

Contemporary Women's Writing Association 2018 Conference

Writing Wrongs

Northumbria University, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK
20-21 September 2018

Thursday 20 September 2018

8.45-9.15 Registration (Lipman Foyer)

9.15-9.30 Welcome (Lipman 033)

9.30-11.00 Parallel Panels: A

Beyond Borders (Lipman 034)

- Leila Harris, "Crossing Hemispheres, Decolonizing Knowledges and Aesthetics"
- Kimberly Lamm, "Inheriting Letters of Exile: Gayatri Chakrovarty Spivak and Women's Art Practices in the 1980s and 1990s"
- Rose A. Sackeyfio, "African Women's Writing in the 21st Century: Mobility, Identity, and Marginalization"

Digital Voices (Lipman 033)

- Sarah Bowskill, "Reimagining Mexican Politics and the Politics of Publishing in Brenda Navarro's *Casas vacías* and Cristina Rivera Garza's *Con/Dolerse*"
- Stefanie El Madawi, "Necessary Narcissism: Blogging Post Trauma and Existential Recovery"
- Kerry Myler, "21st-century short fiction, feminist politics, and experiments in form"

Ecofeminism (Lipman 035)

- Alison Bartlett and Nandi Chinna, "The Poetics of Solastalgia: creative responses to environmental loss"
- Anna Kirsch, "Writing a Feminist Hardboiled: The Rise of Ecofeminism in Sara Paretsky's *Blood Shot*"
- Lucy Rowland, "Dunes, Desertification and the Possibility of Refuge in Clare Vaye Watkins' *Gold Fame Citrus* (2015)"

11.00-11.30 Break

11.30-1.00 Parallel Panels: B

Writing Resistance (Lipman 033)

- Cristina Riaño Alonso, "'There's always, there'll always be, more story': Writing Wrongs in Ali Smith's *Autumn*"
- Sarah Bernstein, "Difficult Women and the Common Good"

- Melanie Waters, "Feeling (Bad) Like A Feminist: Affecting Change in 1970s Women's Writing"

Representations of Dementia: Culture and Genre (Lipman 034)

- Raquel Medina, "Dementia and Poetry: Juana Castro's *Los cuerpos oscuros/The dark bodies*"
- Katsura Sako, "Dementia in Japanese Children's Picture books"
- Sarah Falcus, "'Remember[ing] all the moments of craziness, beauty, and tragedy': telling parental stories in Sarah Leavitt's *Tangles: A Story About Alzheimer's, My Mother and Me* and Roz Chast's *Can't We Talk About Something More Pleasant?*"

Speculative Fiction (Lipman 035)

- Jade Hinchliffe, "Juli Zeh and the Right to Privacy and our Body in a Surveillance Society"
- Nic Stavris, "Out of Time and Out of Place: Apocalyptic Displacement in Megan Hunter's *The End We Start From*"
- Susan Watkins, "Time, Narrative and History in Contemporary Women's Post-Apocalyptic Writing"

1.00-2.00 Lunch

2.00-3.30 Keynote: Professor Clare Hemmings (London School of Economics, UK) (Lipman 031)

3.30-4.00 Break

4.00-5.30 Parallel Panels: C

Black British Women Writers Network Roundtable: authenticity, politics and writing (Lipman 121) Elisabeth Bekers, Helen Cousins, Laura Fish, Degna Stone

Mapping the City (Lipman 034)

- Carla Rodríguez González, "The Wrongs of the City: Denise Mina's Garnethill Trilogy"
- Clara Botamino González, "Spatial Transgression in Laura Hird's 'Hope'"
- Melissa Tombro, "Women Write New York City"

Rewriting Female Sexuality (Lipman 033)

- Lauren Cooper, "Women's memoir as *écriture féminine*: reclaiming female sexuality"
- Krystina Osborne, "Rewriting the Dominant Narrative of Female Masturbation"
- Sarah Heidebrink-Bruno, "'I Love and Have Been Love[d]': Healing and Restorative Practices in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*"

5.30-6.30 Reception and Book Launch sponsored by Palgrave Macmillan: Mary Eagleton, *Clever Girls and the Literature of Women's Upward Mobility* & Clare Hanson and Susan Watkins (eds) *The History of British Women's Writing, 1945-1975*

7.00-9.00 Conference Dinner

Friday 21 September 2018

9.00-11.00 Parallel Panels: D

Motherhood (Lipman 033)

- Helen Davies, “‘The Sins of the Mother?’ Down Syndrome, Feminism, and Ableist Ideologies in Contemporary Women’s Writing”
- Miyuki Hanabusa, “Contemporary Women’s Dilemma About Work-Life Balance: Japanese ‘Mommy Lit,’ its Limitations and Possibilities”
- Clare Lavery, “My front door key unlocks no neat forgiving plots”
- Jenny Moore, “Local Practice, Global Reach: Translating the Local Mother-to-Mother Support of La Leche League into Transformative Texts”

Hearts and Wrongs: The politics and aesthetics of postcolonial romance (Lipman 034)

- Carolina Fernández Rodríguez, “Chamorro Romance Heroines: Loving the G.I. while Resisting Imperialism”
- Paloma Fresno-Calleja, “Feminist Romance Samoan-Style: Local and Global Wrongs in Lani Wendt Young’s Scarlet Series”
- Aurora García Fernández, “Aspirational Dreaming: Political Activism and Transcultural Pedagogy in Anita Heiss’s Romantic Fiction”
- Irene Perez Fernandez, “Re/Writing Racial Wrongs: Ethical and Political Uses of Romance in Malorie Blackman’s Young Adult Series”

Re/writing Trauma (Lipman 035)

- Boriana Alexandrova, “On the Ethics of Writing & Reading Historical Abuse: Eimear McBride’s *A Girl Is a Half-formed Thing*, #MeToo, and the Public Resurgence of Child Sexual Abuse Narratives”
- Poonkulaly Gunaseelan, “Resistance through writing (?): Writing and representing rape in Shashi Deshpande’s *The Binding Vine* (1992) and Meena Kandasamy’s *When I Hit You: Or, A Portrait of the Writer as a Young Wife* (2017)”
- Chrysavgi Papagianni, “Righting Wrongs in Michelle Cliff’s *Free Enterprise*”
- Alice Ridout, “Re-reading Joy Kogawa’s *Obasan* after #MeToo”

11.00-11.30 Break

11.30-1.00 Parallel Panels: E

‘Righting wrongs for women in academia’ – an interactive presentation and workshop (Lipman 121) Julie Scanlon

War and Conflict (Lipman 034)

- Ann Marie Condrón, “Lucie Aubrac, The Importance of *Her Story*”

- Lymon Majid and Tabasum Aslam, “Gender, Memory, and Conflict: Exploring the Personal Narratives of Women in Kashmir”

Feminist Appropriations (Lipman 033)

- Eliane Campello, “Metaphor: Nélide Piñón’s strategic narrative in *Desert Voices* (2004)”
- Amy Crawford, “Re-Writing/Re-Righting the Bible”
- Barbara Franchi, “Writing War, Righting the World: Memory, Trauma and Activism in A. S. Byatt’s Short Fiction”

1.00-2.30 Lunch & CWWA AGM (from 1.30-2.15)

**2.30-4.00 Keynote: Ruvani Ranasinha (Kings College London, UK)
(Lipman 031)**

4.00-4.30 Break

4.30-6.00 Parallel Panels: F

Writing Space and Place (Lipman 034)

- Sandra Almeida, “The Power of Story Telling: Writing Space and Affect”
- Andrea Toth, “Dis/connected lives: personal ethnography from the semi-periphery”
- Zeynab Yousfi, “Gender Trouble in Arab Women’s Novels”

Writing the Body (Lipman 033)

- Olivia Heal, “Effacement: A Maternal Reading”
- Kiriaki Massoura, “The abject body of Agnes Magnúsdóttir in Hannah Kent’s *Burial Rites* (2013)”
- Fiona Tolan, “The Cleaning Problem: Class, race and labour in the work of Zadie Smith, Hilary Mantel and Ali Smith”

Abstracts

Beyond Borders

Leila Harris, “Crossing Hemispheres, Decolonizing Knowledges and Aesthetics”

The strengthening of oppositional discourses and the employment of feminist practices are instrumental for the visibility and agency of minority groups. However, it is necessary that the gaze and the discourse do not reproduce essentialist images and respect differences while representing the self and the Other. The concepts of relationality, positioning of discourses and intersectionality of oppressions contribute to a better understanding of the multiple perspectives that inform current feminist practices, anchored on decolonial knowledges and aesthetics. Our discussion aims at foregrounding political practices and aesthetics adopted by women from very different geographical and social places. The artistic/cultural productions of Dionne Brand, Trinidadian writer living in Canada, Mc Carol, a Brazilian funk artist, and Luz Ribeiro, Brazilian slam poet stimulate political agency and emancipatory practices. The potential for transformation which arises from creativity, manifesting itself in diverse languages and contributing to promote the decoloniality of gender, leads me to travel over two decades, cross from the northern to the southern hemisphere and turn to the artistic production of the women featured in this presentation. Without forgetting Spivak’s cautionary words about the dangers of representing the Other, and without the intention of speaking for the Other, my objective here is to make known the discourses and practices of the selected artists, in an attempt to work against subalternity (Almeida, 2012, p. 16-17), by creating a space for these voices to be heard.

Leila Assumpção Harris is an Associate Professor at the State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ/ Brazil) and holds a research grant from FAPERJ (state agency). She teaches U.S. Literature at the undergraduate level and Literatures of the English Language in the Graduate Program. Her publications include many articles in periodicals and book chapters. She has also participated in the organization of several books. She leads a research group that is part of a national pool of Brazilian university professors. Her work focuses primarily on contemporary literature produced by women. Her main areas of interest are diaspora studies, gender studies, cultural studies, and more recently the decolonization of knowledges and aesthetics.

Kimberly Lamm, “Inheriting Letters of Exile: Gayatri Chakrovarty Spivak and Women’s Art Practices in the 1980s and 1990s”

This paper explores how visual artists engage with the textual appearance of language to write the wrongs against women perpetuated by global visual culture. It focuses on the work of one postcolonial feminist theorist, Gayatri Chakrovarty Spivak, and three artists, Mona Hatoum, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, and Lorna Simpson. I argue that Spivak’s theoretical writings are an untapped resource for interpreting artwork that engages with the challenge of representing women within cartographies of oppression and thereby helps to demonstrate that the aesthetic practices of Hatoum, Cha, and Simpson are rich reflections of the insights and arguments offered by the postcolonial feminist theories that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s. Both Spivak’s writings and the artwork of Hatoum, Cha, and Simpson reflect on specific national histories (post-colonial India;

the annexation of Palestine; the colonization of Korea; and the African diaspora, respectively) but also create dense aesthetic encounters that push against the readily available and highly circumscribed images and words for representing the sign woman and thereby resist the spectacularization of women's oppression around the globe.

By tracing the ways in which the work of these artists align with Spivak's commitment to putting deconstruction to work for postcolonial and global feminism, I argue that we can better see how artwork by women can contribute to imagining feminism on a global scale with the depth and complexity it demands. In turn, connecting Spivak's work to the oeuvres of Hatoum, Cha, and Simpson highlights the aesthetic dimensions of her writings and gives us a chance to put her recent arguments about the "aesthetic education" to work for analyzing the global image economy and seeing how it figures into the historical, imaginative, and psychic challenges entailed by the project of writing different worlds for women.

Central to my paper is demonstrating the links between Spivak's engagement with deconstruction and the artists' use of text and images of writing—a signature feature of their artwork that manifests its complicated thematization of voice, silence, and testimony. Like Spivak, the artwork of Hatoum, Cha, and Simpson suggests that they are interested in representing how language in patriarchal cultures are premised on the absence of women, what Luce Irigaray identifies as "Women's Exile," while also demonstrating that language is the means by which this absence is inherited along the maternal line. I deploy the figure of "letters" to describe this inheritance and connect it to the textual features of these artists' work. Tracing their engagement with "letters," I argue that the aesthetic practices of Hatoum, Cha, and Simpson can be read as meditations on the inheritance of women's exile and thereby resist the ways in which global visual culture naturalizes the inheritance of that loss.

Kimberly Lamm is Associate Professor of Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies at Duke University. She has published widely in the fields of feminist theory, US literatures, contemporary poetry and poetics, and visual culture. She recently completed her first book, *Addressing the Other Woman: Textual Correspondences in Feminist Art and Writing*, and is now pursuing a new project, tentatively titled, *A Sense of Arrangement: Feminist Aesthetics in Contemporary Poetry*, which reads the work of Barbara Guest, Rosmarie Waldrop, Ann Lauterbach, and Susan Howe through what she calls a "feminist distribution of the sensible."

Rose A. Sackeyfio, "African Women's Writing in the 21st Century: Mobility, Identity, and Marginalization"

A salient feature of contemporary African women's literature is the emergence of new perspectives on life outside Africa's borders. Recent fictional works by leading female writers reveal insight, realism and vivid narratives of racialized identities, otherness and hybrid existence in the lived experiences of African emigre's in the west. This essay highlights the ways in which female authors from Africa use their creative artistry to capture new tropes of identity formation, mobility and displacement as a mirror of life in the African diaspora. As immigrant populations increase within western boundaries, new questions arise about survival, diaspora existence and the challenges to success in foreign lands.

The new emphasis on transnational perspectives represent a shift in the direction of African literature away from arresting post-colonial themes of nationhood, decolonization and cultural authenticity. The emergence and complexity of 21st century perspectives may be understood as building upon and extending the literary engagement of earlier African writers by writing about Africa and what it means to be African in new ways within a globalized arena. Critically acclaimed works that will be explored are Chimamanda Adichie's *Americanah* (2013) and her collection of short stories *The Thing Around Your Neck* (2009). Sefi Atta's *A Bit of Difference* (2013) examines diaspora life to reveal how African identity becomes a barrier to success in London. Chika Unigwe's *On Black Sister's Street* (2009) illuminates the nature of the sex trade between in Europe and West Africa. As a new writer from Zimbabwe, NoViolet Bulawayo has crafted an insightful portrait of the disruptive elements of western life in *We Need New Names* (2013). The works are compelling accounts of hybridized existence among African women subjects. They also represent imperative literary engagement with experiences that uncover the dark underbelly of global mobility across transnational borders of Africa and the west.

Digital Voices

Sarah Bowskill, "Reimagining Mexican Politics and the Politics of Publishing in Brenda Navarro's *Casas vacías* and Cristina Rivera Garza's *Con/Dolerse*"

This paper analyses the responses of Mexican women authors to the country's current political situation which is characterised by feminicides, forced disappearances and narco-trafficking. It uses the ideas of French political philosopher Jacques Rancière to argue that these women use their fiction to change perceptions of who can and cannot go where, what can and cannot be said and who can and cannot speak. It also foregrounds their choice of publishing outlet as part of a parallel political statement which represents a rejection of traditional, highly exclusive, male dominated publishing networks. The paper takes Brenda Navarro's *Casas vacías* (2017) and Cristina Rivera Garza's collaborative endeavour *Con/Dolerse* (2011, second edition 2015) as case studies. Navarro's novel addresses issues of disappearance and motherhood and seeks to give voice to the experience of those whose loved ones have disappeared. Navarro published her work with Kaja Negra which started as an online news outlet and expanded into poetry, short stories and the novel. The text is free to download in multiple formats and the website asks readers to comment on what they have read just as they might after reading an online newspaper article. *Con/Dolerse* is a collection of works by fifteen contributors that was first published in 2011 in response to narco violence and then published in a second, updated edition following a wave of disappearances in Mexico. *Con/Dolerse* was published by *Sur+* an independent publishing collective. These novels exemplify how contemporary Mexican women authors are using new publishing outlets to present alternative political visions.

Stefanie El Madawi, "Necessary Narcissism: Blogging Post Trauma and Existential Recovery"

In the wake of 9/11, Julie Powell, a so-called 'soulless bureaucratic goon' (Powell, 2002) began a blog to document a cooking project that would see her tackle 527 recipes in a

year as a means of ‘making a space for [herself] in [her] own life’ (Powell, 2009). The blog facilitated escape from a thankless and often heart-breaking role within a government agency dealing with insurance claims pertaining to the WTC tragedy, and the necessary space for unapologetic self-reflection.

Powell attests ‘One thing about blogging is that it gives you a blank check for whining [...] I could take my drone to cyberspace. There is could always find a sympathetic ear’ (2005: 210). The therapeutic benefits of writing, or ‘scriptotherapy’ (Henke, 2000: xxii) are widely recognised in literary studies (LaCapra, 2001; Henke, 2000; Riordan, 1996; et al.) and it was the written output of the ‘Julie/Julia’ cooking project that was the impetus for an introspective, self-referential narrative that eventually propelled Powell out of the existential crisis imposed by the post-traumatic, New York bureaucracy and the ‘ticking’ of her ‘biological clock’, and towards validation as a successful, published writer.

The subsequent adaptation of Powell’s book, *Julie and Julia* (2009) depicts the practice of blogging as simultaneously narcissistic and therapeutic, whilst also demonstrating the heterophenomenological, empathic connection achieved through the act of autobiographical writing (Schmitt, 2017). The human connection missing from Powell’s working life is achieved through the paradoxical solipsism of her blog project. Julie Powell’s existential recovery is the result of ‘blogishly narcissistic’ (Dumes, 2009) narrativising and introspection, coupled with the intersubjective empathic connection with her ‘bleaders’ (Powell, 2005).

Kerry Myler, “21st-century short fiction, feminist politics, and experiments in form”

Malcolm Bradbury argues that the modern British short story can be divided ‘into two traditions: one pre-eminently social and one predominantly experimental’ but that the two strands are subject to ‘constant attempts at reconciliation (1987, p. 13). Short fiction, according to Bradbury, enacts a literary tension between social realism and the art of language and form, ‘the strange, the fantastic, the grotesque, the surreal and the mythic,’ and in doing so offers ‘new kinds of self-questioning and a fresh enquiry into the nature and the proper conditions of fiction’ (p. 13). Thirty years on, short fiction, and women’s short fiction in particular, not only continues to combine the political and the experimental but does so in, or in dialogue with, a digital environment only dimly imagined in 1987.

Short fiction has proven itself a malleable genre and in the 21st century it has once more adapted, this time to a digital culture that is constantly shifting in terms of both technological possibilities and readers’ interests. Short fiction not only needs to suit its new, multiple environments but also to appeal to the often-fleeting interests of its potential audiences. The story that has most successfully met this remit is Kristen Roupenian’s ‘Cat Person’ (2018), the ‘first viral short story of the net’ (*Scroll.in*). Received by readers as a ‘hot take’ on the current #metoo movement, this short story became ‘a reminder of the power the form can wield, and a great advert for literature in an era dominated by other mediums’ (*Esquire.com*). ‘Cat Person’ is not the only short story to achieve viral potential – Carmen Maria Machado’s ‘The Husband Stitch’ from *Her Body and Other Parties* (2017) has also been widely shared across social media

platforms. Other women's short fiction – inc. Han Kang's *The Vegetarian* (2015, a short story cycle), Ottessa Moshfegh's collection *Homesick for Another World* (2017), Gillian Flynn's 'The Grown Up' (2014) – has garnered much attention and successfully navigated differing digital and traditional publishing environments. All the stories are shocking, 'grotesque' even, to use Bradbury's term, and often without any easily identifiable or quantifiable political and/or feminist position. In this paper I will argue that 21st-century women's short fiction offers a unique space to combine the social and experimental, the political and abstract, turning both outward and inward and, in doing so, it once more produces 'new kinds of self-questioning' while it toys with the very notion of 'the proper conditions of fiction.'

Ecofeminism

Alison Bartlett and Nandi Chinna, "The Poetics of Solastalgia: creative responses to environmental loss"

This paper is a response to activism last summer when bulldozers pushed a 5km highway footprint through local urban wetlands and woodlands in Western Australia, known as the Roe 8 extension. We argue that the impact of the community campaign and the clearing of this land evoked a form of cultural mourning and loss that can be thought of as solastalgia (Albrecht 2005). As an increasingly common experience in the Anthropocene, we are interested in how solastalgia can be expressed. In our need to comprehend and articulate solastalgia, we propose a poetic response to the Roe 8 bulldozing that offers a complex and intense a form of mourning which is not restricted to that summer of activism but connects with broader experiences of solastalgia. In its articulation, such expressions must inevitably acknowledge prior Indigenous dispossession, connecting local environmental wrongs with the ongoing politics and governance of colonisation. This presentation will include poetry written by Nandi Chinna in response to the sick feeling that accompanies witnessing radical ecological destruction.

Alison Bartlett is Associate Professor in English and Cultural Studies at The University of Western Australia. Her research on Australian feminist events is increasingly drawn to meanings of place when they become sites of activism, memorialisation, and social memory. Her most recent work is published in *Feminist Ecologies: changing environments in the Anthropocene* (2018), and *Never Again: reflections on environmental responsibility after Roe 8* (2017). She is the author of *Jamming the Machinery: contemporary Australian women's writing* (1998) and *Breastwork: rethinking breastfeeding* (2005), has edited 4 volumes of essays, and is general editor of *Outskirts* journal of feminist cultural studies.

Nandi Chinna is a research consultant, poet and activist based in Fremantle, Western Australia. Her professional and artistic interests include ecological histories, and intangible cultural heritage. Her poetry collection *Swamp: walking the wetlands of the Swan Coastal Plain* (Fremantle Press, 2014), is a poetic history of Perth's wetlands. In 2016 she was the inaugural writer in residence at Kings Park and Botanic Garden in Perth. Her third poetry collection *The Future Keepers* is forthcoming from Fremantle Press in 2019.

Anna Kirsch, "Writing a Feminist Hardboiled: The Rise of Ecofeminism in Sara Paretsky's *Blood Shot*"

The paper explores the textual expression of the porous divide between the human body and the environment in relation to a feminist definition of self and nature as expressed in the popular consciousness using Stacy Alaimo's idea of trans-corporeality. It focuses on genre fiction as a medium of expression for social justice and activism. The paper looks at the dual roles of environmentalism and feminism in crime fiction. Using a close reading of *Blood Shot*, the fifth novel in Sara Paretsky's V. I. Warshawski series the paper argues Sara Paretsky was popularizing an ecological feminist crime narrative. The paper explores the striking parallels between the detective, the victim, and the environment. Paretsky's detective V. I. Warshawski represents a wave of feminist revision in the American hard-boiled genre of crime fiction which according to Gill Plain in *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction: Gender, Sexuality and the Body* was part of a feminist re-visioning of the hardboiled crime novel traditionally associated with American writers. While the British tradition of cosy mystery writing was popularized by the four queens of crime Agatha Christie, Dorothy L. Sayers, Margery Allingham and Ngaio Marsh American hard-boiled crime fiction tradition was more masculine represented by writers such as Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler. The 1980's saw an appropriation of the hard-boiled's lonely wisecracking hero by writers such as Paretsky into a feminist frame which bent the roles commonly applied to masculinity and femininity. The paper explores how a social re-visioning of gender roles in crime narratives was an integral part of other boundary transgressions such as the divide between culture and nature.

Anna Kirsch is the Book Reviews Editor for the International Crime Fiction Association. She completed her English Studies MA at Durham University and is applying for her PhD. Her master's thesis was on environmental ethics and morality in Carl Hiaasen's crime fiction. Additionally, she has earned four film credits as a story consultant on the documentary films *Breath of Life*, *Trading on Thin Air*, *For the Love of Tango*, and an upcoming documentary *Living in the Future's Past* narrated by Jeff Bridges

Lucy Rowland, "Dunes, Desertification and the Possibility of Refuge in Clare Vaye Watkins' *Gold Fame Citrus* (2015)"

Clare Vaye Watkins' novel *Gold Fame Citrus* (2015) articulates a disastrous escalation of the environmental crises currently plaguing the southwest of the US. Desertification and drought forces protagonists Luz and Ray (a young couple who adopt an abused child) to travel across a parched California in order to eke out a living in the Armagosa Dune Sea, a constantly shifting sand mass that can render entire cities uninhabitable. Author Emily St John Mandel has noted that this novel demonstrates a clear interest 'in the psychic impact of place'. In light of this statement, in this paper I read *Gold Fame Citrus* from a feminist ecocritical perspective, addressing the social, moral and psychological consequences of climate change-induced desertification and drought that become apparent in the novel. I pay particularly close attention to the text's engagement with (and critique of) contemporary political and media discourses on climate change, for example climate change denial and war on the environment, which can exacerbate environmental damage and remove the hope for refuge in increasingly inhospitable environments. I situate my analysis of the novel alongside Clare Colebrook's notions of

climate change and refuge, and Donna Haraway's assertion that the increasing absence of refuge spaces for both humans and nonhumans characterises the Anthropocene epoch, ultimately examining the unique interventions that *Gold Fame Citrus* makes into critical debates surrounding discourses on climate change and its related environmental disasters.

Lucy Rowland has a BA and MA in English Literature from the University of Birmingham, and began a PhD in the School of English at the University of Leeds in 2015. Her PhD project is titled "'Tortured Ecologies': Environmental Disaster and Climate Discourse in Contemporary Women's Speculative Fiction', and is funded by the White Rose College of the Arts and Humanities (WRoCAH). Her wider research interests include material ecocriticism and the environmental humanities more broadly. Alongside her PhD, Lucy is the administrator for the AHRC Research project 'Land Lines: Modern British Nature Writing', based at the universities of Leeds, Sussex and St Andrews.

Writing Resistance

Cristina Riaño Alonso, "'There's always, there'll always be, more story': Writing Wrongs in Ali Smith's *Autumn*"

This paper focuses on Ali Smith's novel *Autumn*, the first one in a series of books named after the seasons. Published in 2016, it is a book of the present and about the present: its narrative unfolds in contemporary Britain during the Brexit campaign. Bringing the past into the present, the novel also takes us back to 1963, the year of the Profumo Affair (also referred to as the Scandal '63). Drawing from theories of affect and ethnicity, I will discuss how the novel subtly but critically comments on the refugee crisis and the anti-immigration sentiment surrounding the Brexit campaign, as well as on sisterhood and sexism. Firstly, I will argue that the novel works as a collage, by means of the different socio-political events and cultural references that accumulate meaning throughout the novel in order to create a more complete and complex image of the current socio-political situation in Britain. I will contend that they contribute to building a multi-layered narrative which works as a palimpsest for current sexist and racist attitudes. Secondly, I will explore the novel's depiction of sisterhood through the stories of Elisabeth Demand, Pauline Boty and Christine Keeler. The interweaving of their stories pays homage to a history of female resistance and empowerment, while also underlining a history of institutional sexism. Thirdly, I will focus on Pauline Boty's art to comment on ideas of sexism, sisterhood and female empowerment. A number of her collages are mentioned in the book and a better understanding of these works of art adds meaning and a gendered awareness to the events and themes presented to us in the novel.

Sarah Bernstein, "Difficult Women and the Common Good"

This paper theorises a phenomenon in contemporary women's writing, the 'difficult woman', to show that she has emerged as a cultural figure at odds with the state at precise historical moments. Specifically, I explore how the 'difficult woman' appears in experimental writing in response to changes in the organisation and administration of social welfare. The paper theorises the figure of the difficult woman in the

contemporary moment by highlighting her rise in the conceptual novels of Rachel Cusk, Claire-Louise Bennett's 'series of improvisations' on the short story, and the 'war on affect' in Katie Kitamura's minimalist novels. I read these texts as part of a broader contemporary phenomenon that includes the 'feminist killjoy' and has emerged as a form of activism in response to the concerted dismantling of social welfare programmes. I argue that, just as the 'Nasty Woman' became a call for solidarity through protest during the 2016 presidential election, so has the difficult woman emerged as a figure who, in her refusal of the social contract, models new patterns of social citizenship. The 'difficulty' of the difficult woman is twofold: first, the writers' formal and thematic experimentation renders their texts challenging to read. The formal difficulty of these texts creates a space for new ways of making meaning and new kinds of narratives – literary as well as social – and it is through this new patterning that alternative forms of community are proposed, created and tried out. Second, the women that populate the worlds of these novels – often characterised by critics as 'affectless' or 'cerebral' – are marked by a disavowal of filiation, a rejection of a purely familial or romantic connection in favour of a more impersonal – and, I argue, democratic – mode of association.

Melanie Waters, "Feeling (Bad) Like A Feminist: Affecting Change in 1970s Women's Writing"

When *Spare Rib* first launched in July 1972, its glossy pages promised to 'put women's liberation on the newsstands' by spreading 'new politics through familiar forms' (Fell 1979: 2). From editorials exploring how it 'feels' to work collectively to letters from readers expressing the emotional toll of discrimination, *Spare Rib* makes a consistent effort to provide spaces in which the feelings associated with women's liberation can be articulated and explored. This paper examines the extent to which affect theory might help to illuminate the virulent discourse of feeling in *Spare Rib*, as well as in popular feminist fiction of the 1970s. Foregrounding the high premium placed on personal testimony within the women's liberation movement, it explores how 'bad feelings' (Ahmed 2010a: 50), in particular, might serve as an 'affective magnet' around which the politics of feminism can be negotiated and critiqued (Berlant 2008: 7).

Melanie Waters is Senior Lecturer in Modern and Contemporary Literature at Northumbria University, UK. She is the editor of *Women on Screen: Feminism and Femininity in Visual Culture* (2011), co-editor of *Poetry and Autobiography* (2011) and the author, with Rebecca Munford, of *Feminism and Popular Culture: Investigating the Postfeminist Mystique* (2013). She has recently contributed to and co-edited *From Suffrage to Second Wave: Feminist Periodical Culture*, a special issue of *Women: A Cultural Review* (2017)

Representations of Dementia: Culture and Genre

Raquel Medina, "Dementia and Poetry: Juana Castro's *Los cuerpos oscuros/The dark bodies*"

The poetry book *Los cuerpos oscuros/The dark bodies* (2005) by the Spanish poet Juana Castro presents the experience of Alzheimer's disease (AD) in its last two stages. The book offers different perspectives about experiencing the disease: the experience of the

person living with AD and the experience of the informal caregivers. The book deploys a polyphony of voices through which the reader perceives the symptoms of the disease, as well as the psychological and physical effects on caregivers. The representation of AD depicted unfolds aesthetically from the ugly experience of the disease to the poetical beauty of its representation. That is, Juana Castro places the readers before a poetized reality that shifts between the aesthetics of the ugly and the beauty of emotions. She does so using a poetic language full of metaphors and syntactical fragmentation with the aim to make poetic language the textual mirror of the loss of language experienced by the people living with AD. Although the book conveys all aspects and symptoms of the disease's reality, these are not the focus of the book; on the contrary, the book places its focus on the continuous construction and deconstruction of selfhood as lived by the people living with AD and their caregivers.

The purpose of this presentation is to analyze the representation of the disease offered in terms of identity and poetic language. This analysis argues that content and poetic language are expressions of psychological states created by the disease in those who live with it and those around them. In addition, the relationship between semantic memory and metaphorical language will be analyzed.

Katsura Sako, "Dementia in Japanese Children's Picture books"

As population ageing continues, children are very likely to encounter dementia in their families, local communities and in the media. Manthorpe (2005) argues that there was little information for children affected by dementia until the 80s and 90s, when many therapeutic, practice-based publications, in particular, began to emerge to respond to 'growing attention to the expressed needs of families for information, support and advice' (306). There has been a growing awareness of this need in more recent years, with more and more children's picturebooks being published in many ageing societies.

As an example of this, the paper will consider some picturebooks published in Japan in recent years and analyse how they represent dementia, care and familial relationships. Children's literature is inherently dialogic, as it is produced for children by adults based on their ambivalent assumptions about what children are. Nodelman argues that the best children's texts are "trying to be optimistic and didactic at once" ("Pleasure and Genre" 2). Picturebooks for children are even more dialogic, because of their combination of text and picture. My analysis will focus on the ways in which these generic features of children's literature shape the narratives in these books and how they seek to contain, at both formal and narrative levels, the anxiety that dementia and the changes it brings may cause in children. Where it is relevant, I will also draw comparisons with picturebooks published in Anglo-American contexts.

Katsura Sako is Associate Professor of English, Keio University (Japan) and Visiting Research Fellow at the University of Huddersfield (UK). Her main field of research is post-war/contemporary British fiction, and she has published on authors such as A. S. Byatt, Margaret Drabble and Michèle Roberts. Her recent research focuses on ageing, gender and dementia in contemporary fiction, and she is currently working with Sarah Falcus on a book-length study on contemporary narratives of dementia.

Sarah Falcus, "Remember[ing] all the moments of craziness, beauty, and tragedy': telling parental stories in Sarah Leavitt's *Tangles: A Story About Alzheimer's, My Mother and Me* and Roz Chast's *Can't We Talk About Something More Pleasant?*"

It is perhaps not surprising that the graphic form has proved attractive to the life writer. As Hillary L. Chute suggests, comics, with their combination of text and image in ‘a narrative punctuated by pause or absence’, ‘mimic[...] the procedure of memory’ (2010: 4). This paper explores how the comic form not only lends itself to life writing, but specifically to the representation of a condition that has (loss of) memory at its heart: dementia.

For many critics, comics are particularly effective at representing illness because of their combination of image and text, which can represent both language and the embodied self at the same time. This ability to represent embodied subjectivity offers the potential for comic books to counter, or at least complicate, the loss-of-self narrative of dementia that depends on the intimate association between language, memory and selfhood. We explore how two comic books, Sarah Leavitt’s *Tangles: A Story About Alzheimer’s, My Mother and Me* (Canada, 2010) and Roz Chast’s *Can’t We Talk About Something More Pleasant?* (US, 2014), exploit the possibilities of the graphic form to tell familial stories of dementia and care. At the same time, as comics written by daughters about parents with dementia, these texts are very aware of the ethical issues at the heart of the representation of such vulnerable subjects (Couser, 2004). The comic may be an ideal form for the exploration of illness and dependence, but, as with any representation of a person whose cognitive capacities are impaired, there is undeniably a tension here between the necessity to tell these stories and the ethical dangers of doing so.

Speculative Fiction

Jade Hinchliffe, “Juli Zeh and the Right to Privacy and our Body in a Surveillance Society”

Surveillance has become a part of everyday life in the twenty-first century from CCTV cameras, to airport scanners to internet surveillance; we are increasingly under the watchful eye of Big Brother. Juli Zeh is a German novelist and law graduate, who has used her experience to speak out on issues regarding surveillance in both fiction and non-fiction essays. As Zeh grew up in West Germany and saw the reunification of the country in her teens she is well aware how surveillance practices can be used to monitor the general public. In her 2009 novel, *The Method*, Zeh imagines a surveillance state that uses the excuse of improving healthcare to monitor its citizens. By reading the novel in light of surveillance studies, through a post-humanist critical lens, it becomes clear that the novel cautions the reader to examine our relationship with surveillance and the rights we are giving away. In the novel, the state uses a variety of surveillance methods such as the vertical, top down monitoring of the citizens by the state and self-monitoring through participatory surveillance. Through these practices, Zeh demonstrates how the body is increasingly becoming the property of the state and how the general public can be conditioned to accept intrusions in their privacy as the norm. The various debates in the novel surrounding surveillance and human rights culminate in a clear warning: we must defend the right to privacy and reclaim ownership of our bodies before it is too late.

Nic Stavris, “Out of Time and Out of Place: Apocalyptic Displacement in Megan Hunter’s *The End We Start From*”

In her debut novel *The End We Start From* (2017), Megan Hunter utilises the genre of apocalyptic fiction so as to illustrate the fragmented and disorientated experience of displacement during times of crisis and uncertainty. Apocalyptic fiction might be thought of as an appropriate genre or narrative discourse through which to consider the experience of displacement, since both pivot on a moment of disconnection from time and place. Displacement is the experience of separation from that which might be considered familiar. The identity of displaced subjects, for example, migrants and refugees, can be defined by a sense of both 'timelessness' and 'placelessness'. Otherwise put, displacement involves being always in transit and always on the move. Hunter's narrative, an amalgamation of poetry and prose, foregrounds the temporal and spatial sensibility of the displaced subject in its depiction of the journey of a mother and her baby son in a post-apocalyptic world. This discussion will explore the process and experience of displacement with respect to Hunter's narrative, arguing that Hunter's narrator is defined by a lack of autonomy, agency and status, core traits through which displaced subjects become stigmatised and devalued. At the same time, however, it will be suggested that Hunter's novel interrogates this understanding of the displaced subject as passive and powerless. The journey undertaken by Hunter's narrator in the apocalyptic aftermath is governed not by lack and loss, but by hope and possibility, and it is through her capacity for hope that she is able to confront the crisis and uncertainty of displacement.

Dr Nic Stavris has recently been awarded his PhD from the University of Huddersfield for his thesis on the subject of apocalyptic fiction and cultural trauma in the twenty-first century. His primary research interests include representations of dystopia and utopia in contemporary culture and literature, trauma studies, gender and twenty-first century fiction, and environmental criticism. He is the co-editor of a 2015 Bloomsbury publication entitled 'Supplanting the Postmodern: An Anthology of writings on the Arts and Culture of the Early 21st Century', and has also written on the subject of globalisation in the post-9/11 epoch.

Susan Watkins, "Time, Narrative and History in Contemporary Women's Post-Apocalyptic Writing"

Apocalyptic fictions inevitably exist in a state of suspension, self-consumption or unfinished process. This curious position in relation to time and narrative has been discussed by a number of critics and theorists of apocalypse, including Frank Kermode (1967) Jean-Pierre Dupuy (2009) and Steven Connor (1996). Recently, in *Staying with the Trouble*, Donna Haraway has refused the apocalyptic narrative as it is commonly understood, asking: 'How can we think in terms of urgencies *without* the self-indulgent and self-fulfilling myths of apocalypse, when every fiber of our being is interlaced, even complicit, in the webs of processes that must somehow be engaged and repatterned?' (2016, p. 35). Haraway sees our attraction to the Apocalyptic narrative as part of the disturbing appeal of the term *Anthropocene* as a characterisation of our present moment and relationship with the Earth. She proposes the 'Chthulucene' as an alternative, as a way to 'cultivate with each other in every way imaginable epochs to come that can replenish refuge (100). This paper will examine how a number of contemporary women's post-apocalyptic fictions make narrative/historical/time contortions or conundrums central to their texts. Particularly, the paper will focus on the use of the

sequel as a deliberately paradoxical device that, in Haraway's terms, writes/ rights the self-fulfilling 'wrongs' of the apocalyptic narrative by revising and transforming it. Examples will include Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* trilogy, Doris Lessing's two 'Ifrik' novels, and Maggie Gee's re-use of characters from her own earlier fiction in her novel *The Flood*. The attraction to sequels might appear illogical: how can there be a sequel to the apocalypse? This paper will argue that the sequel allows the creative revision of many of the expectations created by the earlier novel, as well as providing the opportunity to expose further some of the former text's (and the genre's) implications.

Black British Women Writers Network Roundtable: authenticity, politics and writing, Elisabeth Bekers, Helen Cousins, Laura Fish, Degna Stone

As highlighted by Danuta Kean's report 'Writing the Future: Black and Asian Writers and Publishers in the UK Market Place' (2015: commissioned by the writer development agency for London, 'Spread the Word'), Black British contemporary writers are frequently expected to comply with the narrow demands of the publishing industry who see their 'ethnicity' first. There is an underlying assumption that their work must be political: as one writer Kean interviewed commented: 'you risk being seen as a commentator on your race, rather than an author who had a wonderful idea that you wanted to explore formally in the format of a novel' (p. 13). Instead, writers interviewed for this report frequently identified pressures from publishers to write 'authentically' – which usually meant conforming to the preconceptions of a predominantly White readership about 'Black experience' – coupled with an assumption that 'if you are a Black writer, you should be writing about that – being Black'; and that, as the books feature Black characters, they must be about racism (p. 13). This denies Black writers the designation of 'artist'.

This round table will explore the toxic literary environment in which Black British women write, where their work is predominantly judged on its realism and socio-political commitment, despite the authors' striking formal experimentations. Our focus on Black British women writers in particular acknowledges that this is a group 'disproportionately under-represented in mainstream literary culture' (SI Leeds Literary Prize www.sileedsliteraryprize.com/about-the-prize/) something that may be connected to the constraints identified by Kean. Topics, explored through a conversation between scholars and authors, will include:

- how far the existing predilection for authenticity and political writing undercuts the authors' aesthetic creativity as well as inhibiting a full appreciation of their work in publishing and academia;
- gendered impacts on Black British women writers whereby their works are perceived as adhering to a 'cultural politics that stresses social and political relevance over aesthetic considerations and innovations' (Weedon 2008: 19);
- critical approaches to the work of Black British women writers offering an alternative to the more common critical practices focused on the writers' engagement with questions of race and gender.
- how far larger publishing houses, readers and even scholars at times appear only interested in the instrumentalisation of Black British women writers as reliable sociological informants (for example, praise for Kit De Waal's novel, *Leon*, focused on its apparent authenticity as written by a former social worker, herself mixed-race);

- The role of smaller publishing houses in promoting and prizing aesthetic innovation in Black British women's writing (e.g. Peepal Tree's publication of Desiree Reynolds) and how far this still keeps this writing firmly in the margins.

Laura Fish, Senior Lecturer at Northumbria University. Laura teaches creative writing and is the author of *Flight of Black Swans* (Gerald Duckworth & Co 1995) and *Strange Music* (Vintage 2009).

Elisabeth Bekers, Lecturer in British and Postcolonial Literature at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel. Elisabeth established the Black British Women's Writers Network and the accompanying academic website (www.vub.ac.be/TALK/BBWW) in 2013, with funding from the Research Council of Flanders, Belgium. She is currently working on a research project on Black British Women's Writing and Criticism, with a special interest in neo-slave narratives,

Helen Cousins, Reader in Postcolonial Literature at Newman University, Birmingham. Helen researches and publishes on contemporary Black British writing, with a focus on Englishness, belonging and aesthetics. She is currently working on a monograph on Black British literature and belonging.

Originally from the Midlands, Degna Stone is now based in Tyne and Wear. She is a co-founder of Butcher's Dog poetry magazine, a Contributing Editor at *The Rialto* and is currently a Poetry Book Society pamphlet selector. She received a Northern Writers Award in 2015, holds an MA in Creative Writing from Newcastle University and is a fellow of *The Complete Works III*. Magazine and online publications include: *The Black Light Engine Room*, *DiamondTwig*, *Ink*, *Sweat & Tears*, *The Ofi Press* and *The Rialto*. Appearances include: Durham Book Festival, Newcastle Poetry Festival, StAnza International Poetry Festival, Stoke Literary Festival and BBC Radio 3s *The Verb*.

Mapping the City

Carla Rodríguez González, "The Wrongs of the City: Denise Mina's Garnethill Trilogy"

Drawing from affect, spatial and capabilities studies, this paper analyses the representation of spaces of resilience in Denise Mina's Garnethill trilogy (1998, 2000, 2001) and on the role these spaces play in the gendered redistribution of urban and domestic power portrayed in the narratives. In order to do so, it contextualises these books within the framework of contemporary Scottish crime fiction and subsequently studies the contraposition and subversion of emotional spaces in Glasgow and London in the process of recovery from the trauma of the child sexual abuse their protagonist, Maureen O'Donnell has undergone. Her resilient strategies are studied in relation to her embodiment of urban spaces —Glasgow and London— within the framework of the collaborative action through which she finds radical means to transform them. Added to this, it studies Maureen's urban capabilities and their relation to her experience of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). It will be examined how by means of her character's embodiment of space, Mina interrogates the available capabilities in the city of Glasgow, according to differentiated gender and social conditionings. To this end, the article focuses on the concepts of resilience and urban capabilities, to then explore them in

relation to the different urban spaces Maureen navigates across. Finally, it studies her embodiment of the domestic realm by analysing the interconnectedness of her affective practices and her capacity to appropriate and transform her symbolic apartment, situated at the top of one of Glasgow's most iconic hills, Garnethill.

Clara Botamino González, "Spatial Transgression in Laura Hird's 'Hope'"

This paper focuses on the challenge of the hierarchical relationship between the private and the public spheres in Laura Hird's short story "Hope", published in the collection *Hope and Other Urban Tales* (2006). From the framework of space and gender theory (McDowell 1997; Masey 1994), it analyses the construction of alternative forms of gendered identities in the city of Edinburgh, which is mapped by means of the characters' trajectories in its urban spaces. Similarly, this paper revises Hird's negotiation of established notions of the private space through the presentation of disruptive practices (de Certeau 1984), which act as spatial transgressions. It will be argued that "Hope" constitutes an urban study of traditional notions of domesticity, which in the story are disrupted through the application of sexual practices in the public spheres. Published between the last years of the 1990s and the beginning of the twentieth century, Hird's writings provide a relevant portrayal of contemporary Scottish society, using the city of Edinburgh as the scenario for her complete fictional work. The contrast private/public applied to her oeuvre demonstrates the obscure nature of delimiting boundaries between the two spheres. By analysing Hird's portrayal of the spatial disruption in "Hope", this paper will demonstrate her contribution to gender studies in terms of 'writing wrongs' as a political act.

Melissa Tombro, "Women Write New York City"

Inspired by Rebecca Solnit's remapping of NYC to represent the women who shaped its narrative, this paper examines women's contributions to the creation of NYC as literary construct through analysis of their writings on literature, art and activism. No city has been more anthologized as subject and inspiration. Popularized narratives construct our experience of the city and NYC has been a historically popular topic and setting for many great works of literature. Despite this, women who write about the city, especially women of color and first generation Americans have been vastly underrepresented as creators of the city's literary landscape. Popular books fail to focus on the vast array of women's voices that have contributed to the creation NYC as preeminent center for literary production. This paper seeks to disrupt and redirect that canon by highlighting works by women responsible for important cultural production related to the city and its boroughs. My work identifies the way women have formed and contributed to these narratives, how their stories have been celebrated, forgotten, anthologized or gone relatively unheard. The city is considered as character and setting and I will demonstrate how the celebration of women's contributions and narratives come to play in our understanding of the city as a whole.

Dr. Melissa Tombro is an Associate Professor in the English and Communication Studies Department at The Fashion Institute of Technology – The State University of New York. She is the author of *Teaching Autoethnography: Personal Writing in the Classroom* published through Open SUNY Textbooks. In 2015 she created the Women and Gender Studies program at FIT and serves as its coordinator.

Rewriting Female Sexuality

Lauren Cooper, “Women's memoir as *écriture féminine*: reclaiming female sexuality”

A post-feminist climate can be identified in current Western culture, where social media trends such as #IDon'tNeedFeminismBecause become worryingly popular and where capitalism utilises choicerhetoric to the point that feminism looks like 'something wholly interchangeable' with consumerism. The 'choice' to buy sexy lingerie is presented as an act of liberation, rather than participation in a capitalism-defined feminine/feminist identity. (Nina Power, 2009) Many women are claiming feminism is no longer needed or relevant, yet female sexuality continues to be oppressed as society unjustly downplays female desire, predominantly represents female sexuality through/for the male gaze and by surrounding it with negative language, for example female-associated words such as cunt and pussy are insults.

Female sexuality must therefore be explored away from capitalist and male-oriented arenas, if women are to be liberated, and a return to the second-wave phenomenon of *écriture féminine* could provide this opportunity. Close reading key *écriture féminine* texts finds a particular connection with sexuality. *Écriture féminine* encourages a use of the body in women's writing, making it an invaluable tool for women to correct representations of female sexuality – from female perspectives - and re-find positivity in the associated language. This paper finds similarities between *écriture féminine* and memoir and looks at Periel Aschenbrand's *On My Knees* and Catherine Millet's *The Sexual Life of Catherine M* as examples of contemporary women's memoir embracing an openness towards and embodiment of female sexuality, aligned with the delineation of *écriture féminine*. Memoir, as a modern form of *écriture féminine*, provides a space for women to explore, create and share real representations of female sexuality, which are largely withheld from culture and society. It is particularly worth exploring memoir, as a relatable and accessible form, for its potential to re-engage a post-feminist generation with women's experiences and issues, at a distance from capitalism and media.

Krystina Osborne, “Rewriting the Dominant Narrative of Female Masturbation”

This paper argues that there is an ideological investment in positioning female masturbation as one of the last sexual taboos in order to distract from the fact that engagements with female masturbation are actually relatively commonplace in culture. It goes on to suggest that perpetuating the myth that female masturbation is a rarely discussed topic thus draws attention to certain cultural engagements with the act which are then perceived to be revolutionary and subversive. However, rather than celebrating the polymorphous potential of female autoerotic sexuality, these prominent depictions often use the process of Othering in order to demonise female masturbators, working to contain female masturbatory pleasure within societally acceptable parameters. This process allows relatively conservative engagements with female masturbation to masquerade as sites of feminist resistance, thus confining the discourse within regressive, patriarchal boundaries.

In order to combat that dominant narrative, this paper will explore the associations between female autoeroticism, the autoerotic gaze and the process of writing the self. Moving beyond the emerging genres of autofiction and autotheory, in

addition to acknowledging the recent post-*Fifty Shades* boom in female-authored erotic fiction and sexually explicit confessional writing, this paper envisages a genre of 'autoerotic fiction' that embraces the autofictional style popularised by Chris Kraus's *I Love Dick* (1997) and her 'lonely girl phenomenology'. As women and girls in particular are routinely discouraged from embracing the self and the abject, the lack of objectivity inherent to autofiction and autotheory is doubly subversive when appropriated by female authors. This paper references writers including Kathy Acker, Kate Zambreno, Charlotte Roche and Miranda July in order to propose an alternative autoerotic genre which is imbued with female autoerotic literary pleasure and fuelled by masturbatory modes of reading and writing.

Krystina Osborne is writing up her PhD thesis, entitled 'An Analysis of Engagements with Female Autoeroticism in Contemporary Women's Writing from 1972 to the Present Day'. She is based at the Research Centre for Literature and Cultural History at Liverpool John Moores University, where she has taught modules on gender, literary theory, and British literature of the 1950s and 1960s. A former steering group member of the Postgraduate Contemporary Women's Writing Network (PG CWWN), she is currently Acting Secretary of the CWWA. She can be found on Twitter: @KrystinaOsborne

Sarah Heidebrink-Bruno, " 'I Love and Have Been Love[d]': Healing and Restorative Practices in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*"

Since the publication of Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* in 1982 and the movie release three years later, both the book and the film have undergone a tremendous amount of scrutiny. Critical responses run the gamut from high praise to condemning Walker's work as a racist representation of black manhood. Walker is certainly interested in demonstrating the historically harmful effects of black families' assimilated ideologies of racism and sexism—but she further challenges these norms by imagining what a radically different community could look like. Walker crafts *The Color Purple* as an aesthetic model of change; she offers readers the opportunity to vicariously experience a transformative, if utopian, vision of gender roles within alternative kinship networks. By following her characters' evolutions, readers gain a better understanding of how to undue toxic relationships and promote healing within their own communities, starting with the most basic kinship structure, the family. Essentially, Walker uses *The Color Purple* as a fictive depiction of womanist prose in action. Like other feminist texts written during the Women's Movement, the novel contends with the violence of sexism, racism, and colorism. However, Walker's novel takes this model a step further, as she encourages readers to also imagine a community that is defined not by its past violence, but by its ability to take responsibility for this violence while healing a victim and restoring a former abuser. For my purposes in this paper, womanism-cum-intersectional feminism combined with a restorative justice framework allows for the reader to better understand not only Celie's reclamation of herself, but also Albert's transformation and re-entry into their community. Walker demonstrates that healing and restoration can, and should, happen on multiple levels, including in relationships between women, men, and in one's community.

Motherhood

Helen Davies, “‘The Sins of the Mother?’ Down Syndrome, Feminism, and Ableist Ideologies in Contemporary Women’s Writing”

This paper argues that Down syndrome has a tendency to be deployed as a metaphor – in David T. Mitchell and Sharon Snyder’s term, a ‘narrative prosthesis’ – for postfeminist anxieties about women’s ‘choices’ in relation to reproduction and sexuality in contemporary women’s writing. Not only does this expose the ableist ideologies of a certain strand of feminist and postfeminist discourse, it demonstrates the perpetuation of gendered ideologies about Down syndrome which originate from the nineteenth century when the condition was first described by medicine.

I begin with a reading of some nineteenth-century discourses on Down syndrome. In a reiteration of the concept of ‘maternal impression’, which blames the mother’s behaviour on the birth of a child with physical or mental disability, we see how Victorian gendered ideologies of ‘promiscuity’ and failure to fulfil the maternal ideal are positioned as instrumental in producing a child with Down syndrome. This forms the basis of my analysis of two novels from the late twentieth century: Doris Lessing’s *The Fifth Child* (1988) and Fay Weldon’s *Darcy’s Utopia* (1991). Both represent the birth of children with Down syndrome as being a consequence of maternal selfishness, and as a ‘disability’ to the fulfilment of women’s independence. Ironically, however, my reading of the novels also exposes the ways in which it is the culture of women’s ‘choices’ in relation to juggling a career, relationships and family that is depicted as leading to the birth of a child with Down syndrome. In this sense, the postfeminist discourse of ‘choice’ also becomes a disabling discourse in these texts. As a counterpoint, I end with a discussion of Cecelia Ahern’s *The Year I Met You* (2014). Although Ahern might usually be more securely considered as a postfeminist writer in comparison to the ‘feminism’ of Lessing and Weldon, I argue that the novel actually offers a more empathic and diverse construction of the possibilities of life with Down syndrome. Ahern dramatizes the gendered prejudices which persist in relation to the condition, but also imagines a character with Down syndrome who challenges gendered and ableist stereotypes in relation to independence and agency.

Helen Davies is Head of English at Newman University. She is the author of *Gender and Ventriloquism in Victorian and Neo-Victorian Fiction: Passionate Puppets* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012) and *Neo-Victorian Freakery: The Cultural Afterlife of the Victorian Freak Show* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015). She is currently writing a book about the ideologies of the Victorian freak show. She has published widely on gender, sexuality, and disability in Victorian and contemporary fiction, and is on the executive committee of the Contemporary Women’s Writing Association and the editorial board of *Journal of Gender Studies*.

Miyuki Hanabusa, “Contemporary Women’s Dilemma About Work-Life Balance: Japanese ‘Mommy Lit,’ its Limitations and Possibilities”

The last half a century has promoted women’s advancement in society in developed countries but has brought them new difficulties. One of these difficulties is achieving equilibrium between their professional career and personal lives, namely, maintaining a work-life balance. Although comparatively slower, women’s advancement in society has been promoted in Japan as well; in 1985, the Equal Employment Opportunity Law for

Man and Women was passed, and some women began to follow the same track as men concerning promotion. Despite the fact that equal opportunities in employment and promotion have been accorded to these women, however, support for them, whether public or private and particularly for working mothers, is still insufficient. Furthermore, although their difficulties have structural backgrounds, working women are often asked to deal with their difficulties individually.

On the literary scene, like chick lit and its subgenre mommy lit, some popular genres of fiction in Japan, called *L-bungaku* (literature by, for, and about women), *oshigoto-shosetsu* (job fiction) or *wamama-shosetsu* (working-mothers fiction), have dealt with these issues for a couple of decades. Needless to say, the fact that some fictions began to feature working women is not a coincidence: these genres reflect women's access to work. In these texts, while there are similarities with the Western ones, difficulties that are unique to Japan are found, such as a shortage of nursery schools available (employing babysitters is not as common as in some other countries, and there was even a demonstration against the government in 2016, which was triggered by an anonymous working mother's blog).

In my paper, following a brief overview of women's advancement in society since the 1980s and the current social support system for working women/mothers, and also the literary genres' shift from young women's pursuit of career and romance to working mothers' work-life balance, I will focus on some selected representative texts including those by Naoki-Prize-winning novelists Setsuko Shinoda and Mitsuki Tsujimura. For instance, one of Tsujimura's text published in the mid-2010s portrays a working mother who tries to find every possible means including divorcing her husband to make her kid accepted to a nursery school. In this text that narrates the daily-life struggles of professional mothers and a "wrong," it is easy to find the structural problems surrounding working mothers. I will also discuss the limitations and possibilities of these literary genres, which have wide readership, mostly women. That is, although these genres may not necessarily or directly present effective means to solve women's difficulties or lead social change, they could serve readers as a potential medium to share difficulties, disseminate their message to the grassroots level and give a voice to their challenges, as a woman's blog led the actions of women's solidarity in 2016.

Dr. Miyuki Hanabusa is Associate Professor in the Department of English Literature and Culture, Faculties of Humanities, Fuji Women's University, Japan. She is currently working on two research projects. The first is an ongoing project that analyzes representations of the body and the subject in Anglo-American and Japanese cultural texts. The second project involves research into contemporary popular fiction genres, including mommy lit, in Anglo-American countries and Japan. Her major publications include a journal article on Melvin Burgess's fiction, 'So Much More Than Pretty': Body Modification and Boundary Transgression in Melvin Burgess's *Sara's Face*." *Jeunesse: Young People, Texts, Cultures*. Vol 4, No. 2 (2012; U of Winnipeg): 67-86.

Clare Lavery, "My front door key unlocks no neat forgiving plots"

This talk examines autoethnographic work and approaches to 'voicing the self' when the Self has been stigmatized in mainstream spaces. Mothers whose children have been harmed by close family members live in imposed complexity, with altered identities within communities. They may be ostracized as a form of 'moral quarantine' (Morris,

2017) or socially shamed by their association to an offender (Condry, 2008), yet left with the burden of altered life narratives, mediated through the lens of 'other'. How do we create spaces for witnessing? How do we understand the process of multiple wrongs? There is urgent need to translate this 'identity displacement', loss of agency and belonging. Forche (1993) offers a model of poetry of witness and digital life storying techniques can also capture the kaleidoscopic layers of obscured lives. This paper examines such writing, using arts-based research methods to facilitate performance of 'mother blame' and empowerment. As one voice states, "*My front door key unlocks no neat forgiving plots*".

Life storying that facilitates new translations of impact into their own language, and on their own terms, is the aim. This crafting forms a 'right to reply' against the mitigating "*stigmcraft*" identified by Tyler (2017) in her process definition of wronged identities. Silencing this victim testimony constitutes, according to the philosopher Miranda Fricker, a distinct form of 'epistemic injustice' for individuals 'wronged specifically in their capacity as a knower' (Fricker, 2007)

Performance of anonymity after crime calls for complex skills of 'identity juggling' and writing becomes a negotiation of knowing. The paper illustrates the potential of this method for "affective impact" in research areas of hidden victimhood (Kara, 2016). As Arundhati Roy states, for all marginalized women, "There's really no such thing as the 'voiceless'. There are only the deliberately silenced, or the preferably unheard".

Jenny Moore, "Local Practice, Global Reach: Translating the Local Mother-to-Mother Support of La Leche League into Transformative Texts"

Because gendered spatial segregation is implicated in the marginalization of women from institutional systems such as medicine and science, feminist rhetorical scholars such as Jessica Enoch and Nan Johnson have called for investigation into the role of rhetoric in establishing, maintaining, challenging, and transforming gendered spatial institutions. While feminist rhetorical scholars Susan Wells and Carolyn Skinner have studied the ways in which women physicians successfully challenged institutionalized spatial segregation from within the medical profession, less attention has been paid to the domestic sphere as a location from which activists shaped the institution of medicine. In this presentation, I explore how La Leche League International (LLLI), which began in the late 1950s as a local mother-to-mother breastfeeding support group in the suburbs of Chicago, harnessed the domestic sphere as a locus for sharing experienced-based knowledge about breastfeeding and mothering to counter the detached approach to mothering promoted by physicians in the era of "scientific motherhood," an early twentieth century ideology that emphasized a scientific detachment and strict adherence to prescribed sleeping and feeding schedules. The structure and domestic location of the early LLLI meetings allowed the organization to develop privately and strengthen their ideology prior to moving into the public sphere. Through analysis of LLLI's archival materials and publications, I examine the rhetorical strategies employed by the organization as it translated the work of the local support group into writing with the goal of reaching a geographically dispersed audience while attempting to provide the same spirit of support it offered to local mothers. Largely through textual outreach that foregrounded a maternal ethos, cultivated an egalitarian tone, and responded to the social situations and needs of the organization's audience of

mothers, LLLI crafted written materials that assisted the organization with engaging in and transforming medical discourse on motherhood and infant feeding.

Hearts and Wrongs: The politics and aesthetics of postcolonial romance

In response to the aim of the conference to “explore the limits and possibilities of writing as a political act”, our panel reformulates this question by asking whether that potential can be realized through popular romance, often condemned as escapist, conservative, apolitical, purely commercial and unworthy of proper academic attention. More specifically, we are interested in exploring the politics of contemporary romance writing in four specific post/colonial contexts and in connection to four subgenres (historical romance, contemporary romance, chick lit, young adult romance) to explore how their romantic conventions and formulae may be effectively reformulated to suit each author’s respective agenda. This research is part of the project “The politics, aesthetics and marketing of literary formulae in popular women’s fiction: History, Exoticism and Romance” (HER) (FFI2016-75130-P).

Carolina Fernández Rodríguez, “Chamorro Romance Heroines: Loving the G.I. while Resisting Imperialism”

A US colony since 1898, Guam has not yet undergone a decolonization process. The Chamorro people, the island’s indigenous population, were mostly grateful to the Americans for the “liberation” of the island from the Japanese in 1944, though soon after some started to see it as a “reoccupation” of their homeland. Whatever the case, WWII constitutes a hugely influential event for present-day Chamorro culture, which explains its recurrent presence in Chamorro literature. The aim of this paper is to offer an analysis of two WWII romances written by Chamorro writers: *Conquered* by Paula Quinene (2016) and *A Mansion on the Moon* by Cathy Sablan Gault (2015). In particular, it attempts to study the ways in which these two novels depart from mainstream romances in their adaptation of well-known formulas. Special attention will be given to the reconfiguration of the romance genre through the de-exoticization of the island setting, the historicizing and politicization of Guam, the inscription of Chamorro language and culture as valid tools to narrate the romantic experience, and the vindication of cultural appropriation and syncretism. Ultimately, the paper argues that Chamorro popular romance can effectively serve as a form of literary activism that highlights the negative impact that Spanish and Japanese imperialism had on Guam, and the current subjugation of the island to the US. The paper also endeavors to palliate the double erasure that Chamorro popular literature has systematically endured in Academia, given that, on the one hand, romance is the least prestigious literary genre, and, on the other, US Literary Studies rarely devote any attention to the literature produced in the US Pacific territories, while Post-colonial Studies often fail to focus on territories that are yet to be decolonized, such as Guam.

Carolina Fernández-Rodríguez has a PhD in English Philology and she teaches American Literatures and Cultures at the University of Oviedo. Her research focuses on contemporary women’s writing, with a special focus on feminist revisions of fairy tales, a topic on which she has written three books and several articles. She is also interested in the representation of latinidades in American literature and mass media, and in

issues related to multiculturalism as portrayed in children's and young adults' literature.

Paloma Fresno-Calleja, "Feminist Romance Samoan-Style: Local and Global Wrongs in Lani Wendt Young's Scarlet Series"

My paper focuses on two contemporary romances by Samoan writer Lani Wendt Young, *Scarlet Lies* (2015) and *Scarlet Secrets* (2015) (part of a three-volume series to be completed with the publication of *Scarlet Redemption*). The novels focus on the life and romantic adventures of a young Samoan woman after she travels back from the US to her home country for her sister's wedding. While the novels fall squarely into the conventions and formulaic plots of contemporary romance, Young deploys the genre as a very effective tool for social commentary, offering an insider's view of Samoan culture, clearly under- or misrepresented in the global romantic imaginary. Most importantly, the novels serve as tools of political intervention by raising criticism towards both Samoan and western society, by reflecting on the neo/colonial structures affecting the lives of her young characters and by introducing discussions on culturally-specific –and very sensitive– issues like religion, sexuality, family pressures or societal expectations. Young's work, which also includes poetry, essays and young adult fiction, has been unanimously well received as a fresh take on issues that are of concern to thousands of Samoan, Pacific and global female readers, who for the first time are seeing themselves represented in novels which are accessible, funny and unashamedly commercial, yet do not shy away from an explicitly feminist and postcolonial critique.

Paloma Fresno-Calleja is Senior Lecturer in English at the University of the Balearic Islands where she teaches postcolonial literatures and gender studies. Her research focuses on New Zealand and Pacific literatures, on which she has published monographs, book chapters and articles in international journals. She is lead researcher of HER and of the UIB research group "Modern and Contemporary Anglophone Literatures".

Aurora García Fernández, "Aspirational Dreaming: Political Activism and Transcultural Pedagogy in Anita Heiss's Romantic Fiction"

Among the many wrongs inflicted on Indigenous Australians since the European invasion of their ancestral land was the misinterpretation when not complete disregard for their culture which, like the people themselves, were thought to be doomed to disappear. Far from it, they have proved resilient and extremely resourceful at adapting to the demands made on them by land dispossession and cultural assimilation up into the 21st century. A young generation of urban Indigenous writers and activists have now taken the torch; well-known among them is Wiradjury author, academic and social activist Anita Heiss, who has infiltrated the chick-lit formula and cross-fertilized it with a pedagogic and political agenda. Reconciling the pressure from career life and romantic or family pursuits is a recurrent issue for chick-lit writers; integrating the goals and dreams of upwardly mobile young professional Australian women with their Indigenous cultural roots and a full political agenda is the issue at stake in Anita Heiss's five "choc-lit" novels to date. Her aim is not only to demonstrate that Indigenous Australians have survived and even made all their way into the ranks of the academia, the media, the law and the arts, but to educate mainstream Australia —and her global

readers— to understand Aboriginal culture, history and politics. Furthermore, she aims to show them/us the versatility of Indigenous Australians to take their culture, their Dreaming, across the nation and the world, be it Canberra or Melbourne, Manhattan or Paris. This paper thus aims to scrutinize the wrongs confronted by Indigenous Australians by examining those works and her more recent historical romance *Barbed Wire and Cherry Blossoms* (2016) in the light of her trajectory as a political activist and in the current context of race relations and Indigenous politics in Australia.

Aurora García Fernández is Senior Lecturer at the University of Oviedo, Spain, where she teaches Postcolonial Studies and Cultures of the Anglophone World. Her interests lie mainly in Postcolonial and Global Studies and in Australian literature, as well as in curriculum design and methodology. She has co-edited *Translating Cultures* (1999) and is the author of a monography on Australian historical fiction, *La revisión postcolonial de la historia de Australia en la obra de Patrick White y Peter Carey* (2001), as well as several articles and book chapters mostly on Australian fiction. She coordinated the new syllabus of the Degree in English Studies and, as a vocational educator, she has been involved in several innovation teaching projects.

Irene Perez Fernandez, “Re/Writing Racial Wrongs: Ethical and Political Uses of Romance in Malorie Blackman's Young Adult Series”

Contemporary Black British writer of children literature and young adult fiction Malorie Blackman has confidently explored different literary genres and aesthetically interrogated dominant cultural forms. Her literary works are nonetheless still committed to deep social concerns and preoccupations shared by other authors within the literary tradition of Black British Women Writing. My paper examines her young adult romance trilogy *Noughts & Crosses* (2001), *Knife Edge* (2004) and *Checkmate* (2005), as they depict an impossible teenage love across racial boundaries against the backdrop of a dystopian world where black people are the ruling elite and white people are confined to minority status. I shall study the trilogy as an ethically and politically committed narrative that renegotiates concepts of race, identity and, romantic love. While doing so, the trilogy offers examples of ways in which the genre of romance can be updated and its allegedly formulaic characteristics put into question. In that sense, I shall consider Blackman’s work as a feminist re/reading of young adult romance which makes a political use of the genre to offer strong, resourceful and independent female role models for young female adults and produce a narrative that has ideological content. In this respect, the series presents a solution to the inherent contradiction posed by Jannice Radway in her seminal analysis of romance, *Reading the Romance*, i.e. how can readers find pleasure in consuming books in which love stories are recurrently based upon unequal power relations where women are frequently dominated by men who at times hurt them.

Irene Pérez-Fernández is Lecturer in English Studies at the University of Oviedo. Her research focuses on the notions of gender, space and identity in contemporary British literature and literatures in English with a special interest in the literary works of contemporary Black British and Asian British Women Writers. She has published articles on the works of Andrea Levy, Zadie Smith and Diana Evans in various international journals (*Atlantis*, *Odisea*, *The Grove*, *Interactions: Journal of British and American Studies* and *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*) and has translated Joan Anim-

Addo's short story "Daughter and His Housekeeper" into Spanish (*Revolución y Cultura*). She is the author of two books *Espacio, Identidad y Género: Aproximaciones Teóricas* (2009) and Maggie Gee: "The Artist/Artista" (2011).

Re/writing Trauma

Boriana Alexandrova, "On the Ethics of Writing & Reading Historical Abuse: Eimear McBride's *A Girl Is a Half-formed Thing*, #MeToo, and the Public Resurgence of Child Sexual Abuse Narratives"

Eimear McBride's *A Girl Is a Half-formed Thing* enjoyed instant success when it first appeared in 2013: it won the Goldsmiths Prize mere months after its publication, followed by the 2014 Baileys Women's Prize for Fiction, and several others. Yet it took McBride 10 years to find a willing publisher. The difficulty was purportedly in the novel's radically experimental style, but I would contend that it also had something to do with the unspeakability of its subject matter: historic child sexual abuse, disability, and domestic violence in a suburban Irish Catholic community. It is no coincidence that a book about a girl's experience of sexual violence struggled to attain public recognition until the 2010s, which marked a new resurgence of media attention to historical abuse narratives. The 2011 revelation of Jimmy Saville's decades-long history of child abuse was one of the tipping points that shifted the public response to abuse allegations in the UK and Ireland. This paved the way for several other prominent cases (including Stuart Hill in 2012-13 and Max Clifford in 2014) and major child abuse inquiries in Rotherham, across England, and Scotland in 2013-present, marking a shift in the legal, cultural, and political discourse surrounding historical abuse. This paper will explore the links between McBride's *A Girl* and the cultural re-framings of historical and sexual abuse narratives. Thinking through feminist theories of gendered embodiment, abjection, and disability (including Margrit Shildrick, Janet Price, Sara Ahmed, and Eve Sedgwick), I will explore the ethics of reading and critically responding to a text like *A Girl*: What does its stylistic difficulty do to our readerly response to the sexual violence narrative? How is our reading practice tied to the nature of engaging in public discourses of child abuse? Does—or could—literature inspire public action and an activist response?

Poonkulaly Gunaseelan, "Resistance through writing (?): Writing and representing rape in Shashi Deshpande's *The Binding Vine* (1992) and Meena Kandasamy's *When I Hit You: Or, A Portrait of the Writer as a Young Wife* (2017)"

Narratives of rape articulate specific intersections of gender, power, violence and sexuality. Thinking more broadly about the act of writing, postcolonial feminist criticism has highlighted how the practice of women's writing has been enmeshed in the process of politicized consciousness, self-identity and resistance (Mohanty, 2003). Consequently, the act of writing rape is therefore invested with certain notions of power, and it is this specific intersection between writing and rape that this paper will examine. The paper will be based on close readings of Shashi Deshpande's *The Binding Vine* (1992) and Meena Kandasamy's *When I Hit You: Or, A Portrait of the Writer as a Young Wife* (2017), and will address how these two authors utilise writing as a form of resistance for their female characters to narrate rape. Deshpande and Kandasamy both emerge from distinctive moments in Indian feminist history; while Deshpande is framed

by the second wave of Indian feminism, which was concerned with the economically liberated woman (Kumar, 1993), Kandasamy has emerged as a contemporary voice of Indian feminism, currently engaged in the debates that are circulating about sexuality, sexual violence and women's bodies (Kandasamy, 2015). Informed by Rajeswari Sunder Rajan, Chandra Talpade Mohanty and Susie Tharu's analyses of writing as resistance, this paper will explore how these two novels posit writing as a tool of resistance when confronted with the violence of marital rape. I argue that gender is reimagined through scenes of literary rape, and will reflect on the limits and possibilities of writing rape as resistance.

Chrysavgi Papagianni, "Righting Wrongs in Michelle Cliff's *Free Enterprise*"

Memory can be used 'to justify crimes... yet it is [also] central to the pursuit of justice,' as Booth rightly observes in his *Communities of Memory* (ix). In *Free Enterprise: A Novel of Mary Ellen Pleasant* (1993), Jamaican American writer Michelle Cliff explores the 'unofficial,' marginalized memories of the Caribbean in an attempt to expose the distortions of what Cliff sarcastically calls, the 'official' version that 'illumines the Great White Way.' The polarization between 'official' and 'unofficial' is a recurring trope that obviously aims at the pursuit of justice for the Caribbean women, and the Caribbean people for that matter, that have been written absent by dominant historical narratives. Writing, in this context, becomes an act that bears political implications as it counteracts the historical distortions of the dominant discourses and in so doing unsettles the power differentials and the binaries on which such discourses are consolidated. Indeed, Cliff's attempt to write the unwritten history of genocide and female heroism in the Caribbean, in conjunction with the alternative storytelling techniques she employs, represent an undeniable attempt to write and right wrongs, to write back, and ultimately to write 'b-l-ack.' As a result, the novel becomes a site of struggle against the omissions mandated by what Peterson calls the rules of 'safe politics.'

Dr. Chrysavgi Papagianni, holds a PhD on 20th century film and literature by women from the State University of New York at Buffalo (UB), USA. She has taught film, literature and writing at the State University of New York at Buffalo and at Athens University, Greece. Dr. Papagianni is currently an Assistant Professor in the Department of English and Writing Studies at Zayed University, UAE. Her research focuses primarily on women's literature and cinema with a specific interest on issues of memory, history and identity. Her recent work includes "The Salvation of Emirati Memory in Nujoom Alghanem's *Hamama*" published in the *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*. She is also a regular book reviewer for the *European Journal of American Studies* as well as a reviewer for various academic journals in her field. She is currently working on a funded (RIF grant) project focusing on Emirati women filmmakers."

Alice Ridout, "Re-reading Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* after #MeToo"

When NDP leader, Ed Broadbent, read a passage from Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* (1981) in the House of Commons during the announcement of Prime Minister Brian Mulroney's 1988 apology and redress settlement, he made apparent to Canadian readers the close relationship between writing wrongs and righting wrongs. *Obasan's* importance to the Japanese Canadian Redress Movement is widely acknowledged. Central to the novel's

both literary and political success is Kogawa's choice of a semi-autobiographical child protagonist.

A devastating source of Naomi Nakane's (the child protagonist) trauma is her separation from her mother which occurs *before* her mother moves to Japan and *before* Naomi's own displacement due to the wartime internment of Canadians of Japanese descent. Naomi is unable to tell her mother about her abuse by the neighbour, Old Man Gower, and this leaves her feeling torn apart from her mother and herself. Given the book's role in the Japanese Canadian Redress Movement, this scene has often been read as a secondary trauma in the novel or as an early example of Naomi's experience of racism. What does it mean to re-read *Obasan* in the context of the #MeToo movement?

This paper will attempt to answer this question by paying particular attention to the importance of children's literature and fairy tales to this novel. Kogawa's extensive intertextual allusions to famous children's texts from *Momotaro* to *Goldilocks* encourage readers to recognize in the juxtaposition of Old Man Gower with Rough Lock Bill those familiar figures of the wolf and the hunter from *Little Red Riding Hood*. This paper will read Kogawa's layered allusions to children's literature and fairy tales within a post-#MeToo feminist context.

Alice Ridout is Associate Professor of English at Algoma University in Sault Ste. Marie, Canada. She is the author of *Contemporary Women Writers Look Back: From Irony to Nostalgia* (Continuum, 2011) and co-editor of *Doris Lessing's The Golden Notebook After Fifty* (Palgrave, 2015) and *Doris Lessing: Border Crossings* (Continuum, 2009). She is Past President of the Doris Lessing Society (2012-15).

'Righting wrongs for women in academia' – an interactive presentation and workshop, Julie Scanlon

The bleak statistics regarding women's position in academia are well known. For example, it is estimated it will take forty years to close the gender pay gap and fewer than one in four professors are women, with a gender pay gap at that level standing at over £5000 a year (UCU report 2016).

Like many large institutions with entrenched hierarchical power structures, universities often serve to magnify the inequalities of the patriarchal world in general. Also like many large institutions (and the patriarchal world in general!), universities can sometimes feel as though they are moving achingly slowly toward becoming a genuinely more equal and diverse environment.

In this interactive presentation and workshop, we will consider strategies to bring about organisational change. The session will include consideration of the 'bifocal approach' (de Vries); differences between equality, equity and justice; unconscious and structural bias; forms of discrimination; the Equality Act and Equality Duty; examples of good practice.

Participants will be encouraged to share experiences of good practice from their own universities/departments, which might be taking place either as part of the Athena

SWAN scheme or outside of that, so that we might discuss how to right wrongs for women in academia.

Julie Scanlon is an independent trainer and facilitator specialising in gender and LGBT equality. She works with private, public and third sector organisations and groups to enhance understanding of barriers to equality and identify ways to progress. Working with the LGBT Fed, she has designed and facilitated training and awareness-raising for schoolteachers across the North East, for NHS Business Services, Stockton College students and Northumbria University staff. She also enjoys her work as a professional development and career-change coach and has designed and delivered a workshop, 'Gender and Coaching' for the Association for Coaching's 'Coaching Exchange', Newcastle. Julie is currently External Evaluator for the 'Women of Tyneside' Project, Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums and also holds a part-time role as Athena SWAN Manager at Sunderland University. Prior to setting up her own business in 2017, Julie was an academic, most recently at Northumbria University, with expertise in gender and LGBT representations in contemporary culture.

War and Conflict

Ann Marie Condron, "Lucie Aubrac, The Importance of *Her* Story"

This paper will focus primarily on Lucie Aubrac's memoirs *Ils partiront dans l'ivresse* (*Outwitting the Gestapo*) published prior to the trial of Klaus Barbie in 1984. Former Chief of the Gestapo in Lyons, Barbie was renowned for his sadism, which had earned him the nickname the 'Butcher of Lyons'. In February 1983 he was extradited from Bolivia to face charges of crimes against humanity. One of the few women honoured by General de Gaulle and a well-known public figure, Lucie was encouraged to publish her memoirs by her former pupil and friend the actress Simone Signoret. In the run-up to Barbie's trial, his defence lawyer, Jacques Vergès revealed that his defence would rely fundamentally upon charges of corruption within the Resistance in Lyons in 1943. Vergès intended to discredit the testimonies of former Resistance members and lay responsibility for the betrayal of Jean Moulin, General de Gaulle's envoy, firmly with members of the Resistance.

Like Lucie, many of the witnesses who testified at Barbie's trial declared that the trial had been a catalyst for their writing. Thus the act of writing their memoirs entailed metaphorically 'writing the wrongs' they had experienced under the Nazi occupation, and also enabled them to refute the allegations made by Jacques Vergès. Since Lucie's memoirs are a personal account of the events, which had taken place during her second pregnancy in Lyons, 1943, they represent a female-centred narrative. We will discuss the importance of the female voice in Lucie's memoirs and contrast them with Claude Berri's film *Lucie Aubrac* (1997). Although initially well received by the public and major French politicians, it aroused much controversy among leading historians of the period. Nevertheless, the film won State approval and was promoted in schools as if it were a historically accurate document rather than a fictional film.

Lymon Majid and Tabasum Aslam, "Gender, Memory, and Conflict: Exploring the Personal Narratives of Women in Kashmir"

Gender and Memory are, to a large degree, intertwined. Recognizing gendered experiences provides a way in which the cultural memory of a community does not become a monolith, for collective memory must be inclusive of different voices and narrations. In this sense, in a conflict zone, where multiple voices contest and claim the public space, the narratives of women and how they memorialize events adds a gendered perspective to memory and history. This paper discusses such personal narratives in Kashmir during the years of insurgency. Building on short memoirs, articles, blogs, and interviews published in newspapers and books, the paper examines the complex intersections stemming from how gender interacts with history, nationalism, and memory in a state of armed conflict, analysing how identities are asserted by such gendered narrations. Further, focusing on militarization and violence, this paper extensively deals with how women in Kashmir remember the violence inflicted on them by State and non-State actors. The paper argues that such a situation exists because of pervasive militarization and that is why the State, in order to absolve itself of its crimes, contests these narratives (based on memory) by calling them (women) as actors of myth-making.

Keywords; Kashmir Conflict, Gender, Memory, Personal Narratives

Iymon Majid is a PhD candidate in the Department of Political Science, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi (India).

Tabassum Aslam is a PhD candidate in the Academy of International Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi (India).

Feminist Appropriations

Eliane Campello, “Metaphor: Nélida Piñon’s strategic narrative in *Desert Voices* (2004)”

Voices do Deserto (*Desert Voices*, 2004), a novel by Nélida Piñon, a contemporary Brazilian writer, has given her the “Jabuti Prize for Fiction” and “The Prince of Asturias Award” in 2005. She has become the first Brazilian woman to receive it, although in 1995, she has already won the “Juan Rulfo”, the most relevant prize for literature in Latin America and Caribe, given for the first time to a woman and to a Brazilian writer. In 1996, she has become the first woman to preside the Brazilian Academy of Letters, in 100 years and, in 1998, after 505 years, the University of Compostela gave a woman the title of “Doctor Honoris Causa”. This year, 2018, UCompostela’s main Conference is in her homage. In one interview, she has stated that “If there wasn’t the art of deceiving, life wouldn’t be acceptable”. This saying drives her writing of *Desert Voices*. By making good use of the generative motto of *The Arabian Nights*, she transfigures the original tale into a novel ruled by distinct gendered principles. From the aesthetics, philosophical, structural tenets to the ethics, she gives life to the words expressed not only by a girl who wants to escape from death and to save other virgin’s lives from the Califa’s revenge, but by an artist of the words. My aim is to explore the erotic, the imagination and the memory tracks built under the cloak of a metaphoric structure in what concerns Piñon’s narrative techniques and her urgency in explaining what is going on the characters’ minds. In such a revolutionary rewriting perspective, she notably is writing wrongs. It is highly meaningful that she calls herself a “historical feminist”. At

her eighties, she has titled one of her speeches as “Sharp tongue: women writers take the word”, because Time is up!.

Amy Crawford, “Re-Writing/Re-Righting the Bible”

In this paper I analyse the rewriting and rereighting of Genesis 3 (Christian Fall narrative) in contemporary women writers. With attention to narrative technique, specifically how the biblical narrative is deployed intertextually in contemporary fiction, I will seek to show how this interpretative act is transformed into a social corrective, attempting not only to rewrite these narratives, but also to re-right the position of women in the Christian tradition. To do so, I will first unpack the canonical narrative, its orthodox interpretations, theological conclusions. Next, I will provide an overview of contemporary women writers who engage with the Christian Fall narrative intertextually, briefly discussing Angela Carter’s ‘Penetrating to the Heart of the Forest’ (1974), Ursula K Le Guin’s ‘She Unnames them’ (1985), Edenic references in Michele Roberts’s *The Visitation* (1983), as well as Lucy Durneen’s ‘This is Eden’ (2017). I will then focus on Roberts’s *The Visitation*. With attention to narrative technique, specifically how biblical narratives are deployed intertextually in contemporary fiction, I will seek to show how this interpretative act embedded in the revisions transform into a social corrective, attempting not only to rewrite these narratives, but also to re-right the position of women in the Christian tradition.

As I have argued in previous publications, feminist revision of canonical texts is inherently bound up with questions of authority, nomenclature, subjectivity and womanhood. Biblical narratives and traditions, comprising the foundation of Western culture and society (or, As Northrop Frye asserts, the great code of all western literature) require concentrated analysis by feminist critics and writers. In performing close readings of text by contemporary women writers, I seek to investigate textual strategies as interrogations of ideological codes.

Amy Crawford is originally from the US. She has earned a Master of Liberal Arts in English from the University of Northern Colorado; a Master of Christian Studies from Regent College in Vancouver, BC; and a Master of Letters in Women, Writing and Gender at the University of St Andrews in Scotland. She has completed a PhD on contemporary women writers and feminist revision of narratives. She is particularly interested in Margaret Atwood, Michèle Roberts, Ursula Le Guin, Ali Smith, Andrea Levy, and Angela Carter. She lives in Cambridge, England. She has been a member of CWWA since 2013.

Barbara Franchi, “Writing War, Righting the World: Memory, Trauma and Activism in A. S. Byatt’s Short Fiction”

Narrating her own experiences as a child in the Second World War, in ‘The Thing in the Forest’ (from *The Little Black Book of Stories*, 2003), and *Ragnarok: The End of the Gods* (2009), A. S. Byatt uses the language of myths and fairy tales to give a collective dimension to the individual memory of past traumas. At the same time, she explores the human instinct to destroy others, be they civilians seen as enemies in a war, or the natural environment on the plane, whose very functioning is put at serious risk by invasive, polluting and exploitative human activity. Similarly, in the short story ‘Dragon’s Breath,’ commissioned by the *Sheherazade 2001* project (1994), Byatt projects

the trauma of war onto monstrous dragons, and counters their destructive force with the figures of storytellers and artists who make meaning, through art, of their traumatic experiences.

How do storytelling and the sharing of stories become an act of peaceful protest against the violence of the war? And how can the creative effort of trauma survivors have a transformative effect on the individuals and communities that, starting from that very collective consciousness, negotiate present and future relationships between spaces, humans and environments?

This paper examines how Byatt's short fictions of war find in the 'living energy' (Byatt, *On Histories and Stories*, 181) of stories the key to counter the disruptive forces at stake in a world constantly at war with itself. In particular, it argues how Byatt deploys the highly symbolic metaphors of monsters and dragons to transform individual memory into a shared, foundational and creative moment. Ultimately, by equating the violence of war to the current environmental crisis, Byatt celebrates storytelling as an urgent and necessary form of resistance against humanity's past traumas and its ongoing disruptive tendencies.

Barbara Franchi obtained her PhD from the University of Kent in 2017, where she wrote a thesis on A. S. Byatt's fiction and intertextuality. Her research interests are in the areas of contemporary women's writing, Victorian and neo-Victorian literature, travel and mobility studies, and feminism. Her publications include the collection *Crossing Borders in Victorian Travel: Spaces, Nations and Empires* (with Elvan Mutlu; Cambridge Scholars 2017); two chapters on A. S. Byatt, appeared in *Sea Narratives: Cultural Responses to the Sea* (ed. Charlotte Mathieson, Palgrave: 2016) and *A. S. Byatt, before and after Possession: recent critical approaches* (ed. Armelle Parey and Isabelle Roblin, PUN-Editions Universitaires de Lorraine: 2017); and a journal article on Eleanor Catton's *The Luminaries* (appeared with *Partial Answers*, 2018).

Writing Space and Place

Sandra Almeida, "The Power of Story Telling: Writing Space and Affect"

This is the power of the telling of a story.
Mohja Kahf

This paper analyzes the geographies of affect that mark women's contemporary writings as an inherently political act. These narratives address issues that are closely related to what the British feminist geographer Doreen Massey theorizes as spaces of emotional attachment and the Canadian critic Diana Brydon refers to as emotional geographies. Analyzing such a writing space from this perspective leads to the possibility of establishing an intrinsic connection between contemporary spaces and a politics and poetics of affect in tune with Barush Spinoza's philosophical arguments. Taking these theorizations in mind and with a focus on the works by two contemporary women writers Shani Mottou (*Valmiki's Daughter*) and Arundhati Roy (*The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*), this paper aims at discussing how these contemporary works focus on writing alternative stories, disruptive identities and geographies of affect. These narratives also address the power of writing and storytelling to disrupt the

construction of women's subjectivity, the images of the gendered body, and the affective configurations of space.

Sandra R. G. Almeida is a Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG), Brazil. She was President of the Brazilian Association for Canadian Studies (2001-2003) and is currently is UFMG Vice-President. She has edited and co-edited several books, including: *The Art of Elizabeth Bishop* (2002), *Transnational Perspectives Brazil-Canadá* (2005), *New Challenges in Language and Literature* (2009). She recently published *Cartografias contemporâneas: espaço, corpo, escrita* (2015).

Andrea Toth, "Dis/connected lives: personal ethnography from the semi-periphery"

There is a small village at the Hungarian and Slovak border, whose "citizenship" has changed from time to time during the course of history, while it has never changed its location. At the moment it belongs to Slovakia. However, I am not concerned here with the nationality of the small village, otherwise typical with its decreasing and ageing population, migrating youth, and falling birth rate. What is of more interest and more significance for us now are the inhabitants's gender and generational relations, with their permeable and impermeable interconnections. This is a social milieu with very strict gender rules for little girls, generations of whom — especially those who were born before the 1980's — used to grow up to be working women, get married, become mothers and grandmothers, and widows eventually, with very little opportunity to break out of the limiting social, cultural, political and economic environment either through work or education. In this study I attempt to trace the lines that connect and disconnect the generations of women born before and after the 1980's: how can the latter generations if not justify, but at least offer reasons for the earlier generations' strength and spirit to hold on under the harsh life conditions and stringent patriarchal system that has highly undervalued and exploited women. More specifically, along the lines of Ruth Behar's personal ethnography (1993), I attempt to examine the social, cultural and political changes that connect and disconnect the life of a grandmother and her granddaughter, a grandmother who barely writes and a granddaughter who writes science.

Zeynab Yousfi, "Gender Trouble in Arab Women's Novels"

In a purely male dominated arena, Arab women writers admitted themselves to the literary scene, slowly and successfully establishing a revolutionary feminist literature challenging the male tradition. Since the emergence of the feminist literature in the Arab world, women authors have created works distinguished by style and theme. They moved away from the romantic style to touch upon reality, to speak of the unspeakable and to probe questions that assail Arab societies' sensibility.

This paper focuses on the works of the two most internationally celebrated Arab women writers, Nawal El Saadawi from Egypt and Assia Djebar from Algeria. I turn to their novels: *Woman at Point Zero* and *Ombre Sultane* to see how gender discourse in the Arab world has been affected by the feminist literature of Arab women novelists.

I argue that the rich and the complex stories of Arab women writers are in fact attempts-hard but often successful- to counteract stereotypical gender expectations, and to negotiate authentic and unique identities. In El Saadawi's and Djébar's works, myths of inferiority, subjugation, invisibility, and silence are challenged to present local and global readers with fictional but realistic narratives that portray an accurate image of Arab women. Despite the traditional and the patriarchal nature of the Arab society, these two writers manage to impose themselves as creative women capable of broadcasting their voices in the medium of storytelling.

Writing the Body

Olivia Heal, "Effacement: A Maternal Reading"

A confluence of factors has prompted the long overdue revisioning of motherhood that is currently taking place. These include the recent shifts in maternal terminology and rise in non-conventional realisations of motherhood (queer, non-biological etc.), a necessary rethinking of the psychoanalytic 'othering' of the mother, and a sharp rise in maternal first-person writing across the spectrum (from online blogs and forums through literature to the academic arena).

Contemporary maternal writing is drawing motherhood out of its past inhibiting associations, creating pathways that resist dogmatic, absurdly extolling or denigrating maternal representation, and reinterpreting maternal subjectivity, thus positing alliances between motherhood and the feminist discourses that have long eschewed it.

This paper uses a figure of effacement to explore the de-essentialising and de-mythologising of motherhood in contemporary maternal writing. Drawing an analogy between cervical effacement and mothers' accounts of loss of self, I will trace a trajectory in which effacement is stripped of its paralysing status and reconstituted as agential. Where earlier accounts have tended to inhabit a mournful or melancholic position in response to effacement, I argue that recent responses to motherhood simultaneously mark and occasion a shift in mothers' experiences (Maggie Nelson 2015, Andrea Brady 2012, Lucy Mercer 2017, Joanna Walsh 2016). In these texts a formal engagement is upheld by an irreverent stance that seeks to 'catch rather than cauterise' (Brady 6). As such, they conjure potential in effacement, both literary and political, and sketch a version of maternal subjectivity that is performative and self-fashioning.

By performing a first person, maternal reading I hope to affirm the effect of these texts beyond the page, and to silently acknowledge the extent to which they might both construct and empower their readers.

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Kiriaki Massoura, “The abject body of Agnes Magnúsdóttir in Hannah Kent’s *Burial Rites* (2013)”

Burial Rites is the debut novel of the young writer Hannah Kent, based on a historical double murder that takes place in Iceland and was thought to have been motivated by greed and jealousy. In June 1829 Agnes Magnúsdóttir, alongside her fellow maidservant, Sigríður Sigga Gudmundsdóttir, and Fridrik Sigurdsson, the son of a local farmer, were convicted of the brutal murders of legendary healer, poet and secular mystic Natan Ketilsson and a visiting neighbour. The two men had multiple stab wounds and their bodies had been burned after death, along with Natan’s remote farmhouse, to cover the evidence of their murder. Although Sigríður was later pardoned to life imprisonment, Fridrik and Agnes faced death by beheading.

As an Australian, Kent felt she had to conduct rigorous research to be able to write a novel about a true double murder that takes place nearly two hundred years ago and it is clearly documented, in a country that is not her own. However, as an outsider she identifies the gaps and inconsistencies in written history and questions the marginalised representation of a historical figure. Kent uses her creative imagination to unfold the last few months and death of Agnes, who seems to be presented by various historical records as literate, intelligent and a poet in her own right, but also stereotypically and unquestionably wicked, a witch gleefully plotting and helping to execute a double murder. This does not rest well with Kent, who gives Agnes her own voice to narrate her story in first person, using a lyrical prose. As Kent explains: ‘I...wanted to mark the stylistic difference between the way Agnes relates her experiences and the dry, bureaucratic language of the authorities who record and judge her crimes. She has no place in or right to the dominant patriarchal mode of formal rhetorical discourse, so she represents herself “outside” language.’ As readers, we are privy to Agnes’s first person interior monologues but also to the narration of her life story up and including the day of the murders that she offers to Reverend Tóti. There are also multiple third person narrators and extracts from historical and archival materials are used as epigraphs at the beginning of each of the thirteen chapters, in Kent’s effort to stitch together a credible record of a woman who was neither victim nor monster but human, with moral complexity and ambiguity.

Kent’s novel is winner of numerous awards, including the Indie Award for Debut Fiction (2014). It is a very atmospheric novel, with a harsh but also magnificent landscape that plays another character, so it is not surprising that has been picked up for film adaptation with the Oscar winning actress Jennifer Lawrence committed to star as Agnes. This is a neo-historical, death-row, Gothic romance and revisionist feminist/postmodern novel and whilst I will make references to the other genres in my analysis, I will concentrate on the revisionist feminist aspect and on how Kent grants Agnes the power to recover her voice from the margins, right the wrong that has been done to her and offer her own story. I will explore Agnes’s abject body which works as text, using Judith Butler’s theory as well as Julia Kristeva’s theory on abjection. Class, gender and the use of language will also be important themes that will be critically analysed in my paper.

Fiona Tolan, “The Cleaning Problem: Class, race and labour in the work of Zadie Smith, Hilary Mantel and Ali Smith”

In *The Second Sex* (1949), Simone de Beauvoir writes: 'Few tasks are more like the torture of Sisyphus than housework'. Domestic work, for Beauvoir, is a stultifying pursuit that provides 'little affirmation of individuality' (470). This same assumption pervades much of the subsequent second-wave feminist discourse on domesticity. For Betty Friedan, writing in *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963, the myth of 'The Happy Housewife Heroine' is 'burying millions of American women alive' (336). In *The Female Eunuch* (1970), Germaine Greer declares that women 'represent the most oppressed class of life-contracted unpaid workers, for whom slaves is not too melodramatic a description' (329).

Second-wave feminism identified cleaning and housework as a key battleground in the fight for gender equality. Feminists called for 'Wages for Housework', looking to rally women as workers united in struggle, connecting domestic labour to the wider labour market. Too frequently, however, such calls to common experience failed to address competing inequalities. As bell hooks reflects, 'we could only become sisters in struggle by confronting the ways women – through sex, class, and race – dominated and exploited other women' (*Feminism is for Everybody*, 3).

Cleaning becomes a ready locus of underlying tensions in the feminist project – around class and race, but also the division of public/private spheres, women's work, capitalism and globalization. And yet, as the housework problem has proven intractable, it has largely fallen out of favour with contemporary feminist theorists. Consequently, it falls to women fiction writers to interrogate the question of cleaning in the twenty-first century. Examining Hilary Mantel's 'The School of English' (2014), Zadie Smith's 'The Embassy of Cambodia' (2013) and Ali Smith's *The Accidental* (2005), I argue that these texts all use cleaning as a trope by which to examine recurring patterns of injustice and competing narratives of liberty and oppression: tackling ethical concerns that second-wave feminism raised but failed to resolve.