

Contemporary Women's Writing Association (CWWA)

**Contemporary Women Writing Race: Textual Interventions
and Intersections Symposium**

**Friday 10th September 2021, online (Zoom)
9.15am – 17.30pm**



9.15am Welcome from CWWA Chair, Dr Kerry Myler, and Conference Housekeeping

9.30am **Panel 1: Bernardine Evaristo's Textual Politics**
Panel chair: Dr Helen Cousins (*Newman University*)

- Arwa F. Al-Mubaddel (*Cardiff University*), 'Intergenerational Family Identity, (Un)belonging, and Diaspora Consciousness in Bernardine Evaristo's *Lara* (1997)'
- Amirtha Devarhan (*IISER Pune*), '(Re)versing: Analysing the acts of re-writing and writing back in Bernardine Evaristo's *Blonde Roots*'
- Ana García-Soriano (*University of Leeds*), 'Diversity and Equality in Bernardine Evaristo's "The White Man's Liberation Front" (2020)''

Arwa F. Al-Mubaddel

Paper title: 'Intergenerational Family Identity, (Un)belonging, and Diaspora Consciousness in Bernardine Evaristo's *Lara* (1997)'

Abstract: Bernardine Evaristo's *Lara* is a semi-autobiographical novel-in-verse, telling the coming-of-age story of Lara, a mixed-race woman of Nigerian and white origin, as she grows up in Woolwich, a white suburb of London, during the 1960s and 1970s. The narrative travels 150 years back in time to tell Lara's ancestry from both sides. It contrasts the struggles of Lara's Irish, German, and enslaved African Yoruba ancestors, over three continents: Europe, Africa, and Brazil, as they search for better lives and create better futures for their children. Their children, however, struggle to fit in post-war London and strive to be accepted, yet still feel a sense of unbelonging as they begin to develop a diaspora consciousness, despite their mixed ancestry and sense of fluid identity. Utilising James Clifford's theorisation of diaspora consciousness, which is constituted negatively through instances of bias and discrimination, and positively through a peoples' shared history and political aims, I explore how Lara navigates her nuanced experience of blackness and sense of (un)belonging through the intersections of her class, gender, and race. I further explore the diasporic dimensions of blackness through Lara and her family's experience with institutional and societal racism.

Bio: Arwa F. Al-Mubaddel is a PhD researcher in Critical and Cultural Theory at Cardiff University. Her research focuses on metamodernism and feminine subjectivity in women's writing. She is the co-chair of The Modern and Contemporary (MoCo) Postgraduate Research Network based at the School of English, Communication, and Philosophy at Cardiff University as well as the incoming Editor-in-Chief for the academic journal *Intersectional Perspectives: Identity, Culture, and Society (IPICS)* (formerly *Assuming Gender*) published by Cardiff University Press.

Amirtha Devarhan

Paper title: ‘(Re)versing: Analysing the acts of re-writing and writing back in Bernardine Evaristo’s *Blonde Roots*’

Abstract: This paper attempts to analyse the two acts of rewriting in Bernardine Evaristo’s *Blonde Roots* (2008). *Blonde Roots* reimagines and reverses the history of the transatlantic slave trade, where the Africans enslave the Europeans. This reversal is not a simple one, but a profound one as it neatly separates race from racism, destabilizing the epistemologies which continues to perpetuate racism. This reversal becomes a trope not only to rewrite or reimagine but also to write back; this highlights the politically (and ethically) charged nature of this reversal. Evaristo alludes to a wide variety of literary texts, cultural artefacts, writings structured around the issue of slavery and racism. Her (re)vision of these text forces the reader to re-read the original text, as it uncovers the racist basis of the text. This paper focuses on two specific literary allusions: 1) *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852) by Harriet Beecher Stowe: where the racist basis of Eva’s friendship with her Black friend is questioned 2) *Heart of Darkness* (1899) by Joseph Conrad: where Evaristo reverses the ‘gaze’ to challenge any claim to inferiority/superiority while also questioning the ‘white-man-gone-native trope’. This paper puts forth the argument that Evaristo’s (re)vision of the classic questions the whiteness of the literary canon, and her act of re-writing these texts amounts to re-writing the canon. Further, this paper shall briefly draw upon intertextuality in *Blonde Roots*, throwing light on the kind of resources that Evaristo used to construct a neo-slave narrative; however, the focus shall remain on aforementioned literary texts.

Bio: PhD Scholar, Department Of Humanities and Social Sciences, IISER Pune

Ana García-Soriano

Paper title: ‘Diversity and Equality in Bernardine Evaristo’s “The White Man’s Liberation Front” (2020)’

Abstract: As Adrian Hunter argues, “the short story is somehow ‘up to speed’ with the realities of modern life”, in other words, the genre enables authors to offer a prompt writerly response to social changes. This paper seeks to offer a re-engagement with the interrelation of gender, genre, and race by exploring how these matters are discussed in various ways in “The White Man’s Liberation Front” (2020), a short story by the internationally acclaimed writer Bernardine Evaristo. Evaristo is a literary activist and prolific author who has taken a central position in the British literary canon as the winner of the 2019 Booker Prize. Firstly, my examination exposes the existing critical lacuna in the study of contemporary women’s short story writing, as the scholarly attention paid to women’s short stories omits consideration of short stories written by black British women. I will highlight the cultural significance of contemporary short stories by black British women to distil the complexity contemporary moment and to explore the socio-political landscape. Secondly, I complement my conceptualizations with the analysis of “The White Man’s Liberation Front”. The story addresses the lack of representation of black and Asian women in academia. Evaristo inverts reality and imagines an academic field where white heterosexual male scholars are marginalised. The short story satirises white male supremacy in academia through a narrator who firmly rejects his outsider position in his university department. My analysis of “The White Man’s Liberation Front” focuses on how this story engages with current conversations about the lack of diversity and equality in a university context in the aftermath of the Black Lives Matter movement.

Bio: Ana García-Soriano is a first year PhD student at the University of Leeds.

10.30am Break

10.45am Panel 2: Race, Gender and Genre

Panel chair: Dr Claire O’Callaghan (Loughborough University)

- Joydeep Bhattacharyya (*University of Delhi*), ‘The Police and the Private Eye: The Making of Gendered and Racial Peripheralization in the Crime Fictions of Valerie Wilson Wesley’
- Nahla Raffaoui (*Manchester Metropolitan University*), ‘Writing the Personal at the Intersections of Race and Gender in Morgan Jerkins’ *This Will Be My Undoing*’
- Saba Zaidi (*Sardar Bahadur Khan Women’s University, Quetta, Balochistan, Pakistan*), ‘An Intertextual Analysis of *The River of Fire, Swing Time, On Beauty* and *White Teeth*’

Joydeep Bhattacharyya

Paper Title: ‘The Police and the Private Eye: The Making of Gendered and Racial Peripheralization in the Crime Fictions of Valerie Wilson Wesley’

Abstract: Mainstream literature has been fairly vocal about gender disparity and racial subjugation in African American literature. Yet, in the emerging global crisis of racial predicament and gendered stigmatization, it is imperative to question and restructure the maxims of the governing dictums. Seminal literary works of empirical importance by principal black feminists like Angela Davis, Alice Walker, bell hooks, Toni Morrison and Audrey Lorde have effectively explored the gendered and racial construction, with the recent point of inquiry gradually shifting towards motherhood as occupation, with special focus on colored mother in Andrea O’Reilly’s works. Thus said, this chapter proposes to validate the confluence of gendered and racial politics in the African American writer, Valerie Wilson Wesley’s crime fiction featuring Tamara Hayle. Wilson penned down eight novels featuring Tamara Hayle as a PI. Though Tamara used to work as a cop with the Belvinton Heights police department, she leaves her job and is self-employed. A single mother, living with a teenaged son, Jamal, Tamara runs her investigation agency in Newark. An initial survey reveals that the crime fictions featuring Tamara Hayle are grossly neglected and underrepresented, and there is a lamentable absence of serious academic discourse. Most of the available secondary resources featuring Tamara Hayle are in genealogical surveys like *Contemporary American Crime Fiction*, by Hand Bertens and Theo D’haen; *100 Most Popular African American Authors* by Bernard A. Drew; *Writing African American Women: An Encyclopedia of Literature by and About Women of Color, Volume 2*, edited by Elizabeth Ann Beaulieu; Carl Rollyson’s *Critical Survey of Mystery and Detective Fiction*, Elizabeth Blakesay Lindsay’s *Great Women Mystery Writers*. Most importantly, “*Polar noir*”: *Reading African-American Detective Fiction*, edited by Alice Mills and Claude Julien has an interview with Valerie Wilson Wesley by John Gruesser, and two essays; Nicole Decure’s “How Are You Doing with Your Pain? Violence in Black Women’s Crime Fiction”, and John C. Gruesser’s “Valerie Wesley’s Tamara Hayle and Newark’s Past, Present, and Future”. In addition to the sources listed here, Stephen F. Soitos’ *The Blues Detective: A Study of African American Detective Fiction* has a passing reference of Tamara Hayle. Thus said, the proposed presentation intends to have three sections. The first part titled, “A Black Female Cop in the White Belvinton Heights” focuses on Hayle’s racial and gendered discrimination in the public space of the State-backed police department. The second part, “Tamara Hayle and a Sphere of Private Investigation” shall deal with her lived

experience as a vulnerable single mother and private investigator within the racial and gendered “other”. The final section, “Tamara Hayle: A Denigrated ‘other’”, shall be devoted towards an amalgamative study of both the public and the private spaces and deconstruct the power relations governing the colored, marginalized, and the single working mothers in these spheres, leading to a state of double marginalization.

Bio: Joydeep Bhattacharyya gained his Bachelor of Arts in English Literature from Sri Aurobindo College, affiliated to the University of Delhi, India; and Master of Arts in English Literature from Jamia Millia Islamia (University), New Delhi, India. He holds an M.Phil. degree (Masters in Philosophy) in Comparative Indian Literature from the Department of Modern Indian Languages and Literary Studies, University of Delhi, India. His area of specialization is Detective fiction, with a special focus on British and Bengali detective fiction. Apart from his area of specialization, his field of interest include postcolonial studies, popular culture, and translation studies. He has presented research papers at national and international conferences held at different universities and venues across India. He has also contributed chapters in academic books in India and is currently working on another international research paper. He is currently teaching at the Non-Collegiate Women’s Education Board Centre at Sri Guru Gobind Singh College of Commerce, University of Delhi.

Nahla Raffaoui

Paper Title: ‘Writing the Personal at the Intersections of Race and Gender in Morgan Jerkins’ *This Will Be My Undoing*’

Abstract: Within the need to publish and publicly engage with the race and gender dialogue in contemporary America, Black feminist writers create from their works a platform to write about their personal experiences with the intersection of race and gender. Among such writers, is the young Black feminist writer and essayist Morgan Jerkins. In 2018 Jerkins published a collection of autobiographical essays entitled *This Will Be My Undoing: Living at The Intersection of Black, Female, and Feminist in (White) America*. In these personal essays, Jerkins shares with her readers the complexity of being a Black woman in a white androcentric America by taking the role of a narrator and the Black woman subjected to racial and gender inequalities. I argue that Jerkins’ choice to adopt the autobiographical form of writing in this work is a continuation of a long-established tradition among Black women writers. Historically, Black women used autobiographies to document their experiences with slavery, which allowed for their texts to serve as historical accounts that gave later generations access to the voices of these marginalized women. At the same time, I maintain that the merger between the autobiographical writing presented in a form of a collection of essays, mark Jerkins’ attempt to both continue a tradition and to experiment on a new form of writing about the Black women’s struggle with racial and gender issues. Therefore, to discuss Jerkins’ representations of her personal experiences with the double bind of race and gender, this presentation will refer to the scholarship on the popular term intersectionality by Kimberlé Crenshaw, bell hooks, Patricia Hill Collins, and other Black feminist scholars. Finally, to illustrate both the connection and the importance of autobiography for Black women, the discussion will return to the works of Sidonie Smith and Johnnie M. Stover on this matter.

Bio: Nahla Raffaoui is a fourth-year PhD researcher at Manchester Metropolitan University.

Saba Zaidi

Paper Title: ‘An Intertextual Analysis of *The River of Fire*, *Swing Time*, *On Beauty* and *White Teeth*’

Abstract: This research has a multidimensional perspective based upon the novels *The River of Fire* (1998) by Quratul ain Hyder, *Swing Time* (2016), *On Beauty* (2005) and *White Teeth* (2000) by Zadie Smith. It is an intertextual analysis based on religion, history, cultural plurality, post-colonialism, and post-diasporic issues related to Blackness (race). The combined analysis of these texts will focus upon racial politics, political activism based on religion, class and gender through the above-mentioned intertextual aspects. The applied theory and method of analysis is Fairclough’s (1992) Intertextual model from the domain of Critical Discourse Analysis. The above-mentioned novels by Smith are simultaneously, post-colonial and contemporary British literature, similarly, *The River of Fire* is also a post-colonial historiographic metafiction and a contemporary South Asian novel. These novels are epitomes of current British and South Asian literary paradigms while they are penned by the women writers of not only two different countries but also continents. Yet, they are representatives of intertextuality and cultural plurality. The findings of the research will justify the title and analysis through theoretical and methodological Intertextual exploration, that will be based on a comparative analysis of the selected works by both the mentioned women writers.

Bio: Saba Zaidi an assistant professor in the Department of English at Sardar Bahadur Khan Women’s University, Quetta, Balochistan (Pakistan) while also working as Dean, Faculty of Humanities. She gained her PhD (in English Literature) from National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad whereas, her research fellowship is from the University of North Texas, Denton USA. She is a pioneer of 21st century literature in Pakistan as she has introduced Post-cyberpunk literature in Pakistan through her PhD research. She is also among the few around the globe who have introduced Digital Humanities as her PhD research has linked Artificial Intelligence with English Literature through Postmodernism and Post-cyberpunk narratives.

11.45am **Lunch and the CWWA AGM (the AGM will begin online at midday)**

12.45pm Parallel Panels 3a and 3b

Panel 3a: Resisting Oppression(s)

Panel chair: Dr Shareena Hamzah-Osbourne (*Swansea University*)

- Mridula Sharma, ‘Gender, Religion, Caste: A Study of Women’s Writing as Political protest’
- Dhruvadi Chattopadhyay (*SNDT Women's University, Mumbai, India*), ‘The Other Side of Nostalgia: Dalit Women’s Narratives from the Diaspora’
- Parveen Kumari (*Central University of Jammu, Jammu, Jammu and Kashmir, India*) and Anupama Vohra (*University of Jammu, Jammu, Jammu and Kashmir, India*), ‘Adolescence Memories as a Site of Resistance: A Comparative Study of bell hooks’ *Bone Black* and Urmila Pawar’s *The Weave of My Life*’

Mridula Sharma

Paper Title: ‘Gender, Religion, Caste: A Study of Women’s Writing as Political protest’

Abstract: My paper attempts to examine Kritika Pandey’s “The Great Indian Tee and Snakes” and Meena Kandasamy’s “Rape Nation” to assess women’s confrontation with organised religion and the emergent oppressive theological hypocrisies that become functional in specific political milieus. Pandey’s short story acquaints the readers with the predicaments that inter-faith matrimonial alliances encounter in social conditions shaped by contemporary Indian nationalism. The subtle intersection of right-wing totalitarian politics with Hindu religion offers an insightful investigation into the adulteration of intimacy with politico-religious conflicts. The story also problematises Carol J. Adams’ theorisation of the sexual politics of meat by uncovering the complexities of power dynamics in South Asia, a process that inevitably reveals how knowledge production in the West about vegetarianism in the Hindu community remains controlled by the upper-caste narrative. Kandasamy’s “Rape Nation” similarly indicts existing systems of power. Written in response to the gang-rape of a young Dalit woman in Hathras in 2020, the poem navigates the dominance of Brahmanic patriarchy in contemporary Indian society. Kandasamy articulates the trauma/s of Dalit women in India on account of the dual oppression with which they negotiate in their quotidian lives. Her advocacy of Dalit feminism bears similitude with an indigenous decolonial grassroots women’s movement that imitates Mary Daly’s radical feminist challenge in its confrontation with misogynistic and casteist purveyors of religious morality. By studying the works of Pandey and Kandasamy, I intend to critique current political networks that exploit religious rhetoric to code femininity in paradigms of religious and caste vulnerability.

Bio: Mridula Sharma is currently working on a book-length manuscript. She has published several journal articles and book chapters in the intersection of gender, race, and class. Her research interests include 20th century literature, feminist theory, and Marxian- postcolonial theory. She is the recipient of several scholarships and fellowships in creative writing

Dhrupadi Chattopadhyay

Paper Title: ‘The Other Side of Nostalgia: Dalit Women’s Narratives from the Diaspora’

Abstract: Whether it be in its celebratory or maligned modes, the conceptual framings around the notion of the Diaspora (in particular of the South-Asian) variety has veered towards the understanding of ‘nostalgia’. The Diasporic literature thereafter of the South-Asian kind, to write about their hyphenated identities and real or imagined displacements has sought out a generous portion of nostalgia. This has acted as a veritable connect between the desirable and not-so desirable outcomes of a displaced existence. Imagined as the relational other of unstable diasporic identities, nostalgia emanated, albeit rose-tinted and honey dipped, from a secure social location that both the authors, critics and their literary protagonists inhabited. Most importantly while it has attended to questions of race it has veritably homogenized this experience. Both the literary output and the voluminous critical responses to Diasporic writing from South-Asia read the diasporic identity crises as a ‘exemplary condition of late modernity’ and allow for newer forms of identity making to take shape in these fluid ‘unmarked spaces’. These negotiations have most notably reframed questions around nation-making and gender roles, I argue that its privileged locations have more often than not made the questions of caste invisible. I intend to look at recent Dalit women’s autobiographical writings that emerge from the locations in the West to examine how they use their caste identities to dismantle the centrality of nostalgia as an essentially privileged discourse. Instead, I argue that the past and

its uneasy relationship with the homeland in their (self) identifications is used as a means to challenge a savarna feminist discourse. It is significant that these interventions take place in English, a departure from the first generation of Dalit women's autobiographies in the bhasa literatures, as it draws out newer interfaces of caste-dynamics in caste-invisible spaces. I further argue that these recent autobiographical writings with their roots in the Dalit aesthetic tradition actively work to dismantle the savarna cultures of somaticity that define the epistemological premises of nostalgia.

Bio: Dr. Dhruvadi Chattopadhyay is an Assistant Professor of the Department of English, SNDT Women's University, Mumbai

Parveen Kumari and Anupama Vohra

Paper Title: 'Adolescence Memories as a Site of Resistance: A Comparative Study of bell hooks' *Bone Black* and Urmila Pawar's *The Weave of My Life*'

Abstract: Daniel L. Schacter defines 'memories' as 'records of how we have experienced events, not the replicas of events themselves'. Hence, the feelings associated with the experience have an undeniable role in making of the memory. Marginalized women's memories carry out a central function in their writings of their life experiences. Marginalized women's lives have historically been oppressed, hence, acts of remembrance in their case 'constitute the site of resistance within the dominant narrative'. Therefore, the very act of remembering and narration of one's memory becomes political. The experiences of adolescence are the imperative location in the construction of identity for women. The abuse, violence and repression experienced in this period of life become a painful memory. Hence, the fact of being a girl becomes 'political' as the conduct and rights of a girl is policed because of her gender. Hence, black girl's experiences and Dalit (marginalized people belonging to the lowest caste in India) girl's experience becomes doubly marginalized experience because of race and caste respectively. Taking this as background this paper attempts a comparative study of bell hooks' life narrative *Bone Black* (1996) and Urmila Pawar's life narrative *The Weave of My Life* (2008) to underscore how gender and race/caste have an effect on the adolescence. Both the life narratives take us to the mind of a 'girl' and unflinchingly show the world and her pain through the narrator's perspective.

Bios: Dr. Parveen Kumari is an Assistant Professor, Department of English, Central University of Jammu, and Prof. Anupama Vohra is a Professor of English, DDE, University of Jammu, Kashmir, India.

Panel 3b: Writing Racial Politics

Panel Chair: Olivia Heal (UEA)

- Sadia Sohail (*MS Scholar English, Quetta*), 'The Representation of Race and Racial Issues faced by the Women in the works of Toni Morrison'
- Pulkita Anand (*Govt PG Shahid Chandrashekar College, Jhabua*), 'Call me Black! Racial Discourse in Audre Lorde's Works'
- Laura Gallon (*University of Sussex*), 'Jhumpa Lahiri's Linguistic Exile: Breaking Away from the Burden of Representation in *Dove Mi Trovo* (2018) and *In Altre Parole* (2015)'

Sadia Sohail

Paper Title: ‘The Representation of Race and Racial Issues faced by the Women in the works of Toni Morrison

Abstract: Racism is a convention of laws of social order and therefore it is studied from a sociological perspective because it not only determines the bond of rights and duties but also liabilities and responsibilities. According to Van Dijk, the system of racism consists of a social and a cognitive subsystem. The social subsystem is constituted by social practices of discrimination at the local (micro) level, and relationships of power abuse by dominant groups, organizations, and institutions at a global (macro) level of analysis. Toni Morrison portrays the futility of Racism in black society at the various layers of experiences. Her novels show that her creative vision not only reflects American social reality but also helps to shape it by highlighting the present multi-racial nature of contemporary society. Her novels encourage American society to think long and deeply about its future so that the attitude of both black and white Americans towards one another and each other may change for the better. Morrison closely studies the black and whites psychology in her work and enables us to get a glimpse into their domestic life, married life, business activities, and the effort to survive against hostile circumstances and to save their children from the cruel clutches of the white establishment. She depicts reality in fiction by showing women struggling to get their identity and equal place in white-dominant society. Women are double marginalized firstly because of their gender and then because of their race (color). Morrison depicts in her novels *The Bluest Eye* (1970), *Sula* (1973), *Beloved* (1987), and *A Mercy* (2008) the identity of women as it was socially constructed. She bravely talks about social issues which a woman faces and about slavery, discrimination, and black feminism. She not only depicts feminism in the texts but highlights the social problems and rejections women faces in her life. How their voices are unheard and if she raises her voice, how she is misunderstood by the community. It is a community that decides for her and judges her for her actions. Women were and still struggling and facing challenges to get their equal value and racial and social freedom in society.

Bio: Sadia Sohail is an MS Scholar of English in Quetta

Pulkita Anand

Paper Title: ‘Call me Black! Racial Discourse in Audre Lorde’s Works’

Abstract: For sustainable and holistic development of a human being, freedom is invariable and inevitable. However, we inadvertently do some degree of oppression to every human being. Race discrimination is the most heinous of these. Snippets of brief verbal and non-verbal derogatory racial assaults are complex and have detrimental effects. This results in hampering human progress and kindle hostility for others. The narrative of Lorde’s work is imbued and contested with these experiences. There has been an enormous impact of Audre Lorde on others too, particularly in the development of Black German women consciousness. She is looked at as a role model leading against racial struggle. She challenges white supremacy through her writings. The paper proposes to register racial discriminations and examine them to bring a change in mindset through textual analysis. The paper attempts to analyse some of Lorde’s works, in particular *Zami*. *Zami* marks a text that explores and reflects on the racial discrimination and racial segregation prevalent in the US during the 60s. Her works are pivotal in defining, redefining and thwarting various kinds of oppressions. Her exemplary works provide intersection and interaction for pressing contemporary issues. Her works, speeches and efforts have enduring effects on budding writers.

Bio: Dr. Pulkita Anand is Assistant Professor of English at Shahid Chandrasekhar Govt. PG College, Jhabua. Her areas of research are Indian Writing in English and British Drama. She has participated in many workshops, symposiums, international conferences, national seminars and has written papers which have been published in reputed journals.

Laura Gallon

Paper Title: ‘Jhumpa Lahiri’s Linguistic Exile: Breaking Away from the Burden of Representation in *Dove Mi Trovo* (2018) and *In Altre Parole* (2015)’

Abstract: Jhumpa Lahiri became world famous for her Pulitzer-prize-winning debut, *Interpreter of Maladies*, in 1999. The bestselling books that followed, namely *The Namesake* (2003), *Unaccustomed Earth* (2009) and *The Lowland* (2013) share, with her debut, the same Bengali-American subject matter and focus on migrant families. Lahiri has written expansively about the pressure and cultural weight placed on her shoulders as the figurehead of ‘Indian American’ literature. In 2015, she took the radical decision to no longer write in English, and to choose Italian instead – a language in which she believes she can be “a tougher, freer writer”. Following the publication of her 2015 language memoir, *In Altre Parole* (‘In Other Words’), she wrote a novel entitled *Dove Mi Trovo*, which she translated as *Whereabouts* in May 2021. I argue that this subversive linguistic choice allows Lahiri to escape the burden of representation while anchoring herself even further into the Western canon. In this presentation, I compare her English-language and Italian-language writing to suggest that what occurs in her most recent publications is not only a linguistic ‘deracination’ but also a form of ‘deracialisation’. Leaving behind detailed descriptions of Bengali life, Lahiri’s Italian texts are more impressionistic and meditative. They contain nameless and wandering characters and take place in unidentified locations. And yet, the themes of identity and otherness continue to dominate her writing, while her grammatically perfect Italian is, as scholars have observed, somewhat peculiar to a native ear. As such, Lahiri’s Italian stories also reveal the pain of being unable to indulge in a sense of belonging fully to a culture and of being devoid of secure roots.

Bio: Laura Gallon was recently awarded her PhD at the University of Sussex. Her research explores contemporary short fiction by immigrant women in North America since the 1980s and argues for more inclusivity in short story theory. In 2018, she undertook a three-month-long research placement at the British Library to assess their holdings of North American migrant narratives.

13.45pm Break

14.00pm Parallel Panels 4a and 4b

Panel 4a: Intersectionality and Dualities

Panel Chair: TBC

- Upasana Banerjee (*Jadavpur University, Kolkata, India*), ‘Indiqueer identity and the narratives of unacceptance: A journey through Joshua Whitehead’s *Jonny Appleseed*’

- Xin Zhao (*University of York*), ‘Doubly degraded: Intersectionality and the Other Side in *The Passion of New Eve*’
- Marni Appleton (*University of East Anglia*), ‘Postfeminism and “minor” feelings: Affective resistance in short stories about Anglo-American Chinese girlhood by Jenny Zhang and May-Lan Tan’

Upasana Banerjee

Paper Title: ‘Indiqueer identity and the narratives of unacceptance: A journey through Joshua Whitehead’s *Jonny Appleseed*’

Abstract: This paper tries to understand how Indiqueer advocacy can never be a part of mainstream Queer activism through Joshua Whitehead’s *Jonny Appleseed*. The protagonist of the novel explains his dual identity as playing straight in order to be Native Indian and White in order to be Queer, which implicates how Indiqueer communities are facing larger identity crisis due to the intersectionality between racism and cultural oppression. This paper will seek to examine how the Indiqueer communities are forced to choose between their Indigenous identity and Queer identity because of the colonial oppression with “Two-spirit” theory. The conclusion of the paper would try to understand how Indiqueer activism can be elaborated with the context of colonialism in order to amalgamate Queer activism with Indigenous activism to fight against white oppression.

Bio: Upasana Banerjee is a postgraduate student in Comparative Literature at Jadavpur University. Her main research interests are in Ecofeminism, South Asian Cultural Studies and North American Indigenous Queer Studies.

Xin Zhao

Paper Title: ‘Doubly degraded: Intersectionality and the Other Side in *The Passion of New Eve*’

Abstract: Angela Carter’s *The Passion of New Eve* (1977) has long been regarded as a transgender story that challenges the fixity of femininity with Eve/Evelyn and Tristessa as the ultimate centre. However, the previous studies tend to overlook the profound racial implications the novel has. Having lived in Japan for two years, Carter was aware of the slippery relationship between “gaze” and “being gazed”. The subaltern lives, talks, gazes back at her with surprise in this foreign land where she is perceived as “absolutely the mysterious other”. Such destabilising experience would in a way reshape Carter’s understanding of identity. It is no longer solely defined by gender, but also by her race and other categories. This paper believes that this experience has led her to a more complicated terrain of intersectionality where categories intertwine and entangle. In light of this, a closer investigation of the much-neglected sub-plot of the novel reveals the other side of the story. Before Eve/Evelyn’s transgender experience, his statement that Leilah “has been doubly degraded, through her race and through her sex” seems problematic from an intersectional perspective. Drawing attention to other marginalised female characters and the anti-racism movement in the novel, this paper is particularly interested in the ways in which Carter is not just a feminist but a very proto-intersectional one that aims at decentring Eurocentric feminism.

Bio: Xin Zhao is a PhD candidate who will be starting in October 2021 in the Department of English and Related Literature at the University of York, funded by the White Rose College of Arts and Humanities. Her research “Re-reading Exoticism: Race, Gender, and Intersectionality

in Angela Carter” examines Angela Carter’s construction of literary exoticism from an intersectional perspective.

Marni Appleton

Paper Title: ‘Postfeminism and “minor” feelings: Affective resistance in short stories about Anglo-American Chinese girlhood by Jenny Zhang and May-Lan Tan’

Abstract: This paper explores the intersection between the affective life of neoliberal postfeminism and what Cathy Park Hong terms “minor feelings”. For Hong, minor feelings emerge in response to enforced optimism, which contradicts the reality of racialised experience. I read two short stories, “The Empty the Empty the Empty” by Jenny Zhang and “Would Like to Meet” by May-Lan Tan, to identify the ways in which the stories resist the optimistic and celebratory archetypal narratives of both immigrant self-determination and coming-of-age in postfeminist girl culture. Lucy, the protagonist of “The Empty the Empty the Empty”, is a Chinese American schoolgirl who lives in New York City. Vivien, of “Would Like to Meet” is an art school graduate of Chinese heritage who lives and works in London. Both stories are set in Western metropolises, which situates them within the socio-political landscape of late capitalism. Lucy and Vivien are therefore tied to certain good-life fantasies associated with choice, opportunity and personal agency, in a neoliberal context in which the continued existence of structural racial and gender inequality, and the power relations that produce it, are glossed over. All girls and women, including girls and women of colour, are seen as capable architects of their own lives. This paper first outlines the socio-political context in which I read these stories, then offers some thoughts on the ways in which the static, non-cathartic feelings in these stories can be read as acts of affective resistance against the “feeling rules” imposed on the protagonists of these stories, as Anglo-American Chinese girls embroiled in neoliberal culture. I hope to open a productive space for thinking about the intersections between race, feeling and gender by arguing that the feelings produced in these stories work to highlight the persistence of structural inequality in the face of neoliberal optimism.

Bio: Marni Appleton is a postgraduate researcher in Creative-Critical Writing at the University of East Anglia. Her PhD project comprises a collection of short stories exploring contemporary girlhood and a critical component that explores (post)feminist feeling in contemporary short stories about young women and girls. Marni completed an MA in Creative Writing Royal Holloway in 2015. Her short stories have been published in journals such as *Banshee* and *The Tangerine*, among others.

Panel 4b: Women Writing Race and Forms of Violence

Panel Chair: Dr Shareena Hamzah-Osbourne (*Swansea University*)

- Hannah Spruce (*University of Leicester*), ‘Bearing Creative Witness to Anti-Indigenous Racism in Katherena Vermette’s *The Break*’
- Kateryna Pilyarchuk, “‘I couldn’t believe that our mother would laugh and eat oranges in the sunshine without her children” – Narrating childhood trauma and coming to terms with her (Maya Angelou’s) own identity’
- Kanishka Sikri (*York University, Canada*), ‘The Place of Writing in Feminist Struggle’

Hannah Spruce

Paper Title: ‘Bearing Creative Witness to Anti-Indigenous Racism in Katherena Vermette’s *The Break*’

Abstract: The 21st century has seen Indigenous communities in Canada take part in acts of vital testimonial work that bear witness to settler state violence from Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings, to report work by the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and vital memoirs exploring the abuse of the residential school and out-of-home care systems. Métis author Katherena Vermette contributes to this period of Indigenous witnessing with her 2016 novel about lateral violence, policing, and the ongoing damage of settler colonial violence and Indigenous women’s myriad responses. *The Break* follows four Métis and Anishinaabe families following the horrific sexual assault of a thirteen-year-old Métis girl by a sixteen-year-old homeless Métis girl. The novel is focalised through ten interconnected but very different Indigenous characters including a Métis officer, offender, victim, and witness. Collectively, the chapters build a mosaic of voices that expose the ongoing damage of settler-colonialization and Canadian policies that create the conditions for violence in (and towards) Indigenous communities. Informed by Indigenous approaches to literary criticism I ask, how does Vermette harness the novel form to hold the nuances, complexities, and contradictions of Indigenous Peoples relations with contemporary settler policing and how does Vermette unsettle racist images of Indigenous Peoples as criminal/deviant? The paper demonstrates how Vermette reconfigures the Eurocentric procedural form by focalising through a Métis officer and examines her humanising depiction of a young Métis offender to argue that Indigenous ‘criminality’ is one coping mechanism – albeit harmful to all involved – to an existence in which protective factors are structurally denied by the settler nation-state.

Bio: Hannah Spruce is a Midlands4Cities PhD student at the University of Leicester. Her dissertation uses women’s writing to unsettle the individualistic focus of psychopath narratives and expose the contemporary weaponization of deviance narratives against minoritized peoples. She is interested in 21st century women’s writing in Canada and the United States.

Katheryna Pilyarchuk

Paper Title: “‘I couldn’t believe that our mother would laugh and eat oranges in the sunshine without her children” – Narrating childhood trauma and coming to terms with her (Maya Angelou’s) own identity’

Abstract: Maya Angelou’s life was full of traumatic experiences on both the personal level and the level of the collective effort of her race. As a black female writer, she records her own suffering embedding it into the general history of her people’s suffering from inferiority and insecurity. Balancing between telling the story of parental abandonment, childhood rape, poverty, and lack of self-esteem and confidence, Maya Angelou forgives her Mother Dear, reclaims her body after abuse, and overcomes racial bias. Being a woman and belonging to a racial minority group are the two aspects that have a profound impact on Angelou’s life. It is hardly possible to separate the two subordinate identities and decide whether it is gender or race that comes into play at a particular moment (cf. Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach, 2008). The research data are selected passages from the autobiographic novel *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1969). The aim of the paper is to show how Angelou’s autobiography reflects her traumatic experiences and where it posits her in the relation to these experiences and people involved. This paper is also a humble endeavor to demonstrate that for analysis of a literary text, a rather traditional method of linguistic analysis – literary stylistics – marries well with

critical discursive psychology (Potter and Wetherell 1987; Wetherell 1988; 1998), which is typically used to treat data obtained from real conversations. These two methods are framed by trauma theory and intersectionality theory, a psychological and social approach respectively.

Bio: Kateryna is an adjunct lecturer and PhD student in linguistics at the University of Klagenfurt, Austria. Her areas of interest are gendered discourses, fashion discourse, political discourse, cognitive linguistics, critical studies, critical discursive psychology.

Kanishka Sikri

Paper Title: ‘The Place of Writing in Feminist Struggle’

Abstract: “This precious powerful sense of writing as a healing place where our souls can speak and unfold has been crucial to women’s development of a counter-hegemonic experience of creativity within patriarchal culture” — bell hooks

The writing of a feminist, literary or non-literary, is always political. Even with a dedication to being apolitical, that very decision has laced within it multiple lines and blocks of power. I engage with bell hooks, particularly her work in *Remembered Rapture: The Writer at Work* and her unending commitment to not only speak truth to power, but grapple with the multiple truths, the multiple powers and realities and oppressions that surround us all and use this naming and articulating of it as a means of radical imagination and liberation. And I grapple with Andrea Dworkin, particularly *Heartbreak: The Political Memoir of a Feminist Militant* to journey the ways structures of domination were made real in Dworkin’s life, and what it meant to put these stories down on page, speak them, to have others hear and judge. To bare oneself, the writing of pain, grief, sorrow, vision, desire, hopes as means through which we may be able to challenge and abrogate structures of violence. I entangle both bell hooks and Andrea Dworkin to consider the place of writing in feminist and anti-racist struggle, and the putting name to power via life writing and fragments of stories and testimony, in its intersectional and multiple means, as an anchor to disrupt and excavate the ‘dominator culture’ in which this struggle takes place.

Bio: Kanishka Sikri is a feminist writer, consultant, and theorist unravelling the multiple faces and forms of racialized, gendered, climate, and epistemic violence. You can visit her digital home at kanishkasikri.com

15.00pm **Break**

15.15pm Parallel Panels 5a and 5b

Panel 5a: Embodied Racial Narratives

Panel Chair: Olivia Heal (UEA)

- Jade Hinchliffe (*University of Hull*), ‘Racialised Surveillance of Latin Americans in Sabrina Vourvoulias’ *Ink* (2012)’

- Zsuzsanna Lénárt-Muszka (*University of Debrecen, Hungary*), ‘The Gendered, Racialized, and Embodied Aspects of Reproductive Technologies in Danielle Evans’s “Harvest”’
- Sylvanna Baugh (*University of Toronto*), ‘Talking Bodies: Postcolonial Depictions of Race and Gender in Zimbabwe’

Jade Hinchliffe

Paper Title: ‘Racialised Surveillance of Latin Americans in Sabrina Vourvoulias’ *Ink* (2012)’

Abstract: Since 9/11, many countries have employed ban-optic surveillance practices where individuals and groups perceived to be dangerous are subjected to increased levels of surveillance and limitations on their freedom of movement. Furthermore, biometrics and racial profiling have played a significant role in border security since 9/11. In Sabrina Vourvoulias’ dystopian novel *Ink* (2012), individuals residing in the USA who were not born in America or whose mother and/or father were not born in America are forced to have a biometric tattoo on their wrist that resembles a barcode and have GPS chips in their necks tracking their movements. These characters, labelled “inks,” have their freedom of movement increasingly limited throughout the novel and are subjected to segregation laws as well as imprisonment and sterilisation. Those who were born in America but whose mother and/or father were not born in America have a blue tattoo, permanent residents have a green tattoo, and temporary workers have a black tattoo. Many of the “inks” are Latinx, like the author who was born in Guatemala during the internment crisis. This paper will analyse the racialised surveillance methods in the novel and evaluate how Vourvoulias raises awareness of the discrimination of Latinxs and migrants in the USA through her speculative fiction and journalism. I will draw attention to the emerging field of Latinofuturism and discuss Vourvoulias’ role in this area. Finally, I will put forward my argument that contemporary dystopian authors—especially women writers—create hope in their fiction by having multiple, diverse protagonists, who form a resistance network.

Bio: Jade Hinchliffe is a Sociology PhD researcher at The University of Hull funded by the North of England Consortium for Arts and Humanities. She has a First-Class BA Hons in English Literature and an MRes in English Literature. Her doctoral thesis examines discriminatory surveillance practices in twenty-first century dystopian fiction from the global north and global south. You can find out more about Jade’s research by visiting her website: <https://jhinchliffe048.wixsite.com/jadehinchliffe-1>

Zsuzsanna Lénárt-Muszka

Paper Title: ‘The Gendered, Racialized, and Embodied Aspects of Reproductive Technologies in Danielle Evans’s “Harvest”’

Abstract: The short story “Harvest” (2010) by African American writer Danielle Evans is set in an ostensibly post-racial society: an environment in which one’s (perceived) racial background is thought to be immaterial in terms of social equality. However, the story exposes the systemic racism inherent in science and medicine by commenting on the white supremacist climate its female characters of various racial and socio-economic backgrounds have to navigate. The first-person narrator, Angel, an African American college student, lives in a dorm sometime after the new millennium, where a number of her white dorm-mates make money by selling their eggs. However, Black and Chicana students believe that the agency would not even consider soliciting their eggs. Even though these women are highly intelligent and

healthy, they are faced with the reality that their genetic material is considered undesirable while their white peers (who often come from modest means) enjoy the financial perks of being a donor. After situating the characters' anxieties around egg donation in the historical context of reproductive rights, economics, and the politicization of non-white women's bodies, the presentation will discuss how the intersections of age, gender, race, and class impact the embodiment of Angel and her friends. Within the theoretical frameworks of Black and Chicana feminisms, Afropessimism, and intersectionality, I will explore the extent to which history makes its mark on the experiences of young Black, Chicana, and white women in the 21st century, and I will argue that the current practices of egg donation depicted in the story are imbricated in the wider system of racial capitalism that values women's childbearing capacities differentially in terms of their race.

Bio: Zsuzsanna Lénárt-Muszka (lenartmzs@gmail.com) is an instructor at the North American Department of the Institute of English and American Studies, University of Debrecen, Hungary. She is set to defend her PhD dissertation in 2021; her research focuses on the representations of motherhood and maternal bodies in contemporary African American literature and visual culture.

Sylvanna Baugh

Paper Title: 'Talking Bodies: Postcolonial Depictions of Race and Gender in Zimbabwe'

Abstract: In my paper I explore depictions of sexism and racism in two postcolonial Zimbabwean novels. *Under the Tongue*, by Yvonne Vera, tells the story of Zhizha, who is unable to speak after being assaulted by her father. In *This Mournable Body*, by Tsitsi Dangarembga, the unlikeable yet inventive protagonist, Tambudzai, struggles to find success in white dominated businesses in 1990s Zimbabwe. Both authors use grotesque depictions of their protagonists' bodies to demonstrate the effects of violence upon their psyches. Zhizha feels her pain as bodily undoing, describing her silence as a "tongue which no longer lives" (Vera 121). During moments of anxiety, Tambudzai imagines "the snakes that hold [her] womb inside...open[ing] their jaws," her "abdomen slid[ing] toward the ground" (Dangarembga 13). Vera and Dangarembga use the body to express interiority and subjectivity, in a move that reclaims embodiment from histories of racism and sexism. Through the work of theorists like Susan Bordo, Kaila A. Story, and Judith Butler, I look at how anti-Black and misogynistic discourse both attempt to reduce women and Black people to the merely bodily. As Ritu Tyagi notes, it is the over-embodiment of Black and racialized subjects in colonial discourse which caused early postcolonial authors to write women who "do not have bodies," and who represent idealized types (Tyagi 46). When one loses the body, however, one loses an entire dimension of political and quotidian reality. Straddling the line between what Dionne Brand calls "bodies without being:" the condition of the colonized or enslaved (Brand 25); and beings without bodies: the condition of women in early postcolonial literature, these authors use the bodily to poignantly capture the subjectivity of their postcolonial protagonists. In recuperating embodiment as an expression of selfhood, Vera and Dangarembga veer into dangerous and vital territory.

Bio: Sylvanna is entering the second year of her PhD in English literature at the University of Toronto. She is particularly interested in experimental African literature, and the intersections of sex, race, and class in modernist fiction. She's a long-time literature fan from the west coast of Canada.

Panel 5b: Race, History and Contemporary Women's Writing

Panel Chair: TBA

- Jennifer O'Reilly (*Syracuse University*), 'Conjuring Ethnography: Reading Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* and Ntozake Shange's *Sassafrass, Cypress & Indigo* as Ethnographic Fiction'
- Seohyun Kim (*Michigan State University*), 'Life of Ungendered Flesh: Hortense Spillers and Sojourner Truth'
- Shelby Judge (*University of Glasgow*), 'Decolonising the Classics in contemporary adaptations of Greek myth'

Jennifer O'Reilly

Paper Title: 'Conjuring Ethnography: Reading Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* and Ntozake Shange's *Sassafrass, Cypress & Indigo* as Ethnographic Fiction'

Abstract: This paper explores the function of the novel and in particular the ways in which Black women's writing of the 1970s and 80s transmit "partial truths" about African American culture and folklore. By examining depictions of conjuring rituals, traditions, and folklore embedded within fictional narratives in Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* and Ntozake Shange's *Sassafrass, Cypress & Indigo*, and putting them in dialogue with historical and ethnographic studies of conjure, I will explain how these novels can be categorized as ethnographic fiction. This paper uses examples of African folklore contained within *Song of Solomon* to demonstrate that Morrison's novel not only transmits tales that hold cultural significance in Black diasporic cultures, but also the oral tradition. I will also examine the form of *Sassafrass, Cypress & Indigo*, particularly Shange's inclusion of recipes and instructions for rituals, to suggest that she invites the reader to view the text as a work that extends beyond the boundaries of the novel. I utilise perspectives from Black feminist writing, ethnography, and African American literary and cultural studies to demonstrate that these novels are attempts to record, rediscover, and represent African American traditions and as such, argues that they can be interpreted as works of ethnographic fiction. By categorizing these novels in this way, this paper further claims that these texts work as powerful counter-narratives to historical misrepresentations of conjure and instead celebrate it as a means to reconnect with African and Black Diasporic cultural traditions.

Bio: Jennifer O'Reilly is a Visiting Assistant Teaching Professor in the Department of African American Studies at Syracuse University. Her research explores representations of Africana religions in nineteenth and twentieth century American literature, particularly ethnography and fiction. She teaches a variety of courses on the cultures and literatures of the Black diaspora.

Seohyun Kim

Paper Title: 'Life of Ungendered Flesh: Hortense Spillers and Sojourner Truth'

Abstract: Hortense Spillers argues that the Western sex/gender system makes Black sexuality illegitimate. Spillers' path-breaking essay, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe" (1987), argues that

the transatlantic slave trade and physical violence of slavery institutions calculate Black bodies based on scaled inequalities and this “ungendering” turn Black “body” into “flesh.” The slavery legal system, *Partus Sequitur Ventrem*, treats Black woman’s body as a reproductive machine in a way to increase the slaveowner’s property. Spillers’s claim that “My country needs me, and if I were not here, I would have to be invented” (“Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe” 203) indicates that Black flesh is, rather than marginalized, exploited as a “vestibular” between “culture” and “what a human being was not” (“Interstices” 155). Spillers’s theoretical writings offer Black feminist frameworks which allow us to grapple with the intersections of race, gender, and sexuality. However, her theoretical writings are often situated in the vein of Afropessimism which highlights social death and impossibility because her theory examines the irretrievable harms of slavery and racism. Although my presentation opposes this controversial parallel of Spillers’s work and Afropessimism, it recognizes Spillers’s emphasis on wounded “flesh” as a critical discussion to read the silenced power of Black women. While several scholars theorize possibilities that “flesh” opens (Alexander G. Weheliye and Tiffany Lethabo King), my presentation suggests reading Sojourner Truth alongside Spillers’s writings since it can parse out the complex logic of erasure and hypervisibility of Black women’s sexuality with a historical sense. By elaborating on Spillers’s critique on the Sojourner Truth plate in Judy Chicago’s “Dinner Party,” my presentation discusses why and how Truth’s life allows us to deepen our understanding of Spiller’s theoretical writings.

Bio: Seohyun’s research interests lie in critical mixed-race theory and early twentieth-century African American literature. In her dissertation project, she explores how early twentieth-century Black and mixed-race writers challenge the narrative of racial uplift and complicate the construction of blackness.

Shelby Judge

Paper Title: ‘Decolonising the Classics in contemporary adaptations of Greek myth’

Abstract: Decolonising the Classics has been a source of much debate in the discipline. While some oppose decolonising the curriculum, characterising any attempt to do so as eradicating white men’s contributions to the subject (Ram-Prasad 2019), the movement in favour of decolonising the Classics has been gaining momentum. The humanities more broadly has been working towards decolonising curriculums and redressing the injustices perpetrated against minorities in academia, but Classics’ seemingly inextricable roots in conservatism and colonialism make it somewhat resistant to attempts at decolonisation. Moreover, Classical myths and iconography continue to be co-opted by alt-right groups to propagate racist and sexist ideologies, as explored by Donna Zuckerberg in *Not All Dead White Men: Classics and Misogyny in the Digital Age*. As Susan B. Brill puts it: ‘Of all scholarly disciplines, that of the classics may well be the most resistant to [...] critique. Classical scholars have traditionally defined Greco-Roman antiquity as the origin of a Western civilization defined in Eurocentric, ethnocentric, and androcentric terms.’ (1994: 400). This paper aims to explore the complex relationship between Classics and (de)colonisation, and will gesture towards theoretical and literary movements that are working to decolonise the Classics and de-centre the perspectives of middle-class white men in the discipline. In particular, this paper will focus on Kamila Shamsie’s *Home Fire* – a retelling of Antigone that centres British Muslim identity politics - and Jesmyn Ward’s *Salvage the Bones* – a reimagining of Medea in the context of an impoverished Black family during Hurricane Katrina – as two examples of contemporary, literary myth-making that utilise Classics to narrate the experiences of women of colour, marking a movement away from the previous, (neo)colonialist domination of the field.

Bio: Shelby Judge is a third year English Literature PhD student at the University of Glasgow. Her thesis topic is “Exploring contemporary women writers’ adaptation of myth for feminist purposes”. In this thesis, Shelby is researching what impact contemporary adaptations of Greek myth can have upon the feminist movement. Shelby’s overarching research interests are in feminist and queer theory and contemporary British and American women’s fiction. Shelby also runs a PhD-related blog: TheShelbiad.blogspot.com

16.15pm Break

16.30pm Panel 6: The Poetics of Writing Race and Resistance
Panel Chair: Olivia Heal (*UEA*)

- Ngoi Hui Chien (*Victoria University of Wellington*), ‘The Metaphysics of Race in Barbara Jane Reyes’ Selected Poems’
- Angelica Maria Barraza (*University of California, Riverside*), ‘Writing Xicanas into the Historical Archive through Poetry’
- Minh Huynh Vu (*Yale University*), ‘Absence & Apparition: Haunting as Anti-Imperial Poetics in *Ghost of*’

Ngoi Hui Chien

Paper Title: ‘The Metaphysics of Race in Barbara Jane Reyes’ Selected Poems’

Abstract: ‘A couple of things about that room. They don't want you in it. It's true’ (stanza 2). Such is the trenchant writing of Barbara Jane Reyes, a Filipina American poet, in ‘Dear Brown Girl,’ (2020) which evokes metaphysical ambiguity: who is the ‘brown girl’? A similar equivocation surfaces in Reyes’ ‘Anthropologic’ (2003) that depicts the 1904 Human Zoo of St. Louis World's Fair: do phrases like ‘[f]eats of hunting prowess’ (stanza 27) denote the biological habit or social portrayal? The ambiguity of the metaphysics, or reality, of race, I argue, can be analysed through discourses of gender. Beauvoir’s declaration that ‘[o]ne is not born, but rather becomes, a woman’ (1973, p. 301), in my reading, suggests that we can only understand the social impact on gender by acknowledging its biological construction. We will risk undermining the social significance of the brown girl and Hottentot Venus in Reyes’ poems without accepting the biological gender distinctions. Likewise, I will rupture the dichotomy between the biological and sociological causations of ‘race’ promulgated by certain strands of metaphysics. Social racism stems from a lack of biological interaction, which is stoked by prejudicial mindsets. The conceptual energies of this vicious cycle can be derived from Heidegger’s metaphysical proposition that identity formation ‘operates *proximally* in accordance with the kind of Being which is *closest* to us’ (1962, p. 161, my emphasis). Besides, I will examine the limitations of Reyes’ poems in confronting the monist metaphysics when she urges the brown girl to marginalise herself: ‘Why do you want so badly to be in this room with them’ (2020, stanza 2). The human body, which manifests the biological construction, is a site of socio-political struggles. It is thus necessary to read Reyes’ poems in gendered terms, thereby interrogating the metaphysics that downplays the complex infrastructure of racism.

Bio: Ngoi Hui Chien is a Malaysian who will soon begin his PhD in English literature at Victoria University of Wellington after earning an MA in English literature from the University of Leeds in 2020. His research interests encompass trauma literature, postcolonialism,

psychoanalysis, philosophy, and ecocriticism. He is committed to academic literary criticism and creative writing. The ideas in his works are usually drawn from both anglophone and sinophone literatures.

Angelica Maria Barraza

Paper Title: ‘Writing Xicanas into the Historical Archive through Poetry’

Abstract: There is a robust body of scholarship that accounts for the tenuous, shifting, and indeterminate relationship between “feminism” and “nationalism.” Within this corpus, it is widely argued that feminist temporalities operate antagonistically to nation time insofar that the latter is preoccupied with self-affirming narratives of progress whereas the former is a “project that acts on the present in order to enact a different future.” My paper integrates xicanisma – a concept developed by Ana Castillo that foregrounds the necessity of Chicana feminist activism to reclaim indigenismo – in order to expand the current conversation on feminist temporalities to include intersectional analysis on race. Through a reading of Vanessa Angélica Villarreal’s poem “f = [(root) (future)]” I demonstrate how xicanisma temporalities are constructed to contest the official, linear historical account of indigenous conquest, as well as the immigration narrative that continues to undergird and legitimate the myth of the American Dream. I argue that Villarreal employs formal experimentation to develop a conceptual “anti-timeline” that allows the experiences of women – motherhood, arranged marriage, immigration, and rape – to pierce through into the historical archive. As a result, the poem is able to capture different affective registers of the legacy of conquest and enduring colonialism often occluded in official accounts.

Bio: Angelica Maria is currently a PhD candidate at UC Riverside where she studies the intersection(s) of race, gender, and experimental poetic forms

Minh Huynh Vu

Paper Title: ‘Absence & Apparition: Haunting as Anti-Imperial Poetics in Ghost of’

Abstract: Please refer to PDF file attached (contains images)



Adobe Acrobat
Document

Bio: Minh Huynh Vu is a Ph.D. student in American Studies and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Yale University. Their research examines Afro Asian intimacies through the analytic of water as a site of racial, imperial, and colonial (dis)connection. In addition to coursework, they are a fellow with the Yale Prison Education Initiative, which brings for-credit college courses to incarcerated students in Connecticut

17.30pm Ends