Allegory and feminist Rhetoric in Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows*'

Angela Thurstance, University of Leicester: 'Spanish Flu: The Forgotten Tragedy'

Alexa Athelstan, Leeds University: 'Clandestine Desires: Queer Time & Space in Sarah Waters' *The Night Watch* (2006)'

**4C: Global Spaces (Meux)**

Jahnvi Misra, Durham University: 'Cosmopolitanisms and Internationalisms in Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows*'

Libe Garcia Zarranz, University of Alberta: "'Whose City Is It?": Mapping the Intersections of Gender and Race in Dionne Brand's *What We All Long For*'

Christine Vogt-William, University of Frankfurt: 'Twins and Space in Black British and American Women's Fiction'

13:00 – 14:15 **PANEL SESSION 5**

**5A: Regional & Urban Imaginaries (Conf Room 1)**

Emily Dickinson, Loughborough University: "'Trash always rises": Regionalism and Violence in Dorothy Allison's *Bastard out of Carolina*'

Arina Cirstea, University of Warwick: 'Mapping Space and Time in Michèle Roberts' London Novels'

Sumana Ray, University of Warwick: "'Imagining the Midlands": Literary Expressions of

Regional Women'

**5B: Historicizing Time & Space (Tranby)**

Sarah Walton, University of Hull: 'Calculating the Distance Between Us and the Women of Ancient Rome'

Claire O'Callaghan, University of Leicester: 'War Time as Queer Time in Sarah Waters's *The Night Watch*'

Leanne Bibby, Leeds Metropolitan University: 'Narrating Pasts, Creating Futures? Historical Narrative and Female Subjectivity in A.S. Byatt's *The Children's Book*'

Barbara Henderson, Newcastle University: 'Children's Time Travel Fiction'

# ABSTRACTS & BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

## 1A: Mapping Textual Spaces

### **Rebecca Pohl, University of Manchester: 'Sexing the Labyrinth: Space and Sexuality in Sarah Waters' *Affinity*'**

I argue that in Sarah Waters' novel *Affinity*, space and sexuality are (re)produced through social relations and practices, each produces the other, each depends on the other – they are relational networks where sexuality is a particular way of inhabiting space. A particular instantiation of this relation between space and sexuality is the labyrinth, a polysemic space characterised by complexity, contradiction and ambiguity, notions which also characterise the representation of sexuality in the novel. I propose to use a critical reading of materiality as a lens through which to investigate this relation as manifested in the labyrinth.

Where materialization is understood as the "sedimenting effect of a regulated iterability" (Butler 1993), the labyrinthine Millbank, one of the key settings of the novel, becomes an intriguing spatial principle. It is predicated on the repetition of a path tortuous both in its windings and in its effects of desire for Margaret Prior, one of the protagonists of the novel. Margaret repeatedly makes her way along this path to Selina Dawes' cell. In this process of repetition, I argue, the prison is materialised, and along with it the social relations it constitutes and is constituted by. Simultaneously, Margaret's repetitions produce the sexual relation of desire between herself and Selina. Millbank is also a space renowned for its rocky solidity, and this solidity is troubled by the presence of the spirit medium Selina, whose spirit materialisations seem to haunt her cell. The prison thus appears to be both a process of sedimenting repetition and to be "haunted by contingency" (Butler 1993) since the practice of spirit mediation is closely linked with dissident sexuality throughout the text.

The aim, then, is to look at the labyrinth as a specific and idiosyncratic manifestation of space that offers new possibilities for the perception and organisation of sexuality as it is negotiated in *Affinity*. I suggest that it is crucially the spatial politics that are troubled here, along with the sexual politics, precisely because the two are conceptually intertwined.

Rebecca Pohl studied English and History in Potsdam, Berlin and London. After working as a junior lecturer in English Literature at the University of Stuttgart, she began her PhD research at the University of Manchester in 2008. She is investigating the relationship between space and sexuality in select contemporary British novels. Rebecca has published on Victorian Visual Culture as well as written reviews for *Critical Engagements*.

### **Nissa Parmar, Oxford Brookes University: 'The Spider and the Web in Adrienne Rich's Poetry'**

This paper examines recurring motifs of the spider and the web in the poetry of Adrienne Rich. These images/symbols have also drawn notice from other scholars and critics. Some have suggested the web and related symbols like weaving and knitting recall Arachne and Penelope myths. I believe they "re-vision" these Western myths as well as link to the New World, Native American myth of the Spider Woman. In addition to a recurring motif, the web is also an original formal strategy in some of Rich's poems which serves as a synecdoche for the body of her work. Through analysis of the images and metaphors of the spider and weaving, I suggest Rich has created an oeuvre that, while highly self-referential, has, with each phase of her career, expanded outward incorporating and linking broader subjects and concerns, evolving toward her present state as a writer of the personal and local as well as of the world.

Poems which employ the web as a formal strategy simultaneously gesture forward to "poets [and readers] to come" and the possibilities of poetry and backwards to Rich's own personal experiences with the genre as well as its broader historic context. They create a web of the past, present, and future; the personal and the public; and disrupt the Western narrative tradition of both linear time and logic in order to create a poetry that crosses cultures and boundaries.

Nissa Parmar is a PhD student at Oxford Brookes working on a thesis titled, "In the American Strain" which traces a distinctly American line of poetry originating from Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson, through William Carlos Williams and Adrienne Rich to the contemporary poets Sherman Alexie and Marilyn Chin.

**James Bailey, University of Sheffield: 'Life and Death in the Tense Present: Time and Deduction in Muriel Spark's *The Driver's Seat*'**

Muriel Spark's *The Driver's Seat* (1970) relates the final hours in the life of Lise, a woman who travels abroad to a busy metropolitan city to seek the man who will murder her. The novel, which is strewn throughout with proleptic descriptions of the protagonist's future death, appears to present its tragic conclusion as an inevitable fact, the occurrence of which seems little more than a *matter of time*.

While studies of *The Driver's Seat* have paid close attention to its morbid temporal design in relation to the figure of the deathly (and deadly) woman, most have neglected to consider the complex interaction between time and space in the novel, which arguably forms the source of its unsettling effect. This paper aims to provide a closer examination of the spatio-temporal dynamics of Lise's journey; of the airports and streets she passes through, and the department stores in which she speaks to strangers and purchases a series of mysterious gifts. By considering Lise's artful interactions with the spaces she inhabits, her journey can be seen less as a reckless drive to death, and instead as a bold assertion of female agency within a male-dominated, 'Master' narrative. Drawing upon Walter Benjamin's study of the *flâneur* in the poetry of Charles Baudelaire, as well as Spark's own playful engagement with the genres of detective fiction and travel writing, I argue that the journey taken by Lise represents an attempt to mark the present with the trace of female design. The spaces that Lise chooses to inhabit *en-route* to her death thus form a series of markers in time, allowing the heroine to weave her own fatalistic plot in a world in which her voice has been silenced.

James Bailey is postgraduate student in English Literature at the University of Sheffield. His thesis examines notions of time and free will in the fiction of Muriel Spark, and consults the author's unpublished letters and manuscripts. James is also assisting with an edited collection of essays entitled *Representing Perpetrators in Holocaust Literature and Film*. His essay, a study of Spark's experience attending the trial of Adolf Eichmann, and its subsequent representation in her fiction, will be included in the collection.

## **1B: Theorising Time & Space**

**Solomon Omatsola Azumurana, University of Lagos: 'Male-Oriented Psychoanalytic Theories and the Nigerian Feminist Aesthetics: Creating Transgressive Space in Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Children of the Eagle* and Kaine Agary's *Yellow-Yellow*'**

In this paper, despite the reservation that has been expressed by feminist critics against the application of Freud's penis envy and Lacan's concepts of unconscious female desire to female texts and characters, I argue for their relevance using two Nigerian contemporary novels written by women. I then go on to establish a confluence between Sigmund Freud's penis envy and Jacques Lacan's the Desire to be the other by deploying them to provide a psychological explanation for the motivations of the action or inaction of the major female characters in the two selected works. However, my use of penis envy in this paper is not in the sense of a woman's desire for erotic pleasure from her male counterpart as in the sense in which Sarah White speaks of a woman that "wants her husband's body to be completely covered with erect penises" (20), but in the sense of appropriating that which is lacking in her as a result of the limited space into which she has been encoded. Therefore my argument is that Ezeigbo's and Agary's major female characters are propelled in their actions or inactions by their gendered exclusion within their socio-cultural spatiality. For instance, even though Sisi in Agary's *Yellow-Yellow* knows little or nothing about the eponymous heroine, she accommodates her because she wants to create for herself phallographic space and responsibility as a way of interrogating the stipulaceous position that attends her being in her environment. Nevertheless, Freud's penis envy and Lacan's theory of the other has been appropriated and reappropriated in this paper: they are not restricted only to the female appropriation of male roles and authority. Rather, this essay sees the "other" as any absence or vacuum in the life of a female character: that which she does not possess and

which she unconsciously craves for. But by craving for this lack and doing something to acquire it, I argue that these female characters are creating transgressive spaces of authority for themselves.

Solomon Omatsola Azumurana is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of English, University of Lagos. His research interest is in the comparative study of African and African Diaspora literature. He graduated from the University of Lagos in 2002 with B.A in English (2<sup>nd</sup> Class Upper Division). He also holds a M.A. degree in English (with a C.G.P.A of 4.14) from the same university in 2005. The Ph.D. thesis he is presently working on is entitled "Socio-psychological Complexities of Existence in Selected African and African American Novels".

### **Lucy Barnett, University of York: 'Historiographic Metafictions and Regeneration: Rewriting the Scripts of Space, the Feminine, and the Other'**

History is not static, but rather, it is a transitory space. Jeannette Winterson's *The PowerBook* and Bharati Mukherjee's *The Holder of the World* re-write narrative space and time through technology, in order to transcend colonial and gendered concepts of possession of the female mind. The post-structuralist critics Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari write that 'what is lacking is a Nomadology, the opposite of a history'. Whilst these two texts are the creations of women who are rewriting the creations of men, the female protagonists of *The PowerBook* and *The Holder of the World* are data inputters. Sonya Andermahr writes that 'it is very often women who occupy the role of low-paid data inputters in what Donna Haraway has called 'the informatics of domination', and whilst it appears that Mukherjee and Winterson are regenerating a form of feminism and taking control of technology, they are in fact dominated by its existence. The space continuum of postmodernism refutes time, or interchangeably, history, in favour of an exhaustive database of every possibility to ever exist: characters, genres and endings. This paper will discuss to what effect Winterson and Mukherjee use the phenomena of historiographic metafiction (re-writing history from a metafictional perspective) and parallel fiction (re-writing a text published by another author). Whilst asking whether completely regenerating stories is even possible, this paper will take a specifically technological approach to the question. The aim of this paper is to highlight that feminist re-writings of stories through the use of technology can be greatly successful as a tool for transcending globally gendered boundaries of time and space.

Lucy Barnett is studying for an MA at York University in Cultures of Empire, Resistance and Postcoloniality. This paper on historiographic metafiction is a development of her undergraduate dissertation from Aberystwyth University. Her current research interests include Burmese postcolonial women's writing and literary censorship, issues of toleration, and women's science fiction writing.

### **Emilia Borowska, Royal Holloway: 'Beneath the Paving Stones: Kathy Acker and the Situationists'**

"Beneath the paving stones – the beach!" is one of the famous slogans that erupted on the walls of Paris during the May revolts in 1968. During the uprisings, the rebels removed the stones from the streets and threw them at the symbols of authority in protest or self-defence. This graffiti draws on the writings of the Situationist International, a group of radical leftist thinkers and artists active between 1957 and 1972 who played a significant part in the events. My paper seeks to explore the importance of the Situationists' revolutionary conception of space and time to the political project of an American novelist, Kathy Acker (1947-1997). Where scholars have tended to celebrate Acker as a dazzling postmodernist, by investigating a part of the underexamined relationship between Acker and the Situationists I intend to argue for Acker as a revolutionary writer who was interested in appropriating useful strategies and options in order to advance a radical socio-political transformation. Through analysing selected scenes from her novels, the aim is to demonstrate how Acker's literary reworking of such experimental concepts as "the construction of situations," "détournement," "permanent play," "literary community," "dérive," Asger Jorn's topological geometry and Raoul Vaneigem's radical subjectivity produces explicitly political dimensions in her fiction. Acker's politics of the event, virtually synonymous with the broad concept of revolution as theorised by the Situationists, has a lot in common with the affirmative idea of a fold-event in Gilles Deleuze and Michel Serres's writings on topology. Their notion of folding space and time becomes a valuable tool for discovering

topological proximities between past and present, inside and outside, the cobbled street and the beach. The folding of space and time that Acker performs in her fiction, following the Situationists, enables the constitution of new liberatory potentials opening new strategies towards the dismantling of oppressive regimes.

Emilia Borowska is a PhD student at the English Department at Royal Holloway, University of London. Her thesis focuses on the engagement of postmodern American literature with Western revolutionary tradition and investigates how fiction and contemporary theories of the event rethink the failure of radical politics. Her articles on William T. Vollmann's strategies of resistance and Kathy Acker and Marilyn Manson's transgressive subcultural aesthetics are forthcoming.

## **2A: The Subject in Time & History**

### **Allison Neal, University of Hull: 'Venus Rising in the Afterlife: Saartjie Baartman as Historical Commodity'**

Saartjie Baartman, otherwise known as The Hottentot Venus, was born in South Africa in 1789. Throughout her short life she was both a curiosity and a commodity who was exhibited in England and France, even after her death in 1815. This paper will examine how Saartjie was effectively constructed as a racial stereotype and performed as a 'freak show' for the jeering audiences of the performance spaces in London and Paris. During this time Saartjie was commodified by various raconteurs who sought to exploit her steatopygia (enlarged buttocks) and other physical features for the amusement of the viewers and the financial gain for themselves. Even after her death Saartjie was still considered as a medical curiosity to be exchanged amongst men and was dissected and displayed for the scientific and anthropological communities. Finally, in 2002 her remains were re-patriated to South Africa where she was eventually buried. However, there is a third layer to the story of Saartjie Baartman's life that shall be addressed. This is the fact that after more than 200 years later she is again utilised as an historical artefact in twenty-first century re-imaginings of her and life in Barbara Chase-Riboud's biofictional text *Hottentot Venus: A Novel* (2003) and Rachel Holmes's historical biography *The Hottentot Venus* (2007). Both Chase-Riboud and Holmes further commodify Saartjie as a 'dis-human...now an icon for all humankind' (Chase-Riboud, 2003:316), yet both attempt to place Saartjie in her own time and her own space.

Allison is just completing her second year of doctoral research into her thesis which is entitled, '(Neo-)Victorian Impersonations: Nineteenth-Century Transvestism in Contemporary Literature and Culture'. Her approach is interdisciplinary in nature and involves drawing on critical literary analysis, historical evidence and contemporary gender theory, in order to examine protagonists and characters in neo-Victorian literature who cross-dress. Her thesis chapters include explorations into the historical personas of James Barry MD, Hannah Cullwick and Vesta Tilley among others, and literary texts such as: *Tipping the Velvet* (Sarah Waters), *Misfortune* (Wesley Stace) and *Mademoiselle de Maupin* (Théophile Gautier).

### **Rebecca Crowley, Leeds Metropolitan University: 'Towards a dislocation of imperial insanity: re-reading Janet Frame's vision of ECT in terms of a feminist reappropriation of 'madness''**

The English imperialist asylum system, a system built on an Enlightenment model of rationality, is now in the process of being knocked down. These changes have prompted scholars from a variety of disciplines to revisit, rewrite and reconfigure anterior understandings of 'madness' in the wake of such temporal and spatial alterations. In this paper I will be considering this issue of reconfiguration in relation to a selection of work by Janet Frame, a woman writer from New Zealand who, until her death in 2004, wrote prolifically about the mysteries of 'madness'. This paper focuses on a particular aspect of Frame's work: the ECT machine as it is portrayed in her second novel *Faces in the Water* (1961). I 'read' this machine as a historical trace; a trace, which when interpreted through Homi Bhabha's notion of 'third space', gestures towards the presence of a kind of postcolonial feminist reappropriation of 'madness'.

Rebecca Crowley is a second-year PhD student at Leeds Metropolitan University. Her thesis, entitled 'Hosting the Ghosts of Madness: Feminists Speaking Through the Veil', connects ambiguous portrayals of 'madness' by contemporary women writers such as Janet Frame, Evelyn Piper, Doris Lessing, Deborah Hautzig, Marya Hornbacher and Susanna Kaysen to both Kristevan terms such as 'abjection', 'melancholia' and 'herethics' and to Bhabhaian terms such as 'third space' and 'mimic men' in order to suggest the ghostly presence of supplementary intertexts operating between and alongside 'feminist' and 'madness' narratives. Rebecca's research interests tend to focus on popular, and populist, imaginings of 'women' and 'madness' in both fiction and film.

### **Ursula Hurley, University of Salford: 'Finding the *Heartwood*: Readings from an Experimental Novel'**

'Ursuls, what do you think you're doing?' He grabbed me by the shoulders as if he meant to shake some sense into me. I pushed his arms away and down until I was holding them against his sides – a move I'd suddenly remembered from a self-defence class during Freshers' Week. I laughed and let go. 'I think I'm going to write a novel.'

This paper tells the story of why I wrote a novel and how it got its name. My presentation will consist of readings from the text and commentary on process. From Old Testament Judea, to Elizabethan England and late twentieth-century Cambridge, my novel, *Heartwood*, traces unseen connections, uncanny coincidences and untold histories as it stages investigations into narrative space and time, and the relationship between the personal and the historical. Blurring the traditional distinctions between critical theory and creative practice, *Heartwood* enacts a praxical enquiry in which the text performs a triple function: as original literature, as document of process, and as critical investigation. It is a composite text that, I will argue, works as historiographic metafiction to dramatise key events in the apparently disparate lives of three women. The relationship between the women becomes visible as the narrative strands interweave spatially and chronologically to create a multi-layered palimpsest, in which, according to Robin Nelson, 'the traces of previous inscriptions remain visible in the new text'.<sup>1</sup> Via this structure, layers of resonance accrue as the themes outlined above are worked through in this fictional space. Via the accretion of significance, echoes build to create a text that resembles a tree-trunk in structure: only in relation to each other can the individual rings of the heartwood form a meaningful pattern. Together, these stories become a meditation on authorship, gender and the heartwood of the human condition.

Ursula Hurley teaches English Literature and Creative Writing at the University of Salford. In addition to publishing poetry with Shearsman and Erbacce Press, memoir with Leaf Books, and chapters on writing craft with Palgrave and Continuum, she is just completing her Ph.D., which investigates the relationship between history and fiction. Always in search of a free lunch, she has given master-classes at the Cheltenham Literature Festival and the launch of the Writers' Handbook. She recently won the Unbound Press First Chapter competition, and most excitingly, her biography of Renaissance playwright Elizabeth Cary was short-listed for the Tony Lothian prize 2010.

## **2B: Gendering Ecological Space**

### **Rachel Sykes, University of Nottingham: "'To surrender the idea of wilderness": The Transient Landscape of Marilynne Robinson's *Housekeeping*'**

This paper considers the depiction of American wilderness in Marilynne Robinson's debut novel, *Housekeeping* (1980). The novel details the life of an orphaned child, as she moves from domestic habitation to an unsettled life, eventually becoming assimilated with the surrounding landscape. The traditional, domestic

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<sup>1</sup> Robin Nelson, "Set Map Slip = Palimpsest (working title) – 'working' because it is provisional and 'working' because it is on the move," *Performance Research* 6, no.2 (2001): 20.

restrictions of small town America are broken down by the encroaching wild which surrounds it, but the open spaces which Ruthie moves into trouble traditional conceptualisations of wilderness.

My paper will consider Robinson's interest in the conceptualisation of wild space; the author refuses to position wilderness as an oppositional 'other' to the domestic, nor as part of the traditionally masculine frontier. Instead, *Housekeeping* interrogates the relationship between the natural and the manmade, discussing traditional conceptions of the home *and* the wilderness and exposing the idea of both as elaborate constructs. The portrayal of Robinson's "vast and melancholy" Idaho is informed by the tradition of transcendentalism, but nuanced by Robinson's environmental writings, in her essay "Wilderness" (2005), and her collection *Mother Country: Britain, the Welfare State, and Nuclear Pollution* (1999). The novel also predates aspects developed in William Cronon's *Uncommon Ground* (1996), who questions the homogenization of wilderness with concepts such as the sublime, challenging the perceived neutrality of nature.

This paper will develop Robinson's novel through the writings of Cronon, whilst also discussing *Housekeeping's* roots in the work of Thoreau to demonstrate how Robinson portrays an unconventional perspective of landscape, whose power lies in its transience.

Rachel is currently in the first year of her PhD at the University of Nottingham, having previously studied at the Universities of York and Oxford. Her PhD thesis examines twenty-first century American fiction, considering the ways in which non-topical novels engage with a history of the present. Alongside Marilynne Robinson, Rachel's research interests include the American novel after September 11, 2001, cultural memory, and "trauma" studies.

#### **Sarah Shaw, Northumbria University: 'Space, Time and Metaphor in "Deep Blue"'**

This 20-minute paper considers time and space in relation to a short fiction, 'Deep Blue'<sup>2</sup>. In the story, a teenager recovering from treatments for leukaemia, accompanied by her parents, takes part in a tourist excursion from Tarifa to view whales and dolphins, sees a boy she fancies and, suffering from sea sickness, vomits. The paper poses questions concerning lines drawn between Europe and Africa, and racialised categories that indicate histories and journeys. As a caution against unproblematic celebration of women's mobility, it refers to an analysis by Sara Ahmed of metaphor as a violent gesture when the literal act of travelling is translated into nomadic subjectivity<sup>3</sup>. The paper concludes by looking at the spatial nature of metaphor in this short story, where the trope adds depth and connects the end with the beginning. In 'Deep Blue', the young woman's journey ends in return and disappointment. The colours of the deep sea, waves and sunlight as the girl plunges into them in her imagination effect a prolepsis that remains implicit and yet becomes unavoidable, so that time—the girl's future—is narrated through space and colour.

Sarah Shaw has had articles, stories and poems published in magazines that include *Wasafiri*, *Mslaxia* and *Cadenza*. In 2009 Tonto Press published her novel *Make It Back* and her short stories won the Badenoch Fiction Award. She is writing another novel, *Seventeen*, as a practice-led research project at Northumbria University, supervised by Professor Michael Green.

#### **Emma Smith, University of Derby: 'Awakening Psychological Spaces by Negotiating Desert Places: An Exploration of the Psychogeographical Representations of Environmental Space in Robyn Davidson's *Tracks*'**

Psychogeography as a method of interpretation has been positioned firmly in the realms of the male domain for decades. This paper will interrogate Robyn Davidson's *Tracks* and begin to bring a balance to the field of this representative concept. A thorough analysis of *Tracks* will emphasise that women's contemporary literature provides a compellingly relevant element of psychogeography. Revising Guy Debord and the Situationist's claim that psychogeography as, 'a study of the precise laws and specific effects of the

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<sup>2</sup> Sarah Shaw (2010), 'Deep Blue' in *The London Magazine*, December 2009/January 2010, London.

<sup>3</sup> Sara Ahmed (2000), *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality*, Routledge, London.

geographical environment consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behavior of individuals<sup>4</sup> can develop spacial and temporal representations in literature. This paper will challenge the limitations Debord's concerns regarding city space introduces. It can be argued that any environmental space will evoke conscious and subconscious responses and ultimately redefine a sense of self for an individual, Davidson crossed Western Australia's deserts and relates her life-changing journey in powerfully engaging prose.

The desert for Davidson awakened aspects of her identity nothing could have prepared her for. Her ability to reflect and present to the reader her evolution of mind and body is an important representation of the connection between time, space and identity. Her response to a particularly difficult part of her journey, both psychologically and physically highlights these concerns, Davidson battles and eventually succumbs to a completely different temporality, 'I was being torn by two different time concepts. I knew which one made sense, but the other one was fighting hard for survival.'<sup>5</sup> The temporal spaces are connected with Davidson's psychological approach to her journey which throughout the text affirm the notions that an individual within a particular environment mirrors that presentation of space and time, whether it be momentary or more deep seated, as a matter of circumstance or for survival.

Emma Smith is presently studying at the University of Derby as a part time student on the MA in Humanities course. She previously graduated from the University of Derby on their BA Hons English course in 2010. Emma has written an article for Professor Neil Campbell's collaborative web site critical-regionalism.com (critical-regionalism.com/category/psychogeography/). She is hoping to conduct PhD research based around the concept of Psychogeography, in order to test the functionality of a psychogeographic discourse which can be applied to any particular landscape/environment.

## 2C: Traumatic Times & Violent Spaces

### **Nirmala Iswari, National University of Singapore: 'Broken Verses: The Gendered National Space'**

Kamila Shamsie's novel, *Broken Verses* (2005), begins in Karachi, in a period immediately following the 9/11. As the novel's narrator, Aasmaani, narrates her attempt to work through the loss of her mother, who commits suicide after her lover's death, she simultaneously recounts her mother's activism in the women's movement in Karachi in the wake of the Hudood Ordinance.

Aasmaani refuses to accept her mother's suicide; in a national space where women's rights are consistently violated, Samina's outspokenness denotes possibility for empowerment. To Aasmaani, her mother's suicide indicates vulnerability to the patriarchal power that structures the national landscape into a gendered space. This vulnerability takes away the sense of empowerment and possibility that, to Aasmaani, come with imagining her mother as impervious to social censure and political consequences.

Shamsie's book suggests that Aasmaani's need to conceive of her mother as a mythical figure stems from a deep sense of disempowerment. Aasmaani is disillusioned about the state of politics in Pakistan, and she initially considers her mother's struggles pointless, given that no significant change came out of it. Later, Aasmaani would hear her mother remark on a recording that the latter fought to remind the nation of 'all the components of its character' (335). The book closes with Aasmaani beginning work as a researcher for a documentary on the women's movements in Pakistan – a work that seems motivated by Samina's remark. The book portrays the passing of an inheritance, motivated by a demand for empowerment. In its portrayal of Aasmaani's narrativization of her mother's life and her eventual coming to terms with her mother's death, *Broken Verses* textualizes the national space as a gendered space.

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<sup>4</sup> Debord, Guy-Ernest, *Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography*, <http://library.nothingness.org/articles/SI/en/display/2> Accessed 3/3/2011, 10:13.

<sup>5</sup> Davidson, Robyn, *Tracks*, p173.

**Cristina Gamberi, University of Bologna (Italy): 'A Voyage into the Unguessable Country of Marriage: Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber*'**

Angela Carter was a pioneering writer for her use of fairy tale as a key point of reference in our understanding of contemporaneity. She intends her readers to realize how much folk stories are still implicated in the real condition of our very existence, questioning gender and sex relations from an ideological and aesthetic perspective, both in public and private sphere. Through analysing the short story *The Bloody Chamber*, the aim of my paper is to highlight how concepts of time and space have played a crucial role in Carter's provocative re-writing of traditional fairy tales, not only for 'demythologising' stereotypical patterns of female acculturation, but also for her parody of romance, gothic and pornographic narrative modes. While revisioning Perrault's *Le Barbe Bleue*, defamiliarized but instantly recognizable, Carter sets the story of a coming-of-age heroine in a *fin de siècle* France, where she is trapped in a fairy mansion which immediately turns into a gothic castle. Enclosure and claustrophobic spaces are crucial features that drive the retrospective first person narrator into the terrifying bloody chamber, which is constantly in contrast with the protagonist mother's apartment, the peaceful place of childhood memories. Highlighting how Carter's feminist and literary approach can often seem complex and controversial, this presentation argues that this short story could be read as a woman's journey toward the symbolic space of male violence and female subordination. But the bloody chamber is also the chronotope for the protagonist consciousness raising where she becomes self-aware of her own sexuality and desire.

Cristina Gamberi took her degree in Humanities at the University of Bologna with a thesis on feminist theory and the issue of the body. In 2004 she attended a one year Master on Gender's Studies. In 2010 at Federico II University (Naples) she defended her PhD thesis in Gender's Studies, investigating the relationship between Angela Carter's fiction, fairy tale and *Bildungsroman*. She is currently enrolled in the Erasmus Mundus Master in Women's Studies GEMMA. She has published several articles on Angela Carter. In addition, she co-edited *Educare al genere. Riflessioni e strumenti per articolare la complessità* (Carocci, Roma, 2010) an interdisciplinary study that investigates education and gender identity. Her research interests include British women's writers, Gender studies and Feminist theory, Cultural Studies and post-colonial theories, masculinity and man's studies.

**Veronika Schuchter, University of Innsbruck: "'You cannot imagine how much I long to have a house, a room or two, a cave of my own?": Rooms in the Contemporary Works of Jean Rhys'**

This paper will take a very literal approach to the conference's theme of "Time and Space in Contemporary Women's Writing" and aims to investigate the descriptions and importance of actual rooms in the contemporary pieces of writing by Jean Rhys. With detailed reference to the author's works, I would like to show that the female protagonists' descriptions and perceptions of rooms in many instances reflect their attitudes, beliefs, and state of mind and can fulfil several functions. Firstly, Rhys' female characters are very much influenced by capitalism and think that beautiful clothes and rooms will make them better people in the eyes of society and will ultimately result in a transformation of their former self. Having to stay in a poorly furnished room adds to their despair and is only a constant reminder as well as confirmation of them being a no one in a world where everyone else seems to be a someone. Secondly, rooms can function as both prison and safe haven for the characters. One can observe that rooms are perceived as hostile environments, reminding the characters of their own (material) inadequacies and former lovers. However, a very similar room may have a completely different effect at a later stage of the story, giving the protagonist a feeling of safety and self-confidence. Thirdly, a change in the characters' perception of themselves often goes hand in hand with a change in location that can be an opportunity to start anew or signal a new low-point in life. The paper examines these contrary functions of rooms in the works of Jean Rhys, the overall importance of rooms for the different narratives and how the description of rooms can be applied for a more thorough analysis of the female protagonists.

Veronika studied at the University of Innsbruck, Austria and is currently a graduate student, in the process of finishing two master programmes within the next year. She spent a study year abroad at University College

London. Her Masters thesis looks at the description of rooms in the works of Jean Rhys and her research interests include postcolonial studies, modernist literature and women writers.

### 3A: Domestic Landscapes

#### **Lindsay Reeve, Simon Fraser University (Canada): 'Strange Fruit and Estranged Bodies: The Politics of Time & Space in *Salt Fish Girl*'**

Asian-American critic Lisa Lowe has argued for the novel as cultural institution that "genders the domains of 'public' and 'private' activities, prescribes the spatialization of race relations, and most of all, determines possible contours and terrains for the narration of 'history'" (1996, 98). Larissa Lai's *Salt Fish Girl*, a dystopian novel with timelines alternating between a future Canadian West Coast and nineteenth century South China, constructs a series of liminal spaces and overlapping temporalities in order to critique the movements and histories of contemporary capitalism. *Salt Fish Girl* intertwines stories of the ancient, shape-shifting Nu Wa and mid-twenty-first century Miranda Ching, forming a hybrid and structurally disjunctive narrative. I read Lai's novel as itself a heterotopia that engenders a history – including a recent history – that both global capitalist and Canadian national narratives occlude; it materializes the logic of privatization and corporatism and its palpable effects on gendered and racialized bodies. This literary space contains its own heterotopias and Unregulated Zones, its contaminations by strange fruits, seeping odours, and genetically modified bodies. In her essay "Political Animals and the Body of History," Lai asks "how do we diasporized types make a homespace for ourselves given all the disjunctures and discontinuities of our histories, and for that matter, the co-temporalities of some of them?" (1999, 149). The literary concern with time and space is, for Lai, political; she theorizes geographical space in terms of a social history, and specifically one that includes non-dominant and sometimes incoherent diasporic trajectories. Lai's approach is not to present a seamless narrative that would legitimate a pre-existing 'homespace' in Canada or in an ancestral homeland, but rather to construct a heterotopic literary space that re-examines the temporal, historical, and economic determinants of geographical place and its material effects on the site of the body.

#### **Emma Young, University of Leicester: 'Time & Space in the Works of Emma Donoghue'**

The proposed paper will explore the concepts of time and space in relation to the work of Emma Donoghue. As a contemporary Irish and Lesbian writer Donoghue is under researched and this is something I hope to challenge. This paper will develop out of my MA dissertation that is due for completion in September which will focus upon Emma Donoghue's work. It is also the beginnings of my PhD that will explore contemporary women's writing and the short story in which Emma Donoghue is one of the author studies. In this paper I will examine how through the interconnecting mediums of time and space the prominence of the theme of the house and home comes in to existence in her work. I will question how the idea of having, belonging, knowing and owning a home relates to female identity within Donoghue's work. A sense of female displacement is a key characteristic within Donoghue's work whether this is because of a sexual identity, family relations, and marital status amongst other issues. The primary focus of the paper will analyse Donoghue's historical fiction *Slammerkin* (2008) where time and space intersect and place emphasis on the continual displacement of the protagonist. Based on a true story *Slammerkin*'s protagonist Mary Saunders is turned out of her family home and the narrative follows her journey that can ultimately be defined as a quest to find a home. The spaces of London and Monmouth take on central significance within this journey as Donoghue juxtaposes the urban and the rural throughout this quest. Furthermore, the significance of time arises through the employment of historical fiction to recite the tale of Mary Saunders as well as within the narrative itself. Set in the backdrop of the Calendar Riots and with "The Dial" being a central location time is emphasised from the very beginning of the text.

Whilst this will be the main focus of the paper the importance of the theme in all of Donoghue's work will be acknowledged. The issue of the home and what it means to female identity is apparent in all of her work in some way. In *Room* (2010) the female is literally kidnapped from her home and placed in a new one that destroys any sense of a previous identity. *The Sealed Letter* (2008), another historical fiction, questions the rights a woman has to her home when divorce arises in Victorian England. In *Stir-Fry* (1994) and *Hood* (1995) the lesbian identity of the protagonists in Ireland provokes questions of belonging and the

ability to express sexual identity within the home. Whilst there will not be time within the paper to explore all of these connections it will be within this context that the paper will discuss time and space in Donoghue's work.

Emma is completing an MA in Modern Literature at Leicester University. Her dissertation explores the work of Emma Donoghue in relation to the theme of home as a patriarchal, heteronormative and national space. Her research focuses on contemporary women's writing, gender and sexuality and the concept, use and representation of space within literature. She begins a PhD at Leicester this year, considering the connections between gender and genre in contemporary women's writing and the short story.

### **Lucinda Newns, London Metropolitan University: 'The Private and the Postcolonial: A New Reading of Emecheta's *Second-Class Citizen*'**

One of the most hotly debated topics within feminist theory is the Western paradigm of the division between public and private spheres. While influential feminists like Simone de Beauvoir have called for women's emancipation from the private realm through paid labour outside the home, others insist that this easy division of space into public and private is a fictional construct that must be interrogated. This paper seeks to build on these debates by re-centring the work that goes on in 'the private' by looking at the way domesticity is represented in literature of migration, particularly Buchi Emecheta's novel *Second-Class Citizen*. In this work, migration to England has created a situation where the female protagonist, Adah, is the one working outside the home while her husband hardly leaves their one-room domestic space. Adah's resolve to keep her children rather than fostering them out combined with her husband's inability to cope with the racism he encounters in England create friction in the family that eventually turns their home into a nightmarish space for Adah.

Although feminist critics have embraced Emecheta's novels as works of feminist protest against the patriarchal aspects of West African culture, this reading often obscures the way her work participates in decolonizing discourses. What sets her apart from other postcolonial writers, however, is that Emecheta grounds this work in the realm of 'the private'. Through an analysis of *Second-Class Citizen*, I discuss how Emecheta engages with both the British post-war politics surrounding home and mothering and the feminist politics of the public/private divide in order to contest power relations of race as well as gender. To borrow Bill Ashcroft's term, the space of the private needs 'postcolonial transformation' as much as the public arenas of land, government and cultural institutions, and it is this project that Emecheta's work speaks to most directly.

After completing a BA in English Literature at New York University and an MA in Comparative Literature at the School of Oriental and African Studies, she was awarded a Vice-Chancellor's Scholarship to undertake a PhD at London Metropolitan University and is now in her second year. Through an engagement with theoretical frameworks within diaspora studies and feminist geography, her thesis looks at representations of domesticity and home-making in postcolonial novels of migration and is supervised by Dr. Irene Gedalof. She has helped organize the first postgraduate research conference at London Met and is also the founding editor of the university's postgraduate research journal, *Metronome*.

### **3B: Bodily Spaces**

#### **Fariha Chaudhary, University of Huddersfield: 'Hiding and Seeking Identity: "Female Body" and "Space" in Bapsi Sidhwa's "The Pakistani Bride"'**

My paper is based on Pakistani Writer Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *The Pakistani Bride* (1990). The novel captures a deep interplay of the female body within the patriarchal world. I explore this interplay of the 'female body', 'sexuality', and 'space' as I examine how the female body becomes the 'space' upon which her identity is negotiated. We also learn the vulnerability of the 'female body' as the protagonists (female figures) within the novel stand not only as sites of oppression and resistance but also as 'disputed territories' upon which the battle of honour and shame is staged. I therefore attempt to focus on the struggle of the female figure in

an attempt to uncover and seek the muffled traces of their identity. My work also examines how Sidhwa creates a 'literary space' or the textual space to negotiate the identity for her female characters. In addition to this I further examines how Bapsi Sidhwa places her protagonists within their geographical locations 'the mountains', the 'plains' the 'veiled spaces' (harems) and how their position within these spaces/places interplays with their identity.

Fariha Chaudhary is a PhD Student at the University of Huddersfield, where she is studying on scholarship from Bahauddin Zakariya University Pakistan. Her research is focused on Pakistani women novelists, particularly identity construction of the female figures in their works. Her research explores the lives and issues of women living in patriarchy and how fiction writers, especially women, negotiate female identities. She has taught as a part-time lecturer in Pakistan.

### **Emily Blewitt, Cardiff University: "A look within": The Ultrasound Scan in Contemporary Women's Poetry'**

This paper explores 'the ultrasound poem' as written by Kathleen Jamie, Kate Clanchy, Sinead Morrissey and Helen Dunmore: a subgenre (or 'body') of poems which place the pregnant poet at the centre of a landscape which is natural, metaphorical, and, inevitably, highly personal. It considers how the interior female space and the female lyric 'I' are constructed, and whether they incorporate what Jamie, in her travelogue *Findings* (2005), calls the 'new function': '...these objects in their jars show us the forms concealed inside, the intimate unknown and perhaps that is their new function...' 'In the midst of this city, you think you are removed from nature', they say – 'but look within'.<sup>6</sup>

Jamie's account of the selection of bottled foetuses she finds in 'Surgeon's Hall', invites the reader to 'look within' the female reproductive space. While examining an array of specimens kept for posterity by male surgeons – from the flayed corpse of a child to several preserved foetuses, displayed in jars – Jamie risks an inward look. Her shift from the consideration of the contents of a room situated in an urban landscape, 'the midst of this city', to her contemplation of the microcosmic 'natural world' to be found within the female human body is a neat summation of what Rosalind Pollack Petchesky called for in 1987: '...recontextualize the foetus: ...place it back into the uterus, and the uterus back into the woman's body and her body back into its social space.'<sup>7</sup>

This paper examines poetic engagements with ultrasound scanning, a technological practice often deemed to be responsible for the 'foetus as spaceman' narrative – and a means of medicalising childbirth which undermines exclusively female knowledge of pregnancy, such as 'quickenings'. The texts examined include Dunmore's 'Scan at 8 Weeks' (from *Recovering a Body*, 1994), Jamie's sequence, 'Ultrasound' (from *Jizzen*, 1999), Clanchy's 'Scan' (from *Newborn*, 2004), and Morrissey's 'Found Architecture' (from *Through the Square Window*, 2009).

Emily Blewitt read English Language and Literature at St Hilda's College, Oxford, and has an MA in Film and Literature from the University of York. She has published poetry in *Brittle Star*, *Nu2: Memorable Firsts*, and *Cadaverine*, among others, and appeared on BBC Radio 4 to speak about Anne Ridler, as part of their 'Lost Voices' series. Currently she works for the University of Wales, and is studying for a PhD at Cardiff University. Her research interest is the literary representations of pregnancy by women writers, from the 19th century to the present day.

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<sup>6</sup> Kathleen Jamie, *Findings* (London: Sort Of Books, 2005), p. 141.

<sup>7</sup> Rosalind Pollack Petchesky, 'Foetal Images: the Power of Visual Culture in the Politics of Reproduction' Chapter 3 in *Reproductive Technologies: Gender, Motherhood and Medicine* ed. Michelle Stanworth (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987, 1988), pp. 57-80, p. 78.

**Mair Rees, Cardiff University: 'The Womb & the Word: The Female Body as Cultural Space in Welsh-Language Fiction by Women'**

Mair originates from Swansea, where she was raised in a bilingual home: her father and grandparents spoke Welsh and her mother spoke English. She graduated in Psychology in 1981 from Reading University and worked as an Art Therapist for some 15 years before taking a career break to have her family. During her career she wrote a number of articles and edited and contributed to a book: *Drawing on Difference: Art Therapy with People who have Learning Difficulties*, in 1997. In the same year she was awarded an MSc in Counselling from the University of Bristol. In 2007, she graduated from Cardiff University with a first class honours degree in Welsh and subsequently won a scholarship from the department for PhD study. Her thesis is concerned with the portrayal of women-only experiences, namely pregnancy and menstruation, and the symbolic use of female bodies in women's Welsh-language fiction 1948-2008.

**4A: Poetic and Dramatic Times & Spaces**

**Sebastian Owen, University of York: 'Jorie Graham's *Overlord*'**

The Pulitzer Prize winning poet Jorie Graham's 2005 collection *Overlord* emerges from the landscapes of Normandy where 'now-dead boys, desperate, in these same marshes' hid. Taking the 1944 Normandy Invasion as her point of departure, Graham's poetic project in *Overlord* is one of her most complex and introspective to date. This paper will negotiate the displacement of the poet from the events of the Second World War, temporally, physically and morally, positing time and place as comingled threads in the poetic fabric.

The word 'now' recurs again and again, restating its emphatic positioning of the speaking subject whilst complicating the poem's relation to that incisive moment which it signifies – '*now now now / now I sang, not much knowing where we were.*' 'Now... is the thing at hand' we learn, but it is slippery and violent – 'Don't blink. Don't miss it. Pay attention. It's a bullet.'

A second heavily freighted word is 'here.' "Here I am, here I am" the poetic voice states, a "voice telling its story." In the next poem the voice wavers – "I do not know who I am, but I am here, I tell you this."

The 'here' and the 'now' are the constituent elements of Graham's self-reflexive explorations. It is within the creative space enabled by these metaphysical concepts that the poetic object emerges, characterized by the disruptive, displaced immediacy of 'now' and the declarative, disorienting insistence upon 'here.' The object itself is approached with an urgent caution; the Second World War *must* be remembered in these poems but by whom, and through what narrative? The project is perhaps summed up in the line "Something that *was* once is not graspable from here." Not graspable perhaps, but the attempt will not go unrecorded.

Sebastian is finishing a Master of Arts in Modern and Contemporary Literature and Culture at the University of York. His MA thesis focuses on the work of contemporary American poet Jorie Graham, and the representation of the 1944 Normandy Invasion in her collection *Overlord* (2005). This research will form part of a PhD thesis on poetry and memory of the Second World War beginning in October 2011 at York. Other research interests include Holocaust, Trauma and Testimony Studies, and he recently co-authored a paper for the AHRC funded Future of Testimony Network conference in Salford entitled 'Poetry in Testimony, Testimony in Poetry.' He also works on Zimbabwean fiction and is the chair of the Cultural Memory Studies reading group at York.

**Alex Pryce, University of Oxford: "'Where Is She?': Binaries, Anthologies and Northern Irish Poetry'**

This paper will interrogate patriarchal binary value systems and their manifestations in poetry from the North of Ireland during the Troubles. It will ask and attempt to answer the question posed by Hélène Cixous in *Sorties* (1975): 'Where is she?'

Looking at the Northern Irish scene in the mid-1970s it would seem that women found no space in the dominant binaries of the civil unrest. The focus was instead on aggressive and masculinist oppositions

such as Catholic/Protestant, Republican/Loyalist and nationalist/unionist. Given the critical attention paid to Troubles writing, and the high acclaim for anthologies such as Padraic Fiacca's *The Wearing of the Black* (1974) and Frank Ormsby's *A Rage for Order* (1992) it is poignant and timely to question 'where is she?' – for women poets from Northern Ireland were overlooked in these otherwise self-consciously inclusive texts.

Moving to identify what space was available to women writers, I will highlight the role of the feminist political movement in bringing writing to press in *The Female Line* (1984), an anthology of poetry and short fiction already long out of print. This then reveals another marginalising binary between mainstream and 'grass roots' writing, and demonstrates that the esteem of poets such as Seamus Heaney and Derek Mahon relies on power and exclusion for much of its existence.

I will prove this rule by exception through attention to Medbh McGuckian, arguably the only Northern Irish women poet to have achieved any literary success pre-ceasefire. Despite her success, McGuckian was notably excluded from *A Rage for Order* because she did not write 'about' the conflict, or at least not in a way that could be understood under patriarchal value binaries. Perhaps it is no surprise then that McGuckian's work is often accused of 'difficulty' in part due to the heavy debt it owes to French feminism.

Alex is currently an AHRC-funded first year DPhil student at Wadham College, Oxford. Her thesis looks at tradition, feminism and influence in contemporary Northern Irish women's poetry, particularly focusing on women writers emerging since the mid-1990s. She joined the steering group in October 2010, after completing the MA in Modern Literature at the University of Leicester. She frequently reviews contemporary poetry for magazines and journals including *Poetry Review*, *Poetry London* and *New Walk*. Alex also publishes her own poetry in reputable magazines, is an editor of the Poetry Archive and runs the national poetry podcasting website *Poet Casting*.

#### **Vanessa Dodd, University of Wales, Newport: 'Time and the Dramatic Narrative'**

The dramatic narrative in whatever form is a spatial object in which time has been compressed and thus can transcend the constraints of time and place of its original conception. It is a 'time traveller', carried across acres of time to be performed in a number of future spaces and times. Does this tell us something about the nature of the human consciousness that authored it or about the plasticity of time and space? There is the inescapable durative time/place it takes to watch or hear a dramatic narrative, but time as experienced by human consciousness is unquantifiable and variable, for often when engaged in a dramatic narrative we can lose a sense of time and place, as the play before us, unfolding in the specious present, flashes forwards and backwards. This paper will explore how contemporary drama captures the complexities of time and space as experienced by human consciousness by looking at the works of playwrights April De Angelis and Phyllis Nagy.

Vanessa Dodd holds a first class Honours degree in English and History and an MA in playwriting studies from Birmingham University. She is currently Senior lecturer in English and Creative Writing at the University of Wales, Newport. She is also programme leader for the newly established Applied Drama course at the University, having trained originally at the Central School of Speech and Drama (now part of London University) as an actor and at Bristol Old Vic Theatre School as a theatre director before embarking on an academic career.

#### **4B: Spaces of War & Violence**

##### **Gohar Karim Khan, University of Warwick: 'The Hideous Beauty of Bird-Shaped Burns: Transnational Allegory and feminist Rhetoric in Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows*'**

The date of '9/11' and the subsequent 'war on terror' has triggered a 'New Age' in Anglophone Pakistani literature. Though it continues to be interested in the larger issues of nation, gender, diaspora and religion, there is now a sense of urgency in the political and national agendas at work in its literary corpus. Writing mainly from the metropolitan centres of New York, London and Paris, Anglophone Pakistani writers are

increasingly seen to deconstruct conventional notions of nationalism and identity formation in favour of a markedly more subjective and transnational approach. Their 'doubleness of belonging', sometimes regarded as an enabling homelessness, empowers them with the ability to ask questions as insiders and as outsiders simultaneously. As transnational intellectuals involved in the process of what Ambreen Hai calls 'border work', their fiction reflects their own positions as those 'who both belongs and unbelongs, who can offer crucial perspectival shifts, can have liberatory potential, because it can undo binaristic and hierarchical categories of opposition.' (Hai, 381) Exploring the relationship between nationalism and transnationalism, this paper examines the ways in which they are intricately and inextricably linked in Kamila Shamsie's most recent novel, *Burnt Shadows*. The paper attempts at connecting the novel's alternative version of nationalism with its feminist rhetoric, via the novel's unique and ubiquitous protagonist, Hiroko Tanaka who has witnessed the Hiroshima bombings, the partition of India and '9/11'. It argues that while Hiroko's physical body serves as a manuscript upon which national and political upheavals are literally and metaphorically transcribed, her character poses serious challenges to the normative understanding of time and space. It offers the novel as an attempt at 'psychic healing' – a work that embraces nationalism transnationally, hence propounding an 'imagined community' (Hicks, xxiii-xxxi) that makes possible the existence of a kind of 'horizontal comradeship', transcending national borderlands and cultural boundaries.

Gohar Karim Khan is working on a PhD in Postcolonial Literature at the University of Warwick supervised by Dr Pablo Mukherjee. Her research focuses on the literary representation of Muslims in contemporary Pakistani literature in English, especially post '9/11'. Scholarly work and research on Pakistani literature is limited and Gohar's research aims to update the field and promote an interest in fiction from this important part of the world. Gohar studied for her undergraduate degree in Karachi, moved to Canada on a scholarship to read for her Masters degree and then trained to become a qualified teacher in Oxford.

#### **Angela Thurstance, University of Leicester: 'Spanish Flu: The Forgotten Tragedy'**

History and literature about the Great War has tended to focus on the trenches, portraying the Home Front only to illustrate the lingering effects on the soldiers. But contemporary literary texts, particularly those written by women, have turned to the suffering on the Home Front as well. Despite the abundance of literature surrounding the Great War, the Spanish Flu pandemic which began as the war ended, and was to kill more than 50 million people, remains overlooked. It merits merely a passing mention in a minority of the texts depicting the War and is rarely the focus for literary representation.

This paper will examine Reina James' *This Time of Dying* (2006) which takes the pandemic as its focus. There are no guns and no muddy trenches in James' text, but death is everywhere as the living descend into inhuman living conditions which draw direct parallels with the Western Front. With resources stretched to the limit, bodies pile up unburied and the survivors must live alongside them. To add to their misery they must contend with authorities who don't seem to care and who seem doomed to inaction. Meanwhile the war effort must continue at all costs.

James' text is restricted both temporally, to a brief period between 14<sup>th</sup> October and 6<sup>th</sup> November 1918, and geographically to a small community in London. I will show how James uses these limitations to raise wider questions about both the War and the pandemic and to provide a different perspective on the aftermath of the First World War. She highlights the challenges faced by a society which had barely emerged from one tragedy before it had to endure another and raises important issues about Britain's emergence from war.

Angela is a PhD student at the University of Leicester. Her thesis will explore the way the First World War Home Front is represented in British fiction written since 1990. Angela's research focuses on the literary representation of three main areas: propaganda, patriotism and the rush to volunteer at the outbreak of war; the changing roles of women during the war and its influence on emancipation and suffrage; and the issues which occurred in society following the war, focusing on shattered lives and the impact of the Spanish influenza pandemic.

**Alexa Athelstan, Leeds University: 'Clandestine Desires: Queer Time & Space in Sarah Waters' *The Night Watch* (2006)'**

When discussing her novel *The Night Watch* (2006), which is set in London during and after the Second World War, Sarah Waters describes 1940's wartime Britain as being both an extremely traumatic and yet also intensely liberating and exhilarating time, which opened up a lot of opportunities for women, lesbians and gay men. With the ordinary rules of gendered and sexual relations temporarily suspended during the war, women were afforded the opportunity of taking up, what were traditionally regarded as male or masculine professional positions, as fire fighters, ambulance drivers and air force pilots, whilst the constant influx of servicemen to the country and the blackened streets of London during the bombings, facilitated the emergence of temporary anonymous intimacies between gay men.

This paper will therefore argue that *The Night Watch* by Sarah Waters depicts the dystopian space of wartime Britain and London during the blackouts, as a quasi queer Utopian time and space, which allowed for queer subjectivities, sexualities and social practices to positively flourish. Employing Judith Halberstram's theory of queer time and space, this paper will thus explore how Waters portrays wartime London as an urban space that was 'newly born through darkness' into a queer Utopia where 'all sorts of clandestine things could go on in the shadows' (Lucie Armitt, 'Interview with Sarah Waters,' 2007, p.123.)

Alexa Athelstan is a PhD student at the Centre for Interdisciplinary Gender Studies, working on a project about queer femininities. She has previously conducted research on the writings of Sarah Waters.

#### **4C: Global Spaces**

**Jahnvi Misra, Durham University: 'Cosmopolitanisms and Internationalisms in Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows*'**

In this paper, I will examine Kamila Shamsie's novel *Burnt Shadows* (2009). Shamsie's text spans across three generations and five countries. The protagonist, a Japanese woman called Hiroko Tanaka, journeys to India in the last days of the Britishraj after the atomic bombing of her city, Nagasaki, on August 9, 1945, in which she loses her German fiancé Konrad Weiss. She goes on to live a majority of her life in Pakistan with her Indian/Pakistani husband, Sajjad Ashraff. In her old age she settles in the United States, where she witnesses the fall of the World Trade Centres.

I will examine the global scope of the text, demonstrating through the course of the paper how it avoids the Western-centrism attributed to most transnational writings. With the help of the text, I will also endeavour to defend the idea of *cosmopolitanism* from the charge of any kind of elitism, by demonstrating how the cosmopolitan is in fact directly connected to the *marginal*, inasmuch as a politically disadvantaged person will automatically be more accepting of other cultures and world views.

The debates surrounding the *ethics of care* proposed by Carol Gilligan in *In a Different Voice* (1982) will provide me with an entry point for the discussion of all the above ideas. My attempt will be to extend this ethic, which emerged due to feminine marginality in conventional morality and thereby politics, beyond White, western women to other kinds of marginalised sections, including women from different backgrounds. I will demonstrate how it is significant that the more cosmopolitan characters in Shamsie's text share a feminine sensibility, thereby connecting the notion of cosmopolitanism to an inclusive understanding of the *feminine*. In so doing, I will attempt to establish the importance of a feminine ethic, like the ethics of care, to discussions of transnationalism.

Jahnvi Misra is a PhD candidate in English Literature at Durham University, working on the idea of Ethics and Justice in contemporary women's writings. Her project is being supervised by Professor Patricia Waugh and Dr Jenny Terry.

**Libe Garcia Zarranz, University of Alberta: “Whose City Is It?”: Mapping the Intersections of Gender and Race in Dionne Brand’s *What We All Long For*’**

In the 2005 interview reprinted in the collection *No Margins: Writing Canadian Fiction in Lesbian*, Toronto’s Poet Laureate Dionne Brand shares her views on the creative potential of urban space in her work: “I’ve always wanted to write about the emergent city. [...] I think the city is a source of incredible energy. I’m not saying that it’s always positive energy but I love that and I want to describe it” (33). Always occupying a central role in her writings ranging from early essay collections like *Bread Out Of Stone* (1994), to more recent memoirs like *A Map to the Door of No Return* (2001), and poetry collections like *Thirsty* (2002), the city of Toronto has been rewritten and reimagined in Brand’s *oeuvre* as a site of contradiction.

Drawing on Saskia Sassen’s insights on ‘global cities,’ this paper seeks to examine the representation of urban space in Dionne Brand’s latest novel *What We All Long For* (2005). Canadian literary and cultural critics have looked at how Toronto is portrayed and reimagined in the book, focusing on issues like the deterritorialization of public space and subjectivity (Dobson 2009; Johansen 2008; Goldman 2004). While supporting these arguments, my presentation will explore how Brand’s gendered and racialized characters start to make new claims to the space they inhabit, rising intriguing ethical issues about legitimacy and belonging in the denationalized global city of Toronto. As I will argue, the queer racialized body is often found at the core of Brand’s *oeuvre*, so my discussion will also look at how citizenship and sexuality intersect thus troubling national narratives of Canadian urban space.

A 2010 Trudeau and Killam Scholar, Libe García Zarranz is a PhD Candidate in the Department of English and Film Studies at the University of Alberta. She has published on the representation of women in the work of authors Merlinda Bobis, Raymond Carver, Emma Donoghue, and William Trevor. She has also published on the evolution of the female heroines in Walt Disney’s movies from the 1990s. In the spring of 2009, she co-edited the second issue of *The Raymond Carver Review* on “Carver and Feminism.” Areas of interest include transnational and globalization studies, contemporary women’s writing, and queer theory.

**Christine Vogt-William, University of Frankfurt: ‘Twins and Space in Black British and American Women’s Fiction’**

I propose to read how cultural spaces in Barbara Kingsolver’s *The Poisonwood Bible* and Diana Evans’ *26a* are negotiated by the twin protagonists in their transcultural identificatory practices.

In addressing America’s imperialist activity in 1960s postcolonial Congo, Kingsolver’s political allegory deals with the diasporic experiences of Leah and Adah Price, who migrate to the Congo from Kentucky in the late 1950s with their missionary parents. Here twins’ adolescent perspectives negotiate this postcolonial African space, as well as their past cultural contexts of white middle class American Southern society. Evans’ coming-of-age narrative traces the development of mixed race twins Bessi and Georgia Hunter in the urban space of 1980s and 1990s London, while addressing the imbrications of their maternal Nigerian heritage in their negotiations of multicultural Britain. In both narratives, the twins are at pains to carve out individual identities for themselves which can also accommodate their duality.

Both novels address diasporic tropes of unbelonging and rootlessness in the cultural spaces, which despite denoting “home”, still bear the potential of unhoming for these twin protagonists in their struggles for individualities that allow for twinship. Here concepts of the Self and the Other (both the cultural and the twin Selves and Others) are relevant to the protagonists’ understanding and shaping of their lived spaces.

A native of Singapore, Christine Vogt-William studied English, German and Psychology at the University of Essen, Germany. From 2002 until 2008, Vogt-William was a junior lecturer and research assistant at the Department of New English Literatures and Cultures at the Goethe University of Frankfurt, Germany. She spent a year (September 2006 to August 2007), at the University of York, England as a Marie Curie Gender Graduate Fellow and completed her doctoral thesis on ‘Women and Transculturality in Contemporary Fictions by South Asian Diasporic Women Writers’. Vogt-William has published on South Asian diasporic women’s literature from the US, Canada, England and the Caribbean. She is the co-editor of and contributor to *Disturbing Bodies* (Berlin, Trafo Verlag, 2008), an essay collection on artistic and literary representations of deviant bodies, using contemporary feminist and queer theories. Vogt-William currently divides her time

between the Universities of Muenster and Frankfurt, Germany. She is working on her postdoctoral project entitled: *Twins in American and Anglophone Literatures: Negotiating Selves, Space and Gender*.

## 5A: Regional & Urban Imaginaries

### **Emily Dickinson, Loughborough University: “Trash always rises”: Regionalism and Violence in Dorothy Allison’s *Bastard out of Carolina***

My paper will look at representations of time, space, regionalism and the history of the American South in Dorothy Allison's novel *Bastard Out of Carolina*. In particular, it will focus on how the victim's ability to articulate the trauma of incest is both inhibited and assisted by the public sphere, the so-called 'white trash' community she inhabits, whether her private indulgence in sadomasochistic behaviours can offer anything other than a temporary release from the confines of her existence, or if Allison depicts time as the only measure which can adequately deal with, and therefore offer some form of release from the abuse. Other sub-texts that I intend to address include the legitimacy of revenge, the manner in which the author's narrative form locates the characters in specific cultural and regional spaces but prevent simplistic stereotyping, and the extent to which economic factors determine the location and timing of the abuse.

Emily Dickinson is currently in the second year of her PhD in English literature at Loughborough University. Her research examines the relationship between violence and women in contemporary American Literature.

### **Arina Cirstea, University of Warwick: 'Mapping Space and Time in Michèle Roberts' London Novels'**

In the Introduction to her 2007 autobiography, *Paper Houses*, Michèle Roberts describes the process of writing in both spatial and temporal terms, arguing that 'my narrative in one sense goes in a straight line, chronologically, charting my rake's progress, but in another sense is a *flâneur*' who 'enjoys being enticed down side streets'. Roberts' metaphor suggests to what extent her writerly imagination is deeply embedded in the fabric and history of the city, while also acknowledging an awareness of current debates in the field of urban studies.

In this paper, I will read two of Roberts' most poignant London novels, *The Mistressclass* (2003) and *In the Red Kitchen* (1990), in conjunction with her autobiographical *Paper Houses* (2007) in an attempt to tease out some of the pleasures and anxieties of the late twentieth century city. The engagement with urban space and time in these fictions is complex and multifarious. While the autobiographic *Paper Houses* brings into focus her involvement in London life between 1971 and 1995, *The Mistressclass* deploys an experimental narrative technique to draw together a number of key themes in the author's work, including the creative revision of cultural history and the contrast between metropolitan London and the French country village. *In the Red Kitchen*, on the other hand, makes a parallel between women's lives in different temporal and spatial frameworks, from contemporary and Victorian London to ancient Egypt.

This paper will suggest that, while the joys of 'conventional marriage' and 'conventional family life' prove to be transitory in the lives of Roberts' urban dwellers, what is enduring is their relationship with the city, fuelled by the writer's own devotion to her beloved London, that she 'can't do without' (*Paper Houses*).

Arina has recently completed her PhD in English and Comparative Literary Studies with a thesis entitled 'Urban Imaginaries: Mapping Self and Space in the Writing of Doris Lessing, Sara Maitland and Michèle Roberts'. After submission, she is an Early Career Fellow at the Institute of Advanced Study (Warwick) as well as a tutor in the English department. Her research interests focus on post-1950s women's writing, literature and religion and the literary essay. In June 2011, she co-organised a symposium on *Religious Identities in Literature* and is currently planning a Warwick-based research network on Literature and Religion. Her publications include 'Marx, Postmodernism and Spatial Configurations in Jameson and Lefebvre' in *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* (2008) and 'Feminism and Faith: Exploring Christian Spaces in the Writing of Sara Maitland and Michèle Roberts' in *E-rea: revue d'études Anglophones* (2011).

## **Sumana Ray, University of Warwick: “Imagining the Midlands”: Literary Expressions of Regional Women’**

London has been the metropolitan ‘centre’ as well as the hub of multicultural imagination in Britain. The focus of this paper is to shift the spotlight away from ‘London-based’ writers to those who present their experiences from the regions. The paper contests the dominant reading of London and endeavours to illustrate how women writers from multi-ethnic communities in the Midlands re-imagine the space that they occupy – both literally and metaphorically – to express their ideas of ‘Britishness’. Birmingham is arguably Britain’s second city and it is women’s writing from this region, with its “characteristically forthright Birmingham flavour” that I wish to examine in my paper.<sup>8</sup>

The paper examines the literary expressions of Midlands women from black and Asian communities. The texts discussed will be a selection of short stories from two anthologies by multi-ethnic women writers in the Midlands - *Whispers in the Walls* (2001) and *Her Majesty* (2002), both published by the regional independent press Tindal Street. In this paper, I wish to introduce the idea of the ‘Liminal Briton’ based on the anthropological concept of ‘liminality’. I contend that the space occupied by new generation black and Asian Britons can be best described through Victor Turner’s concept of being located ‘betwixt and between’. Using a ‘liminal spectrum’ enables reflection of the ambiguities and multiplicities of these women in twenty-first century Britain as exemplified in the chosen literary texts. I also argue that the Midlands region being a ‘liminal’ location in relation to the geography of devolved Britain, the ‘liminal’ attributes of these women are more pronounced, thereby making their articulations vastly different from those based in London.

Sumana Ray is a PhD candidate in the Department of English and Comparative Literary Studies at the University of Warwick, UK. She is also a Lecturer in English Studies at a College of Further Education in Birmingham. Her areas of interest include Post-colonial Literature, Feminism, Women’s Writing and Anthropology and her research project focuses on literary and artistic productions of Black and Asian women in the Midlands. She is the co-organiser of the Women and Community Seminar Series held at the University of Warwick and an active member of the Centre for the Study of Women and Gender.

## **5B: Historicizing Time & Space**

### **Sarah Walton, University of Hull: ‘Calculating the Distance Between Us and the Women of Ancient Rome’**

In her reflections on the composition of her *Memoirs of Hadrian*, Marguerite Yourcenar states: ‘It took me years to learn how to calculate exactly the distances between the emperor and myself.’<sup>9</sup>

This paper considers the challenges contemporary novelists face when calculating the distance between modern readers and authentic ancient female Roman voices, and questions to what extent authenticity is desirable. Many women’s names stand out in Roman history as having stepped outside of cultural norms but direct access to their voices are lost as most surviving writing is male authored. Ancient Romans would have considered political and academic careers falling naturally in the male domain. Women who sought to perform these roles would have been considered unnatural. How would these women have related to the world around them that begrudgingly accepted them? Would Hypatia, the acclaimed academic, altered her attire or diction to align herself with her male colleagues, or would she have emphasised traditionally revered matronly virtues?

Based on the assumption that one’s inner world, behaviour and diction is heavily constructed by one’s cultural attitudes, approximations of voice and public personas can be sketched. Citing Davis, Justice, Duffy and Bradshaw, this paper will demonstrate the diversity of voice of ancient Roman women in contemporary fiction. Gillian Bradshaw’s heroine disguises herself as a man to enter the medical profession

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<sup>8</sup> Review, (2001) Yvonne Brissett & Leone Ross (ed.) *Whispers In the Walls*, Birmingham: Tindal Street Press

<sup>9</sup> Yourcenar, M. 1959. *Memoirs of Hadrian*. Translated from the French by Frick, G. London. Penguin.

in *The Beacon at Alexandria*.<sup>10</sup> Some contemporary women authors have given their women relatively modern voices and views.

Absolute authenticity is not necessarily desirable, as the distance between modern readers and the characters may be too vast – resulting in ostracising rather than engaging a modern readership.

Sarah is a PhD student at the Philip Larkin Centre for Creative Writing at the University of Hull. Her thesis combines a neo-ancient Roman novel, *The Lost Scribe* and an exegesis, entitled *Representing Ancient Roman Sexuality in Contemporary fiction*. Sarah holds a BA in Literature and Linguistics and MA in New Media. She has worked in that field since 1994, as a Digital Consultant.

**Claire O’Callaghan, University of Leicester: ‘War Time as Queer Time in Sarah Waters’s *The Night Watch*’**

In Sarah Waters’s fourth novel, *The Night Watch* (2006), the heroine, butch ambulance-driver Kay Langrish states that “people’s pasts are so much more interesting than their futures” (p. 106). Kay’s comment, like the novel’s title, highlights the significance of time, specifically, the past, as both a structural and functional feature within the text. *The Night Watch* focuses on three time-bound moments in the lives of four protagonists: lonely Kay; paranoid dating-agency worker, Helen; her illicitly bound colleague, Vivian; and gay, Viv’s brother and ex-prison inmate, Duncan, and moves backwards through their histories from the present, 1947, through 1944 to 1941 in order to examine the way that the gender and sexual politics of the past shapes each of their traumatic and melancholy presents. This paper focuses on this interrelated representation of time with gender and same-sex desire in order to demonstrate how Waters offers wartime as a queer time in the context of gender and sexual politics. Reading the novel in relation to Heather Love’s examination of the traumatic queer past in her study *Feeling Backwards: The Politics of Loss and Queer History* (2007), I will examine the ways that *The Night Watch* unfolds a queer temporal arc from a moment of post-war prohibition to an earlier moment of anticipatory liberation that renders the queering of genders and same-sex desires visible. In doing so, I will demonstrate that although this novel marks a shift in Waters’s choice of historical period, like her earlier texts, *The Night Watch* continues and develops her interest in recovering queer histories of the past through fiction but does so in order to mark a lost and traumatic moment in queer history/ies of the 1940s.

Claire O’Callaghan is a PhD candidate at the University of Leicester where she is researching the fiction of contemporary author Sarah Waters. Her thesis examines the representation of homosexuality in Waters’s novels and specifically, situates her portrayal of lesbian sexuality within the discourses of lesbian/feminism and queer theory. Her research also contextualises Waters’s fictions within a tradition of lesbian/feminist writing. Claire’s research interests centre around the genre of historical fiction, gender and sexuality. Claire is a lead member of the Postgraduate Contemporary Women’s Writing Network (PG CWWN), an Executive member of the FWSA, Vice-President of the University of Leicester’s Feminist Society and a founding member of Leicester’s branch of the Fawcett Society.

**Leanne Bibby, Leeds Metropolitan University: ‘Narrating Pasts, Creating Futures? Historical Narrative and Female Subjectivity in A.S. Byatt’s *The Children’s Book*’**

By narrating the past, can women novelists change the future? Historical novels by women are of course nothing new, but past studies of these novels’ interactions with non-literary discourses have often failed to ask whether these interactions allow contemporary women writers to change the very ways in which they use language and narrative to represent time and space. A. S. Byatt’s most recent novel *The Children’s Book* (2009) is a lengthy and crowded engagement with a fin de siècle in British history. Its timescale of 1895 to 1917 encompasses numerous national, political, cultural and personal histories, the greater part of which concern seismic shifts in women’s lives. Byatt’s fiction has been criticised for its tendency to represent women’s major problems throughout history without deconstructing the binaries underpinning these problems, such as the Neoplatonic identification of the ‘mind’ with the male and the ‘body’ with the female,

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<sup>10</sup> Bradshaw, G. 1986. *The Beacon at Alexandria*. London. Penguin.

and permeating patriarchal culture (Steveker, 2009). However, as yet no study has placed her work in substantial dialogue with feminist critiques of relevant, male-focused philosophical traditions. This paper offers such an approach, examining *The Children's Book* as a significant fictional narration of key moments in women's history. With reference to the poststructuralist feminist work of Luce Irigaray (1985, 1993, 2002), I argue that in reappraising its particular version of past times, Byatt's novel productively destabilises the subjectivities of its female characters as they think, speak and act. Their individual stories illustrate possible new subject positions for readers to contemplate, in terms of language and narrative, in both our contemporary moment and the future. The presentation considers *The Children's Book's* many texts-within-texts and its representation of material histories, such as the history of art, to demonstrate that its narration of female subjectivity is remarkably multifaceted and that its implications stretch far beyond its pages.

Leanne Bibby is a final-year PhD researcher at Leeds Metropolitan University, currently investigating the relationship between fictional representations of women intellectuals in the fiction of A. S. Byatt and their broader, problematic cultural representation. Her additional, developing interests include gender, subjectivity and technologies, 'fourth wave' feminist ideas and many aspects of fiction's negotiation of historical narrative.

### **Barbara Henderson, Newcastle University: 'Children's Time Travel Fiction'**

'Time and space are only forms of thought.' So said the forward-thinking Psammead in E. Nesbit's *The Story of the Amulet* (1906) – arguably the first children's time-travel novel and one in which the author drew upon contemporaneous scientific theories of time. Novels in which child protagonists travel through time have become a consistently popular medium, throughout the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries – and significantly more women writers than men practise in the genre. Such fiction has often received great critical acclaim, yet little scholarly attention. This paper will explore why children's historical time-travel fiction has become, effectively, a 'female form,' not only because of the creation of many feisty female protagonists, but because of the notion of the female quest. The distortion of time may be interpreted as a creative response to the maturation process in an adolescent protagonist, and a liberation from the domestic in the desires of older women characters. Drawing upon key texts including the most recent children's time-travel fiction, it will argue that the form is one which, although it is often accused of conservatism, in fact demonstrates innovative and sometimes subversive tendencies.

Barbara Henderson is in the final stages of a Creative Writing PhD at Newcastle University. Her children's time-travel novel, *The Serpent House*,<sup>11</sup> was shortlisted for the 2010 Times/Chicken House Award. She is currently working on a sequel to this novel and a Young Adults novel, which recently won a Writers Advice Centre award. Barbara teaches Creative Writing and Journalism at Newcastle and Northumbria Universities.

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<sup>11</sup> Barbara writes under the name Bea Davenport.