

# Experimental Writing in English (1945-2000): The Anti-Canon

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## ABSTRACTS

### KEYNOTE: DAY 1

#### **Anthony Reed (Vanderbilt University) - Between Subjects: Black Lyrical Voicing Against the Canon**

In her 2019 *An Autobiography of the Autobiography of Reading* poet and novelist Dionne Brand makes a distinction between “the world of a reading self” and the world of “the subject who is supposed to be made, through colonial pedagogies in the form of texts—fiction, non-fiction, poetry, photographs, and governmental and bureaucratic structures” (8). In that gap between the predicted and desired effects of reading and discipline and the chaotic, enigmatic, incoherent, and potentially aspects of the process of reading, particularly for those readers who are not imagined to be part of the community of texts and propositions for which the curriculum is primarily intended. My ambition in this talk is to take seriously Virginia Jackson’s arguments that “lyric *reading*” has created generations of readers inclined to take all short occasional verse to be lyric and ask from a different perspective what it means to read that tradition and be denied normativity by the larger society. Reading Jackson with Claudia Rankine’s suggestive distinction, in *Citizen: An American Lyric*, between the “historical self” and the “self self,” on the one hand, and substantive critiques of coloniality as offered by Dionne Brand and Sylvia Wynter on the other, this lecture will offer some reflections on what is gained and lost by attempting to read Afro-descended writers through a singular lyric frame. If lyric ideology is pervasive, what ends does its hegemony serve? How might taking seriously the colonial roots of human experience that subtends common understandings of lyric personality open new vistas for study and new ways of reading? Finally, how might critics reframe vexed questions of canon formation and influence if we attend to the plurality of readers, and the range of desires and histories they might bring to the texts that comprise it? To begin answering these questions, this talk will engage June Jordan’s poetry and essays with particular attention to the ways her work negotiates the demands of the personal and the collective.

**Anthony Reed** is Professor of English at Vanderbilt University. The ways people of African descent throughout the diaspora understand their world and imagine possibilities of living free motivates his research and writing on black poetry, media, aesthetics and politics in the 20th and 21st centuries. He has published two books, *Freedom Time: The Poetics and Politics of Black Experimental Writing* (2014) and *Soundworks: Race, Sound, and Poetry in Production* (2022), and co-edited *Langston Hughes in Context*, with Vera M. Kutzinski. He is currently working on a book of black lyric theory, taking lyric poetry as a self-reflexive document of everyday life and freedom practices. He is also researching post-Apartheid aesthetics and politics across the African diaspora.

## **KEYNOTE: DAY 2**

### **Georgina Colby (Westminster University) - Forms of Solidarity: Feminist Avant-Garde Writing in the Twenty-First Century**

Artistic avant-gardes have historically sought to imagine new social, as well as aesthetic forms. In recent years, in the face of a set of intertwined political emergencies, avant-garde writers have pursued that aim with renewed vigour and urgency. My larger project brings feminist avant-garde writing into dialogue with feminist theories of solidarity to argue for the emergence of a new literary form: solidary writing. Through close engagement with writers such as Anne Boyer, Caroline Bergvall, Bhanu Kapil, Kyoo Lee, M. NourbeSe Philip, Nat Raha, Kaia Sand, Juliana Spahr, and Rita Wong, among others, I argue that it is through literary experiment and a grounding in social justice that the feminist avant-garde work is able to operate as a form of solidarity. New forms of textual solidarity emerge in these writers' works, whereby 'form' refers to both the form of the literary text and to the conceptual permutation of solidarity. Politically engaged and interventionist in nature, solidary writing counters the representative constraints of dominant social and political discourses, giving literary form to turbulent socio-political conditions, addressing issues such as forced migration, social class struggle, experiences of xenophobia, transphobia, racism, modern slavery, reproductive rights and ecological crisis. For this talk, I will present the central argument of this project alongside two forms of solidarity found in the work of Caroline Bergvall and Bhanu Kapil.

**Georgina Colby** has published widely in the field of avant-garde writing and feminisms. Her books include *Kathy Acker: Writing the Impossible* (Edinburgh University Press, 2016), and the collection *Reading Experimental Writing* (Edinburgh University Press, 2019). She is the founder and Series Editor of *Edinburgh Foundations in Avant-Garde Writing* and *Edinburgh Critical Studies in Avant-Garde Writing* (co-edited with Eric White). She is also the founder and co-director of S A L O N, a site for responding to the present through feminist avant-garde writing. From 2018-2021 she led the BA/Leverhulme funded project *Feminist Representations: Violence Against Women, Asylum, Voice, and Testimony*. She is currently finishing her new monograph, *Forms of Solidarity: Feminist Avant-Garde Writing in the Twenty-First Century*, a seed essay for which appeared in *Jacket 2* in 2017. She is Reader in Modern and Contemporary Literature at University of Westminster.

## **PANEL 1. (IM)MATERIAL CONDITIONS AND THE EVERYDAY**

### **Nonia Williams (University of East Anglia) - Ann Quin: Gender and Precarity**

Recent readings of Ann Quin have claimed or drawn attention to her position as a working-class writer, and it is clear that the intersection of gender and class might well have quadruply marginalized Quin in terms of Christine Brooke-Rose's oft quoted idea that even the notion of an 'experimental woman writer' was already a triply marginalised one. Throughout her life, Quin's material conditions were uncertain, and her writing clearly acknowledges the importance of class

structures and experiences, for example the material effects and aesthetics of working class environments in *Berg* (1964), and the critique of bourgeois living, marriage and sexuality in *Three* (1966).

This paper considers various entanglements between gender, class and experimentation in her writing in terms of Quin's larger interest in states of precarity. Precarity here refers to and includes both Quin's lived experience – such as her precarious material conditions, sexual and emotional life, mental states and more – and the experimental forms and contents of the writing. With Quin, the question of precarity and precariousness is both an identity and a literary question, and I suggest it is useful and productive for us to read her texts as precarious. By precarious here, I mean the sexual and other kinds of vulnerability of the characters, the experimental uncertainty of the writing's forms, strategies, techniques and perspectives, the wider cultural position of her writing as 'experimental', and the scattered and fragile position of her archive materials. Overall, I read Quin as a writer of ontological and phenomenological uncertainty and insecurity who employs the suggestive ambivalence and both/and of precariousness to write and rethink intersections of identity such as gender, class and sexuality.

**Nonia Williams** is a Lecturer in Modern and Contemporary Literature at the University of East Anglia. Nonia's key research interests are experimental aesthetics and forms; feminism, gender and sexuality; issues of archive and recovery research. Recent work on Quin includes *British Avant-Garde Fiction of the 1960s* (EUP, 2019); 'About/Of Madness: Ann Quin's The Unmapped Country' (Textual Practice, 2020); 'Designing its Own Shadow': tracing Ann Quin's reiterative experimental processes' (Palgrave, 2021); '(Re)turning to Quin: An Introduction' (Women: A Cultural Review, 2022); and the forthcoming *Close Reading Ann Quin: Precarious Experiments* (EUP, 2022).

**Laura Haynes (Glasgow School of Art) - *I who want to run in one river and become great: The Maternal Reconciliation of Tillie Olsen***

Taking film and media theorist Catherine Liu's polemic assertion that 'success' is aligned to those with better 'impulse control' (*Virtue Hoarders: The Case Against the Professional Managerial Class*, 2021), this paper will examine notions of accomplishment in correlation to deferred satisfaction and, in particular, consider the work and biography of American writer Tillie Olsen (1912-2007). Mother to four daughters, Olsen's 'failed potential' was often accursedly aligned to her maternal status and inspired her to write *Silences* (1978), which, in addressing the impact of reproductive labour and social class on writing, career progression, domestic ties and societal stratification, (re)asserts counter historical and disenfranchised literary losses.

By addition, with reference to literary theorist Jacqueline Rose's identified mother as 'ultimate scapegoat' (*Mothers: An Essay on Love and Cruelty*, 2019) of societal failure and blame, this paper will examine Olsen's autofictive reckoning with ambivalent motherhood, suffocating discontent and the cultural narrativisation of good-enough mothering.

Presented as performative reading, 'I who want to run in one river and become great' (Olsen, 1953-54) will retell intertextual legacy as part academic paper and part visual essay where live reading will parallel onscreen image and audio collage. This essayistic presentation will navigate the now late-capitalist constraints on time and the mother-writer, questioning an ever-pervasive societal demand for the day's optimisation.

**Laura Haynes** is a writer and editor. She is the Programme Leader of M.Litt Art Writing at the Glasgow School of Art. She is also an Editorial Director of MAP, a non-profit organisation dedicated to the discussion and support of artist-led publishing and production. Laura's writing and research is concerned with autotheory and biomythography as poetics for critique. Her work is interdisciplinary

and cross-form, often presented in multiple registers including publication, exhibition and performance. Her writing both embodies and examines the intimate, cerebral and emotional voice as a rhetorical form where criticality is charged by correlation to the everyday and the anecdotal.

**Matthew Rana (Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis) - B W B R B B W R W R G W G B W G B R B: Analogical Representation and Sexual Difference in Bernadette Mayer's *Studying Hunger Journals***

This paper considers American poet Bernadette Mayer's notion of "emotional science," as it is developed in her book *Studying Hunger Journals* (1975/2011), a six-part prose poem based on notebooks she kept during a three-year period of psychoanalysis. Drawing on Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank's reading of Silvan Tomkins's theory of affect as a "coarse scientism," traversing analogical and digital modes of thought, I argue that Mayer's writing enacts a series of crossings which problematize sexual difference as a structuring principle of representation. In doing so, I aim to show that Mayer's poetics offers not only a model of experiment that is affectively grounded in everyday operations, but also a model of difference that challenges orthodoxies of the psychoanalytical canon.

**Matthew Rana** (b.1981/US) is an artist and writer living in Stockholm, Sweden. His writing on contemporary art and poetry has appeared in *Art-Agenda*, *Camera Austria*, and *Jacket2*, among others, and he is a regular contributor to *Kunstkritikk* and *Frieze*. He is currently a PhD candidate at the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis, University of Amsterdam, where his research considers Bernadette Mayer's durational works of the 1970s through the lens of cinema.

**Hilary White (University of Manchester) - Hypnagogic hallucinations: Bernadette Mayer and Wanda Coleman's dream poems**

This paper addresses challenges both to canonised literary forms and to conventional understandings of sleep and sleep disorder in works by Bernadette Mayer and Wanda Coleman. Focusing on Mayer's 'skinny sonnets' (1989) and Coleman's *African Sleeping Sickness* (1990), I consider how these works anticipate and are entangled with developments in sleep science, 'speaking back' to medicalised conceptions of sleep disorder which project a universal subject with universalised experience (in the manner, too, of literary canons), all the time experimenting with received poetic forms – and especially the sonnet – to have these conversations. Mayer described her sonnets as "hypnagogic word clusters", suggesting the structures which bind them are looser than we might expect from the form, and using a term extremely resonant with contemporaneous developments in sleep science: in 1987, Andreas Mavromatis published the first book-length study on the subject, *Hypnagogia: The Unique State of Consciousness Between Wakefulness and Sleep*, beginning a branch of study still under great scrutiny today. In 1995, Al Alvarez proclaimed that hypnagogia were beyond the reach of literature (*Night*, 152), a situation directly refuted by Mayer's work: later, in *Ethics of Sleep* (2011), she actively employs a hypnagogic state to write poems, developing on the work begun in the 'skinny sonnets', a sort of collaboration with an almost-asleep self.

While Mayer indicates the ways in which creative work sometimes anticipates, and is certainly entangled with, developments in sleep science, Coleman's dream poems adopt a sleep-infused syntax to question structures of meaning-making both within and without the poems, all the time posing challenges to asocial readings of disorders which do not account for structural and societal factors when identifying deviations from the 'norm'. Considered together, these two poets show how the formal mimicking of sleep and dream states readily questions normative modes of understanding, be they of social constructions of race and gender, or of socialised experiences of sleep and rest – an anti-canon resistant to both literary and medical conformity.

**Hilary White** is a writer and researcher based in Manchester. She recently completed a PhD at the University of Manchester on visuality and indiscipline in the work of Christine Brooke-Rose, Ann

Quin and Brigid Brophy. A monograph based on this research is forthcoming with Edinburgh University Press. Now she is beginning work on a postdoctoral research project on sleep disorder and experimental poetics. She co-edits *Academics Against Networking* zine series, and co-runs the experimental poetry and performance reading series, *No Matter*.

## **PANEL 2. RE-FORMING IDENTITY**

### **Florian Zappe (independent researcher, Berlin) - A most curious case: Kathy Acker vs. Identity Politics**

In the last interview that she gave shortly before her death in 1997, the American post-avant-garde writer Kathy Acker laments that “[i]dentity politics took over the States”, a development she calls “dangerous” and “repulsive.”<sup>1</sup> In my paper I will argue that this harsh assessment (which may sound surprising coming from a writer who is generally associated with ‘progressive’ politics) has its roots in the fundamental aesthetico-philosophical axioms of Acker’s writing. By advocating radical experimentation with identity features, sexuality, the body, language and text, Acker’s work is based on what I suggest to call ‘rhizomatic ethics’ in the Deleuzian-Guattarian vein. This particular paradigm of ethical thinking against and beyond essential absolutes converges with the literary aesthetics of her rhizomatic writing that has “has neither object nor subject”<sup>2</sup> and therefore eludes the incorporation in those metaphysical, ideological, or aesthetic taxonomies that lie at the heart of the culture wars that are often associated with identity politics. By elaborating Acker’s philosophy of identity as a concept of in-betweenness and constant becoming, my paper will also show that her literature is still—25 years after the author’s demise—highly relevant and can provide valuable insights and contributions to contemporary debates on identity politics.

**Florian Zappe** is a cultural critic and literary scholar based in Berlin. He is the author of books on Kathy Acker (*Das Zwischen schreiben—Transgression und avantgardistisches Erbe bei Kathy Acker*, transcript, 2013) and William S. Burroughs (‘*Control Machines*’ und ‘*Dispositive*’—*Eine foucaultsche Analyse der Machtstrukturen im Romanwerk von William S. Burroughs zwischen 1959 und 1968*, Peter Lang, 2008), as well as the co-editor of the essay collections *The American Weird: Concept & Medium* (Bloomsbury, 2020), *Surveillance|Society|Culture* (Peter Lang, 2020) and *Spaces and Fictions of the Weird and the Fantastic: Ecologies, Geographies, Oddities* (Palgrave, 2019). In addition to that, he has published widely on literary and visual culture.

### **Luna Chung (University of Arizona) - Vietnamese American Literature: *Watermark* as 20<sup>th</sup> century experimental writing**

Published in 1998, *Watermark: Vietnamese American Poetry and Prose*, is an anthology of Vietnamese American writing ahead of its time. Editors Barbara Tran, Monique T.D. Truong, and Luu Truong Khoi brought together a diverse cast of authors who refuse a singular narrative of Vietnamese American identity that is solely predicated on war. In this presentation, I argue that *Watermark* is anti-canonical writing because the collection pushes the boundaries of representation by refusing to recuperate a singular Vietnamese American identity but writing for the possibilities of what could be. My presentation illuminates how *Watermark* subverts hegemonic representations of Vietnamese American identity as minoritarian literature. I explore the various themes within *Watermark* including gender, sexuality, ageism, nationality, and memory to analyze how *Watermark*, as experimental writing in English at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, challenges the hegemonic conflation of Vietnamese American literature as war narratives and opens up the possibilities for what it means to be Vietnamese American.

**Luna Chung** is a PhD Candidate in Gender and Women's Studies at the University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ. She is a first-generation graduate born in a refugee camp. Her research centers around Vietnamese American refugee subjectivity, immigration, transnational feminist theory, and women of color feminisms. Currently, she is working on her dissertation proposal, *(Un)making Refugee*, that thinks through how the legal figure of the refugee is predicated on a negation of Blackness. Her research seeks to bring the fields of Vietnamese American studies, critical refugee studies, and Black feminism in conversation with one another to answer what the contemporary literature of Vietnamese American authors can expose about the importance of Black-Vietnamese relations in the making of a Vietnamese American refugee subjectivity.

### **Tara Stubbs (Oxford University) – ‘Precarious words like rocks’: the contemporary (African) American Sonnet**

Discussing his 2016 collection *American Sonnets for My Past and Future Assassin*, Terrance Hayes asks: ‘What is American about the American sonnet?’, adding that his poems are ‘not African American sonnets’.<sup>1</sup> Here, Hayes appears to challenge sonneteer James Weldon Johnson’s title of his anthology *The Book of American Negro Poetry* (1922), in moving away from a ‘Black’ American literary label.

Published in the intervening years, Wanda Coleman’s *American Sonnets*, a fragmented, disorientating sequence (1993–2001), pushes the boundaries of both genre and form, asking difficult questions about the fraught relations between skin colour, education and politics; while Ed Roberson’s ‘sonnet’ (1998) seems to be wary of the perilous position of the African American poet who ‘must set the precarious words. / like rocks. without one snowcapped mistake’;<sup>2</sup> and Gerald Stern’s apparently autobiographical *American Sonnets* (1998) run for ‘twenty or so’ lines rather than 14.<sup>3</sup> Lastly, Rita Dove’s sequence *Mother Love* (1995), as Timo Müller puts it, ‘fractures the intact worlds of myth and nation’.<sup>4</sup> The often-fragmented publishing histories of these poems tell us much about their anti-canonical status. While Müller’s study *The African American Sonnet: A Literary History* (2019) certainly cements their literary significance, I wish to build upon his work to demonstrate how such poems not only trouble the concept of the ‘African American sonnet’ but also ask wider questions about the ‘precarious’ position of African American poets, of women poets, and even of the ‘American sonnet’ itself.

**Tara Stubbs** is Associate Professor of English Literature at Oxford University’s Department for Continuing Education (OUDCE), and Dean of Kellogg College, Oxford. She is the author of two monographs on Irish and American literature – *American Literature and Irish Culture, 1910–1955: the politics of enchantment* (2013), and *The Modern Irish Sonnet: revision and rebellion* (2020) – and the co-editor (with Doug Haynes) of *Navigating the Transnational in Modern American Literature and Culture* (2017). She is now working on a larger project about the practices of poetry reading in the public sphere; and on publications on the interrelations between poetry, form (particularly the sonnet), gender and race.

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<sup>1</sup> ‘I think of Metaphor as a Gesture of Empathy’: Terrance Hayes in conversation with Stephanie Sy-Quia, *review31.co.uk*: <http://review31.co.uk/interview/view/28/i-think-of-metaphor-as-a-gesture-of-empathy-an-interview-with-terrance-hayes>. Italics in the original.

<sup>2</sup> Ed Roberson, ‘sonnet’, rept. In Kevin Young, ed., *African American Poetry – 250 Years of Struggle and Song* (New York: Library of America, 2020), p.524. Coleman’s poems are part collected in the same collection on pp.600–604.

<sup>3</sup> See Gerald Stern, *American Sonnets: Poems* (New York: W W Norton, 2002).

<sup>4</sup> Timo Müller, *The African American Sonnet: A Literary History* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2019), p.118.

## **Juliette Bouanani (Paris Nanterre) - "who is speaking?" Lyn Hejinian, feminist poetics and the Anti-Canon**

In "Recharging the Canon: Some Reflections on Feminist Poetics and the Avant- Garde" Marjorie Perloff argues that opposing "male and female poets" when discussing canon formation obscures the difficult status of the "literature of the present" (12). "Canonicity", according to her, "is almost invariably the enemy of the avant-garde" (12). Perloff "Anti- Canon" is thus primarily made of experimental writers whose poetry has been neglected due to its difficulty. Some of these poets, such as Susan Howe and Lorine Niedecker, are difficult poets who happen to be women. Their otherness is textual rather than identity-based, even when they do raise "questions about female identity" (13). Lyn Hejinian challenges this opposition between the canon and the experimental avant- garde. Indeed, Hejinian notes that this dichotomy "leaves out the work of numerous productive aesthetic communities, and in particular those whose aesthetics are grounded in sociopolitical contexts". Going further, she dissociates Language writing from the modernist avant-garde heritage. Hejinian's vision of the Anti-Canon moves beyond the vocabulary of "poetry wars" and engages with complex sociopolitical issues. She also questions the meaningfulness of identity-based categories since, as is typical of Language poets, she doesn't "believe in opposites", such as that between men and women: "Being a woman isn't a state as much as it's an impetus, with a certain momentum, occurring at various velocities and in various directions" (182). This rejection of womanhood as a fixed state goes along an examination of the patriarchal roots of power within her own poetic community, as illustrated by her essay titled "Who is Speaking?". Aesthetically and theoretically, Hejinian's work offers a redefinition of the dominating narratives surrounding canon formation and exclusion as well as "women's poetry" within the avant-garde.

**Juliette Bouanani** is a PhD student under the direction of H  l  ne Aji and Nicholas Manning, at Paris Nanterre University. Her research focuses on the feminine lyric in contemporary American poetry in the works of four (very different) poets: Louise Gl  ck, Lyn Hejinian, Susan Howe and Sharon Olds.

## **PANEL 3. THE TWISTS AND TURNS OF AN AFRICAN AMERICAN ANTI-CANON**

In accordance with Anthony Reed's argument in *Freedom Time* about the formal radicalness or "abstractness" of much experimental poetry written by black poets, along with its resistance to fixed conceptions of black identity and "preemptive understandings of black life," this panel explores experimental literature written by black American poets from the 1960s to the present day. It specifically traces an underappreciated corpus of texts that demands to be considered alongside the more recognized, and primarily white-authored, experimental canon; that excavates the technologies of literary production and canonization; and that attempts to counter the brutal effects that such production and canonization has had for black writers, imagining alternative infrastructures of literary production. It thus engages with the question "How might anti-canonical works of literature subvert established ways of looking at the world and society?", but twists it by considering poetic practices subversive of the very functionalities that shape the category of "experimental literature" on an infrastructural level. Protesting carceral forms such as the racialized casting of individual authorship, and transgressing divides between verbal, visual and sonic media, works by Pritchard, Mullen and Rankine suggest more solidaric and plurally-voiced ways of producing poetry through an experimentation, that occurs not only on the printed page but also through the technological conditions of books as physical, circulating objects in a complex media ecology.

**Jesper Olsson (Link  ping University) - Spirituality, Politics, Technology: A Reading of N. H. Pritchard's Concrete Poetry**

Much belatedly, the poetry of Norman Pritchard has been rediscovered. Last year, his collections from the early 1970s, *The Matrix* (1970) and *EECCHHOOEESS* (1971), were put out in new editions and at the current Whitney Biennial 2022, a section is dedicated to his exploration of the intermedia territory between writing and image in the unpublished *Mundus: A Novel* (1970). In this paper I will initiate a reading that inserts Pritchard's work into its contemporaneous context of concrete poetry and investigates his exploration of numbers, visual patterning, and acoustics in relation to a setting that was crucial to much visual and sound poetry at the time, cybernetics and the "machinic universe" (Félix Guattari) that expanded the field of signification in the postwar decades. I will especially focus on how these technological circumstances relate to the spiritual aspirations – both thematized and embodied in the poetry's verbi-voco-visual ecology – and to the social-critical-political dimensions of Pritchard's writing, which both emerged from and has been situated in a community of black writers and, most notably, the group around Umbra Magazine. How are these seemingly contradictory aspects in the poetry negotiated? Are there hidden connections to be observed and analyzed here? And, how can this Pritchardian nexus of spirituality, politics, and technology be read from the specific viewpoint of today?

**Jesper Olsson** is Professor at the Department of Culture and Society, Linköping University, where he leads the research group Literature, Media History, and Information Cultures. With Tania Ørum he co-edited *A Cultural History of the Nordic Avant-Garde 1950–1975* (2016). His latest book is *Spaceship, Time Machine. Öyvind Fahlström's Ade-Ledic-Nander* (2017) and forthcoming this year is a short book on post-digital literature. He is also a literary critic and one of the founders of the art-literature-theory journal OEI.

### **Solveig Daugaard (University of Copenhagen) – Why these blues come from us**

This paper engages with Harryette Mullen's 1995 poem *Muse & Drudge*, which was published partially in response to what its author described as the "aesthetic apartheid" of the American experimental poetry scene. As Mullen's work gained recognition in experimental poetry circles, she experienced how her initial entrance into an "experimental canon" immediately collided with her blackness: black readers were scarcely included in her new audience. In *Muse & Drudge*, Mullen produces a multivocal poetic texture drawing on multiple sources including classical, modernist, and Black Arts literature, media cultural motifs and folk cultural forms – from quilting and graffiti to the dozens and the blues. Featuring forms not foremost perceived through the lens of individualized authorship, Mullen questions fundamental functionalities of canonization tied to the concept of the self-sufficient author. Via deliberate interventions into the book's design, including the way metadata is presented, the stability of the individual author as an isolated and independent figure is challenged. In this way, the work becomes an exponent of the tendency described by Georgina Colby et al. in *The Contemporary Small Press*, of "making publishing visible" by extending the zone of experimentation beyond the page to include the infrastructural conditions of production and distribution of literature, that literary canonization has relied on for centuries.

**Solveig Daugaard's** research field is modernist and contemporary American poetry, and contemporary Scandinavian literature informed by affect and media theory and infrastructural studies. Her research and literary criticism have appeared in journals and papers in Denmark, Sweden and abroad. She is currently a postdoc at the research center Art as Forum, Department of Arts and Cultural Studies, University of Copenhagen. Her PhD in Literature, Media History and Information Cultures is from Linköping University.

### **Christa Holm Vogelius (University of Copenhagen) - Claudia Rankine's Image-Text**

This paper reads Claudia Rankine's image-texts *Citizen: An American Lyric* (2014) and *Don't Let Me Be Lonely: An American Lyric* (2004) through Jacques Rancière's idea of works as a "third thing" between spectator/reader and author, a shared space "whose meaning is owned by no one, but which exists between them, excluding any uniform transmission"(14-15). Focusing on Rankine's use of still images and film, I argue that by using imagery as a shared but highly indeterminate space, Rankine's image-texts function to mitigate the viewer's tendency toward passive and isolated spectatorship. Ekphrasis is imagined as a collective space that nonetheless is fraught with all the fissures of the nation: racial, political, and cultural. Rankine uses of citation to call into place the voices of others, and at the same time insistently conflating the individual bodily experience with the body politic. While Rankine's centrality as a cultural figure might challenge her framing within an anti-canon, it is part of my argument in this paper that within her own works, she very consciously uses imagery to create an anti-canon of American media and visuality.

**Christa Vogelius** is a Mads Øvilsen Postdoc at the Department of Arts and Cultural Studies at the University of Copenhagen, where she works on American literature and visual culture from the nineteenth century into the present day. This paper is from a monograph (forthcoming, University of Massachusetts Press) on American feminized writers of the long nineteenth century and their relations to nation.

#### **PANEL 4. THREE ANTI-CANONISTIC POETIC EVENTS: UNDOING THE CANON IN TRANSREAL TIME**

This panel proposes three unconventional ways of approaching anti-canonism at the level of scholarly form, poetic engagement, movement, and making. With an eye toward scholarship, poetics, poetry, and poems in the sense of ποιητής (maker), we would like to suggest that to retain the power of anti-canonism requires that we also re-think, or perhaps unthink, our conventional engagement with criticism and its objects, even going so far as to suggest that we dispense with convention altogether. One of the problems with any "canon" is the way the concept attempts to falsely fix what constitutes not just "the history" of poetic lineage(s), leading to oppressive and exclusionary historicities, but also the ways that canons attempt to arrest the poetic object itself, reducing it to a bounded "thing" with determined, agreed-upon qualities they are thought to possess that we go on to describe (lines, rhymes, meters, forms), rather than as ongoing processes that in our engagement with them we intervene in and co-create in critical/poetic acts. We suggest that retaining the subversive potential latent in a politics of anti-canonism might be achieved not just by the important work of representing key texts that can be considered anti-canonism and describing their "qualities," but that staying true to a politics of anti-canonism might require shifting our understanding of what constitutes literary critical objects and our methods altogether. Perhaps we must understand that criticism itself *is poetics*. That is to say, rather than fixing representative works into a canon, anti-canonism could be the ongoing generation of a contingent definition (and undefining) of what poetry and poetics *is*, as a non-teleological processual research program that cares for while inventing poetic events. These three presentations self-reflexively engage the form of the conference presentation and question what constitutes sufficient poetic objects of study. We hope to demonstrate a rigorous, scholarly, anti-canonism, heterogeneous mode of production in the spirit of anti-canonism.

#### **Brent Cox (University at Buffalo) - Retaining Anti-Canonism Against the Critical Final Word: N.H. Pritchard, Republication, and Infrastructuralist Video Poetic Criticism**

N.H. Pritchard's *The Matrix* and *EECCHHOOEESS* have recently been republished in the United States by *Ugly Ducking Presse*, *DABA Press*, and *Primary Information*, constituting an anti-canonism event *par excellence*, because these publications are meant, in part, to point out the

serious critical lacuna in “the canon” (both poetic and critical) surrounding these incredible works of visually inflected poetry. While recent critical work by Anthony Reed and Craig Dworkin, among others, have stressed the import of Pritchard’s work to experimental and innovative poetic history, and have rightly urged that we must take this work into account, Pritchard remains, in no uncertain terms, “anti-canonical.” Here, though, a difficulty emerges. On the one hand, we must engage with this work. On the other hand, one of the powers of Pritchard’s work is that it stands as a challenge to the canon’s ability to formulate an adequate history without reproducing those oppressive structural conditions from which it emerges; in this case, one of the reasons Pritchard’s work remains anti-canonical is its powerful indictment of the United States’ racist regime, down to what is permitted into the canon of “experimental literature.”

My question is: how do we discuss this work without neutralizing its power? How do we allow it to retain the power of its piercing anti-canonicity without being submitted to hegemony’s oppressive regime? We might put this same question into conversation with the recently published *Women in Concrete Poetry 1959-1979*, ed. Alex Balgiu and Mónica de la Torre, a gathering of republications that we might justly call an anti-canonical anthology. Using my ongoing development of a “video-poetic infrastructuralist style,” in this presentation I will argue that if we are to change the canon, and understand the power of anti-canonicity, we must also change our modes of engagement with the works that we study. Taking seriously Kamau Brathwaite’s notion of “interstanding,” my video-oriented presentation will combine animation, video, conventional scholarly prose, and poetic-image-making to provide readings of N.H. Pritchard’s work in relation to his notion of *transrealism*, while tacitly arguing for a poetics of ongoing interdependent development against any literary critical final word.

**Brent Cox** is a PhD Candidate in University at Buffalo’s Poetics Program. Work has recently appeared or is forthcoming at the Electronic Literature Organization’s 2020-2 conferences, in P-Queue, and in OEI. He is the recent recipient of a Race and Technology grant from University of Boulder’s Media Archaeology Lab (MAL) to research Kamau Brathwaite’s use of the MAC SE30 computer in creation of his Sycorax Video Style, research that lead to a conference presentation at “What Does the Poem Think?” at University of Cambridge. He helps run Buried Text, a podcast devoted to poetics. Buried Text is part of the Topological Poetics Research Institute (TPRI, [www.poeticsinstitute.com](http://www.poeticsinstitute.com)).

### **Amanda Hurtado (University of Boulder) - Susan Howe: A Poetics of Motion and Measure, Material and Media**

Much has been written about the feminist foundations of Susan Howe's anti-canonical poetics. Her way of collaging archival materials not only foregrounds the gaps and lacunae of unrecorded histories—most often the voices of women and indigenous American peoples—but also *literally shreds* the canon. However, less has been written about the significant ways in which her inscriptive tools mediate the historical materials that inspire her. Xerox, scissors, and tape pattern, trim, and refit measures of textual material in a way that literalizes the idea of what poetic measure might mean. Susan Howe has been included in the short-list of major players of the post-modern language poetry movement because of the way she foregrounds the materiality of the work, while also considered a poet in the modernist lineage of Pound, Eliot, and Oppen because of her work’s citational nature. To the lineage of Dickinson and Stein with which Howe herself identifies, I would like to add the Dadaist tradition of collage as another layer to the materialist lineage of Howe's work, whose poetic styles and formal modes reflect the process of cut and paste composition. Echoing the formal processes of a mode of production becomes central to Howe’s poetics of space and thereby enables a shift from one aspect of measure to another—that is, from poetic measure to material measurement, thus redefining altogether what we might come to study *as* poetic measure. Her process of splicing creates impossible new spacings, soundings, and perspectives that undo any possibility of a linear canon, and insisting on

an anti-canon of simultaneous material multiplicity. By attending to the affordances and limitations of her inscriptive media, (xerox, scissors, and tape), my paper will consider the specifics and particularities of Susan Howe's poetic process at various points spanning her career.

**Amanda Hurtado** is a PhD Candidate at the University of Colorado, Boulder. Her research focuses on 20th and 21st century poetry and media poetics. She holds an MFA in Poetry from the University of Washington, Bothell and a BA in English from the University of Utah. She is the author of *S ACE P* (Timglaset, 2020 & Editions Eclipse, 2014) and *CELL* (Mono-D Press, 2015).

### **Simon Eales (University at Buffalo) - Making Anti-Canon Poetics Dance: Leslie Scalapino and Choreographic Poetics**

This paper, while challenging what an academic conference paper might be, proposes that anti-canonism is embedded in the choreographic poetics of the transatlantic avant-garde. In order to say as much, the paper defines choreographic poetics not only as an “act of making” at the intersection of dance and poetry, as one might expect, but as “*writing that is doing what it says it is doing.*” It defines the transatlantic avant-garde as the innovative aesthetic and poetic movement which has developed not only between and including Europe and the Americas as geo-political entities, but also as inextricable from the temporal and historical field demarcated by colonial crossings of the Atlantic ocean. The choreographic and the transatlantic are important to invoke in a discussion of the canon and the possibility of anti-canonism because of the way that canons condition the body. At the level of the body, canons are designed to carry law/lore and (religious) order from a central locus—one posited as intelligent and/or proper—to alternative zones. Poets I consider deploying a choreographic poetics use it to identify and decondition this canonisation of the body. They also use it to position the Atlantic ocean as a measuring device for the canon’s center-to-limit extension over geographical, political, and cultural space. The paper will focus on examples from the work of Gertrude Stein and Leslie Scalapino, and consider them against a backdrop of work by Jackson Mac Low and St. Augustine. It will take the form of a *performed academic paper*: read exactly, from memory, accompanied by demonstrative gestures, thus making my own body along with and the conference situation into something like an inscriptive, poetic surface of anti-canonism.

**Simon Eales** is a PhD candidate in the Poetics Program at SUNY Buffalo, where he is a Presidential Fellow. He received a B.A. in English Literature and European Studies, and a M.A. in English Literature from the University of Melbourne, Australia, earning the Percival Serle Prize for his Master's thesis on radical Australian poetry. Simon researches at the intersection of contemporary poetics, bio- and geo-politics, modernist theory, and gender and sexuality studies. He co-organises EcoPoetry Workshop, a poetry and theory residency near Milan, Italy, and co-constitutes Buried Text podcast.

### **PANEL 5. LANGUAGE, MEANING AND AUTHORITY**

#### **Nora Fulton (Concordia University) - Objective Feeling - Laura Riding's *Rational Meaning* and the Stakes of Non-Correspondence**

After abandoning poetry in 1941, the American writer Laura Riding began to compose a linguistic and philosophical commentary on the whole history of language and truth – all from her little bungalow in Wabasso, Florida – that would become *Rational Meaning*, a sprawling work written over the course of over forty years. *Rational Meaning* was not published in Riding’s lifetime, but it circulated as an almost mythic text among American avant-garde poets in manuscript form by the 1970s, and went on to primarily influence key figures in the field of Language writing like Charles Bernstein and Tan Lin.

As Carla Billitteri describes it, *Rational Meaning* paints a picture of Riding as a modern “Cratylist,” or someone who, like Cratylus, holds the position that meaning is fundamentally ungrounded and non-correspondent to any sort of reality, and yet for her meaning is all the more objectively isolatable, individuatable, for that fact. My paper investigates the relationship between *Rational Meaning* and Riding’s thinking around “correspondence” – both in the literal sense of her personal correspondence to her disciples, before and after her work on the book (much of it still unpublished), and in her conception of poetry’s deleterious effects on the individual and on society. If poetry is always “the forceful summoning of an ‘eternal form’,” [Billitteri], then what is it that Riding and the avant-gardes that came in her wake were hoping to summon, with just as much force, if not with the same kind of lastingness? How is Riding’s alternatively conservative and utopian understanding of the civic effects of a thinking language associable to both left and right political worldviews? To what extent is *Rational Meaning* a work of fundamental ontology, and in what way do such philosophical projects bear a special relationship with poetry, as an ‘always-denounced’ form?

**Nora Fulton** is a poet and PhD candidate in English at Concordia University, Montreal, Canada. Her research focuses on fundamental ontology, gender studies and trans theory, as well as modernist and avant-garde poetics. She is the author of three books of poetry—*Life Experience Coolant* (Bookthug, 2013), *Presence Detection System* (Hiding Press, 2019), and most recently *Thee Display* (Documents & Anteism, 2021)—and her poetic work has been published in *Social Text*, *Homintern*, *Some Magazine*, *The Tiny*, and elsewhere. Her critical work has been published by or is forthcoming from *Radical Philosophy*, *Diacritics*, and *Paideuma*.

### **Wanda O'Connor (Open University Wales) – ‘Refusal of silence’: Excess and new forms of writing in Fraser, Duplessis, and Howe**

Twentieth-century women poets working across intersections of feminist theory and new forms of writing engaged Charles Olson’s open page space seeking new arrangements. What emerged were renovated relationships to language and authority, and responses to an erasure history of women’s writing which saw earlier modernists poets largely disappear. Kathleen Fraser’s involvement was two-fold: in the first instance, she identified the need for a women’s innovative poetry journal by launching *HOW(ever)* (1983-1992) which provided, according to DuPlessis, “A space of positive resistance to and powerful critique of the period style in poetry, making a formal and intellectual critique that did feminist cultural work.” Fraser’s second contribution was in recognising that the exploratory nature of Charles Olson’s ‘field poetics’ provided an “immense, permission-giving moment” for women considering “the visualized topos of interior speech and thought” that presented the page as a site for possibility and an opportunity for women to break from the dominant discourse. Susan Howe also engaged with openness in writing, exploring the “spatial, historical and ethical margins” of Olson’s renovated page by radicalising archival ownership and re-writing textual history despite its burden of repetition – as S. M. Schultz notes of her work, “The burden of history, for Howe, is that it repeats itself, even as it is being edited.” DuPlessis’ poetry promotes a procedural poetics resistant to closure, and both the tensions inherent in Howe’s archival body and DuPlessis’ intertextual work produce sites of excess, identifying their work as a collective “refusal of silence” (Karen J. Ford).

**Dr. Wanda O'Connor** is an Associate Lecturer and Honorary Associate at The Open University in Wales. She is co-editor of the *Journal of British and Irish Innovative Poetry* and a member of the Critical Poetics Research Group at Nottingham Trent University. Her creative work has appeared in journals and anthologies such as *The Best Canadian Poetry 2014* (Tightrope Books), *Wretched Strangers* (Boiler House Press), *The World Speaking Back... to Denise Riley* (Boiler House Press), and *Bad Kid Catullus* (Sidekick Books).

## **Gi Taek Ryoo (Chungbuk National University) - The textual ecospace of Lyn Hejinian's experimental poetry**

Lyn Hejinian's notion of "language" poetry, while deeply concerned with socio-political engagements of poetry "after Auschwitz" (Adorno), has also responded to perhaps a more compelling question of what it means to write poetry in the Anthropocene, the epoch of geologic time defined by human impacts on the planet's ecosystems. This paper attempts an ecocritical reading of Hejinian's language poetry, exploring the environmental possibilities of her experimental poetry. Experimental postmodern poetry has been criticized as constituting a "hermetically sealed textuality" (Scigaj) because the artificial (de)construction with language turns us away from the referential world and keeps us from engaging with the material world. However, Hejinian's poetry is far from emphasizing linguistic constructions to the extent that would lead to the exclusion of the material world. Instead, she attempts to bring the material world directly into her textual space by foregrounding textuality as an enactment of our interconnectedness with the material world. While Hejinian's poetry does not explicitly consider nature or environmental issues, we acquire, through the materiality of language, a renewed sense of human existence or coexistence with the nonhuman. Hejinian takes language as a vantage point from which to re-think our relationship with the material world. This paper draws on Hejinian's famous poetry *My Life* (1980) to explore how Hejinian creates a textual ecospace with the material forces of language, in which all human and nonhuman forms, living and non-living beings, are inextricably intertwined. I demonstrate that the textuality of her language poetry does not mean a withdrawal from the material world or a lack of environmental engagement. Hejinian's strategy to foreground the material dimensions of language is much more than simply formal playfulness; it is a *formal* embodiment of the material world.

**Gi Taek Ryoo** is Professor of English at Chungbuk National University, Korea. He has published many articles and book chapters in the fields of the twentieth century avant-garde poetry, poetry and science, ecopoetics, and posthumanism. He is particularly interested in the parallel development of poetry and (natural) science in the twentieth century.

## **Helena Van Praet (UC Louvain) - "Who are you?" Poetic Metalepsis in the Work of Anne Carson**

Being both a scholar and a poet, Anne Carson (°1950) seems to wear two hats at all times. There is consensus among critics that Carson's juxtaposition of the poetic and academic in her writing lies at the heart of what makes her work innovative (e.g. Stanton, Upton), yet the techniques that underlie this hybrid quality seem to have received less critical attention thus far. In this paper, I therefore propose to take Gillian Sze's statement that "Carson's use of the archive, in both her capacity as scholar and poet, participates in [...] an 'inventive' *poetics of error*" (73, original emphasis) as a productive starting point to investigate how Carson achieves a poetic, deliberately 'erroneous' flow of ideas. This flow combines discovery, typical of the scholar, with poetic creativity (cf. Sze 68). As a working hypothesis, this paper posits that Carson makes use of metalepsis to this end, which I first adapt to the domain of poetry by building on Gérard Genette's definition of the term. Next, the analysis considers strategies that underlie *poetic metalepsis* as applied to Carson's *Glass and God* (1998) and *Men in the Off Hours* (2000). These include, most notably, the use of multiple voices, as well as of interpunction, misquotations, metacommentaries, and metaleptic entanglements of worlds.

The paper concludes that when the friction between three different types of voices—i.e. scholarly, lyric, and personified (through the use of characters)—peaks, poetic metalepsis occurs, which in turn spurs readers into an affective, embodied understanding that recognises the role played by the body and intersubjective relations in human cognition (cf. Kukkonen and Caracciolo). In this way, Carson's poetry suggests that freethinking cannot exist without the affective dimension

characteristic of the lyric: the affective is part of the analytic, since profound knowledge cannot exist without this intuitive aspect.

**Helena Van Praet** is an assistant in Dutch Literature and PhD student at Université catholique de Louvain, Belgium. She studied English and Dutch Literature and Linguistics at Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB) and University College London (UCL), and is the 2018 laureate of the BAAHE Thesis Award for her MA thesis on Canadian writer Anne Carson. Her research focuses on the conceptual poetry of experimental contemporary poets Rozalie Hirs and Anne Carson. Articles of hers have appeared in *Canadian Literature*, *English Text Construction*, and *Studies in Canadian Literature/Études en littérature canadienne*.

**Marija Cetinić (University of Amsterdam) - The economy did this to you. Penetrability in Lisa Robertson's *Cinema of the Present***

This paper reads Lisa Robertson's *Cinema of the Present* (2014) through its own question, "How are you distributed across negation?" It posits that such negative distribution is an experimental grammar of internal undermining that unfolds as the throbbing between the line and the sentence. Similarly, the paper claims, this negation is figured as femaleness in Robertson's poetry: a formal contradiction marked by both complete givenness, and the impossibility and failure of capture. The repetition of the structure of the gate ("*A gate made of bread and screws. / A gate made of forceps and silicone tube. / A gate made of gas pumps.*") throughout the long poem carries a comparable logic: it receives architectural structuration and is determined in its materiality—this is its condition of possibility. But a gate is constitutively something that can be traversed, penetrated; this susceptibility to being entered, this logic of the threshold is coincident with a gendered scheme of being done to, of having someone else do the desiring for you. This is what Andrea Long Chu calls females. Undermining, penetrability, a receptivity that is not your own: these are a poetics, the argument goes, one that both befalls the speaker ("The economy did this to you.") while also being posed as a question ("*What is the condition of a problem if you are the problem?*").

**Marija Cetinić** is Assistant Professor of Literary and Cultural Analysis at the University of Amsterdam and a research affiliate at the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis. She is coordinator of the MA Comparative Literature program. *Signs of Autumn: The Aesthetics of Saturation*, her current project, focuses on the concept of saturation, and on developing its implications for the relation of contemporary art and aesthetics to political economy. She completed her PhD in Comparative Literature at USC, Los Angeles. Her essays have appeared in *Mediations*, *Discourse*, and the *European Journal of English Studies*. A co-written chapter on oil barrels in the work of Christo and Jeanne-Claude is out this year in the collection *Saturation: An Elemental Politics* (Duke UP). With Stefa Govaart, she is involved in an ongoing epistolary project *What urge will save us now that sex won't*, as well as a book project of transcribed dialogues on five concepts: Sentence / Essence / Woman / Negation / Sex. She is thesis supervisor and teaches writing in the Critical Studies Department at Sandberg Instituut.

**PANEL 6. AFFECTS, (UN)READABILITY AND RECEPTION**

**Iris Pearson (University of Oxford) - Don't Read B.S. Johnson: Rebarbative Forms and Readerly Affect**

In 1999, Jonathan Coe declared that it was 'time to reclaim B.S. Johnson for the mainstream'. Adamant that twenty-first century readers would be able to appreciate the experimental novels in a way that Johnson's contemporaries had largely failed to, Coe at first seemed to be exactly right. Between 2000 and 2013, Picador re-published four of Johnson's novels, and a *B.S. Johnson Omnibus*. In 2007, Philip Tew and Glyn White published an edited collection entitled *Re-reading B.S. Johnson*, featuring essays by fourteen critics who were evidently eager to return Johnson to the critical limelight. But despite this

briefly promising flurry of activity, Johnson's work has never quite reached the everyday reader. The beginning of the twenty-first century was not the time to read Johnson: and I argue that there will never be one.

I contend that at least part of the reason for this abortive twenty-first-century revival has been critics' failure to consider that Johnson's contemporary readers might have turned away from his work because of - rather than despite - the rebarbative effect of his formal experiments. My paper, which forms part of a wider project about late twentieth-century experimental novelists and readerly affect, explores the way in which Johnson deploys formal devices to manage his reader's affective response, and thus to demand a reading work which reshapes canonical novelistic affect. Focusing on two novels, *Trawl* (1966) and *The Unfortunates* (1969), I will ask how Johnson experiments with fragmented forms (whether at the level of the book, the narrative, or the sentence), what kind of rebarbative readerly affect is produced by these experiments, and what kind of challenging reading work this affect demands. My paper will engage with recent interest in the reading figure by critics such as Merve Emre, Rita Felski, and Doug Battersby, and with work on unusual and therefore radical affect, such as Xine Yao's work on unfeeling and race in eighteenth-century literature. Through this attention to readerly affect and the way that Johnson repels his readers, I will propose that Johnson ensures his own unreadability and extra-canoncity.

**Iris Pearson** is an English Literature PhD student at the University of Oxford. She has an MSt in twentieth- and twenty-first-century English Literature from Oxford, and an undergraduate degree from the University of Cambridge. Her PhD project looks at late twentieth-century experimental novelists, form, and readerly affect. She has recently published an article in the *Latin American Literary Review* on the experimentally fragmented narratives of two Argentine writers: Julio Cortázar and Luisa Futoransky.

### **Salomé Honório (CEComp/FLUL- Faculty of Arts, University of Lisbon) - An ethos of refusal: on the brutalist edge of Kathy Acker's poetics**

One of the most cutting challenges to the tenets of literary convention produced by experimental fiction is its radical disavowal of beauty, along with its imagined correspondence at both a formal and a narrative level. Instead, experimental writing dislodges the authoritarian hold of the beautiful (and its seeming synonymy with the righteous) over the literary imagination, and inquires into ugliness as an aesthetic, a structure of feeling, or a concrete facet of lived experience. Kathy Acker's writing is punctuated by starkly lyrical moments, achieved both through the normative templates of literary language and in more tenuous relations of critical apposition. More importantly, it is saturated with scenes of cruelty, conflict, and violence, through which such instances of (un)conventional beauty are rendered all the more meaningful. These include more or less narratively motivated (and meaningful) events. But they also include the aesthetic, affective and ethical situations Acker's writing places her readers in - especially through the radical disruption of form, in opposition to what Acker described as "ordinary language" (1993). By emphasizing the intentional production of such situations of readerly implication as a result of formal disruption, I mean to describe an ethos of refusal at the core of Acker's work, which motivates an ethics of ugliness - and a concomitant aesthetics of cruelty - that perturbs readerly sensibility and literary convention alike. By tracing certain formal and affective registers important to Acker's writing, I hope to demonstrate how these intervene against the causative relationship between morality, narrativity and beauty upheld by normative literary rationality - firmly situating her work in the purview of what Bradway (2017) has aptly described as "bad writing". I suggest we confront (and mediate) these questions through an autobiographically situated reading of *Blood and Guts in High School* (1984). This reading departs from a recognition of the multiple tensions and frictions Acker's disruptions of form set off. But it also calls for a finer understanding of the uses and abuses of representational content at work in her writing. Finally, I suggest we recognize some of

the more salient political contradictions produced by this brutalist approach to language – especially where the ventriloquistic depiction of dominant systems of oppression is concerned.

**Salomé Honório** (1988) is a poet and researcher based in Cascais, Portugal. They have recently completed their PhD project on the work of U.S. writer Kathy Acker, titled “Troubling Textualities: Insubordinate Politics and Conflicted Complicity in the Work of Kathy Acker (1978- 1988)”, at the School of Arts and Humanities of the University of Lisbon. Present research concerns include a critical history of “queer” discourse in the Portuguese context, and a reexamination of the normative ideal of trans visibility. Their poetry has been featured in ZARF, Amberflora, and the Earthbound Poetry series. They have also authored two poetry pamphlets: *Lábio/Abril* (Traveller/Presente, 2015) and *fox, closet & fist* (Wynter Olympics, 2017).

### **Andrew Hodgson (EHESS Paris) - “Undo the Normative Conquest”: Cut-up, DIY and the Ergodic in the Experimental Novel**

Brigid Brophy’s 1969 novel *In Transit* includes an array of formal innovations, from inclusion of phonetic-demotic speech, to the book itself ending with a visual diagram of a fish labelled: “FIN.” Such radical formal treatment of written language, of the formalised artefact of the novel, is something that unites a grouping of books written largely between the 1950s and 1970s, and that have come to be termed “the post-Second World War experimental novel.” Wider examples include books in boxes, such as Marc Saporta’s *Composition no. 1* (1962) or B S Johnson’s *The Unfortunates* (1969), in which the reader must assemble the pages, or sections, themselves, and in doing so in a sense ‘assemble their own story.’ They are books with holes cut in the pages, for example in Johnson’s *Albert Angelo* (1964), where the reader might ‘glimpse into the future of the narrative.’ They are books made up of cut up newspaper copy and snatches of overheard conversations, such as in Alan Burns’ *Babel* (1969), or Brion Gysin and William S Burroughs’ *Exterminator* (1960). They are books of material language, in which, for example in Georges Perec’s noirish *La Disparition* (1969), Anton Vowl has gone missing – A Vowel is missing – and must be found, though never is. The book itself written entirely without the letter E.

At their most recognisable, the post-war experimental novel is made up of books of disintegration, limitation and constraint, but also of variable readerly outcomes, and pluralisation of narrative potentials. As Brophy writes, the space of the novel following the trauma of Second World War, within the control and paranoia of the Cold War, must become a “DIY space.” She writes that the experimental novel games language, narrative, textual, novelistic aspects of the book as a process of radical engagement: “our programme: - Undo the Normative conquest.”

With this paper I explore the DIY aesthetics of the experimental novel of that era, where narrative is altered, from a story told, to a story constructed, and as such, responsibility shifts within the novel, from the writer, to the reader. Developing this reconceptualization of the role of the reader as an active participant in text, in reference to Espen Aarseth’s conception of “the ergodic,” I raise examples of radical experimental form in the novel, and address what perhaps a reader’s “DIY” engagement with them might entail, as socio-cultural affect, beyond the novel-object.

**Andrew Hodgson** teaches at the École des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS) in Paris. He is author of the novel *Mnemonic Symbols* (Dostoyevsky Wannabe, 2019), and the monograph *The Post-War Experimental Novel: British and French Fiction, 1945–75* (Bloomsbury, 2019). He is translator from the French of Roland Topor’s *Head-to-Toe Portrait of Suzanne* (Atlas Press, 2018), and from the Danish Carl Julius Salomonsen’s *New Forms of Art and Contagious Mental Illness* (New Documents, 2022). He is editor of the collections of experimental writing *Paris* (Dostoyevsky Wannabe, 2019) and *Praxis* (Dostoyevsky Wannabe, 2021).

### **Chris Clarke (independent researcher, Southampton) – ‘A faded negative’: Photographs and other (dis)possessions in the work of Ann Quin**

This paper suggests that Ann Quin’s critical representations of encounters with photographs and other traces of missing relatives invite us to scrutinize the role that images of Quin have played in mediating her work’s reception in the 1960s and its belated recognition in the twenty first century. Quin’s texts return to scenes in which compensatory fantasies inspired by photographs fall apart. *Berg* (1964) recalls the ‘fateful day’ of ‘seeing the photograph of the old man’ as a catalyst for its protagonist’s parricidal intentions, and the text figures his misfiring attempts as ‘a faded negative, something he had begun but not developed’. Similarly, in ‘Every Cripple Has His Own Way of Walking’ (1966), a child imagines that upon the arrival of her long-absent father, she would ‘look past him [...]. At the portrait. For comparison’, but finds herself ‘Grasped. Fondled. Clutched’ before being abandoned by him once more. While these scenes evoke Susan Sontag’s suggestion that ‘photographs give people an imaginary possession of a past that is unreal’ (Sontag, 1977), Quin’s texts unravel these fantasies through their depiction of a disjointed present, in which subjects and their relations to others come undone.

If Quin’s representations of photographs emphasize the fragility of the link they provide to absent others, they equally invite us to adopt a critical orientation to the images of the author that accompanied the publication of these texts. *Berg*, for instance, features a portrait of the author on its cover, while the title of ‘Every Cripple’ was originally encircled with images apparently from a family photo album. Quin’s exploration of how subjects are (dis)possessed by the imaginary link to others provided by photographs can generate, I argue, a critical reflexivity in how we understand the reception of her work in the 1960s and approach our own encounters with her archival ephemera in the contemporary.

**Chris Clarke** is a writer and researcher based in Southampton. He completed his doctoral thesis at the University of Southampton in 2015, before working there as a part-time tutor between 2017 and 2020. His publications include “‘Unconsciously Influenced’: Alan Burns, Ian McEwan, and the Lasting Legacies of Postwar British Experimental Fiction’, *MFS: Modern Fiction Studies* (Spring 2018) and “‘S’ and ‘M’: The Last and Lost Letters Between Ann Quin and Robert Creeley’, *Women: A Cultural Review*, (Spring 2022).

### **Kelly Krumrie (Western Colorado University) - The Mathematical Affect of Pamela Lu**

In this paper, I explicate the mathematical affect of the experimental novelist Pamela Lu. I use Natalia Cecire’s recent book *Experimental: American Literature and the Aesthetics of Knowledge* which looks at the term “experimental” as it relates historically to the form of the scientific experiment and how the term is applied to modernist writers such as Gertrude Stein (and her “objectivity”) and Marianne Moore (and her “precision”). Cecire links the use of this adjective for these writers to Language poets in the ‘80s and ‘90s and their particular interests in and preoccupations with not only language but writing with certain “epistemological commitments” (x). This analysis, however, focuses on poetry and science. I extend Cecire’s work to incorporate *experimental prose writing* as well as narrow it to focus on *mathematical* “objectivity” and “precision,” looking specifically at the 1998 short novel *Pamela: A Novel* by Pamela Lu. Lu, a lesser known, queer, Asian American writer who also published the 2011 novel *Ambient Parking Lot*, studied mathematics, and *Pamela* frequently refers to and makes use of mathematical concepts in its form and content. The novel also includes elements of theory, linguistics, autofiction, and self-reference (similar to Robert Glück and Marguerite Duras). These concepts layered in *narrative* call to mind mathematician Brian Rotman’s assertion that mathematics only exists when a person is doing mathematics, particularly while writing. Lu’s novel’s appeal to mathematics and its highly intellectual nods to Derrida, Benveniste, and Deleuze, alongside repetition and characters’ shifting

identities, combines to create what I'd like to call a "mathematical affect": a tone both objective and illusory, a clarity so clear it's invisible. This mode—reminiscent of Sianne Ngai's "stuplimity" (including "language that threatens the limits of the self by challenging its ability to respond—temporarily immobilizing the addressee" (254))—"subverts established ways of looking at the world and society" as anti-canonical fiction, and it strikingly prefigures (better known) Renee Gladman's more recent works *Calamities* (2016) and *Plans for Sentences* (2022).

**Kelly Krumrie's** research focuses on 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century fiction and poetry that incorporates concepts from mathematics and science. She is the author of the novel *Math Class* (Calamari Archive, 2022). Other creative and critical writing appears in journals such as *echoverse*, *La Vague*, *Black Warrior Review*, *Full Stop*, and *The Explicator*. She also serves as a contributing editor for *Annulet: A Journal of Poetics*, and she writes a column for *Tarpaulin Sky Magazine* on math and science in art and literature. She holds a PhD in English & Literary Arts from the University of Denver.

## **PANEL 7. CROSSING AND REMAKING GENRES**

### **Ali Chetwynd (American University of Iraq)- Carlene Hatcher Polite's *The Flagellants* as an Experimental Road Not Taken**

In 2014 I organized a panel on Carlene Hatcher Polite at the American Literature Association conference, hoping to spark more work on her unusual fiction. But the only subsequent extended publications on her have been from the papers on that panel. While I've elsewhere<sup>[1]</sup> explained this neglect in terms of her pre-emptive critique of Black Arts Movement thinking, for this conference of anti-canon building I'll examine the alternative paths that Polite charted for African American fiction and experimental prose fiction more generally.

*The Flagellants* (1967) is a ground-clearing novel, concerned to identify and scour away the inheritances of the slavery era in culture, in thought, and most fundamentally in language, as it sets itself against the valorization of the past-bound vernacular in pursuit of "words devoid of antecedent arrangement." But what values, in what linguistic forms, would come next? Working backwards from the standards its protagonists Jimson and Ideal appeal to as they tear down each other's rationalizations, I'll show how the novel frames intimate relationships and linguistic interaction as opportunities above all to hold yourself to external standards of reason, seriousness, consistency, and practical effectuality. These, to say the least, are not the values that have been canonically associated with innovative US fiction.

In this commitment to using inventive language to pursue rather than transcend rigorous external standards of conduct, *The Flagellants* represents one of experimental fiction's paths least taken. Yet there's no reason that literature today couldn't return to the robustly idiosyncratic foundations it offers for the relationship between interpersonal politics, generative language, and literary form. With that potential uptake in mind, I'll finally examine the reasons that Polite's own subsequent career in fiction took a different path, and identify some of the disparate writers we might see as her unwitting inheritors, from Fran Ross to Joseph McElroy.

**Ali Chetwynd** is Assistant Professor and Chair of the English Department at the American University of Iraq, Sulaimani. He works on the constructive argumentative capacities of antimimetic fiction usually taken to be intrinsically anti-rational. He co-edited *Thomas Pynchon, Sex, and Gender* (University of Georgia Press, 2018), while his work on Pynchon, William Gaddis, Ben Jonson, and the relationship between non-realist fiction and philosophy has appeared in *College Literature*, *English Studies*, *Orbit: A Journal of American Literature*, *Textual Practice*, and other venues. He is co-organizing 2022's William Gaddis Centenary Conference.

## **Sofie Verraest (Ghent University) - "The Supreme good is like water" (on Gloria Anzaldúa's Borderlands)**

Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* mixes different languages. It mixes fiction and nonfiction, poetry and prose. It's experimental in more than one way. This shouldn't come as a surprise. It's a book about letting go of all fixed categories. This is what the ideal of the *mestiza* requires. What was once fixed in our mind, handed down by culture/s, normative and exclusionary, must be set in motion. What we once considered separate, we must let mix. This is undoubtedly why water runs through all of *Borderlands/La Frontera*. Solids cannot mix. They must melt and liquefy first. Though less prominent than imagery of, say, the serpent or the eagle, images of water, flow, fluidity, liquefaction, and the mixing of fluids form a quiet presence throughout Anzaldúa's book. In the end, the borderlands are murky waters, where different worlds bleed into one other. They cannot be thought in the usual categories, cannot be seen through normative lenses. They flow. For the conference "Experimental Writing in English (1945-2000) - The Anti-Canon," I propose a creative text that takes Anzaldúa's imagery of flow as a point of departure. I intend to track down different moments in *Borderlands/La Frontera* where this imagery surfaces, and create a new text from these moments. It will be a poetic invitation to follow down Anzaldúa's stream: to liquefy the categories of thought imposed by those in power, to allow ourselves to overflow and experiment.

**Sofie Verraest** is a writer, performer, and cultural practitioner who teaches literature, creative writing, and urban and architectural theory at Ghent University and the Royal Arts Academy KASK, and does research in the same fields. She writes fiction, nonfiction, and poetry in Dutch and English.

For her creative work she was offered fellowships by the Elizabeth Kostova Foundation for Creative Writing (2018), by Akademie Schloss Solitude (2020), where she spent six months in residency to work on her novel, and by Pogon Zagreb (2021). She was pre-selected for the Iowa International Writing Program and the Bibliothek Andreas Züst Studio Residency (2020) and selected for the School of Kindness (2021, Aether Sofia and Migrating Voices Amsterdam). She is one of the "New Voices in International Writing" in *Ninth Letter* (2019, ed. Philip Graham). Other writing can be found in *Fiction Writers Review*, *Green Mountains Review*, *Solitude Journal*, *Deus Ex Machina*, and elsewhere. Sofie holds a PhD in Literary Studies from Ghent University. She curates and moderates multilingual literature and story events. Her interests include narratives of place; narratives in (landscape) architecture and urban planning; the imagination of city, country, and the queer borderlands in between; multi- and translingualism in writing; American literature; and very short prose.

Sofie lives on the edge of Brussels.

She wants you to read the poet John Engman. Because nobody is. Which makes no sense.

She is often hungry.

She has trouble sleeping.

## **Melissa Tanti (University of Manchester) - Multilingual experiments as Anti-Canonical Practice in Queer Women's Writing from Québec**

The deep global reach of early language experiments happening in 1960s Québec feminist writing communities and the contributions of poet-translators from this scene in the creation of a North American literary avant-garde is a movement that deserves greater attention. In the spirit of the Quiet Revolution and influenced by the influx of critical writing from France, feminist writers in Québec produced work that was declared "strangely exciting" (Forsyth 91) when first introduced to Anglophone audiences. Louise Forsyth explains that Québécois women were "seeing, thinking, and speaking in ways that [had] never before been known" (91). According to Nicole Brossard, Francophone women in Québec have always been engaged in a unique "bodily tussle with language"

("Fluid" 155). As such, the province became a productive nexus for feminist experimental writing, translation theory and practices of translation. This paper will elaborate both the ground-breaking work of queer poet-translators in Québec including Gail Scott, Nicole Brossard and Erin Moure and related tenets of feminist translation practices and theory that are traceable in contemporary multilingual experimental writing by women. For Cláudia de Lima Costa, "to translate is to multiply other ways of existing" ("Translating"). Working in and through modes of translation, these poet-translators create strategies for sign-making that are not reductionist, non-assimilationist, that maintain difference, incommensurability, and the non-translatability of desire – in short, producing a mode of writing that might enable the conditions for what Judith Butler refers to as "human liveability." Grounded in transnational feminist ethics, practices and poetics of translation are deeply collaborative and emphasize multiple layers of interdependencies between texts, subjects and communities. Thus, these tactics are profoundly anti-canonical by contradicting the ways authority and prestige are typically assigned and the subsequent limits around who might participate in a given literary movement. The experimental poetics initiated by Québécoise women writers known as "écriture au féminin" -- a specifically Québécoise invention connected to but unique from *écriture féminine* in France -- constitutes an enduring thread in the history of women's experimental writing writ large -- one that is evident in the late-corpus practices of writers on both sides of the Canada-U.S. border including Jhumpa Lahiri, Anne Carson and Kathy Acker. This paper examines the movement toward multilingual poetics in recent innovative writing by women against the backdrop of Québec feminist writing history to elaborate both the aesthetic roots and political potential of this contemporary feminist poetic and epistemological strategy

**Melissa Tanti** is a postdoctoral fellow in the Department of English, American Studies and Creative Writing at the University of Manchester. Her area of specialization is experimental women's literature with a focus on queer poetics and women's transnational writing communities. Her forthcoming book, *The Translating Subject* (McGill-Queens UP), examines a recent shift in women's experimental writing toward multilingual poetics as a revolutionary advocacy for queer, feminist, post-colonial and other minoritized perspectives. She is currently co-editing her second volume, *The Edinburgh Companion to Women's Experimental Writing: 1900 to the present* with Dr. Kaye Mitchell. My previous co-edited collection, *Beyond Understanding Canada: Transnational Circulations of Canadian Literature* (University of Alberta P 2017), considers how the field of Canadian Literature has been shaped, bound, and expanded by transnational exchanges: historical, economic, political, epistemic, aesthetic, and diasporic. The book that emerges from her postdoctoral fellowship, *Transnational Experiments*, takes up where her previous and current books leave off by bringing together two frames that have yet to be placed in conversation with one another: women's experimental writing and transnational perspectives.

### **Susannah Thompson (Glasgow School of Art) - Maud Sulter: Poet as Heretic**

The work of the Scots-Ghanaian poet, writer, artist and activist Maud Sulter (1960–2008) embodied many of the characteristics of what is now often referred to as 'art writing' or experimental writing within the fields of visual art, art history and feminist activism. Her poetry, plays, essays, statements, manifestoes and monologues often appeared 'out of place', explicitly challenging the conventions of the publications and sites in which they appeared, and, writing mainly in English, in England, she incorporated untranslated Scots, Glaswegian dialect and French into both her poetry and image-text artworks. Frequently citing other Black and lesbian women writers (Audre Lorde, Dorothea Smartt, Gertrude Stein, Angelina Weld Grimké) throughout her work, and often writing in collaboration with other Black women, Sulter used writing and visual art to *perform* her politics in a constant endeavour to 'put black women back in the centre of the frame'.

A working-class, Black lesbian from the Gorbals in Glasgow, Sulter's experimental, multi-modal, anti-canonical writing frequently challenged the boundaries between different areas of enquiry, focussing

on issues around race, class, sexuality and gender. In 1988's *Call and Response* she subverted the conventions of academic writing, adopting a highly personal, manifesto-like register in her demand for the visibility and acknowledgement of 'Blackwomen's representation and position in a white heterosexist male-dominated world'. In 1989's *Zabat Narratives*, she created object biographies for her black foremothers, allowing reimagined archetypes to speak for themselves while returning agency to the silent, passive figure of the Muse. Her 1991's multi-media installation *Hysteria*, loosely based on the life of African-American sculptor Edmonia Lewis, prefigured the use of historical speculative narrative in contemporary art, while her 2002 play *Service to Empire* represented an innovative recasting of her own biography through a fictionalised account of the life of Ghanaian leader Jerry J Rawlings.

In spite of her extensive work as a poet — she was winner of the Vera Bell Prize for Poetry in 1985 — and her prolific work as a writer and publisher across form and medium for over two decades, Sulter's legacy is often discussed only in relation to her work as a visual artist. This paper seeks to examine the mode and style of Sulter's poetic, dramatic and narrative writing as key examples of cross-genre and auto-theoretical feminist, queer and postcolonial practices which prefigure the emergence of these approaches in contemporary experimental writing today.

**Susannah Thompson** is an art historian, writer and critic based in Glasgow. Her research focusses on twentieth century and contemporary art in Scotland, particularly the work of women artists and writers, and on feminist approaches to art, writing and visual culture. Recent publications include an essay on spinsters, bedsits and boarding houses in the novels of Muriel Spark, the epistolary practice of painter Joan Eardley and the art criticism and curating of Cordelia Oliver. She is Professor of Contemporary Art and Criticism and Head of Doctoral Studies at The Glasgow School of Art.

## **PANEL 8. POSTMODERNIST AND PHILOSOPHICAL EXPRESSIONS**

Steven Forbes (University of Edinburgh) - Cubistic Time and Phenomenology in William Demby's *The Catacombs*

In his novel, *The Catacombs* (1965), William Demby uses an experimental style by fusing a semi-autobiographical fictional storyline set in Rome interposed with various reports from newspapers and other sources of violent happenings around the world. William Demby was an African American writer whose works have now faded into obscurity, partly due to a lack of critical evaluation throughout the years, leaving him 'outside the canon.' In this paper, I will first give a brief outline of Demby's career and works and explain why they are important. I will then utilise the works of Maurice Merleau-Ponty – in particular, his essay 'Cezanne's Doubt' – followed by examples from Demby's novel to show how he uses cubism and existential phenomenology to explore ideas relating to varied perspectives regarding consciousness and the lived black experience. I will also discuss how Demby creates a sense of what he refers to as 'cubistic time' to create a particular effect on the reader's perception of temporality when reading his novel. To further expand on how Demby uses time in this novel, I will refer to Martin Heidegger's notion of time in his work, *Being and Time*, to show how the theories of temporality and historicity are evident in the novel. One of my main aims in this paper is to prove that Demby used complex philosophical systems in his literary techniques, such as phenomenology and existentialism, to achieve his artistic vision. I will also argue that Demby's works deserve a prominent place in the canon of African American Literature alongside Richard Wright and Ralph Ellison and that his novels require more critical attention. I will give a brief account of why Demby and other equally deserving writers might have been left 'outside the canon' despite being contemporaries of other well-known African American writers.

**Steven Forbes** is a PhD candidate in English Literature at The University of Edinburgh. His thesis concerns African American novels from the 1960s and 1970s which have been largely forgotten or

overlooked. He critically assesses these novels using existentialist philosophy to prove their merit as intellectual works of literature which deserve their place in the literary canon of American Literature. One of the novels he is working on has already been used by his supervisor in an undergraduate Honour's course in American Literature. He also currently teaches Scottish and English Literature at the University of Edinburgh.

**Adam Guy (University of Oxford) - 'Good for nothing craft': John Pepper Clark-Bekederemo, the Theatre of the Absurd, and Artistic Autonomy in Global View**

The early theatrical career of the Nigerian writer John Pepper Clark-Bekederemo shows many points of contact with existentialist theatre and the 'theatre of the absurd', a term coined, after Albert Camus, by the critic Martin Esslin, and an important popularizing force for existentialist philosophy in Anglophone theatre. Existentialism was traditionally seen to be opposed to experimental and autonomous literary forms: as Jean-Paul Sartre said of Surrealism, 'Literature as Negation became Anti-Literature; never had it been more *literary*: the circle was completed'. But Clark-Bekederemo's plays, especially *The Raft* (1964), provide a case study in the way that outside of Europe absurdism formed a unique and portable figure for artistic autonomy and experiment levied against transformative civilizational upheaval. This paper reads *The Raft* alongside *America, Their America*, Clark-Bekederemo's memoir of his time on a fellowship in the US; it also considers Clark-Bekederemo against the background of the Mbari club, an important forum for the emergent Nigerian literary culture of the 1960s, and itself an index of the entanglements of postcolonial and modernist writing. In all, Clark-Bekederemo serves as a potent example of the global trajectories and inversions of experimental literature and philosophy at the time of the end of empire, and a challenge to the Western aesthetic categories that often inhere in accounts of formally radical writing.

**Adam Guy** is a Departmental Lecture in Modern and Contemporary Literature, based in the English Faculty at the University of Oxford. His first book *The nouveau roman and Writing in Britain After Modernism* was published by OUP in 2019.

**Suhasini Vincent (University of Paris II – Panthéon Assas) - Exploring Suniti Namjoshi's Experimental Feminist Fables in the Light of Displaced Immigrant Experiences**

In her corpus of feminist fables, Suniti Namjoshi writes about her 'Homeland' India and the 'Fabled' West with the quest of bridging the gap between the two worlds. In this paper I shall study how Namjoshi uses the mode of the fables in verse to navigate feminist politics and racial differences. By figuring animals clad in the skins of other creatures, providing the beasts with masks, dooming the animals to a life of displacement, and changing their forms and identities, Namjoshi exposes existing social structures of racial differences in feminist politics and reveals paradoxes surrounding issues of colour consciousness. Through a broad analysis of her fictional corpus of fables, I shall show how the feminist fables with their echoes from Eastern and Western fabulist traditions constitute pieces of a gigantic jigsaw puzzle whose crust can be broken, reinvented, subverted, and trashed to reveal the shifting of tectonic layers in the ground beneath the reader's and the fabulist's feet regarding feminist liberties and immigrant experiences. The fables serve to bridge the gap between the 'East' and the 'West' and reveal insights of feminism in 'Western' as well as 'Indian' heterosexual paradigms. This paper shall thus view themes like the straddling of the 'East' and the 'West', the issues of 'visibility' and 'invisibility', 'fitting-in' and 'feeling-out', the bridge connects the 'local and the global', the struggle between 'resistance' and 'acceptance' of displaced experiences, and how the fables can cloak, alter, refashion, and resonate with multiple meanings for the alert reader to decipher. In this paper I shall explore the postmodern impulse of adopting the unique form of the fable to support the idea of a

postmodern paradigm shift. I shall thus study how the experimental feminist fable is the ideal poetic mode capable of portraying the individual construction of knowledge and reality.

**Sahasini Vincent** defended her doctoral thesis on Experimental Writing within the Postcolonial Framework of Indian Writing in English through a joint-supervision programme between the University of Paris 3 – Sorbonne Nouvelle and the University of Madras in 2006. In 2009, she was awarded the 2nd prize for the best defended thesis on topics relating to the Commonwealth, organised under the aegis of the SEPC (Société d'études des Pays du Commonwealth). She has interviewed Suniti Namjoshi a couple of times and her research focusses on Gender. She has compiled press reports on Indian Women's Rights for the UNO and has published an article entitled « Beyond a battle of 'props' and 'costumes' - NGOization in India », *The Time Is Now. Feminist Leadership for a New Era*, a UNESCO publication. She has been an Associate Professor at the University of Paris 2 – Panthéon Assas since 2007 and has taken part in international conferences in Europe.

### **Kerry-Jane Wallart (University of Orléans) - Tragic anomalies in a transnational context. The case of Cherrie Moraga**

While Western drama has long heavily relied on types and stereotypes (Greek comic and tragic masks, English mummings' plays, Italian Renaissance *commedia dell'arte*, the 19th century 'well-made play'), postmodern authors have markedly exaggerated such audience expectations and theatrical conventions in order to deconstruct perceived identities. The recognition allowed by a coded characterization became so visible that it provoked a collapse of boundaries identified by theorists of postmodern performance (Schechner 2002, p. 116) but specifically directed at the disintegration of exclusionary representations. This could be said to be the case of Cherrie Moraga's *The Hungry Woman*, a play first performed in 1995. The play revisits myths about female monstrosity and exceptionality : Medea, the Malinche, and La Llorona. I suggest that a first level of reading provokes a saturation of emphatic representations of women, and consequently a vortex of validations and invalidations of binaries (male/female; heteronormative/non-heteronormative; same/other; known/unknown). I also contend that a second level of reading implies a transnational reconfiguration whereby formal distortions of the tragic modality lose their directionality. The return to order guaranteed both by myth, and by tragedies, is postponed endlessly, thus interrogating our collective ability to design futurity in ways that be different from traditional ones (where stability, and convention, are usually restored). This paper will negotiate transnational American/Chicana/indigenous issues and a reflexion on the possibilities of postmodern tragedy.

**Kerry-Jane Wallart** teaches Black Atlantic, diasporic and transcultural cultures and literatures at the University of Orléans, France. She has authored over 40 articles and book chapters about Caribbean, Canadian, African American and Black British writers. She is the co-editor of *Transnational Jean Rhys* (<https://www.bloomsbury.com/us/transnational-jean-rhys-9781501361319/>) and *Jamaica Kincaid as Crafter and Grafter* (Wagadu, 2019), as well as of three issues of *Commonwealth Essays and Studies*, one issue of *Sillages Critiques*, one issue of *Women: A Cultural Review*, and one issue of *Revue de Littérature comparée*. She is the head of the research group REMELICE at Orléans.

### **PANEL 9. FORMS OF “OUTSIDE” IN ART WRITING**

This panel posits art writing as an inherently experimental practice that, in working at the boundaries of many fields, forms and forums, may foster new definitions of the anti-canon and – as these papers explore – modes of writing the ‘outside’. The papers look at practitioners who exploit the discipline’s ambivalence about its status as both *writing-that-is-art* and *writing-about-art* (Clemens, 2022) to reveal that which may lie beyond or outside dominant literary values and states of being. By dissolving

an absolute distinction between ‘art’ and ‘writing’, the practice may expose and contain the writing that exists in and beyond art, and the art that exists in and beyond writing.

These papers present art writing as an often embodied practice, characterised by a sense of becoming, of finding form, whether through intimacy and touch, lyrical criticism, errancy, and the gestural, indecipherable, or encoded. As a collective conversation, they aim to find intuitive lines of connection between ideas and subjects – by way of an (as-yet-determined) dialogic element or visual prompt.

### **Sam Buchan-Watts (Newcastle University) - Inside of the Outside: Skateboarding as Art Writing**

This paper centres on the work of prose experimentalists Fanny Howe and Leslie Scalapino. Drawing from Howe’s rendering of a Californian lyric vernacular and her spiritual ideas of writerly ‘errancy’, I will explore references to skateboarders in these writers’ work as figures of motion. Such references invoke a tradition that often aligns skateboarders’ physical acts of urban drift and detour with the trope of the flâneur, which Howe develops by aligning acts of terror and skateboarding’s ambivalently oppositional (anti-canonical?) status. By staging a linguistic encounter with a built environment that ‘requires you to move’ (Howe, 2017), skateboarding emerges as a compelling site of textu(r)al innovation, a practice that troubles clear divisions between writing/performance and self/other by occurring at, as Scalapino claims, ‘the inside of the outside’. To write of and with skateboarding might emerge then, this paper suggests, as a form of art writing.

**Sam Buchan-Watts** is a Leverhulme Early Career Fellow in the Fine Art Department at Newcastle University, working on a multi-form, creative-critical project about skateboarding as a queer cultural practice.

### **Alice Butler (The Courtauld) - Writing Beside, Outside and Inside: The Reparative Desire of Cookie Mueller’s Crochet Gloves**

The photographer, Peter Hujar, took a series of intimate portraits of the writer, Cookie Mueller, and the artist, Vittorio Scarpati, on their wedding day in Downtown New York, spring 1986. In a picture of the rooftop ceremony, Hujar captures Mueller’s hand (clothed in an antique crochet glove) slipped inside the arm of her husband-to-be. It is a gesture of love, closeness, and care, which I return to in this article, recreating the closeness of the archive—the space in which I first ‘touched’ her gloved hand—in the closeness of my autotheoretical writing. This embodied methodology, which is an extension of the work developed in my upcoming book, is the means through which I address the queer politics of Mueller’s own *close writing*.

This original term refocuses our attention to the affective and transgressive aspects of Mueller’s life and work, how she summoned past and present memories and relations into the close embrace of her writing. This is evident in the short pieces that became *Walking Clear Water in a Pool Painted Black* (1990)—the first in Semiotext(e)’s Native Agents Series that introduced a genre-defying mode of feminist autofiction—as well as in the lesser-known art columns (the focus of this paper). As a combination of ‘adolescent’ journal; fan letter; essay; story; fragment, and column, Mueller’s art writing for *Details* magazine (1982-1989) involved her writing ‘close’ to her subjects—from Hujar and Scarpati, to Jean-Michel Basquiat, Nan Goldin, Robert Mapplethorpe, and others—as a political, reparative act. Writing during the height of the AIDS crisis of multiple crises, and later through her own diagnosis and disease, Mueller created spatial and emotional lines of connection between herself and her beloved, as a necessary and intimate *and* risky form—an expansion of the public memorial outside into the close environment inside—of light-giving, life-giving protest, accompaniment, and care. In doing so, this mode of close art writing—uniquely hers’—challenged the discriminatory

treatment of AIDS patients and exclusions of high-risk groups. Following Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (2003) on the spatial, relational, and reparative possibilities of ‘beside’ as an autotheoretical critical practice, this article illuminates the scenes, energies, and affects of Mueller’s close, ‘bedside’ position. I argue that it is by ‘writing beside’ the bodies of her diseased beloved—newly mobilizing love *outside of* art criticism’s turn to high theory—that Mueller challenged the mortal frame both author and subject lived and made work through. Her reparative desire was a gift—a gloved-hand that tenderly touches—inviting the embodied touch of my own close writing in loving return.

**Alice Butler** is an interdisciplinary scholar and art writer working across feminist art history, feminist theory, and art writing practice. She is the 2021/2022 Terra Foundation Centre for American Art Postdoctoral Fellow and she also teaches in Critical and Historical Studies at the Royal College of Art. She was awarded her PhD from the University of Manchester in April 2019 for the thesis, “Close Writing: Touching Kathy Acker and Cookie Mueller”. In her research, she specialises in the intersections of feminist art and writing to explore questions of sickness, sexuality, and gender, via feminist and queer perspectives and experimental approaches to archive and autotheory.

### **Natalie Ferris (Durham University) - Radical Notations**

‘Asemic’ writing was not named as such by its women. Two visual poets, Tim Gaze and Jim Leftwich, adopted the term in 1997 to draw a line around a field of artistic practice ‘involved with units of language for reasons other than producing meaning’. Visually its graphic components of line, curve, stroke, and point exist on the edges of illegibility, ‘a shadow, impression and abstraction of conventional writing’ that is comprehensible in so far as its significance may be intuited as opposed to a precise meaning understood. Its modern history has long been placed squarely in the hands of its male practitioners and theorists: Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, Christian Dotremont, Max Ernst, Robert Grenier, Brion Gysin, Isidore Isou, Paul Klee, Henri Michaux, Luigi Serafini, Morita Shiryū, Huái Sù, Cecil Touchon, Cy Twombly, Cornelis Vleeskens, Gu Wenda.

This paper will consider the extent to which the gestural, indecipherable or encoded offered a number of women artists and writers not only the opportunity to challenge language’s monopoly on expression, but to challenge the patriarchy’s monopoly on meaning. What was/is the radical political potential of asemic writing? What does the illegible make possible? This paper will reflect on the work of Ana Hatherly, Susan Hiller and Jeanne Triplier and argue that the asemic mode made its own demands upon expressive forms to break contract with patriarchal notions of history, language, knowledge, power and truth.

**Natalie Ferris** is Lecturer in Literature Post-1945 to the Present at the University of Durham. Her research forges connections between literature and visual studies of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, placing particular emphasis on British and American writers, artists, architects and designers. Her monograph *Abstraction in Post-War British Literature 1945-1980* (Oxford University Press, 2022) explores the ways in which writers and institutions responded to non-representational art in the decades following the Second World War.

### **Matthew Holman (UCL) - The Joy of Making Fine Distinctions: James Schuyler’s Outsider Art Writing**

This paper takes as its focus the art writing of queer poet James Schuyler, who was associate editor of *Art News* between 1957 and 1962. Paying attention to the wavering forms of becoming in Schuyler’s art writing on landscape and interior paintings, I will explore the abstracted directness of his descriptive sentences that are often hyper-literary, revelling in the lyrical patina of pigment and line. What, for example, of the ‘blue light’ that ‘hastens into violet’? How to feel the ‘wriggle of pigment perched,

like a slipped wig, on a corner of a pocked chunk’? For Schuyler, a Jane Wilson painting can depict ‘a New York room on a brilliant winter day in Iowa’, while in a Jane Freilicher study of Water Mill, Long Island, he situates us by recognising that ‘the blue that centers one is not a river, for all its skyness.’ If formalist critics of the same period believed that language needed to remain more and not less concrete, substantial, and self-evident in order to account for abstraction in art, Schuyler responded by writing slippery passages of poetic criticism that edged the border between a reading of a work and its own status as artistic writing.

**Matthew Holman** joined UCL in 2021 as Associate Lecturer in English, after completing a PhD thesis on the poet Frank O’Hara in the department. His research focuses on modern American poetry and the visual arts. His first book, *In Favor of One’s Time: Frank O’Hara and the American Century*, is the first to consider in detail O’Hara’s distinguished curatorial career for The Museum of Modern Art’s International Program, which gave him access to art, artists, and cities, and was essential to the shaping of his cosmopolitan aesthetics. Matthew is also completing another book project on O’Hara: an illustrated collection, *Frank O’Hara: The Jane Poems*, on the series of lyrics addressed to the painter Jane Freilicher.

## **PANEL 10. WRITING THE BODY**

### **Jen Brodie (Paris 8) - The land as a male body: fear of fragmentation in an unpublished work of David Ireland**

The experimental modernism of working-class Australian writer David Ireland has been understudied in its specific ramifications for depictions of class, gender, and colonial relations from an Antipodean perspective.

For this conference, I propose a study of his unpublished/unpublishable 1980s novel *Desire* (which is held in the manuscript collection in the State Library of New South Wales). *Desire* relates the torture and dismemberment of a captive male, with the torture of this body intended to function as a metaphor for aspects of the colonial situation in Australia, aspects which continue to structure Australian literary and publishing cultures.

The study I propose will touch on three main problems. First, and most obviously, the danger invoked by the fragmentation of a male body, the aspect which appears to have rendered it unpublishable, will be contextualised. My research here is directed by questions such as: What does it mean to represent the land as a male body? How might AIDS panic, queer panic, and the founding homosociality of the Australian colony be implicated in the non-publication of this work?

Second, although Ireland is by no means an unrecognised writer in his own country, having won the Miles Franklin award three times, the combination of local and transgressive elements in his writing has rendered him rather obscure and unread outside of Australia, a problem for the subject that I am naming the Antipodean modernist. The questions here are concerned with the relationship between the periphery (the Antipodes) and the centre (Europe), and the specific problems that Antipodean writers must come to terms with when working in English, the

colonisers’ language, on stolen and unceded land.

Last of all, I will attempt to sketch out how this work takes its place in company with other unpublishable/lost/destroyed works that are also characterised by violence on the body and obscene content. I am thinking here of Hogg, Samuel Delany’s pre-Stonewall work about a rape artist, which was not published until 1985, and the destruction of Willa Cather’s uncompleted work *Hard*

Punishments by her partner (at the author's request), as well their antecedents in the lost and destroyed works of Sade.

Unpublished works have a special status. Works that are unreplicated, undistributed, and unread exist in a special kind of eternity. I am interested here in making a place for these almost nonexistent works in the context of the non-canonical, beginning with Desire.

**Jen Brodie**, an Australian living in Paris is engaged in a Masters of Dance at Paris 8 where she is working on a thesis that concerns the choreographic potential of the writing of Samuel Delany. She has been involved in collective projects in performance and cinema, always with an interest for the zones where writing touches and produces the body. In her own research, she is interested in religion, nature, and psychoanalysis.

### **Joule Zheng Wang (University of Amsterdam) - (Dis)integrating into Fragments: The "Typewriter Writing" in David Wojnarowicz's *Close to the Knives***

In my research, I theorise on David Wojnarowicz's "typewriter" writing, or as I call it, "typewriting." David Wojnarowicz (1954–1992) was an artist, writer, and AIDS activist. His writing is often a juxtaposition of various imageries, motives, and narratives, including (homo)eroticism, childhood trauma, death (in relation to HIV/AIDS), outrage towards the authorities, and stories of social outcasts. The incoherent, fragmentary characteristics of his life embodies in the technique of automatic writing that he uses, as if he is a typewriter that "shakes out" his senses and streams of consciousness without alteration and pause. Particularly, I examine the narratives and styles of writing in his book *Close to the Knives: A Memoir of Disintegration* (1990), which consists of eight creative self-writing essays. The anticanonical nature is already indicated in the title: it is a memoir about lives that are disintegrating, always being disrupted, and dying because of the oppressive social structure. As Wojnarowicz "typewrites," he switches between different genres (life-writing, self-life writing, social criticism, public lecture script) and mediations (visual imageries, interviews, dreams) as he travels through time and space; meanwhile, his everyday life is constantly disrupted by his erotic fantasies, violent imaginations, and traumatic memories. Besides his anti-canonical writing practice of comprising various narratives into one, the contents of the book are also anti-canonical – not conforming to imposing, authoritative, mainstream heteronormative narratives – even subversive and destructive, not only receiving political backlash because of its searing attack on politicians and religious leaders, but also inspiring a series of HIV/AIDS activism in the 1990s. In my paper, I untangle the "chaos" in Wojnarowicz's experimental writing through a close reading of the book, examining how it moves away from the canon of illness narratives and more specifically, literature related to HIV/AIDS, and how Wojnarowicz's sexual, outrageous, mournful typewriting achieves its political outcome.

Natural from Guangdong, China, **Joule Zheng Wang** is currently reading for a Research Master's in Cultural Analysis at the University of Amsterdam. With a special interest in literature, film, and queer-theory, he has approached these topics from several different angles, having collaborated with the European Union Film Festival in China, the Deep Focus Film Magazine, and the French New Wave Programme at the Broadway Cinematheque in Shenzhen. Taking advantage of a diverse background, his writings deal with the connection between the HIV/AIDS epidemic and the role of media and culture in conversation with queer identities and emancipation in a meta-cultural way.

### **Rosie Haward (independent researcher, Amsterdam) - No time like the past: trauma and lesbian fantasy in the writing of Camille Roy**

Both psychoanalytic theory and trauma studies have sketched out trauma as an experience that comes up against the limits of language, rupturing meaning altogether. How might writing take on this challenge, and how might trauma be shared through cultural expression? Through a reading of short story *The Faggot* (1998) by New Narrative writer Camille Roy, I want to consider how traumatic experience can be imagined distinct from therapeutic and scientific models, and fleshed out as it inhabits the body. In Roy's story, the protagonist Camille experiences a sexual assault, and while Roy allows the reader a brief but incisive dive into its time-shattering and gnawing effects, she also calls up the word dyke as a talisman, foregrounding Camille's burgeoning sexuality as the predominant space of investigation. This narrative proximity allows terror and the painful rupture of safety to exist with the joy and terror of lesbian sexual exploration. The phenomenon of re-experiencing the past in the present—another symptom of trauma—is a destabilising one, a grossly felt intrusion that can render sensate experience suddenly endless. I would like to place this in tension with queer theory's rendering of non-linear temporality as having erotic potential. Here (in the work of Carolyn Dinshaw and Elisabeth Freeman in particular) when the past rears its head in the present it creates an affective relation across time. Is there cohesion to be found between trauma's temporal disruption and the desires that Roy's protagonist lurches in and out of? How can trauma be written when it is felt as shapes and sensations and myths? How is experimental writing, and New Narrative writing in particular, uniquely placed to capture, however fleetingly, the experience of sexual trauma whilst not denying the bodies and desires that are implicated alongside it?

**Rosie Haward** is a writer and researcher based in Amsterdam. Her work engages with queer and feminist studies and visual culture, and the queer potential of experimental fiction. Her fiction and essays have been published by Goldsmiths Press, LitHub, 3 of Cups Press, Orlando magazine, and more. She is also the co-host of the podcast Bare Fruits, which discusses queer writing of all kinds.

### **Julie Dickson (Freie Universität Berlin) - Paradoxical Bodies, Ambiguous Books: The Representation of Marginalized Subjectivities, Community, and Embodiment in Late 20th-Century Short Story Cycles**

The short story cycle has long been considered an underappreciated, understudied, and problematically-defined form. Too close in kind to be an “anti-novel”, it problematizes by proximity: Its ruptures, recursivity, and resistance to linearity pose a sustained challenge to the traditional novel, and, importantly, to the novel's thematic elevation of the individual. The cycle is instead often concerned with communality, with the tension between “the one and the many” as applies to both individuals and communities as well as to stories and “whole” books, and with the ways we do or do not construct coherence—in its many senses—out of disparate parts.

The marginality of the cycle form also corresponds with the high proportion of women writers and women writers of color who have taken it up. In the second half of the 20th century in particular, a wave of such cycles was produced in North America by Gloria Naylor, Maxine Hong Kingston, Louise Erdrich, Jamaica Kincaid, Julia Alvarez, and many others. Though these authors have begun to get their due in terms of critical recognition, too much scholarship fails to go beyond an appreciation of their story cycles' polyvocality to fully investigate the radical implications of the form. Representations of communities such as *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents* do not simply propose a concept of subjectivity as multiple, interconnected, episodically constituted and even spiral; what these cycles also bring to the fore is the fact that the tensions within this multiplicity are necessarily *embodied*.

The writing of these women is a challenge to the canon in its own right; their use of the cycle form, that unruly textual body which presents such difficulties to narrative analysis, is yet another. By

approaching these works from the formal angle first, I argue that these cycles simultaneously center marginalized voices and de-center the individual as concept through forms that are also simultaneously disruptive, resonant, and anti-linear, and this, along with the presentation of these paradoxical subjectivities as embodied, constitutes an *ontological* challenge to novelistic thinking, individual subjectivity, and even the body itself that persists within the still-marginalized cycle “tradition” today.

**Julie E. Dickson** is a Ph.D. candidate in Literary Studies and is working on the representation of female bodies and embodiment in recent story collections. She is a fellow at the Graduate School for North American Studies at Freie Universität Berlin. She earned a B.A. in English and an M.Ed. in Education from the University of Florida, and an M.F.A. in Creative Writing and Folklore from George Mason University. She has taught high school English and undergraduate writing, and has worked in scholarly publishing in Washington, D.C.

## **PANEL 11. DISORIENTATIONS, CONTRADICTIONS, QUEER DESIRES**

### **Alice Hill-Woods (Glasgow School of Art) - “Which piece fits in precisely where?”: Disorientation as Queer Strategy in Ann Quin’s *Three* (1969)**

In an interview with John Hall for the *Guardian* in April 1972, Ann Quin described her bisexual experience as something that “was so far beyond the fantasy that [she] found it very, well, you could say enlarging.” Yet critics rarely consider her to be a queer author, and her novels are infrequently read through a queer lens; scholars tend to regard her elliptical prose and fragmentary aesthetics as representing mental illness. I propose an alternative way of reading Quin’s texts, whereby her dissociative experiments in language are not indicative of psychic fracturing, but rather a playful queering of the avant-garde imaginary. Examining *Three* (1969), the second of Quin’s four novels before her suicide in 1973, I consider disorientation as a critical tool in the construction of Quin’s queer narrative. By way of encompassing disorientation’s separate signifying elements, I approach it as an umbrella term, which I then employ as a means of tracing the queer dimension in Quin’s textual practice. This sheds light on *Three*’s objects of desire, its troubled fabric of reproductive time, its structural puzzles and its world-making potential. *Three* is an entanglement of sorts, allowing objects and temporalities and affects to converge in a tapestry of interdependent relations, all participating in a process of becoming something new. Loraine Morley describes *Three* as a narrative enacting the concept of “becoming woman,” but it synonymously enacts a “becoming queer.” Quin’s disorientations lead us towards imagining what a queer telos might look like in language, in structure and in feeling.

**Alice Hill-Woods** is a postgraduate student at the Glasgow School of Art, where she is studying towards a Master of Letters in Art Writing. She holds an MA (Hons) in English Literature from the University of Glasgow, where she was awarded the Alexander Waddell Prize, and an MA in Medical History and Humanities from the University of York, where she was the recipient of a Wellcome Trust scholarship. She is the author of *HOTHOUSE* (Salò Press, 2021).

### **Kaye Mitchell (University of Manchester) - Queer experiments**

In the introduction to *Liberating the Canon* (2018), a collection which gathers together an array of ‘nonconforming and radically innovative’ short texts, Isabel Waidner opines that, in contrast to the wealth of queer and trans avant-garde performance, film, art, photography, and poetry in contemporary Britain (and beyond), ‘there is hardly any queer avant-garde fiction’ and ‘historically, British queer experimental novels are scarce’ (15). One exception that Waidner cites is Brigid Brophy’s 1969 novel,

*In Transit*, and in this paper I will read Brophy's novel alongside the French Oulipian writer Anne Garréta's debut novel, *The Sphinx* (1986) and Waidner's own debut novel, *Gaudy Bauble* (2018), as a way of thinking through the productive relationship between textual experiment and innovative conceptualisations of gender, sexuality and desire.

While *In Transit*'s punning narrator harps on – and picks apart – all binaries, including those fixing gender, as part of a project to 'Undo the Normative Conquest' (27), *The Sphinx* takes as its main Oulipian constraint the absence of any linguistic marker of gender for either narrator or narrator's love object; *Gaudy Bauble*'s jostling cast of characters includes a writer of 'awkwardgarde fiction, potentially trailblazing', a lesbian couple who 'resembled each other in a Gilbert & George kind of way', a 'transarmy equipped with question-mark hats', and a 12-year-old from West Croydon who 'preferred the gender neutral pronouns "they"/"them", but "she"/"her" were ok, too' and who would go on to be part of 'a *nouveau*-anarcho cabaret troupe called "The Avant-garde of the Oppressed".'

The paper will address the (multi)linguistic play, rich intertextuality and baroque registers that facilitate the queering of gender in these novels. These qualities constitute, I argue, a variety of textual and affective excess that harks back to Djuna Barnes's novel of the Parisian sexual underworld, *Nightwood* (1936): a novel that Daniela Caselli – approvingly – describes as 'a shameless and self-assured effrontery to modernist purity', and another touchstone for this paper. As queer experiments, these texts align also with Tyler Bradway's vision of a queer experimental literature that 'strikes at the disembodied model of critical reading and its heteronormative social imaginary', making use of the 'affective jolts' of 'estrangement, disorientation, and surprise' (2017: xxxiv, xxxvii). In addition, I will be considering here the various *translations* (Brophy's narrator's punning across different language, the challenges discussed by Emma Ramadan vis-à-vis her 2015 translation of *The Sphinx*, and Waidner's alertness to matters of cultural, subcultural and linguistic translation) that, again, provide ways of writing gender that transcend, transgress and trouble binary models and settled identities.

**Kaye Mitchell** is Senior Lecturer in Contemporary Literature and Director of the Centre for New Writing at the University of Manchester. She has published three monographs, most recently *Writing Shame: Contemporary Literature, Gender and Negative Affect* (EUP, 2020). Her editorial publications include a collection of essays on the British author Sarah Waters (Bloomsbury, 2013), a special issue of *Contemporary Women's Writing* (2015) on experimental women's writing, and a co-edited collection of essays (with Nonia Williams), *British Avant-Garde Fiction of the 1960s* (EUP, 2019). Kaye is the UK editor of the OUP journal, *Contemporary Women's Writing*, is on the editorial board of *Open Gender* in Germany and *C21* in the UK, and is a series editor of Bloomsbury's 'Contemporary Critical Perspectives' series.

### **Carole Sweeney (Goldsmiths University) - 'Things irreconcilable': Reading Brigid Brophy's baroque.**

'... all the ambivalences of the baroque are reduplications of the inescapable ambivalence at the heart of human consciousness.' (Brigid Brophy, 'Baroque 'n' Roll', p. 151)

Describing her burgeoning involvement with Neale, a young man of 'manageable height', the plucky protagonist of Brigid Brophy's 1956 novel, *The King of A Rainy Country* observes: 'Our relationship was verbal: allusive and entangled.'<sup>1</sup> In Brophy's fiction indistinctness and ambivalence often prevail, with narrative form and plot fashioned around the pleasures of the unsaid, the indecipherable and the downright incongruous. Propositions, erotic and otherwise, are left tantalizingly unspoken, dangling alluringly out of reach of the determining grasp of certainty needed for the efficient working of the marriage or romance plot. Thus, in *The Snow Ball* (1964), the seduction plot of *Don Giovanni* is turned on its head by allowing the woman to be the desiring subject of a transitory erotic intensity routed through linguistic foreplay embedded in layers of teasing semantic indeterminacy and ambiguity. Both

as an aesthetic practice and sensibility, the baroque, Brophy wrote, welcomes ‘contradictions and oppositions’ by deploying ‘ambiguity and puns’ as its ‘raw material’, like a ‘pair of giant curly brackets that clips things together things irreconcilable.’<sup>ii</sup> I suggest here, then, that a voluptuous obliquity marks these two novels which both relish the ‘bold embrace’ of the baroque that allows for a subtle yet resolute sabotage of some hidebound ideas of gender and desire. Reading these novels and a selection of Brophy’s peerless literary criticism, this paper examines Brophy’s use of these ‘curly brackets’ to produce writing that experiments with the limits of realism. In a ‘flurry of black beauty spots’<sup>iii</sup>, her fiction dashingly sidesteps the predictable exchanges and dénouements of the romantic marriage plot by swerving down unexpected side roads, bringing ‘the reader suddenly round a corner to confront an incongruity’ which might leave a delightful impression ‘on the imagination’s eyelids when the show is over.’<sup>iv</sup>

**Carole Sweeney** is Reader in Modern Literature at Goldsmiths, University of London. Her research and teaching focuses on the intersections of race, class, sexualities and gender in modern and contemporary literature and culture. Her first book, *From Fetish to Subject: Race, Modernism and Primitivism*, examined how the colonial iconography of the black body was deployed in cultural modernism and how anti-colonial and decolonising cultural movements emerged in opposition to this aesthetic racialisation. She followed up this work by publishing widely on Francophone-African writing, in particular by women writers and then by examining racism, anti-feminism and misogyny in contemporary fiction. Her most recent book *Vagabond Fictions: Gender and Experiment in British Women's Literature 1945-1970* examines the evolution of feminism and sexual identity in post-war Britain. Her current research project is on the continuing battleground for women's bodies and sexualities in contemporary literature and culture and will include work on feminist creative criticism.

### **Michael Kindellan (University of Sheffield) – Graphic Wieners**

The lyric poet John Wieners (1934-2002) has, until relatively recently, been largely left out of the story of “the New American Poetry”. Granted, he was included in Donald Allen’s formative 1960 anthology from whence this movement takes its name, but instead of being grouped with the “Black Mountain School”, Allen placed Wieners in the undefined, fifth grouping that featured “younger poets who have developed their own original styles”. Indeed, one of the most remarkable features of Wieners’ poetic is the extent to which he refused ostentatious displays of self-conscious experimentation, opting instead for a far more “romantic”, at times almost confessional mode of expression. In this paper, I mean to address this quality of his work, with especial reference to the first (1958) and second editions (1965) of his inaugural collection, *The Hotel Wentley Poems*. More particularly, I want to explore this unique early publication in terms of its visual—that is to say “graphic” (hence my title!)—presentations, and do this both in terms of the books’ illustrated covers and accompanying artwork, and in terms of the poems’ own reflections on and conceptualisations of artistic practice. The idea throughout is to explore connections between/ questions of (self) representation, mental disorder and desire. Ultimately, I hope to say how *Wentley* queers the genre of “portraiture” if one reads its signs in terms of the very traditions it outwardly advances. It’s a queering that, in my reading, brings writing and drawing into quite intimate articulation.

**Michael Kindellan** is a lecturer in modern literature at the University of Sheffield, UK, where he runs the broadside press Constitutional Information. His book *The Late Cantos of Ezra Pound* appeared with Bloomsbury in 2017; he has also written a bunch of other essays on mid-century American modernist poetry. With Alex Rose Cocker, he is editing a collection of essays on John Wieners and with Joshua Hoeynek he is completing the “complete” correspondence of Charles Olson and Robert Creeley. He has published some poems too, in particular *Not love* (Barque 2009) and *Alphabet Poem: For Kids!* (Prototype, 2020).

**Sophie Corser (University College Cork) – ‘Her little deviations’: queer reading and form in the novels of Barbara Trapido**

How can the effects of reading be communicated in written form? In this paper I will discuss how representations of reading affect form in contemporary women’s writing: how (often subtle) modes of formal experimentation can represent the activity of reading and the impact reading can have. Through playful manipulations of narrative and intertextuality, women’s writing represents reading as having the potential to radically unsettle how women perceive themselves and their relationships to the world around them. This work suggests new ways of considering reading practice, emphasising its creative, active, and disruptive properties.

My paper will in part take a creative-critical approach, through a focus on the work of the UK-based South African novelist Barbara Trapido. The depiction of reading in Trapido’s intricately plotted novels *Temples of Delight* (1990) and *Juggling* (1994) suggests an act which offers solace and manages grief – yet also an act of rethinking, unravelling, and queering. Trapido’s innovative work has received little academic attention, and the strange patterning and mirroring of her novels tends now to be muted by the blurbs and cartoonish book jackets of new editions. In this paper I seek to establish Trapido as an experimental women writer, while also querying my own attachment to her texts.

Where does my own intensely involved and personal reading fit? How can I make it matter critically? The relationship between reading, queerness, and grief in Trapido’s work creates ruptures in the form of her novels; in an academic discussion of this, disruption will inevitably come from how closely my own reading of Trapido’s novels relates to my queerness and experience of grief. This paper will thus be an attempt to solve an issue I am repeatedly encountering in my current work: how to allow my reading to have an effect on the form of my critical writing.

**Sophie Corser** is a Government of Ireland Postdoctoral Research Fellow in the School of English at University College Cork, researching representations of women reading in contemporary women’s writing (2021-23). Before joining UCC, she was a Leverhulme Trust Research Fellow at UCD (2019-21) and completed her PhD at Goldsmiths, University of London (2018). Her first book, *The Reader’s Joyce: ‘Ulysses’, Authorship and the Authority of the Reader* will be published by Edinburgh University Press in August 2022. She has published and forthcoming work in *Modernism/modernity*, *The Year’s Work in English Studies*, the *Literary Encyclopedia*, the *James Joyce Broadsheet*, and the edited volume *Narrating the Passions* (Peter Lang, 2017).

## **PANEL 12. PROCEDURE & FORM**

**Victoria Miguel (University of Glasgow) - Palimpsest and Process: John Cage's Mesostic poetry**

“You’re free, but not to do what you want.” – John Cage

John Cage is best known as an experimental composer and for his most notorious composition, 4’33” (1952), four minutes and thirty-three seconds of ‘silence’ or unintentional sound, as well as his collaborations with his partner of fifty years, the choreographer, Merce Cunningham. His ideas about music and composition dramatically changed Western conceptions of music and sound and these ideas were disseminated in experimental essays and lectures and, later, poetry, that blurred the boundaries between music and writing. His first book, *Silence*, is regularly cited as one of the most influential books of the twentieth century and, despite Cage’s election as the prestigious Harvard University Charles Eliot Norton Professor of Poetry in 1988-89, his writing has received very little critical attention.

From the 1970s Cage's writing moved away from the experimental expository writing he had been producing since the 1940s and he turned his attention to 'making noise' with language. He began writing mesostics, which are similar to acrostics except that the vertical line of text runs through the middle rather than the down left margin. As this poetic practice developed, he began to apply strict rules to 'write through' existing texts, as a way of using mesostic poetry to transform those texts in order to: "*explore a way of writing which though coming from ideas is not about them, or is not about ideas but produces them.*"

My conference contribution would introduce Cage's mesostic poetry, emphasising the role and importance of process and rules and contextualising it in terms of his compositional practice and the work of close contemporaries in literature such as Jackson Mac Low. If there is scope to move away from the traditional lecture format, I'd like to teach conference participants how to follow Cage's process and use mesostics to 'write through' existing texts and demonstrate his method of merging and balancing multiple voices and authors in a new poetic text.

**Victoria Miguel** worked for the estate of John Cage between 2001 and 2007 and has served as a specialist in his work for galleries and institutions on both sides of the Atlantic. In 2012, as part of Cage's centenary celebrations, she was commissioned by the estate to develop an online version of his chess-based composition, *Reunion* (1968), which premiered at Summerhall at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe (2013). She is currently undertaking an AHRC-funded PhD examining Cage's creative writing at the University of Glasgow.

### **Anne-Grit Becker (Humboldt Universität Berlin) - "Go to Work on a Poem": Reflections on David Medalla's Writings**

Since their inception in the 1960s David Medalla's sculptural works have stirred the attention of fellow artists, critics and historians alike. His so-called "auto-creative machines", which compress liquid matter into soap bubbles that rise and fall, have been frequently discussed as a paradigm shift towards ephemeral art. What has remained neglected, however, is Medalla as an experimental writer. This paper addresses this lack by investigating Medalla's literary production as a way of thinking through and expanding his artistic approach. Specifically, it is through writing that Medalla transfers his sculptural projects into the realm of imaginative experience – an expansion, which affects the perception of the material world as well. Two texts will be closely read, both published in 1965 in the magazine *Signals Newsbulletin* coedited by Medalla. Focusing first on his "Manifesto", the question of opposites will be discussed as a condition for destabilizing ingrained patterns of expectation. For it is only within a field of maximum tension that Medalla, who openly lived his queer orientation, discovers things that are unknown. In his writings sculptures can turn into shadows that "move among people", that "breathe, [...] laugh, [...] and dance", and that embark on a mission to found "a new life." In a second step, one of Medalla's Found Poems will be discussed as an attempt to involve the reader in a process of becoming 'other'. Not accidentally his poem is combined with a multitude of instructions, entitled with "Go to Work on a Poem". As will be shown these instructions undermine the dichotomy between author and reader, producer and recipient. They provide an experimental set-up for the readers to remake, to rework the poem, thereby enabling them to experience how objects and subjects can turn unexpectedly into others.

**Anne-Grit Becker** earned her doctorate in art history from Freie Universität Berlin in 2018. Her book, *Cy Twombly und Robert Rauschenberg. Bilder im Prozess*, has been published by Edition Metzler in 2020 and was sponsored by the Gerda Henkel Foundation. She was Research Associate at the FU Berlin, Lecturer for modern and contemporary art history and theory at the University of Graz until 2022, and is currently teaching at the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. In her post-doc project she

focuses on artists' writings since the 1960s as expansions of aesthetic production across different media and identities.

### **Miriam Ould Aroussi (Université de Paris Cité) - Against "absolute regularities": David Antin's Poetics and the Subversion of Writing**

Poet and performer David Antin (1932-2016) is most well-known for the practice of his "talk poems," whose principle he described as "a man standing on his feet, talking." These simple performances indeed consisted in David Antin, tape recorder on, improvising a reflection on a theme selected for the occasion in front of an audience, trying not to lose track of his reasoning at the same time as maintaining a connection with the audience. When Antin deemed the reflection in a talk piece worth extending, he transcribed it, and eventually published it in journals or in one of his collections of poems.

The procedure has sometimes been dismissed as a sham dialogue—since Antin does not engage in an actual discussion with the audience, but rather talks uninterrupted—but also, more generally, as sham poetry—for there is no apparent literary, formal work on language in Antin's speech, and therefore apparently nothing for it to qualify as poetry. Those two characteristics, however, lie at the centre of the revolution his poetics represent: by promoting everyday speech, and having book collections depend on initial performances, he aims at *reversing the traditional hierarchy* he identifies between writing and talking. His vision stands in explicit opposition to the traditional, formalist canon established by the New Criticism of the 1950s, which considered poems as autonomous, close-ended objects to be analyzed as such in academic environments, and whose vision of literature largely dominated poetry studies in the US after WWII. Yet, I argue that David Antin's practice is also distinct from, more radical than the alternative, nonacademic new generation of poets made famous by Donald Allen's reference anthology *The New American Poetry 1945-1960*—poets like Allen Ginsberg or Charles Olson, who contributed to promoting orality and spontaneity in poetry, doing away with the structuralism and stricter formalism of New Critics.

My paper aims at contextualizing David Antin's poetics in order to lay emphasis on one major disruption it introduced in poetry: to emancipate it from the codes of the written. In Antin's new paradigm, the written form is reevaluated away from its aura as a "cleaned-up," unerring version of speech. It becomes, in Antin's words, "a provisional housing" for thought—one that is both complementary to talking and open to new possibilities enabled by its very imperfectness.

**Miriam Ould Aroussi** is a former student of the École normale supérieure de Lyon, and a former teaching assistant at King's University, London. She is currently a PhD candidate at Université de Paris Cité; her research, supervised by Pr Abigail Lang, is devoted to David Antin's poetics. Her research interests include the relation between the oral and the written, the aesthetics of the everyday, and the theories of narrative.

### **Paisley Conrad (Concordia University) – "What an associative way to live this is": Materials of Distraction in Bernadette Mayer's *Midwinter Day***

Bernadette Mayer's early work emphasized procedural and documentarian attention to the details of her everyday life. Her first conceptual work, *Memory* (1972), resulted from a month of obsessive photographic documentation. Mayer's attention to minute detail in *Memory* demonstrates her early commitment to constraint-based conceptual writing and small, everyday details. Throughout her career, Mayer maintains this concern with sustained attention and distraction in the wake of an increasingly stimulating world. Mayer's experimental long poem, *Midwinter Day* (1982), conveys a particular poetics of everyday life that articulates the constraints and openings in poetic attention. Mayer's open poetics takes the raw 'material' of Dec. 22, 1978—the literal happenings of the day—and leans into the uncertainty and vastness of an associative poetics. While the conceit of the poem is experimental and conceptual, the project remains invested in a realistic depiction of Mayer's daily

responsibilities and the attenuations and associations of a mind engaged elsewhere. Her poem, which includes ‘everything’ from the day, is itself an illusion; Mayer’s repetition, her oscillation between daily routine, memory, and intellectual association, demonstrates the openness of an experimental poetics that uses the raw materials of daily life as a catalyst for creation. In this way, Mayer’s work produces a particular relationship to attention—her formal activity generates a sense of vitality and materiality within the constraints of the everyday. As language “nearly is our psychological condition,” Mayer’s play with language, thoughts-in-motion, and attention, constitutes a particular reality within the poem that roughly corresponds to her experience of life and creation. Mayer’s *Midwinter Day* is an exercise in the experience of attention and distraction and the creation of patterns out of repetition; her inclusion of quotidian tasks and various related impressions construct a poetic experience of attention and distraction. Building on Andrew Epstein’s work on dailiness and attention in *Midwinter Day* and Lucy Alford’s claim that attention “is a bidirectional lens,” I contend that the poem is an exploration of the limits and duration of quotidian attention.

**Paisley Conrad** is a doctoral candidate in the Department of English at Concordia University. Her work analyzes the structural and material qualities of late twentieth and early twenty-first century North American poetics about the polymeric structure of plastic products and waste. She is a researcher at the Centre for Expanded Poetics at Concordia University and the co-Managing Editor of *Modernism/Modernity*. Her doctoral research is supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

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<sup>i</sup> *The Snow Ball*, p. 9.

<sup>ii</sup> ‘Baroque ‘n’ Roll’, p. 149.

<sup>iii</sup> *The Snow Ball*, p. 16.

<sup>iv</sup> Israel Shenker, ‘Brigid Brophy Puns in Response to Questionnaire’, *New York Times*, 27 February 1970, p. 28