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Biographies on the Move

Keynote speaker

Caitríona Ní Dhúill

BIO

Dr Caitríona Ní Dhúill is currently a researcher at the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for the History and Theory of Biography, Vienna. Her doctoral thesis on representations of gender in modern utopian writing was completed in 2005 at Trinity College Dublin; her monograph, *Sex in Imagined Spaces*, is forthcoming (2009). She has taught modern German literature at the universities of Dublin, St Andrews, Durham and Vienna. Research interests include gender theory, the theory of biography, and the relationship between biographical and literary texts. She has published on Kafka, Joyce, Wedekind, Hauptmann, Bloch, and on the history and theory of biography.

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ABSTRACT

The Politics of the Mundane: Constructions of the Everyday in Biography

The paper investigates contrasting meanings of mundanity in the biographies of culturally prominent figures. Biography's role in the construction of elites stands in a relationship of peculiar tension to its democratic potential. The presentation of the everyday domestic conditions of prominent individuals seems to bring the elite 'down to earth', in keeping with the debunking claims made in much modern biography since Strachey. In fact, however, biography's narration of the everyday often involves a 'hallowing' of detail, a transfiguration of the mundane: by dint of their association with the iconic figure, details of the everyday are endowed with a spurious significance. This is particularly evident in the case of spatial/material presentations of biography (exhibitions, birthplaces). Contrasting constructions of mundanity, from the democratic to the auratic, which can co-exist in the one biographical text indicate the varying political and ideological agendas of biography.

Biography's construction of mundanity also needs to be investigated from the perspective of gender theory. The gendered division of labour, and the gendering of the public/private binary, are fundamentally constitutive of cultural significance. While biography traditionally perpetuates the category of prominence, it also seeks to undo the public/private binary, recasting the public figure as a private individual. Its narration of the mundane can often uncover occluded relationships of interdependency between reproductive and productive/cultural labour: the personal is thereby revealed as deeply political. On the other hand, many biographical narratives, including feminist biographies, perpetuate received constructions of the gender binary.

Respondent

Mineke Bosch

BIO

Mineke Bosch is Professor of Modern History at the Faculty of Arts, University Groningen. Her research interests are: (auto)biography and life writing, including the use of unpublished 'egodocuments', the history of (international) women's movements, the history of gender and science, commemorative practices and historical culture. In 2005 she published the biography of a prominent Dutch feminist Aletta H. Jacobs. Currently she is working on a project of editing and annotating the fascinating unpublished diary of a 'new woman'.

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Moderator

Maaïke Meijer

BIO

Prof. Dr. Maaïke Meijer (1949) was employed by the University of Utrecht, first as a research fellow in Comparative Literature (PhD in 1988, cum laude), then as an associate professor in Women's Studies in the Arts. Her dissertation *Lust for Letters* (De lust tot lezen) put gender in Dutch literary studies on the map. Since 1998 she works as a professor of genderstudies for the Centre for Gender and Diversity at Maastricht University. Topics of research are: theories of the lyrical, popular culture especially songs, cultural studies, culture and migration, modes of representation and theory of (auto)biography: all from the perspective of gender and diversity. In the Fall of 2009 her biography on the Dutch poet M. Vasalis will be published.

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Panelists

Rachel Disney

BIO

Rachel Disney is a Master's student in English Literature at Fordham University in New York City. Her interests include 20th-Century British literature, modernism, Virginia Woolf, and reader-writer relationships.

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ABSTRACT

Genre as Disguise: Virginia Woolf's Renouncement of Naming in *Orlando*

In *Virginia Woolf Icon*, Brenda Silver shows how Woolf's name and image have been recently commodified, coming to hold multiple meanings for different groups. Silver points out that Woolf's name can be relied upon as illustration in discussions of sexuality, class, feminism, authorship, and even fashion. Though one might wonder about Woolf's reaction to her face on a coffee mug, the public's multiplication of who and what Woolf represents seems to be a goal she attempted to achieve while writing *Orlando*. "I like masks," Woolf once remarked in her diaries, and this penchant for disguise manifests itself in the genre-bending book that wavers between novel and biography, or maybe between love letter and farce.

In this paper, I examine how unnameability permeates *Orlando*, not only in genre, but also in the act of naming within the text. I argue that Woolf, inspired by her friendship with Vita Sackville-West, needed at once to celebrate and to hide the relationship and that these contradictory desires took form in a work that obscures but does not erase the value of the thing behind the name. Like *Orlando*'s need to refer to Shakespeare as Sh-p-re, Woolf's desire to speak and not to speak the name of the person to whom she dedicated her book, V. Sackville-West is an act of reverence: "for," as *Orlando* reflects, "when we speak names we deeply reverence to ourselves we never speak them whole."

Mel Duffy

BIO

Mel Duffy is a Sociology lecturer in the School of Nursing, Dublin City University. She obtained her Ph.D. in 2008 in the School of Language and Intercultural Studies, Dublin City University. The title of her thesis was “Voices from the Hinterland: Lesbian Women’s Experience of Irish Health Care”. Her research interests include lesbian health and health care; inequalities in health care; marginalisation in health care; hermeneutic phenomenology and existentialism.

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ABSTRACT

Recovering the Self in the Face of Heteronormativity

This paper is centered on the stories that lesbian women as consumers of Irish health care tell of their experiences of being lesbian from a hermeneutical phenomenological perspective. Ireland has a dearth of knowledge about lesbian women’s lives and social experiences. Lesbian consumers report experiences of ‘being different’ in health care encounters. They experience their difference both as patients from other patients, and from those who are providers of health care, whether they are doctors or nurses in a health care setting. While their differences are exposed for both themselves as lesbian women and Others to see, Heidegger (1962) suggests there is always a possibility to become, that is, I am not finite, I am constantly becoming through a reflective process of my situation. Therefore, lesbian women find meaning and understanding in both their situation as well as in who they are in their day-to-day interactions within society, which they bring into health care. Dasein, that is, the human being in the world, exists within society (Heidegger, 1962) and through interconnectedness, the lesbian woman becomes whoever she is by making a choice (Sartre, 1985) whether to come out or not. While a lesbian woman knows her difference, she decides whether to expose it to Others. However, there are times where she does not have a choice.

Paul Ferstl

BIO

Paul Ferstl studied Comparative Literature and German Philology at the Universities of Vienna and Brussels. Since the completion of his community service (in lieu of the compulsory Austrian military service) in Romania he has been teaching Comparative Literature at the University of Vienna. Current research projects: interactions between literature & comics, theatre censorship in 20th Century Vienna, literature & WWI.

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ABSTRACT

Matters of In-Between: Jaime Hernandez' *Locas*

Since 1981 Jaime Hernandez' *Locas* is featuring prominently in the Hernandez Brothers' magazine *Love & Rockets*. His renderings of several persons' life history from the 80s California Latina Punk scene to this day undermine the concept of obvious "post hoc, ergo propter hoc." Meaning is not established by linear storytelling but by association that bridges postulated "gaps" from one "life period" to another. Causality and understanding are based on repeated echoes of similar emotional responses to various biographical situations. Concepts of "growth" and "development" are questioned by the constant challenge of mere being.

Hernandez' associative approach relies on the potential of the comics medium. Contrary to other narrative forms, comics openly and explicitly work with a delicate balance of arranged information and deliberate omissions. Actually, the gaps between the various panels convey at least as much information as the pictures themselves as the recipient "fills" those gaps in the comics reading process. Hernandez' cuts switch between years in an instant while using irritatingly similar pictures to stress the link between events separated in time. Thus, biography comes closer and closer to memory, and the "beginning" and the "end" become increasingly superfluous – for what really matters lies in between.

Catherine Lange

BIO

Catherine Lange is a professor of Science and Science Education at Buffalo State College. She works with undergraduate and graduate students. Current research interests include the life study of twentieth century scientists, inventors and science educators. A significant aspect of that research is the role of the public figure of science and invention as a cultural phenomenon both within the public and scientific domains. In addition, Dr. Lange explores the dynamics between nature, art and science specifically as applied pedagogy to disadvantaged and inner-city students.

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ABSTRACT

The White Hyacinth Letters of Rachel Carson and Dorothy Freeman

This proposal examines the relationship Carson had with her Southport neighbor, Dorothy Freeman and how a letter written early in their relationship to answer a question posed to her; “Don’t you ever marvel at yourself, finding yourself in such an overwhelming emotional experience?” Carson’s response was to recall a story of a man who had two pennies who bought a loaf of bread with one and a white hyacinth for the soul with the other. Freeman said that Carson was “her white hyacinth”. This comment has led to much speculation that identify the two as a gay couple. Gay and lesbian followers desiring famous heroes have claimed Carson, who led a very lonely and sad life and Dorothy Freeman, who, with her husband, lived in a remote beach all year on the coast of Maine.

It will also analyze the degree to which Carson’s power to elicit a profound scientific reaction as a result of the controversy of *Silent Spring* that unleashed an unabashed attack by the male dominated field, represents in the purest sense the difficulties that women experience when they dare to compete in an otherwise male world

Malin Lidström

BIO

Malin Lidström Brock is a D.Phil. candidate of English Literature at Pembroke College, Oxford University, United Kingdom. She has recently completed a doctoral thesis on the notion of subjectivity in women's biography and feminist theory, and teaches British and American literature. Her interests include theories of auto/biography, feminist theory, and American and European popular culture. Currently, she is exploring the presence of the "French" as idealized or reviled Other in American popular culture. She has previously written on topics such as European fashion and reading habits, and co-edited a critical essay collection on the Finnish author and artist Tove Jansson.

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ABSTRACT

"Simone and I" – Beyond Female Sympathy in Feminist Biography

This paper explores the feminist potential of two materialist feminist/poststructuralist biographies of Simone de Beauvoir. Liberal and radical feminist critics, such as the American literary critic Carolyn G. Heilbrun, have argued for a departure from traditional plots in biography. Heilbrun suggests that feminist biographers must seek to express women's shared, authentic experiences. That is, they must take a "sympathetic" rather than objective stance towards their subject. In this sense, women's biography will function both as a critique of patriarchal society and point to women's possibilities through the individual example. Meanwhile, postmodern feminist critics, such as historian Joan Wallace Scott, voice a suspicion against the essentialism that informs the notion of the sympathetic biographer, as well as the liberal humanism that underlies the very ideas of a coherent and rational (female) subject. The two biographers presented in this paper offer a viable alternative to this stalemate situation. Although they depart from the traditional realist biographical form, they still aim to fulfill the function of feminist biography, as it has been defined by Heilbrun. The result is a non-chronological, non-narrative biography, in which the biographer simultaneously stresses the particularity and universality of the subject. The pitfalls of this approach are also discussed.

Brian Lobel

BIO

Brian Lobel is a performer and writer currently pursuing his PhD at Queen Mary, University of London, under the supervision of Lois Weaver and Catherine Silverstone. His thesis “What a Difference a Malignancy Makes” explores the relationship of illness, accident and bodily trauma to artists’ professional practice. He currently teaches as visiting lecturer in Drama at Queen Mary and course coordinator for Performing Medicine at King’s College London School of Medicine. His first play, BALL (published in Text and Performance Quarterly, 2008) was performed at multiple theatres and as keynote address at numerous universities, and for Performing Medicine’s 2008 Season. Brian’s performance work incorporates monologue, interactive installation, amateur dance and commonplace digital media. Recent projects include Hold My Hand and We’re Halfway There (Sadler’s Wells, Shunt), WankBank (Duckie, Act Art), love, Self- (Stoke Newington Airport, Around the Coyote) and Other Funny Stories About Cancer. In November, 2008, he received an Arts Award from the Wellcome Trust to develop his upcoming project/publication Fun With Cancer Patients.

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ABSTRACT

‘love-, Self.’ A Performance Essay

love, Self- is a 20-minute performance essay which attempts to queer the process of essay performing. Explicit, commissioned photographs, intimate first-person accounts, innovative methodology and literary criticism attempt to understand digital communities (X-tube, Cam4.com) in relation to previous queer communities and to challenge the place of academia when examining both.

When discussing Annie Sprinkle, Ron Athey, Holly Hughes and many other solo performance mainstays, Deirdre Heddon, in her 2008 Autobiography and Performance states, “In spite of the sheer number and diversity of performances of ‘the self’, criticism of the ‘genre’ tends to be negative, most often reading ‘performing the self’ as intrinsically, implicitly or essentially ‘narcissistic’, ‘solipsistic’ or ‘egotistical’.” Most people think that solo autobiographic work is little more than a circle jerk - a very public form of masturbation.

But how close to public masturbation is solo performance, really? Are those individuals uploading work to X-tube engaged in a similar practice, and with a similar politic, as those who shared intimate acts on stage in the 1970s? The proposed performance essay, love, Self-, critically examines both practices through a review of solo performance history, personal reflection, and over 30 interviews with current on-line amateur

pornographers. love, Self- explores sexual utopias and alternative communities, the relationship of amateur gay pornography to classic feminist concerns, the indelible nature of sexual memory and the politics of studying communities, incorporating and riffing on the theoretical frameworks of, among others, Peggy Phelan, Gregg Bordowitz and Paulo Freire.

Sarah De Mul

BIO

Sarah De Mul is a Postdoctoral Fellow of the Research Foundation Flanders at the Department of Literary Studies in Leuven University. Her teaching and research interests are gender, empire and multiculturalism in literature and culture. She is the co-editor of *Commitment and Complicity in Cultural Theory and Practice* (Palgrave Macmillan) and the co-author of a monograph on multiculturalism in Flanders (Meulenhoff-Manteau), both forthcoming in 2009.

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ABSTRACT

Realist Writing and Multiculturalism

Theoretical approaches in postcolonial studies have viewed realism as a form that interpellates the ideology of imperialism and hegemonic whiteness. However, as Dennis Walder exclaims in *The Realist Novel* (1995; 18), "despite recent attempts to undermine the idea of realism as outdated or infected by humanist ideology, its use persists." Walders' observation certainly applies to the Flemish literary context, in which recently a number of authors have adopted realist modes in rendering their versions of multicultural society. This paper aims to explore the deployment of realism, one of the features principally linked to genres of life-writing, in the Flemish multicultural context. Considering that the realist mode in this context has so far appeared as a persisting, even preferred, medium, I will argue for a renewed reflection on the relationship between postmodern aesthetics and postcolonialism, a topic which has for long been central to debates in the Anglo-Saxon postcolonial context. I will take as my point of departure the highly mixed reception of *Los (Loose)* by Tom Naegels. *Los* is a semi-autobiographical reflection on social issues such as racism and euthanasia staged against the background of the migrant riots in Antwerp following the murder of Mohammed Achrak in 2002.

Gerald P. Mulderig

BIO

Gerald Mulderig is Vincent DePaul Associate Professor of English at DePaul University in Chicago, Illinois, USA. He has published and spoken widely on rhetorical theory and criticism and has recently completed a book-length study of the rhetorical design of biography.

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ABSTRACT

Queering the Conventions of Life (Writing): The Search for Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas in Janet Malcolm's *Two Lives*

One of the strategies by which biographers since Boswell have sought to enhance the believability of their narratives is to mediate the distance between subject and reader by playing a role in their own narratives. Janet Malcolm's recent biographical study of Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas (*Two Lives: Gertrude and Alice*, New Haven: Yale UP, 2007) presents an extreme and at first perplexing example of such a biographical role. As the story of a biographer in search of subjects who ironically become more remote and enigmatic as the narrative unfolds, Malcolm's *Two Lives* draws the reader into a relationship not with the book's ostensible subjects but rather with its author. By disrupting the convention that biographies must depict lives that are linear and coherent, Malcolm's narrative itself becomes an emblem of the unconventionality that characterized her subjects' lives. Just as Stein and Toklas subverted the conventions of their society, the biography appropriately subverts the conventions of life writing and thus offers one way of thinking about what queer biography might become.

Gothic Escapes?

Keynote speaker

Sue Zlosnik

BIO

Sue Zlosnik is Head of the English Department of Manchester Metropolitan University. Her research focuses on prose fiction of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Gothic, and women's writing. With Professor Avril Horner she has written three books: *Landscapes of Desire: Metaphors in Modern Women's Fiction* (1990); *Daphne du Maurier: Writing, Identity and the Gothic Imagination* (1998) and *Gothic and the Comic Turn* (2005), as well as numerous articles and essays. They have edited a collection of essays on international influences and appropriations in the Gothic, entitled *Le Gothic* (Palgrave, 2008), and are completing an edition of *The Heroine*, an 1813 novel by E.S. Barrett. Forthcoming are essays in collections on Female Gothic and Iris Murdoch. As a solo scholar, Zlosnik has recently written on Hilary Mantel for the Blackwell Encyclopedia of Twentieth-Century British and Irish Fiction and is completing a monograph on the contemporary novelist, Patrick McGrath. She is Co-President of the International Gothic Association.

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ABSTRACT

Whatever Became of the Gothic Heroine?

Opening with a discussion of the terms 'Female Gothic' and Postfeminist Gothic', this lecture then goes on to look at the evolution of the Gothic heroine in literary fiction. It relates critical appraisals of the heroine figure to developments in feminist literary studies and the wider concerns of second wave feminism and postfeminism. Moving from early nineteenth-century parodic engagements with the heroine, it considers the critical debate surrounding later nineteenth-century adaptations of the heroine tradition and the legacy of Brontë's *Jane Eyre* in some twentieth-century texts. It then looks at the use of Gothic traditions in work by mid-twentieth century women writers in their representation of women's anxieties before considering later writing by novelists like Atwood and Weldon. In the final part of the lecture there is a discussion of recent critical work on postfeminist Gothic and a discussion of four contemporary novels in the light of debates that have been identified. These are Diane Setterfield's *The Thirteenth Tale*, Patrick McGrath's *Martha Peake*, Paul Magrs' *Never the Bride* and Hilary Mantel's *Beyond Black*.

Respondent

Rosemarie Buikema

BIO

Rosemarie Buikema is Professor of Arts, Culture and Diversity at the department of Media and Culture Studies of Utrecht University. She has published widely on topics related to Literary studies, Comparative culture studies and Gender studies. Her research interests range from semiotics, feminist theory, and post-colonial theory, to the gothic and the grotesque, and the literary biography. In 2006 she published, together with Lies Wesseling, a book on the gothic in Dutch literature (*Het Heilige Huis*, Amsterdam University Press). Forthcoming is *Doing Gender in Media, Art and Culture* (Routledge, 2009 (co-edited with Iris van der Tuin). Buikema is programme director of the Graduate Gender Programme and the EU FP6 Marie Curie Early Stage PhD Training Programme. She is also the Utrecht coordinator of the Erasmus Mundus joint degree in Gender and Women's Studies in Europe. She is the Utrecht regional ambassador for South Africa and worked as a visiting professor at the University of the Western Cape, the University of Cape Town and the Karelssuniversity in Prague.

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Moderator

Agnes Andeweg

BIO

Agnes Andeweg works at the *Centre for Gender and Diversity* of *Maastricht University* (NL), where she teaches gothic fiction, among other things. She is completing a dissertation on manifestations of the gothic in contemporary Dutch novels, with a focus on issues of gender and sexuality. She published on this topic in the volume *Nostalgia or Perversion* (I. van Elferen (ed.), Cambridge Scholars Press, 2007) and in several Dutch journals.

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Panelists

Agnes Andeweg

BIO

Agnes Andeweg works at the *Centre for Gender and Diversity* of *Maastricht University* (NL), where she teaches gothic fiction, among other things. She is completing a dissertation on manifestations of the gothic in contemporary Dutch novels, with a focus on issues of gender and sexuality. She published on this topic in the volume *Nostalgia or Perversion* (I. van Elferen (ed.), Cambridge Scholars Press, 2007) and in several Dutch journals.

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ABSTRACT

Vampiric Sisterhood? Feminist Metaphors and Alternative Forms of Kinship in Renate Dorrestein's Gothic Fiction

In *How Novels Think* (2005), Nancy Armstrong reads the history of the novel as a continuing negotiation of the tensions between individualism and community interests. She argues that gothic fiction offers ways of imagining a more inclusive community than Victorian narrative strategies allow for. Instead of presenting the nuclear family as a model for the social order, the gothic finds ways of imagining alternative forms of kinship.

Armstrong sees an interesting parallel between narrative strategies of the novel and feminist strategies. She is critical about strands in second wave feminism which have stressed the importance of cultural agency for women ('a different voice') too much, not unlike the Victorian novel, in which the highest ambition for women seems to be self expression rather than power or property. Armstrong reads gothic fiction for possible alternatives, connecting feminism and gothic in an innovative way, leaving earlier discussions on female gothic behind.

I will assess Armstrong's ideas by analysing Renate Dorrestein's (1954) fifth book *Het perpetuum mobile van de liefde* (*The Perpetuum Mobile of Love*, 1988); an intriguing mixture of gothic fiction, feminist pamphlet and autobiography. Dorrestein, queen of Dutch gothic and a renowned feminist in the 1980s, gives a both hilarious and tragic account of her painful struggle to become a writer. Before she can claim her work as her own and become an autonomous individual, her fictional self has to liberate herself from the vampirist shadow of her dead sister, who wanted to be a writer just like herself, and various other monstrous women she finds herself surrounded by.

In my paper I will examine cross-connections between second wave feminist discourse and gothic narrative strategies. I will argue that Dorrestein investigates the feminist notion of sisterhood through the autobiographical narrative about her sister's suicide. By making the political personal again, Dorrestein finds modes to express the unspeakable rivalry and competition between sisters – and that includes feminists –, using vampire thinking.

Ardel Thomas

BIO

Ardel Thomas is the chair of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Studies at City College of San Francisco. She received her Ph.D. in Modern Thought and Literature from Stanford University. She recently published an essay in the *Forum on Public Policy* entitled "Equity Denied: How Global Colonization and Imperialism Inhibits Lesbian Identity and Mobility". For her current research, she is exploring the intersections of gender, sexuality, and race in queer nineteenth-century British gothic horror. Ardel has won two gold medals in powerlifting at the Gay Games and hopes to do well this summer in competitive same-sex ballroom dancing at the Outgames in Copenhagen.

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ABSTRACT

Queer Family Structures in Elizabeth Gaskell's Gothic Short Fiction

Elizabeth Gaskell utilizes the gothic genre to explore and provide points of escape for women confined within abusive, heteronormative situations. From her understanding of the ways that gender, class, and subversions of "normative" heterosexual family structures can function together to create transgressive critiques and narratives, Gaskell finds a place to carry out queer family re-structurings within her gothic short fiction. This paper focuses on "The Old Nurse's Story" and "The Grey Woman"- tales that explore the ways that young ladies are imprisoned within the gothic mansion, only to be saved by their women servants. On the surface, this may not seem at all transgressive (the notions that servants have to save their young charges); however, Gaskell makes very clear that the young ladies are saved from their "heteronormative," destructive families by servant class women who are willing to risk creating a new, supportive family structure outside of the bounds of a bipolar gender structure as well as beyond the confines of a heterosexual economy.

Anne Quema

BIO

Anne Quéma teaches theories of criticism and modern British fiction and poetry at Acadia University. She has published *The Agon of Modernism: Wyndham Lewis's Allegories, Aesthetics, and Politics* (Bucknell University Press, 1999) as well as articles in *Contemporary Literary Criticism*, *English Studies in Canada*, *Contemporary Literary Criticism*, *The Canadian Modernists Meet*, *Studies in Canadian Literature*, *Philosophy and Literature*, *West Coast Line*, *Gothic Studies*, and the *International Journal of Law in Context*. She is currently working on a book project on twentieth-century Gothic fiction and English family law.

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ABSTRACT

‘A Sombre Gust of Queer Fantasies’: Patricia Duncker’s *The Deadly Space Between*.

Gilbert and Gubar (1979), Fleenor (1983), Ellis (1989), Milbank (1993), Kilgour (1995), Miles (1995), Williams (1995), and Becker (1999) have all argued that the patriarchal family is an archetype that emerged in *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) and that recurs throughout the Gothic tradition. In this context, Sedgwick has argued that “the paranoid Gothic is specifically not about homosexuals or the homosexual; instead, heterosexuality is by definition its subject” (116). The question is this: do contemporary Gothic narratives remain trammled in Oedipal dramas, unable to envisage new narratives of kinship, or do some gesture towards scenarios of desire and identification that cultural norms have closeted? Published in 2002, Patricia Duncker’s *The Deadly Space Between* seems to reenact the Oedipal complex in its representation of a postmodern English family. Oscillating between, on the one hand, a heterosexual triangle involving Toby, his mother and his mysterious father and, on the other, a homosocial triangle involving Toby’s great aunt, her same-sex partner, and Toby’s mother, the novel seeks to break free from the heterosexual matrix and Gothic archetypes while reiterating both of them. I will suggest that this Gothic rewriting derives its cultural and historical specificity from being published during a major social and gender transformation in England.

This transformation concerns the conception of kinship structures and practices such as marriage. The year 2004 marks the culmination of this transformation through the passing of two historical Parliamentary acts: the *Gender Recognition Act* and the *Civil Partnership Act*. Arguably, this legislation contributed to the legitimization of homosexuality. Indeed, the very terms “gender” and “civil partnership” indicate a historical evolution in English law, particularly with regard to what constitutes the legal subject as well as legitimate kinship structures. However, and as I will demonstrate, the *Civil Partnership Act* remains rooted in incest as the fundamental taboo regimenting

affinity in English laws of marriage, a taboo that Levi-Strauss analyzed in *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* (1949). In her much quoted essay, “The Traffic of Women” (1975), Gayle Rubin argues that this interdict partly functions as a device that locks out or in homosexual identification and relationships.

Duncker’s novel, which explores the possibility of a post-Oedipal cultural script, explodes the boundaries safeguarding heterosexual kinship, and brings into the open psychic areas that remain cloistered by English legislation. Key to the novel is the subversion of the heterosexual family through a phantasmal enactment of an incestuous relation between Toby and his mother and through the creation of the mother’s mysterious lover who shift shapes into Toby’s haunting, incestuous father figure. The subversive effect of this Gothic rewriting lies in its constant deletion of the presumed boundaries between closeted space and social space, whereby the norm-regulated domestic home becomes the site of disobedience and phantasmal intimacy, whereby cyberculture straddles a world of globalized public information and a world of hallucinating and sensorial fantasy, whereby the scientific universe of a hospital laboratory turns into the claustrophobic labyrinth of incestuous desire and paranoia, and whereby history is contiguous with memory and the imagination. In all these instances, phantasies of excess and transgression do not remain in hidden recesses but migrate to the surface of public norms and conventions, shimmer as the hologram of computer hypertexts and painted canvases, and contaminate social performances and cultural rituals. While English laws of same-sex unions and gender identification still rest on a logic of foreclosure, Duncker’s novel burgles into this psycho-social closet and unbolts the doors of gender identification, kinship affinity, sexual categories, and normative reality.

Antonio Sanna

BIO

Antonio Sanna graduated in Italy in 2001. After his MA in English Literature, he has recently completed his PhD on late-nineteenth-century culture at the University of Westminster in London. His main research areas are: Victorian culture, Gothic literature and horror films. In the past two years, Antonio has presented papers on *Beowulf*, Ridley Scott's *Hannibal*, the *Alien* quadrilogy, the TV series *Twin Peaks*, the *Ginger Snaps* trilogy, the horror cave films and the postmodern criticism of contemporary horror films as well as on H.G. Wells's *The Time Machine*, Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and the works of Victorian spiritualists. His publications include articles on Henry James's "The Turn of The Screw", Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, Wells's *The Island of Dr. Moreau* and nineteenth-century ghost stories.

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ABSTRACT

Escaping or Re-affirming Heterosexuality? Unconventional Homosexuality and Transgressive Psychoanalysis in the *Hannibal* Series.

In Thomas Harris's Gothic novels *Red Dragon*, *The Silence of the Lambs*, *Hannibal* and *Hannibal Rising* as well as in their cinematic versions, the character of Dr. Lecter is initially presented as homosexual. Nevertheless, by the end of the narrative he falls in love with the FBI agent Clarice Starling who is charged with capturing him. In my paper, I shall argue that Lecter's love for Starling (and following relationship with her, according to the literary version of the story) can be interpreted as a challenge to the "alternative" or "deviant" discourse of homosexuality. On the other hand, I shall analyse Lecter's practice of cannibalism as itself an escape from heteronormativity. Moreover, by specifically considering that the bond between Hannibal Lecter and Clarice Starling reproduces the relationship between an analysand and his/her patient, I shall interpret the transaction between psychoanalysis and the genre of the Gothic as enacted in the *Hannibal* series as a transgressive transfiguration. Indeed, I shall suggest that these texts create a reactionary dialogue between psychoanalysis and the Gothic by representing the character of a therapist as provoking the feeling of horror in both his "patient" Clarice Starling and the reader/viewer. Simultaneously, I shall argue that the *Hannibal* series present a positive characterization of psychoanalysis through the suggestion that "real" therapeutic analysis is actually beneficial and safe.

Johannes Schlegel

BIO

Johannes Schlegel, *1980 in Aachen/ Germany, received his M.A. from Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich in 2007. He is currently working on a dissertation on literature and evil and holds a teaching assignment at the Faculty of Languages and Literatures at the LMU. He has published a monograph on Baudrillard, Foucault and contemporary/poststructuralist theory.

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ABSTRACT

“They Fuck You Up”: Revaluations of the Nuclear Family in Recent Gothic Film

In Gothic narratives representations of evil predominantly seem to be linked to the subject-matter of the family. Transgression is thus depicted as threat to the nuclear family and its socio-economic politics and ideology. This paper, however, suggests that in recent Gothic texts a thematic shift and revaluation can be observed. By analysing and contextualizing three contemporary movies – *Eden Lake* (dir. James Watkins), *Mum & Dad* (dir. Steven Sheil) and *The Strangers* (dir. Bryan Bertino) – the paper shows that it is no longer the family that is threatened, but increasingly becomes threatening itself as well as the source of evil. While the mentioned literary tradition seems to prove Foucault's reading of Bataille in his “Preface to Transgression” – that transgression ultimately constitutes and confirms the law – and therefore appears to be outright conservative, these films, by means of their generic radicalness, show the sheer monstrosity of the now perverted familiar. Asking what kinds of escape such excruciating experiences could offer also poses the question of the legitimacy of a highly controversial, albeit always political, genre.

Aspasia Stephanou

BIO

Aspasia Stephanou, 2nd year PhD student, University of Stirling. I am a research postgraduate student at the University of Stirling. My thesis explores postmodern subjectivities, identity and otherness through a historical analysis of Vampire fiction, Blood discourse and Vampire Subcultures. I have an MSc in Comparative and General Literature from the University of Edinburgh. My other research interests lie in gothic and avant-garde literature, performance art, horror cinema and gothic subcultures.

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ABSTRACT

Vampiric Sex: Patrick Califia and Female Transgression

This paper will argue that Patrick Califia's vampire stories are transgressive and offer a way out from traditional representations of femininity and sexuality in Gothic fiction. Her stories create a world of excess: transgression, liberated sexuality and sadomasochism are all evident and experienced by lesbians, homosexuals and heterosexuals. But her extreme, pornographical narratives do not invite any limiting or traditional roles for the female subject. It is the female subject that is powerful and consciously decisive in her acts of eroticism and pleasure. In her short story "The Vampire" (Macho Sluts, 1988) and in her vampire novel *Mortal Companion* (2004) the female subject makes a choice- a choice to transgress social order and the subordination of her sexuality to any pre-ordered and restricted conventional performance of her subjectivity. Her role is subversive and paradigmatic of the postmodern experience, where gender performativity and excess of pleasure and eroticism produce revolutionary roles for subjects in becoming.

My analysis of Califia's transgressive fiction, will be informed by theories related to transgression, limit experience and desiring machines as they have been elaborated in the works of Georges Bataille (*Inner Experience*), Michel Foucault ("Preface to Transgression"), and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (*A Thousand Plateaus*). Bataille's obsession with experience through ecstasy to reach a transcendent beyond, to reach the extreme limit of the "possible", is significant to understand the limitations and possibilities of existence, desiring, becoming other. In a similar way, I will focus on Deleuze's and Guattari's revolutionary project which proposes multiplicity and desire as a productive machine, active and reactive desire that ignores the concept of "desire as lack" and the Oedipal trappings of Freudian psychoanalysis. For Deleuze and Guattari the subject-like Califia's women and female vampiress, places him/herself in a non dialectical, non dominating relationship with the world. The concept of the body without organs-the body, in which desire persists, offers a new form of subjectivity. Specifically

the masochist's body, is close to the idea of the BwO and this can be related to Califia's descriptions of female sexuality and sexual experiences through pain and pleasure.

Through a close analysis of female sexuality and performance in Califia's vampire stories, I will present gothic space as open and not claustrophobic-a setting in which femininity is performed against the conventions of the Big Other. The vampire is a great metaphor to talk about excess. In Califia's vampire stories, sadomasochism and sexuality are celebrated and interrupt traditional conceptions of eroticism and gender. Gothic fiction can thus offer progressive multiplicities and endless possibilities for a liberated subjective performance.

Maria Vara

BIO

Maria Vara holds an MA from the University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK and a PhD from the School of English, Aristotle University, Thessaloniki, Greece, where she has taught courses in critical writing and fiction. Her research interests and publications focus on the novel and questions of genre and gender, most recently contributing articles to *Metafiction and Metahistory in Contemporary Women's Writing*, edited by Ann Heilmann and Mark Llewellyn (Palgrave Macmillan 2007) and to *Le Gothic*, edited by Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik (Palgrave Macmillan 2008). She is currently working on a project on *The Reception of Charles Dickens in Europe*, edited by Michael Hollington, to be published by Continuum.

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ABSTRACT

The Narrative Power of Constrictions and Clichés in 1970s Fiction by Women or When the Detective Genre Turns Gothic

It is common knowledge that, following Jorge Luis Borges's and Alain Robbe-Grillet's lead, Paul Auster's *New York Trilogy* (1987) and Iain Banks's *Complicity* (1993), among other works, attempted an inspired subversion of the conventions of the detective genre, when the panoply of Gothic imagery was summoned to replace any coherent enigma resolution. This shift from the classical detective formula (of the early twentieth century) with its rigid stylistic, structural and thematic conventions to an open text, the so-called metafictional, metaphysical, or anti-detective, has been interpreted as presenting the postmodern dissolution of coherent identity formation by recent critical studies, which describe striking parallels between postmodernism and the Gothic, the most important being a similar obsession with foregrounding ontological concerns.

This paper will argue that the above denaturalisation process of restrictive narrative conventions has not been an exclusively male territory. Thus, Muriel Spark's *The Driver's Seat* (1970) and Diane Johnson's *The Shadow Knows* (1974) will be re-introduced as the first anti-detective works by women, works which summon the Gothic so as to undo narrative and feminist imperatives. Their inconclusiveness and depiction of rape constituted these works highly problematic within the spirit of the feminist seventies: they were seen to act out the very anti-feminist stereotype of passivity and female neurosis which culminates in sexual murder. This is due to the way in which their central heroines take up (albeit with a bent) the theme of victim precipitation (as introduced by the victimology studies of the time) "asking for it" in a world where lonely women are, as Susan Brownmiller explains in her 1970s "rape classic" book *Against our Will: Men, Women and Rape*, conditioned to the victim's role.

However, I would suggest that these texts are traversed by an anti-naturalist and non-transcendental materiality that enables us to side-step any literal interpretation and trace, instead, a monstrous restaging/demythologisation of passivity: at a time in literary history when the term “Female Gothic” is about to be coined, the maiden in flight is, I wish to argue, already self-reflexively questioning rigid categorisations by literally *asking for it*, in a grotesque inversion of the terrified Gothic heroine about to be raped or murdered. Thus, these works can be seen to perform an inquiry into the notion of genre, by proleptically referring to what we experience in the early twenty-first century when the Gothic is hailed by critics as a diffuse phenomenon, its power coming from everywhere. They also anticipate the turn of 1990s literary theory towards gender performativity and an anti-essentialist re-estimation of subjectivity, offering a possible escape from mainstream 1970s representations of gender and sexuality.

Carole Veldman

BIO

Dr. Carole Veldman holds a Ph.D. and M.Phil in the Gothic Imagination from the University of Stirling, where she co-organised the Gothic Spaces Symposium in 2004. She is currently working as an associate lecturer at the University of Aachen, teaching Ph.D. students. Her research interests lie in genre theory, in particular the romance, and contemporary feminist and cultural theory. Her latest publication is appearing in *The Mind of Love: New Approaches to Popular Romance Fiction* (McFarland Publishing, 2009).

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ABSTRACT

Resignifying Gothic Symbology: Postfeminist Sexualities in Popular Culture

Gothic, throughout its many historical guises, has remained true to its fascination with boundaries and the breaches thereof. The play of entrapment — being denied points of access/exit — and excess — pushing beyond the limits of what we know/are — signifies a powerful discourse of ambivalence which, as Fred Botting says, resonates among a multitude of genres and media. In the last 15 years or so, the diffusion of Gothic symbology across popular culture has given rise to hit TV shows like *Buffy, the Vampire Slayer* or *Angel*, as well as literary developments such as the best-selling *Anita Blake Vampire Hunter* and *Twilight* fiction series or Ellora's Cave's successful Vampire/Werewolf romantica e-books.

The focus of the paper is on this cross-generic hybridity. What happens to Gothic markers once they coalesce with the teen flick, the action genre or romantica? Do such encounters with the generic other facilitate the articulation of other “frontier” discourses, such as postfeminism (Mann, 2008)? To what extent do these often contradictory experiments of mainstream culture dare us to go beyond the barriers of format, characterisation and plot? And to what extent might these points of exit actually neutralise the pungency of the Gothic bite?

In order to address these questions, this paper pays particular attention to the transformations of Gothic figures — i.e. the Gothic heroine, the hero/villain, the monster — in *Buffy, the Vampire Slayer*, Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* series, Laurell K. Hamilton's *Anita Blake Vampire Hunter* series and various Ellora's Cave romantica e-books. It is my contention that these texts re-script the tale of women's victimisation and vulnerability that has traditionally been inscribed on the Gothic female body. Radcliffe's or du Maurier's virtuous and helpless ingénue is replaced by the physically empowered girlie, the kick-ass action heroine or Everywoman. These heroines do not dread the other

but bed him with a gusto and bodily awareness that speaks of and to postfeminist pleasures of erotic liberalism and self-government. Here, the threat of male predation is diffused to such a degree that the Gothic monster — the vampires, werewolves or demons that so often populate the mainstream Gothic plot — becomes a feasible, if not entirely domesticated, romantic lead. The exchange of body fluids between hero and heroine, haematological and other, does not ban the heroine to the illicit realms of otherness. In turn, their sexual encounters transform the monstrous hero into a safer, less contaminated lover. The resignification of Gothic symbology also echoes in the diversity of sexualities and erotic structures featured in these texts — i.e. in the articulation of bisexuality and romantic *ménage à trois*. The paper concludes that the re-invigorating potential of these textual hybrids should not be underestimated; yet it also cautiously draws attention to the disablement of Gothic markers that such points of exit might engender.

Lies Wesseling

BIO

Lies Wesseling is associate professor at the department of Literature and Art at Maastricht University. Together with Rosemarie Buikema she authored a book on the gothic in Dutch literature (*Het Heilige Huis*, Amsterdam University Press, 2006). Her topics of research are: the interaction between fiction and science, i.e. children's literature, and science-based childrearing advice (1845-2000); rhetorical analysis of scientific personae, and literature and modernity, i.e. the gothic novel.

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ABSTRACT

'Pogroms and Witch-Burnings, Angry Gods and Scapegoats': Evil Children in Contemporary Gothic Fiction

During the late twentieth century, the Gothic genre and the cultural construction of childhood became more closely entangled than ever before through two developments:

- a. an increasingly centrality of evil children as leading characters in Gothic fictions, from the sixties onwards (cf. John Wyndham, *The Midwich Cuckoos* (1957), Ira Levin, *Rosemary's Baby* (1967), William Peter Blatty, *The Exorcist* (1971) Doris Lessing, *The Fifth Child* (1988), etc.).
- b. the remediation of the Gothic mode in children's literature (Diana Wynne Jones, *The Time of the Ghost* (1981), Margaret Mahy, *The Haunting* (1982); *The Tricksters* (1986), M.T. Anderson, *Thirsty* (1997), Gary Crew, *Gothic Hospital* (2001), etc.).

My paper will argue first that both phenomena may be understood as attempts to escape from the child rearing scenarios propagated by science-based child rearing experts such as Benjamin Spock, Penelope Leach, and the like. The child rearing advice industry inculcates a perspective on family life which is a-moral, meritocratic, individualistic and fully devoted to the 'nurture assumption' (Judith Rich Harris). 'Your child will turn out right if you but treat it right', seems to be the central message of this discursive practice, implying that parents may take all the credit or should shoulder all the blame for the ways in which their children turn out.

Gothic fictions featuring evil children destroy this illusion of science-based control by conjuring up premodern forces from the dark past which have supposedly 'innocent' children in thrall. Evil children are represented as genetic throwbacks or atavisms (Ben in Lessing's *The Fifth Child*), or as the very devil incarnate. They are so many attempts to escape from the meritocratic rhetoric of the child rearing advice industry.

Children's Gothic shows us something different, namely child characters who have somehow got caught up in an as yet uncompleted process of demonization. Children's gothic is about demonization in action, so to speak. The stigma of evil is easily attached to those child characters which happen to be above or below average, which is another attempt to alleviate the tensions generated by the child rearing advice industry. Science-based child rearing expertise does not reflect on child rearing in terms of vices and virtues, but in terms of normalcy and abnormalcy, health and deviance.

Ever since its inception in the eighteenth century, the Gothic novel has fulfilled the function of alleviating the tensions caused by the cultural contradictions of modernity. It still fulfills this function nowadays, by pointing to points of exit from the demands of the child rearing advice industry, which put pressure on both parents and children. Parents are given to understand that they have the power to make or break their children, while children have to conform to the standards of normalcy, which are located at some average or golden mean which nobody fully embodies. Now that the atavisms of Gothic literary conventions have also found their way to children's literature, the Gothic provides both parties with their own specific modes of relief.

(Un)conventional Parenthood

Keynote speaker

Deborah Chambers

BIO

Deborah Chambers is Professor of Media and Cultural Studies at Newcastle University. Her research in the sociology of culture and media focuses on gender, identities, the family and cultural theory. *Representing the Family* (2001) examines official, media, and domestic discourses of family values. *Women & Journalism* (2004 with Steiner and Fleming) provides a comparative analysis of women in journalism in USA and Britain. *New Social Ties* (2006) explores contemporary debates in social and cultural theory concerning the impact of new communication technologies on social networks. Professor Chambers is currently writing a book on the Sociology of Families (Polity).

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ABSTRACT

Fertility and Fame: Media and Academic Discourses of Parenting

Social and cultural theories about intimacy and relationships are now enjoying a status once lacking between the 1960s and 1980s. As Carol Smart (2004) states, “*Over the last decade, the family has become interesting to sociology again*”. This renewed interest is accompanied by a persistent nervousness about the decline of ‘the family’. Scholars such as Bauman (2003) and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) continue to advance notions of future families as dystopian. This has encouraged a ‘social problems’ framework which, argues Smart, constrains novel exploration. Smart takes a different approach, emphasising the affirmative dimensions of family life. This paper explores change and continuity in media and academic discourses of ‘family’. It assesses key trends in popular media, news and academic accounts of families/parenthood between the 1990s and the present. With the ‘rich and famous’ taking the lead, fertility is now fashionable. Celebrities are being regularly portrayed as parents/families. Meanwhile, the fertility and parenting skills of working class, poor, ethnic minorities and Third World nations continue to be interrogated and even demonised. Fertility is being flaunted, as long as the fertile are educated, glamorous and/or white. A noteworthy transformation is the arrival of the Obama family: the ‘Black Family’ in the White House.

Respondents

Estella Tincknell

BIO

Estella Tincknell is Reader in Media and Cultural Studies at the University of the West of England. She has published widely in the areas of popular media and contemporary culture in journals ranging from the *European Journal of Cultural Studies* to the *Journal of Popular Film and Television*. Her book, *Mediating the Family: Gender, Culture and Representation* (Hodder Arnold, 2005), has been described as ‘an exemplary cultural studies text’ and her co-authored article (with Parvati Raghuram), *Big Brother: Reconfiguring the ‘active audience’ of Cultural Studies?*, has become a canonical text for courses on reality television. She worked with Deborah Chambers and Joost van Loon on a series of essays about teenage attitudes to sexuality, and their joint-authored article *Begging for It: ‘New Femininities’, Social Agency and Moral Discourse in Contemporary Teenage and Men’s Magazines* has been among the ten most downloaded articles in *Feminist Media Studies* over the last five years. Her most recent book is the edited collection (with Ian Conrich) *Film’s Musical Moments* (EUP, 2006), and essays on the female spy in *Casino Royale* and adolescence and witchcraft in the New Gothic film and television are due out later this year.

She is currently working on a monograph about the films of Jane Campion for Palgrave Macmillan and another edited collection of articles on *Aging Femininities* for Cambridge Scholars Press.

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Claartje Vinkenburg

BIO

Dr Claartje Vinkenburg is associate professor of organizational behavior and development at the VU University Amsterdam. She studied social psychology at the University of Groningen, after which she was in management consulting and a visiting scholar and adjunct lecturer at Northwestern University (USA). She is programme director for the International Business Administration BSc programme at the VU. As managing director of the Amsterdam Center for Career Research (www.accr.nl), Claartje's research focuses on gender, leadership and career advancement, including the effects of motherhood ideology on women's career patterns and outcomes, with Josje Dijkers (VU) and Marloes van Engen (UvT).

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Moderator

Josje Weusten

BIO

Josje Weusten is a Ph.D. candidate and a lecturer at the *Centre for Gender and Diversity of Maastricht University* in the Netherlands. She has been involved in the development, coordination, and teaching of several Bachelor courses in the fields of cultural and gender studies. She is currently writing her dissertation on cultural - mainly literary - representations of motherhood and fatherhood in the Netherlands from 1980 onwards. She has published on this subject in the peer reviewed journal *Tijdschrift voor genderstudies*.

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Panelists

Elke Brems

BIO

Elke Brems (1971) works as a professor in Dutch Literature and Translation Studies at the University of Leuven (K.U.Leuven) and the University College Brussels (HUB).

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ABSTRACT

96 Fathers and One Mother: The Poetry of Toon Tellegen

Although the novel is considered to be pre-eminently the genre where sons can come to terms with their fathers, poetry too can serve as a textual tool to represent a father figure and aspects of fatherhood.

In my contribution to the panel on 'Unconventional Parenthood' I would like to present an analysis of the father figure in the poetry of the Dutch poet Toon Tellegen. I will start from his volume *Raafvogels* (2006), in which each poem (except the last) starts with the words 'Mijn vader' ('My father'). Each poem is a renewed attempt to characterize the father. The lyrical subject uses stereotypes, proverbs and maxims to describe his father. This impersonal, common and collective language contrasts with the intimate, personal and poetic language that is typical for the lyrical genre. In that opposition between convention and particularity one can read a clash between the normative discourses on fatherhood and the personal experience of this son. In Tellegen's poetry, the lyrical subject can be observed in the process of trying – and failing - to create an authentic and coherent image of the father. Themes that run through these poems are power, death, cruelty and emptiness. Yet the tone of the poems is naive, anecdotal, charming. Language can be used to ignore and even hide reality. It is significant that the 'I' is completely erased from these poems. Interesting is also the last poem, which is a 'motherpoem'. Of course that poem will have an important role in my interpretation of the volume. Finally there is the unusual, 'personal' foreword to the volume: is that part of the poetic discourse or is it a biographical link to the 'real Tellegen'?

I will then broaden my analysis to the representation of father-son-relationships and images of fatherhood in other parts of Tellegen's oeuvre, most notably his very popular children's stories.

Finally I will try to set out stakes for further research into the representation of fatherhood in modern literature and more specifically in poetry. Tellegen's poetry offers

not only a comment on fatherhood, but also on the representation of fatherhood. That critical questioning of the relation between content and form (the (im)possibility of representation in poetry) is fascinating and highly relevant.

Barbara Bush

BIO

Barbara Bush is Professor of Imperial History at Sheffield Hallam University. Her key publications include *Slave Women in Caribbean Society, 1650-1838* (Oxford, James Currey; Indiana University Press, 1990); 'Gender and Empire: The Twentieth Century' in Philippa Levine ed., *Gender and Empire*, Oxford History of the British Empire, Companion Series (2004) and *Imperialism and Postcolonialism* (Pearson Education, 2006). Her research is focused on links between gender, culture and empire in slave societies and during the later period of European colonial rule. She is currently researching the development of the academic social sciences and colonial knowledge about Caribbean family structures and gender relations.

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ABSTRACT

Parenting in Adversity: The Impact of the Atlantic Slave Trade on African Cultural Beliefs about Motherhood and Child-Rearing.

Early European accounts of the west coast of Africa provided representations of the fecundity of women and the high value placed on motherhood. African mothers were central to transmitting family memory and the culture and values of their communities and slave women carried this knowledge through to the slave plantation. Mother Africa is evoked by Yemoja, an orisha of the Yoruba religion, the essence of motherhood and the protector of children, and other similar deities relating to female fertility who traveled with Africans across the Atlantic. Yet slavery, in Africa and the Americas, deeply compromised African family structures, women's reproductive role and, slaves' ability to care for their children. In this paper I explore the impact of slavery and the slave trade on the most fundamental relationship in human societies, the bond between mother and child. Firstly, I review European representations of motherhood and childrearing pre-enslavement in the African cultures of origin. Secondly, I address the traumas of dislocation and enslavement during the middle passage. This is followed by some insights into the experiences of women and children in Caribbean slave societies where I argue that, despite the harsh conditions, African-derived conceptualisations of motherhood and parenting endured. I conclude with a brief consideration of the reverberations of slavery into the post slavery era, specifically in relation to European attempts to change 'untypical' African-derived parenting practices that did not conform to white European norms.

Natalie Carter

BIO

Natalie Carter is a PhD Candidate in American Literature at The George Washington University in Washington, D.C. (USA). Her primary research and pedagogical interests are 20th Century American Literature, feminist theory, trauma theory, gender and sexuality studies, and (female, sexual) reproduction narratives. She currently has projects on F. Scott Fitzgerald and Charlotte Perkins Gilman in consideration for publication. This is her first trip to Europe and she is thrilled to have her mother, Lola, by her side to reassure her that she is brilliant and perfect, no matter what anyone else might say.

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ABSTRACT

‘The New American Family’: Transnational Adoption, Resentment, and the Obligation of Caregiving in Gish Jen’s *The Love Wife*

In the opening lines of Gish Jen’s 2004 novel, *The Love Wife*, Janie “Blondie” Wong proclaims that her family is “an improvisation” (3). The “new American family” (3) around whom this text revolves is: Carnegie, a Chinese immigrant, raised and educated in America; Blondie, his wealthy American wife; two adopted Chinese daughters and one biological Chinese American son; deceased grandmother Mama Wong; and Lanlan, the “love wife,” of the title, a distant relative of Carnegie’s who has been willed into the family, via Mama Wong.

This paper explores the myriad representations of the (un)conventional and often (un)wanted role of the caregiver in *The Love Wife*. My primary aim is to open up some of the theoretically necessary questions about the implications of transnational adoption, and to examine the problematic nature of the transnational adoption narrative as a literary form. Drawing on theories of postcolonialism, trauma, and gender, I examine the unique set of challenges that this “new American family” encounters. Discrepancies in behavior and attitudes toward the children are considered, as is Blondie’s position as Mama Wong’s primary caregiver following the older woman’s stroke. Lanlan’s dual role as caregiver/dependent is interrogated, along with the tensions which result from attempting to fulfill the conflicting obligations of these competing spaces.

Denise Ferris

BIO

Denise Ferris has lectured in Photography at the School of Art, the Australian National University since 1987. Currently an Associate Dean (Education), in 2007 she completed a doctoral exegesis *Spoilt Milk: Photography, Recollection and Constructing A Maternal in Humanities and Social Sciences* at the University of Technology, Sydney. This examined her visual articulation of maternal ambivalence through the milk print. Her thesis also investigated a 'maternal genealogy' in fine art photography, a lineage of mothers representing both their children and their relationship. The issues surrounding consumption of these photographs, made for both private recollection and for viewing in public, are of ongoing interest.

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ABSTRACT

The Troubling Aspects of Truthfulness: Awful and Awesome Children in Contemporary Fine Art Photography

This paper examines contemporary photography's increasingly perverse representations of childhood. These public photographs depict children as demons, incapable of innocence, and also display impossibly perfect, digitised children as the protagonists of both ironic and idyllic childhoods.

Showing artist's images at either ends of this spectrum, I argue these representations signal a broader confusion over childhood, amplified by trends to either pessimism, fixating on the potential for evil, or unrealistic longing, reinstating an idealised version of childhood.

While signifying styles currently embraced for public exhibition, these depictions expose a social state of mind, rather than the actual state of childhood. Mirroring society's obsession with the 'awful aspects of truthfulness', these representations suggest dysfunction. They appear to lay bare the 'truths' we have become accustomed to seeing and hearing. On the other hand, proffering an impossible reality they also lead to further anxiety.

I question what is actually revealed, explaining how the pictured childhoods conjure other fictions. I consider photography's influence on imagining childhood, acknowledging an uncertain reciprocity between public photographs and social attitudes, fuelled by the reality effect of photography. I explain how contemporary representations, contributing to our shared narratives of childhood, while apparently confirming nasty suspicions, also excite a troubling fascination with unattainable childhood perfection.

Indera Grewal

BIO

I am a 3rd year doctoral candidate, based in the English department at Royal Holloway, University of London. My thesis examines representations of non-conventional motherhood in Toni Morrison's fiction. I have presented papers at Cardiff University (Wales), De Montfort University (Leicester), and Mansfield College (Oxford University). I have also contributed a chapter to a recent publication entitled, *Hosting the Monster* (Rodopi Press, 2008).

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ABSTRACT

Representations of the 'Anti-Mother' in the British Tabloid Media

My paper will examine representations of motherhood in the British tabloid media. Using aspects of feminist theory and cultural criticism, I will begin with a discussion on how the maternal body continues to be controlled by a patriarchally-defined Western society and its romantic notions of motherhood. Despite history having documented the progress that women's movements have made, the mother figure is still expected to demonstrate her commitment to the home and family. She must always be seen to be displaying maternal warmth and regularly demonstrating her sacrifice for the family. I shall then compare media portrayals of conforming or 'successful' celebrity mothers to examples of a darker 'type' of motherhood; that which fails to conform to the cultural markers created by society. The media, as the social consciousness of Western society, has created a negative narrative to illustrate this 'other' mother. She is condemned for her perceived failures and her motherhood is put on public trial.

Furthermore, the news media has, at times, compromised its duty to be objective, using language that will provoke readers/viewers to form opinions against such women. I will examine the news coverage of stories concerning Kate McCann and Fiona MacKeown. Kate McCann was criticised by the media for being an unemotional mother when her daughter, Madeleine, disappeared. Why did her husband, Gerry, escape such verbal attacks? Fiona MacKeown, whose teenage daughter was raped and murdered while on holiday in Goa, was accused of being a neglectful mother and her 'hippy' lifestyle was attacked. Another example is of the celebrity, Kerry Katona; she is a former 'Mother of the Year' competition winner who is now regularly attacked by the tabloids for being an incompetent and irresponsible parent. She is then, a 'good' mother gone 'bad.'

Biased news reportage ensures the definition of ideal motherhood is reaffirmed and that the maternal body is symbolically returned to male control. However, I am interested in a reassessment of the condemned behaviour of these women and the points of difference

between their expected maternal role and their actual experience of motherhood. Are these women bad mothers, or, are they simply misunderstood?

Jyotsna Gupta

BIO

Jyotsna Agnihotri Gupta PhD is currently Assistant Professor in Gender and Diversity at the University for Humanistics in Utrecht, and senior research fellow at the International Institute of Asian Studies, Leiden University, in the Netherlands. She is the author of *New Reproductive Technologies, Women's Health and Autonomy: Freedom or Dependency?* Sage Publications (2000), and several articles published in books and scientific journals on new reproductive technologies, women's health and autonomy, and population and development issues based on empirical research in India and the Netherlands.

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ABSTRACT

Parenthood by design

With advances in reproductive medicine the boundaries of the body, in terms of closures at the skin and finiteness in terms of biological age, have been stretched, resulting in the open, flexible, leaky, fluid and unbounded body. New meanings of embodiment enabled by the transfer of reproductive body parts are being created. The coherence of selfhood and that of motherhood/fatherhood is constantly risked, fractured and transformed by virtue of the fact of being embodied in contemporary culture. It involves intercorporeality, a material fusion and confusion of bodies, and a material indeterminacy while producing relationality.

Nevertheless, the importance assigned to conventional parenthood that is primarily genetic in nature has not lessened, even if realised through unconventional means, what we may call manufactured parenthood, or parenthood by design, implying individual agency. In this way lesbian women and homosexual men, too, are aspiring to realise their parenthood dream. Reproductive journeys in our globalised world override boundaries of the physical body as well as spatial and temporal boundaries. Parenthood by design also includes the search for 'the designer baby'.

Using two photos by the Dutch photographer Margi Geerlinks as point of exit, I will discuss the deconstruction/reconstruction of parenthood in our post-modern times realised through reproductive technology and the complex possibilities and problems it presents in terms of defining motherhood, fatherhood, kinship, and identity.

Margreth Hoek

BIO

Margreth Hoek

1989-1994 studied economics at the University of Amsterdam and specialised in thinking about care and ethics of care. Title masterthesis: Care can't wait until Sunday. Towards an economic theory of care. 1999-2004 Phd-student at the faculty of social science of the University of Utrecht. 2008 Phd thesis: Uprooted parenthood. Meanings of care and responsibility in Dutch governmental policies regarding support for parents with child rearing (1979-2002). Projectleader at JSO expertisecentrum voor jeugd, samenleving en opvoeding at Gouda. Editor: Tijdschrift Ouderschap & Ouderbegeleiding.

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ABSTRACT

Uprooted Parenthood. Meanings of Care and Responsibility in Dutch Governmental Policies Regarding Support for Parents with Child Rearing (1979-2002)

Keywords: Family policy, ethic of care, discours analysis, parents, support for parents, responsibility, policy stories, educational citizenship, parental learning process, child rearing.

Since 1979 successive Dutch governments have argued for public involvement with parental child rearing but raising a family is also considered a primarily private matter. This tension between restraint and involvement exerts influence on ideas about good care and the distribution of responsibility in child rearing that can be traced in 'policy stories' about supporting parents.

During the eighties and nineties, four policy stories were developed: the story of development, the story of equality, the story of prevention, and the story of control. Child rearing plays a crucial role in these stories but ideas about the practice of upbringing are marginal. Also is the voice of parents missing. New impulses in thinking about governmental involvement in raising children are possible, if policy makers take the experiences of parents as the starting point of their policy. A child rearing discourse in which parents are engaged in a learning process, trying to become 'good enough'-educators can be introduced. This learning process can stagnate for longer periods. I call this 'uprooted parenting'. On the basis of literature research I distinguish four types of stagnation which might hinder the parental learning process and which require differentiated forms of support for parents.

Michèle Schaal

BIO

After earning her Maîtrise at the Université Marc Bloch in Strasbourg, France, Michèle Schaal pursued her studies at Indiana University, Bloomington in the USA to provide her work with a Gender Studies perspective. There, she obtained a Master of Arts degree in French literature in 2004. She is currently an ABD Ph.D. student. Her dissertation focuses on the problematic of gendered identity in contemporary francophone narratives and is entitled *From alterity to hybridity: the theatricality of femininity in five francophone novels*. Her scholarly interests reside in 20th/21st century francophone women writers, women's writing, as well as literary and gender critic and theory. She presently lives in Berlin, Germany, where she is establishing a joint dissertation project with the Freie Universität.

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ABSTRACT

Parenthood as (Gendered) Performance in Virginie Despentes' *Teen Spirit*

Virginie Despentes, a contemporary French woman writer, explores and distorts romantic notions and stereotypes at play in society, especially as related to gender. She focuses specifically on the performative nature of (gendered) identity. In her novel *Teen spirit*, she tackles parenthood and fatherhood in particular. Does parenthood consist merely of a performance of a determined (romantic) role? Why do these parental presumptions persist in modern day society? And how much is parenthood affected by typical representations and expectations of gender?

In the narrative, gender permeates each aspect of social life and personal identity. As Judith Butler, Despentes portrays it as essentially performative and therefore understands the persistence of (un)romantic representations as normative patterns to follow. Thus parenthood, as Bruno, the protagonist, understands, becomes a vector for the transmission of these patterns in spite of their normativeness or unreality. Father, mother and child, although not a nuclear family, indeed come to take on, whether deliberately or not, (un)traditional gendered familial roles. Despentes however also concedes the enduring attractiveness of these clichés and behaviors, as considerations on the matter by (un)conventional characters reveal. Nevertheless, performance may also imply choice and thus become a way to create an alternative and shifting (gendered) identity.

Ilana Shiloh

BIO

Ilana Shiloh is lecturer and Head of English Studies at the Academic Center for Law and Business in Ramat Gan, Israel. She received her Ph.D. in American literature from Tel Aviv University, where she taught detective fiction in the Department of English. She is the author of *Paul Auster and Postmodern Quest: On the Road to Nowhere* (Peter Lang, 2002) and has published a range of articles on contemporary fiction and film. Her second book, *The Double, the Labyrinth and the Locked Room – Metaphors of Paradox in Detective Fiction and Film* is forthcoming in 2009.

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ABSTRACT

No Exit: Motherhood as Nightmare in Lionel's Shriver's *We Need to Talk about Kevin*

We Need to Talk about Kevin (2003) is one of the most subversive and powerful novels published in the last decade. The epistolary narrative, composed entirely of letters written by Eva Khatchadourian to her apparently estranged husband Franklin, tells the story of the couple's adolescent son, Kevin. At the age of fifteen, Kevin shoots dead seven fellow pupils and a teacher at his suburban high school. Two years later the narrator traces the inexorable sequence of events that led to the tragedy.

Shriver's novel is so profoundly disturbing because it embodies our worst fears: the fear that a child can be innately sadistic and evil, that a mother can hate her offspring and yet never be able to leave him, that a father can blindly adore his son and be mortally wounded by him. These fears have traditionally been assuaged by social scripts and cultural myths. The first and perhaps most pervasive of these myths is the socially ingrained belief in the innate goodness and innocence of children. Its correlative is the axiom of a mother's unconditional love, naturally emanating from her body like the milk sustaining her child's existence.

Eva Khatchadourian is gradually revealed as an unreliable narrator. But she is the novel's center of consciousness and our vision becomes aligned with hers. Through Shriver's unforgettable, disquieting heroine we learn to question our most deeply ingrained assumptions about childhood and parenthood. The deconstruction of these assumptions is the focus of the present paper.

New Directions in Age Studies

Keynote speaker

Margaret Morganroth Gullette

BIO

Margaret Morganroth Gullette (Ph.D. Harvard University) is a cultural critic and prize-winning writer of non-fiction, an internationally known age critic, essayist, and activist. Her latest book, *Aged by Culture* (2004), was chosen as a “Noteworthy Book of the Year” by the Christian Science Monitor and nominated for a Pulitzer Prize. *Declining to Decline: Cultural Combat and the Politics of the Midlife* (1997) won the Emily Toth Award as the best feminist book on American popular culture. Gullette’s focus on the midlife has expanded to become Age Studies. Age studies from childhood on can be as powerful as studies of gender or race in empowering people to challenge American decline culture. Currently, Gullette is working on a book, tentatively called *The Hidden Coercions of Ageism*. She has written for *N.Y. Times*, *Ms.*, *Nation*, *Boston Globe*, *American Scholar*, *American Prospect*, *womensenews.org*, *Feminist Studies*, *Representations*, and the *Journal of the History of Sexuality*. Gullette has appeared on popular radio shows such as Brian Lehrer, The Connection, WBAI, To the Best of Our Knowledge, and CultureShocks. She is a recipient of fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the American Council of Learned Societies, and the Bunting Institute of Radcliffe. She is also a member of PEN-America.

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ABSTRACT

Autobiographical Exits from Decline

Not everyone wants to avoid decline narratives of aging. But some readers hunger for the most persuasive and engaging narratives that operate as "exits" from decline, both ideologically (as an antidote to the medical model of aging) and humanly, as restorers of the spirit and realistic psychological preparation for hard times. Elegy is one of the genres they should learn to seek. And later-life romance is the nontraditional other.

In recent North American literature, such readers may want to privilege autobiography over most fiction, and especially two recent love stories: Alix Kates Shulman's *To Love What Is*, and Ruth Ray's *Endnotes*. In her forties, leading a writing workshop in a nursing home, Ray fell in love with a man of eighty, Paul, who was living with Parkinson's. In her seventies, Shulman cares for her husband Scott, the love of her life since her teens, who after a disastrous fall suffers from brain damage and Alzheimer's. My essay assumes a literary climate in which such writers try in structure and tone to ward off decline and

avoid positive aging at the same time. How do these love stories succeed? Is the genre of the "progress narrative" conceivable or useful in relation to narratives of extremity?

Respondent

Roberta Maierhofer

BIO

Roberta Maierhofer is Professor of American Studies at the University of Graz, Austria, and Adjunct Professor at Binghamton University, New York. She wrote her dissertation on William H. Gass, and has taught and published on writers of the 1930s, documentary film, American culture in the 1980s, and on various aspects of women and aging in American literature and culture. As Vice Rector for International Relations of the University of Graz, she has also published in the field of transatlantic cooperations with an emphasis on education, and is now director of the newly established "Center of the Americas" at the University of Graz. Her latest book was entitled, *Salty Old Women: Women, Aging, and Identity in American Culture*. She is editor of the book series *Aging Studies in Europe* (LIT), which intends to foster an interdisciplinary dialogue on the aging process as a (trans)personal, transnational and transcultural phenomenon.

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Moderator

Aagje Swinnen

BIO

Aagje Swinnen wrote her Ph.D.-dissertation on the 'feminine' *Bildungsroman* in modern Dutch literature (*Het slot ontvlucht*, Amsterdam University Press, 2006) at the Department for Dutch Literature and Literary Theory of Ghent University (Belgium). She is currently working as a postdoctoral research fellow at the Centre for Gender and Diversity of Maastricht University (the Netherlands) with a Veni scholarship of the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO). Her fields of interest are: the cultural representation of ageing and old age, the relation between narratology and narrative gerontology, gender and age studies.

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Panelists

Beate Eisner

BIO

Beate Eisner is a Ph.D. candidate and research assistant in American Studies at the University of Potsdam, Germany. She received her 1st State Examination in English and geography from the University of Plymouth, UK and the University of Potsdam, where she also worked as graduate research assistant. In her Ph.D. project she focuses on the representation of ag(e)ing in South Asian American film and literature. Her research and teaching interests include the South Asians and the South Asian diaspora; the cultural representation of the intertwined issues of ag(e)ing, gender, and migration which include literary, film, cultural, and diaspora theory, cosmopolitanism, and cultural gerontology.

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ABSTRACT

Envisioning Ethnic Elderhood in Contemporary Film & Fiction

Contemporary literary and cinematic works by and about South Asian migrants have explored the multifaceted experiences of aging migrant populations of “South Asian” origin in North America, recognizing and revealing aging migrants’ finesse and aptitude in dealing with the fissures and tensions that arise from migration. By acknowledging adept fictional and non-fictional discursive strategies used to translate, transgress and transform the reciprocal effects of migration, displacement, age and gender, prevalent stereotypical representations of ag(e)ing and decline such as clichés about authoritarian elders, arranged marriages, or awkward relationships between South Asian parents and American sons- or daughters-in-law are being questioned in these narratives. Others indicate a nuanced understanding of cultural alienation and the emotional impact of migration on elders, and, thus also depict the “in-betweenness” of migrants as a space of possibilities.

This paper is an effort to disaggregate the perspectives of aging “South Asian” American migrants and seeks to explore how the construction and representation of aging migrants in the “South Asian” diaspora in contemporary film and fiction has served to contest prevailing stereotypes of ag(e)ing, diaspora and migration presenting a range of sometimes conflicting or contradictory alternative lifestyles and patterns of living.

Pamela Gravagne

BIO

After working as a musician and piano teacher for many years while raising and homeschooling four children, I am back in school as a Ph.D. student in American Studies at the University of New Mexico. Returning with an MA in Spanish and an interest in feminist theory, I found myself drawn to applying insights concerning the construction of difference gleaned from feminist theory to the problems and exclusions associated with aging while working on a second Master's and teaching courses in Women Studies. After finishing my dissertation, I plan to continue teaching, writing, and formulating alternative theoretical perspectives on age.

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ABSTRACT

The Becoming of Age: Becoming Within an Indeterminate World

What happens when theories that reconfigure the body as becoming are applied to the dominant narratives of aging and when the differences attributed to aging are shown to be rooted in the logic of reduction, location, and hierarchy common to Western philosophy, empirical science, and liberal humanism? Such a corporeal framework raises questions about these differences that universal and ABSTRACT assumptions do not allow us to ask. If the body is engaged in a continuous and self-modifying intra-action with the so-called objective world, if scientific practices are seen as accountable for the creation of the very bodily boundaries we take to be natural, and if corporeal vulnerability, permeability, and becoming replace notions of a transcendent mind within an essentialized body, how might we view the differences attributed to aging differently?

Drawing from work related to the body in feminist theory, phenomenology, science studies, and political theory, I hope to provide a theoretical framework where differences associated with aging are read not as justification for practices of exclusion, but as evidence of continuing participation in the ongoing configuration of an indeterminate world that becoming demands of us all.

Heike Hartung

BIO

Heike Hartung has worked as a university lecturer and research fellow at the Free University Berlin and the University of Greifswald. Currently, she acts as substitute chair for English Literature at the University of Potsdam. She holds a Ph.D. in English Literature from the Free University Berlin. Her research interests include theories of narrative, the relation between medicine and literature, age and gender studies. Her current research project is entitled “Narrating Age in the English Novel: Age, Gender, and Genre”. She has recently co-edited the Special Issue Narratives of Life: Aging and Identity of the *Journal of Aging, Humanities and the Arts* (2007).

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ABSTRACT

Not Today. Then Tomorrow – You Never Know, Do You? Literary Case Studies of Dementia

As part of the public debate on demographic developments in Western societies, Alzheimer’s disease figures not only as a specific illness which occurs ever more frequently with growing age. It is also regarded as a major “risk factor” of mass longevity, representing fears and problems of late life on the personal and social level. Questions of moral agency and social responsibility in old age arise from the perspective of mental illness in a very pointed way: In the care for the person with dementia, family and love relationships are put to the test. On the other hand, new possibilities may open up for viewing the individual person and for (re-)constructing the relationship between body and mind in old age.

By presenting a selection of 'Alzheimer’s narratives' as literary case studies for a dementia discourse between crisis and possibility, I will argue that these literary texts envision differentiated and alternative models of intersubjective exchange in old age and in illness. In the shifts between different kinds of narrative voice, these stories of dementia develop new perspectives on age, gender and subjectivity.

Sari Irni

BIO

Sari Irni (Lic. Soc. Sc.) is finishing her Ph.D. *Experienced Workers, Troublesome Women, and Gender Binaries – Materialisation of the ‘Ageing Worker’ at the Turn of the 21st Century Finland* at the Department of Women’s Studies at Åbo Akademi University, Finland. She has published articles related to ageing, work, and sexuality. Her research interests also include Postcolonial Studies, and the latest publication is a co-edited book (with Suvi Keskinen, Salla Tuori and Diana Mulinari) *Complying with Colonialism – Gender, Race and Ethnicity in the Nordic Region* by Ashgate, 2009.

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ABSTRACT

Nomadic Experience: Rethinking Ageing in the Labour Market

This presentation takes the rethinking of the concept of experience (Scott 1993) and subjectivity (e.g. Braidotti 1994) in Women’s Studies, as well as an intersectional approach to age, gender, and sexuality and explores what these perspectives might give to the discussion of ageing in work life. The “master narrative of decline”, as it is pictured in the context of paid work, concerns the diminishing of health, and hence an assumption of lesser capabilities of older workers. However, also a more empowering discourse exists, about long work experience as a positive aspect of ageing – that is said to compensate for the losses of physical capabilities. This is exemplified by that in Finland, “Experience is a National Asset” was taken as the motto of the five-year National Programme for Ageing Workers (1998-2002).

On the one hand, the concept of (work) experience seems to offer a more positive view of ageing at paid work than the narrative of decline. On the other hand, however, having long work experience also has connotations of getting into a rut. As Richard Sennett (2006) notes, in fields such as advertising, media and financial services older employees are assumed to be set in their ways, slow, and having lost their energy. Margaret Gullette has even suggested that in work life, the contemporary context of rapid technological change produces a situation related to her famous “fashion cycle”, which teaches us that ageing equals loss and decline. Gullette suggests that there are other cycles that perform related “ageing practices”, and a prominent example consists of “discontinuities in work life, where your ‘old’ skills or knowledge become useless, or your ‘old’ job disappears.” (Gullette 1997, 200.)

In this presentation I purport to rethink ‘experience’ in the context of work life and in relation to older workers. I propose the concept of *nomadic experience* with the aim of opening up ruptures to the above-mentioned characterizations of older workers as well as

of the stagnated view of 'experience' in the work life context. As research material I utilize both previous studies and fragments of two sets of qualitative interviews, first, interviews that focus on the experiences of 56-64-year-old (assumedly heterosexual) women and men related to ageing at paid work, and second, that focus on the experiences at work of people of various ages belonging to gender and sexual minorities.

Karin Lövgren

BIO

Karin Lövgren is an ethnologist and a Ph.D. student at Linköping University. Her dissertation regards cultural conceptions of age and ageing departing from a new genre of popular magazines addressing women with age as a selling point. She has previously done research, evaluations and documentations for Swedish museums and different research institutions on diverse subjects such as work in a modern saw mill, young women's reading of romance novels, and consumption in contemporary shopping malls.

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ABSTRACT

They See Themselves as Young Anyway. The Market Addressing the “Older” Consumer

This paper deals with results from my PhD research on cultural conceptions of age and ageing departing from popular magazines aimed at women readers aged over 45. My thesis has three vantage points: interviews with advertisers and advertising departments at magazines, analyzes of the magazines texts and visual material, both editorial and adverts and finally, interviews with women in the target groups for the magazines.

The advertisers reasoning reflects a model of ageing where you are open to influence, evolve and form an identity in youth. According to this it is in youth one experiences everything for the first time, events thus making a greater impact. People, as they grow older, stagnate according to this thinking. Some advertisers talk of ageing as coagulating or mentally and emotionally dying.

Today the older consumer is becoming increasingly more interesting for the market, being positioned as the one with money and time and opportunities to spend it. This change in interest for a new and older target group entails a change in how ageing is construed and interpreted. Emphasis is put on maturing and gaining experience, whilst still being open to change. The ladder or staircase metaphor for ageing is replaced by one of ageing as progress, onwards and upwards.

On the one hand the older person is construed as knowing what he or she wants, being confident and not as easily swayed as the younger. On the other hand the older consumer is hailed for her many contacts that she in turn can influence regarding questions of consumer choices. The older person is as good a consumer as the younger, claim advocates for these age categories, alongside with marketers aiming to address this age segment with products and advertising campaigns. Today's elderly also grew up in a

consumer society, they are more affluent than the younger generations and they are eager to stay attuned to what is in and on in the society – is repeated like a mantra.

Ageing is also denied – claiming that people who previously were considered old today are too young to be old. Youthfulness is still a highly valued cultural conception. Advertisers maintain that you can always address the older consumer as mentally young or as ageless – thus reaching consumers regardless of chronological age with the same campaigns. Never address a consumer as an older or senior person, asserts the advertisers. Instead address the “forever young”, young regardless of age.

Thus the meaning of ageing is construed in an ambivalent way. The older consumer is hailed for their wallets and continued interest in consumption, claimed to be open to influence and said to be evolving and changing. But also, seemingly contradictory, positioned as mature and experienced and not so easily persuaded as the chronologically younger consumer. The older consumer is said to want to see herself reflected in the advertising and in the magazines representations and at the same time it is claimed that the older consumer thinks of herself as forever young – thus best reached with the same rhetoric as the younger consumer. Ageing is simultaneously affirmed and denied.

Roberta Maierhofer

BIO

Roberta Maierhofer is Professor of American Studies at the University of Graz, Austria, and Adjunct Professor at Binghamton University, New York. She wrote her dissertation on William H. Gass, and has taught and published on writers of the 1930s, documentary film, American culture in the 1980s, and on various aspects of women and aging in American literature and culture. As Vice Rector for International Relations of the University of Graz, she has also published in the field of transatlantic cooperations with an emphasis on education, and is now director of the newly established "Center of the Americas" at the University of Graz. Her latest book was entitled, *Salty Old Women: Women, Aging, and Identity in American Culture*. She is editor of the book series *Aging Studies in Europe* (LIT), which intends to foster an interdisciplinary dialogue on the aging process as a (trans)personal, transnational and transcultural phenomenon.

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ABSTRACT

The Embodied Self: Women, Aging and Identity

Based on the assumption that our bodily existence is not a given, and thus human form is not merely a conglomerate of neurons, hormones or genes, the concrete experiences of a life, individual as well as collective, are inscribed in the physical aspects of a body. This assumption entails that our humanity itself is expressed in our physicality. The anthropologist Mary Douglas speaks of the body as a powerful symbolic form, a surface. Feminists have long seen the female body as a contested site of institutional and personal power. Within Western culture, women have traditionally been defined as body. While liberal feminists have been consistently suspicious of the woman/body equation, others, including matriarchal feminists, have found empowerment in the association of women with the corporeal. Embodiment as a provisional form of power in much writing by women, however, is very often linked to death or ill health, which has allowed for the textual and cultural representation of the otherwise – to use D. A. Miller's term – "unnarratable" female body.

Discrimination of (aging) women is based on the fact that appearance determines identity. The relationship of women to their bodies is an important aspect of the definition of their identity. Dealing with a body that has been marked by illness, impairment and death can – but need not – be an important aspect of age and aging. Illness and death cannot be linked to a specific age. If one agrees with Robert Butler's statement that we are in a "longevity revolution" that means more people are dying at a higher age, but in contrast to public opinion these later years are not always determined by illness and suffering. The aging, healthy female body is often viewed as a symbol of decay and decline, and aging women are often denied their sexuality and sensuality.

While youth is attributed positive significance based on the appearance of the body, the aging female body carries a negative message. Nancy K. Miller speaks of aging as a creative act, of a “coming to terms with a face and body,” a dialogue between the internal and external.

In my presentation, I will discuss texts that show characters involved in this imaginative process of aging, where the individual not only comes to accept her “embodiment” but also learns to see the beauty of an aging self as represented through her body. Using examples from American literature, I want to point to possibilities for older women to overcome binaries such as youth/age, nature/culture, body/soul, and develop a sensual relationship to themselves, which thus questions social norms. These texts repudiate cultural negative, trivializing stereotypes associated with age by presenting female characters who are sexual and sensual beings, and thus counter set the invisibility of old women in our society.

Magnus Nilsson

BIO

Started as a Ph.D.-student at the National Institute of the Study of Ageing and Later Life (NISAL) in 2003. Defended his thesis on October 24, 2008. The thesis is written in Swedish and is about the social construction of older people as a category in public discourse. The study consists of three different, but interrelated, publics; newspaper articles, texts from a pensioner's party, and a Government Investigation on the future of old age policy. Magnus Nilsson has published, mostly in Swedish, on how older people are represented in the mass media, and on older people and political identity.

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ABSTRACT

Ageism and Anti-ageism in Public Policy

This paper analyses the anti-ageist rhetoric of a recent Swedish government investigation whose stated aim is to formulate a policy against ageism. The article discusses ageism and anti-ageism as implicated in an intricate relationship with each other from a discourse theoretical approach through an analysis of the discursive logics that operate in the text. The goal of old age policy is, according to the proposals of the investigation, to make itself redundant through the elimination of ageism. Negative stereotypes and discrimination because of old age are thus made the basis of governmental policy on old age. The logic behind this is an understanding of older people as an artificial category because of its heterogeneity, and that age alone should not form the basis for government policy.

The report argues that old age is changing and that this is related to new generations of older people; the first teenagers. The new generation of older people are said to be constituted by an active life style that will challenge established norms and ways of living in old age.

But, counter to this dissociation from the decline narrative of ageing runs a parallel construction of older people as a category from an administrative perspective. From the logic of the administrative perspective older people, as a category, is defined by a negative deviation in relation to the generalized adulthood of the non-old.

The paper discusses the different discursive logics that are used to articulate older people as a category in the investigation, and how the logics undermine the legitimacy and validity of each other. The analysis of these logics offer an interesting and fruitful way of understanding how older people as a category is constructed in public discourse.

Apostolos Poulios

BIO

Apostolos Poulios holds a BA in English Language and Literature and an MA in Theoretical and Applied Linguistics, both from Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece. He is currently working on his Ph.D. which focuses on the construction of age identities in everyday talk. He has published papers on the construction of elderly identity in conversation as well as media discourse. He has taught language and research methods courses at the School of English, Aristotle University as well as English as a Foreign Language in Greek secondary schools. He has also been involved in projects regarding the Certificate of Attainment in Greek at the Centre for Greek Language, Thessaloniki.

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ABSTRACT

(De)Constructing Elderly Identity in Greek Conversations

Following a trend in social studies that has become known as “the identity-in-action tradition” (Nikander 2002), this paper deals with the construction of elderly identity in talk-in-interaction. Starting from the quest of Ethnomethodological Conversation Analysis to describe methods persons use in doing social life (Sacks 1992) and drawing on Sack’s membership categorization notions, the paper explores the extent to which identities “are ascribed by and for us largely as speakers affirm, reject, avow, allude to, and display their own or other people’s characteristics, and thereby, membership in specific categories” (Nikander 2002: 44).

Age categorization is studied as a part of accomplishing social actions: this way we can understand how cultural meanings of age are “spoken through” people in everyday interaction, how age itself is given meaning through discourse (Coupland and Coupland 1995). Conversational data can reveal how people construct age identities as interactional accomplishments that are negotiated and achieved by people in the course of ordinary events (Paoletti 1998; Poulios 2008). In other words, interactants routinely show each other that they approve or disapprove of an identity that is constructed in the course of a conversation. Age, like gender, is treated as an ongoing performance: it is oriented towards mutual confirmation; however the performance of an age identity can also be rejected by interactants in everyday social interaction.

The paper will show how elderly identity is constructed in —and by— the Greek culture. The Greek culture, like most Western cultures, has traditionally associated being old with withdrawal from status, fulfilment and some sorts of social relationships (Coupland and Coupland 1995). As a result, older people in Greece —and especially older women— often find themselves dislocated from the “mainstream” and ultimately restricted to the

periphery of social life. The analysis of authentic conversations will show how this marginalized elderly identity is collaboratively constructed but it will also show how it is deconstructed, that is, how either older people themselves resist this marginalization or how, in certain cases, younger people actively try to construct positive identities for older interlocutors and thus help them transgress the limits posed by their aged body and (more frequently) by the ageist society. Special emphasis will be paid to the way the double burden of gender and age is experienced and resisted by Greek women in talk-in-interaction.

All in all, the paper will shed light on some patterns through which age is oriented to, projected and interactionally managed in everyday interaction and on the ways age and ageing stereotypes function in the Greek context.

Aagje Swinnen

BIO

Aagje Swinnen wrote her Ph.D.-dissertation on the 'feminine' *Bildungsroman* in modern Dutch literature (*Het slot ontvlucht*, Amsterdam University Press, 2006) at the Department for Dutch Literature and Literary Theory of Ghent University (Belgium). She is currently working as a postdoctoral research fellow at the Centre for Gender and Diversity of Maastricht University (the Netherlands) with a Veni scholarship of the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO). Her fields of interest are: the cultural representation of ageing and old age, the relation between narratology and narrative gerontology, gender and age studies.

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ABSTRACT

Envisioning Love and Lust in Later Life: *The Brooks* (2006) by Pascal Rabaté

In Western popular culture, the image of the elderly body, wrinkled and saggy, is seldom displayed. Online gaming, music videos, blockbuster films, and other wide-spread cultural manifestations cultivate the beauty of youth that seems to be synonymous with sexual attractiveness. Despite the demographic increase of the elderly and the multiple ways people can organise their days after retirement, love and sexuality in later life still remain largely invisible in the image culture. For this reason, my paper analyses the comic *The Brooks* (2006) by the French artist Pascal Rabaté which brings the sexuality of the elderly and the desirable elderly body to the forefront in a remarkable non-conformist way. In *The Brooks* (*Les petits ruisseaux*), the peaceful life of Émile, a widower in his seventies living in the French countryside, comes to an end when his best friend shows him paintings of female nudes whom he meets through an escort agency. For the first time after his wife's death, Émile feels sexually aroused and does not know how to cope with that sexual reawakening. His inner struggle is visualized through internal focalisations of erotic dreams and visions. Because of the guilt he feels towards his deceased wife and the impossibility to confess his confusion to his peers, Émile decides to commit suicide in the house where he was brought up. But the trip to his past opens the window to a new future. Little by little, Émile learns to overcome his internalised negative stereotypes concerning the sexuality of the elderly. Especially his unforeseen stay in a community of hippies with whom he shares the social status of outsider helps him to accept his desire for a new partnership. When he finally meets a new love, the passionate sex scenes are depicted rough and ready. The subtle interplay of image and text within the comic stimulates the reader to question whether he sympathises with the protagonist or shares the gaze of rejection of the other characters.

Queering Queer Texts

Keynote speaker

Henry Ablove

BIO

Henry Ablove is Osborne Professor of English at Wesleyan University. He has served as a visiting professor at Princeton University, Brown University, and the University of Alberta. He is co-editor of *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader* and author of *The Evangelist of Desire: John Wesley and the Methodists* and of *Deep Gossip*, a collection of his essays on the history of sexuality. He is at work on a book on the culture of early gay liberation.

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ABSTRACT

A Queer Dutch-American Genealogy

This paper focuses on one of the most popular of eighteenth-century English-language songs, “Yankee Doodle.” The paper endeavors to explain, first what the mysterious word “yankee” actually signified, then why the song was so much favored during the American War of Independence by both those Americans who rebelled against the British and those Americans who sided with the British. The paper discusses also the possible Dutch origins of the song, its enduring popularity, its queerness, and its long-term impact on the making of American nationalism, literature, empire, and sexuality.

Respondent

Stefan Dudink

BIO

Stefan Dudink teaches at the Institute for Gender Studies and the History Department of Radboud University, Nijmegen. He writes about gender and sexuality in modern political culture, with a focus on the Netherlands in an international context. More or less recently he co-edited (with Karen Hagemann and Anna Clark) *Representing Masculinity: Male Citizenship in Modern Western Culture* (New York: Palgrave, 2007).

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Moderator

Roel van den Oever

BIO

Roel van den Oever is a Ph.D. candidate at the Center for Gender and Diversity, Maastricht University, the Netherlands. His dissertation is tentatively entitled *Dominant Mothers, Queer Sons: Undoing Momism in American Culture, 1944-1969*.

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Panelists

Andrew Blades

BIO

Andrew Blades is currently reading for a D.Phil at Balliol College, Oxford, on the resistance of the postmodern within 1990s American AIDS writing. He has published articles and chapters on the work of Mark Doty and Edward Albee, writes regular reviews for *The Stage* newspaper, and teaches American poetry and contemporary British fiction at the University of Oxford. He also enjoys cooking, fellwalking, and live music of all kinds.

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ABSTRACT

The (De-)Queered Subject in *A Home at the End of the World*

Michael Cunningham has been claimed as a “post-gay” writer by Edmund White and Stacey D’Erasmus, among others. This paper will interrogate the question of the “post-gay” in his first novel, *A Home at the End of the World*. On publication in 1990, “queer” was emerging as a viable alternative to “gay”, which had become inextricable from adverse media representations of the Person Living with AIDS (PLWA). The queer advocated a rainbow alliance of de-centred, destabilised identities that would challenge the binaries of in / out and hetero / homo. *A Home at the End of the World* would appear to epitomise this newly queered America, populated as it is with ostensibly bisexual characters that refuse identification as bisexual, and family units that defy heteronormative convention, becoming seemingly metonymic of the new queer coalition.

However, the novel might also repudiate its own queerness. Reed Woodhouse has defined queer writing as a “transgressive” strain within gay literature itself, a subcultural art that positions itself apart from the more mainstream “gay” world of David Leavitt, Alan Hollinghurst or Cunningham himself. In writing about the “family” at all, Cunningham might be seeking assimilation at the expense of queerness. I will argue that the text engages in a queering of the “queer” itself, an act of self-sabotage that is, in its own way, decidedly queer. Does the de-queered subject in *A Home at the End of the World* become, instead, a “gay” subject, or are both terms destabilised within Cunningham’s writing? Finally, I will address how the novel’s examination of anti-identities might not only be considered “post-gay”, but “post-queer” into the bargain.

Karen Burrows

BIO

Born in Edmonton, Canada, Karen K. Burrows moved to the British seaside to pursue her graduate studies. She recently completed her MA in Sexual Dissidence in Literature and Culture at the University of Sussex and is currently working on a DPhil in Media and Cultural Studies at the same institution. Her doctoral thesis is concerned with the representation of the female spy on television and its impact on political and popular culture.

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ABSTRACT

"Are You Ready?": Renee Montoya and the Question of Lesbian Identity in Superhero Comics

In 2004, the DC Comics series "Gotham Central" became the first of the company's publications ever to use the word "lesbian" when established character Detective Renee Montoya exclaimed "I'm a dyke, a lesbian, I like girls!" in the culmination of a storyline focusing directly on her sexuality. This moment marked a shift in the superhero genre to a point where lesbianism, previously relegated to subtext, became openly visible. Through Montoya, the text of the Batman comics franchise is queered: her rise from an embittered lesbian alcoholic detective to a superhero in her own right enables her to embrace and enact her sexuality, adding a queer twist to identity politics in the superhero world. Several aspects of the relevant storylines, including the method by which Montoya outs herself and the inclusion in her superhero costume of a blank-face mask, appear initially to reflect negatively on Montoya's lesbian identity. Only by reading them queerly, however, do they result in positive depictions of Montoya herself and queerness in general. As is often the case with queer texts, even open discussion of sexuality requires reading between the lines – or, in the case of comics, outside the panels.

Bernd Elzer

BIO

Bernd Elzer, M.A., M.A. is a PhD student in Media Studies and English at the University of Trier, Germany. He studied English, Media Studies and Political Science at Trier, where he received his M.A. in 2002, and also holds a M.A. in English from Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts. He is currently completing his PhD thesis about constructions of masculinity and alterity in American popular genres of the 19th and 20th centuries. His areas of research and teaching include cultural studies, film and television studies, 19th-c. American literature, questions of gender and genre as well as masculinities and queer studies.

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ABSTRACT

Re-Queering the Queer: A Close Reading of Jean-Marc Vallée's *C.R.A.Z.Y.*

The past years have seen a steadily increasing number of cinematic representations of queerness, which must generally be considered a positive development, as compared to cinema's history of the negation and non-representation of homosexuality. Yet, the ubiquity of queer characters in mainstream movies does not necessarily imply that these characters are portrayed in less stereotypical ways. One strategy to avoid stereotyping is to embed the queer narrative into more traditional plots, as does the French Canadian production *C.R.A.Z.Y.* (2005).

It has been argued that the gay story in Jean-Marc Vallée's dramatic comedy is treated as peripheral and that it is rendered almost invisible by the family tale the movie narrates. I would suggest, on the contrary, that while the queer narrative may not always be at the forefront of the *mise-en-scène*, it is still at the very core of the movie: The film's central themes, such as masculinity and religion, are inextricably linked to the questioning of sexual identities and are ultimately queered themselves.

In showing this, I not only counteract the attempt to un-queer an overtly queer text by re-queering it, but also suggest an alternative way of representing queer identities in all their diversity and complexity.

Christian Gay

BIO

Christian Gay is an instructor of Film Studies and doctoral candidate at the University of Miami in Coral Gables, Florida, USA. His dissertation project, entitled “Hollywood Boys: Queer Masculinity in the Films of Coppola, Kubrick, Scorsese, and Spielberg” looks at aggression, sexuality, and homosocial behaviors in some of the major films of the “American New Wave”. His other research interests include Underground Cinema, LGBT Film History, and the Films of Woody Allen.

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ABSTRACT

(Re)queering Shakespeare and Suburbia in *Were the World Mine* (2008)

Were the World Mine (2008) tells the story of Timothy, a gay teen dealing with social acceptance and unrequited love. After being cast as “Puck” in his high school’s production of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Timothy discovers a recipe for the love potion from the play. The potion instills desire in the recipient towards the next person they see, regardless of gender, in a decidedly queerer take on the narrative device from the play-within-the-film. Becoming a real-life Puck, Timothy dispenses the love-potion to the object of his affection as well as many others in his hometown, creating for the film’s audience a modern queer comedy of errors.

This paper will rely on a close reading of the film, with specific moments used to illustrate how it works to make a queer text even “queerer”. The film’s relation to the Shakespearean play will be addressed, with attention paid to how Puck represents queer agency. The paper argues that the film, by depicting an entire community subjected to a temporary experience of queer desires, explores the ways sexuality can be institutionally reinforced, reveals both the constructive and destructive potentials of any totalizing understanding of sexuality, and ultimately emphasizes the fluidity of desire.

David Van Leer

BIO

David Van Leer is Professor of English and Gay Studies at the University of California, Davis. He has written widely on American culture for *The New Republic* and *The Times Literary Supplement*. He is the author of *Emerson's Epistemology: The Argument of the Essays* and *The Queening of America: Gay Culture in Straight Society*. He is the editor of *Edgar Allan Poe: Selected Tales* and the book review editor of the *Journal of Bisexuality*. He is currently working on a study of pre-modern American sexuality called *Reconcilable Differences* and another on music called *Notable Selves: Personal Identity and Popular Music*.

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ABSTRACT

Merle Oberon's Look: Race Among Lillian Hellman's Lesbians

Lillian Hellman's play The Children's Hour (1933) is a famous, even notorious, examination of the scandal resulting when a child falsely claims that the headmistresses of her boarding school are lesbian lovers. In 1935 Samuel Goldwyn bought the rights to Hellman's script and started filming while the play was still being performed on Broadway. The Hollywood production code of the mid-1930s did not, of course, permit any discussion of lesbianism, either as act, lifestyle, or even political danger. The producers felt, however, that they could as easily represent the effects on the community of a charge of heterosexual impropriety; all that need be changed was the nature of the child's lie – a lie whose content is never made explicit in any case.

I do not wish so much to examine Hollywood's attempt at disguising lesbianism, a topic frequently explored, as to consider the way in which the race of one of the film's stars complicated that attempt. The studio cast as one of the accused teachers Merle Oberon, a rising star whose exotic looks in part came from her Indian mother, a racial inheritance that the studio took great care to keep secret. My focus then will be less on sexual repression per se than on the ways in which the film's attempts to disguise Oberon's East Asian features overlap with the plot's interest in repressing the lesbian subtext of the original play. I will propose the idea of a "reconcilable difference" to conceptualize what can happen when minority identities intersect. My point is not that the film is really lesbian, or that Oberon is really "black." Instead I merely wish to show that we as spectators can reconcile these differences, reading them in nontraditional ways. The studio's exploitation of taboos about race and sexuality without confronting either difference makes both more visible. Thus, as I have argued elsewhere, the complacency with which the empowered think they can control the disenfranchised makes the film a

site of cultural carelessness – one of disciplinary failure – where minorities ironically find unexpected freedom to adopt oppositional cultural stances.

Shawna Lipton

BIO

Originally from Toronto, Ontario, Canada, Shawna Lipton received her Undergraduate degree in English and Gender and Women's Studies, as well as the Archibald MacMechan Scholarship in English from Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia. She completed her Master's degree at Portland State University in Portland, Oregon where she specialized in Modernism, Women's Literature, and Queer Theory. Her work can be read in *The Margin* and *MP: An Online Feminist Journal*. She is currently teaching, and will begin a doctoral program in English in the Fall of 2009.

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ABSTRACT

At Ease in Stranger Skin: The Reflection of Desire in *The Talented Mr. Ripley*

The Talented Mr. Ripley contains disturbing descriptions of amoral acts, but underlying the narrative about an aberrant murderer is a message about the fundamental nature of human relationships that is uncomfortably familiar. This essay explores the themes of desire and subjectivity in the popular novel and film. By comparing these works' imagery of reflection in light of the myth of Narcissus, the fundamental process this suspenseful story exposes is revealed. The true talent of Tom Ripley turns out to be undermining the reciprocal nature of relationships seemingly founded on sexual desire.

In Anthony Minghella's 1999 film adaptation of the 1955 Patricia Highsmith novel, the murderous Tom Ripley's actions are attributed to the external manifestation of repressed homosexual desire. In his attempts to literalize what he perceives to be the subtext of Highsmith's novel, Minghella parallels society's compulsion to impose stability upon unintelligible or incoherent identities. By outing Tom Ripley as a "homosexual" Minghella has in fact closeted Ripley's ambiguity and lack of desire. To be non-desiring is "deviant," challenging the very foundations of our conceptions of the human subject.

Roel van den Oever

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Roel van den Oever is a Ph.D. candidate at the Center for Gender and Diversity, Maastricht University, the Netherlands. His dissertation is tentatively entitled *Dominant Mothers, Queer Sons: Undoing Momism in American Culture, 1944-1969*.

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ABSTRACT

All the Queerness You Can Eat: From Martyr to Masochist in Tennessee Williams' *Suddenly Last Summer* (1958)

Tennessee Williams' 1958 short play *Suddenly Last Summer* has commonly been understood as excessive and homophobic: spectral gay character Sebastian Venable's gruesome death – he gets eaten alive by a band of vagabond boys – forms the inevitable outcome of a life filled with sexual sins.

I disagree with such a reading of the play: instead of a gay martyr, I interpret Sebastian as a masochist who actively seeks to be devoured, for this event connotes sexual pleasure to him. What is more, I argue that the play positions its audience as a queer sex partner in Sebastian's masochist act: although Sebastian is never present on stage (for he is already dead when the play begins), the story of his life and death is continuously held out by the other characters as bait to capture the audience's attention. Desiring to know what happened to Sebastian, the audience takes the offered bait in a metaphorical reenactment of the literal devouring of Sebastian by the vagabond boys, eating up Sebastian once again.

Teilhard Paradela

BIO

Teilhard Paradela is currently pursuing his MA in International Performance Research at the Universities of Amsterdam and of Tampere in Finland. He finished his BFA in Creative Writing and Drama at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, BC, Canada. As an emerging theatre researcher, Ty wants to focus on intercultural theatre, performance ethnography, and modes of spectatorship. Topics he is interested in include Catholic rituals, fiesta performances, and theatrical cross-dressing.

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ABSTRACT

The Haunting of the Boy Actress: Queering the Notion of Performing History in *Compleat Female Stage Beauty*

Jeffrey Hatcher's play, *Compleat Female Stage Beauty*, imagines the demise of the boy actress on the early modern English stage as an irretrievable loss facilitated by the discourse of realism in western theatre on one hand, and the taxonomic discourse of modern sexuality on the other. But by staging this historical moment, this period drama, following Freddie Rokem's notion of performing history, attempts to "create restorative energies" in order "to restore that loss" (13). This attempt is reflected in the play's decidedly queer approach to the material which is manifested in two ways: One, in marking the boy actress as a figure of fascination and anxiety in the theatrical as well as in the sexual sense. Two, in the use of camp, irony, and pastiche—devices which have been largely appropriated by contemporary queer artists—in the play. By casting queerness on to the already queerly charged historical moment, the play enables the figure of the boy actress to come back from the past to haunt our dominant understanding of history.