



Friday 16th May 2008

PROGRAM

Hunter Writers Centre –
The Lockup, 90 Hunter Street, Newcastle

- 9.30 - 10.00** Registration (Tea/Coffee)
- 10.00 - 12.00** Postgraduate Workshop with Blake Morrison
(Upstairs in the Education Room)
- 12.00 - 1.00** Lunch (not provided)
- 1.00 - 3.00** Postgraduate Workshop with Shirley Geok-lin Lim
(Upstairs in the Education Room)
- 3.30 - 5.00** DIY Cultures (Downstairs in the exercise yard)
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DIY Cultures

With Anwyn Crawford, Shane McGrath and Paul Byron
Chaired by Keri Glastonbury

Anwyn Crawford (aka Emmy Hennings), 26, is a Sydney-based music writer. She has written about music for publications including *Mess+Noise*, *Cyclic Defrost*, *The Wire* and *Overland*. She also keeps a music blog called *Fangirl* (<http://fangrrrl.blogspot.com>) and has been a zine maker since her teenage years.

Abstract: Fandom, feminism and the 'objective' self

In the history of popular music through the 20th and 21st centuries, female listeners have been consistently positioned as 'fans' - passionate, emotionally involved and subjective in their responses. The typical female music 'fan' is seen to be a slave to her hysteria, caught in an impossibly idealistic relationship with the object (usually male) of her worship. The rhythms and dynamic of female fandom are constructed as part of a woman's broader role as a consumer: she satiates herself with the new object/celebrity on the market, only to discard it when a better model comes along. Female fandom is therefore seen as shallow, fickle and ultimately worthless – a trivial currency.

For these reasons and more (see: structural sexism in the music industry, a whole other conference) it has remained difficult for women to break into the field of music criticism. Men are, supposedly, able to be objective and dispassionate in their analysis of music; they take on the authoritative 'voice' of the critic. Women remain unable to write about anything but their own emotions, goes the reasoning. While many men have made long and influential careers out of music writing, women writers are still a rarity.

I have written about music and other forms of popular culture for many years, and I'd like to draw on my experience as a female writer to interrogate these gendered notions around what distinguishes a 'fan' from a 'critic'. As a feminist I have consciously embraced the label of 'fan', partly because I disbelieve in the notion of 'objective'

criticism, partly because I find the position of being a fan a very fruitful one to write from.

How have female music writers over the years negotiated and/or challenged their gendered positions? What strategies have they embraced? For instance, the use of pseudonyms is quite common amongst female music writers (I use one myself); much more common than with men, and this is quite striking. How does a pseudonym play into the notion of an unstable self, or selves, a masquerade? How might it undermine the 'objective' voice? What about womens' long involvement with fanzines and DIY publishing – the riot-grrrl movement in particular – how has this offered an alternative to the established, 'professional' music press? Are women writers using blogs today as a new form of DIY media, and what writing strategies are they using: do blogs blur the distinction between the 'objective' and 'subjective' writerly self?

Shane McGrath is a freelance (read: unemployable) social critic and prolific zinester. He's the publisher (amongst other projects) of the Musicological Review Quarterly and Crowbar My Heart: The World's Greatest Squatting Zine.

Abstract: DANGEROOOOOOOOOUS! Pro-wrestling fans and criticism.

Starting with a potted history of professional wrestling fans, from travelling carnivals to internet message boards, I want to look at how critical practices - with all their assumptions about value, judgement, and taste - work in a cultural form widely regarded as beneath contempt. What is there to praise in a fake sport? How can you tell a good wrestling match from a bad one? How do fans understand and articulate their own critical assumptions? What kind of moron wrestles a no-ropes barbed-wire match? And can American Dragon dethrone Ring of Honor world heavyweight champion Takeshi Morishima? This one's going to be a slobberknocker, folks!

Paul Byron is a self-obsessive who has written autobiographically since the age of 16; in diaries, journals, zines, blogs and theses. Five years ago he made a zine about Bananarama (Love Truth & Honesty) incorporating memories, material from teen scrapbooks, and reflections upon his fandom. He has recently completed More Love Truth & Honesty, with further contemplations on fandom, pop culture, sexuality, gender, and self. He is currently undertaking research masters at UNSW in 'health, sexuality and culture'.

Abstract: Making Love, Truth & Honesty was a cinch. Upon the idea of writing an autobiographical zine about 80s pop group Bananarama, I sat and wrote pages, drawing upon memories that seemed very present, real, and there for the taking. Through watching music videos, listening to old cassettes, and reading old clippings (sifting through a past that's invisible to all but me), I regurgitated my adolescent self – an uncertain self, but one easy to capture from a position more certain, comfortable, weighted. Or so I thought. Today, in More Love, Truth & Honesty, I write my self from a position of uncertainty – one removed from, yet related to, adolescence. This zine extends upon the first zine, but takes a different approach – part sequel, part re-write. It has been a work in progress for two years, picked up and dropped intermittently, constructed through many voices of many moments. And many fears. Including the fear of completion. For once published, it ceases to be me.

5.00 - 6.00 Conference Registration/Welcome drinks

6.0 - 8.00 Blake Morrison in conversation with Michael Sala followed by public reading by Blake Morrison

Blake Morrison was born in Skipton, Yorkshire, and educated at Nottingham University, McMaster University and University College, London. After working for the Times Literary Supplement, he went on to become literary editor of both The Observer and the Independent on Sunday before becoming a full-time writer in 1995. A Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, and former Chair of the Poetry Book Society and Vice-Chair of PEN, Blake has written fiction, poetry, journalism, literary criticism and libretti, as well as adapting plays for the stage. His best-known works are probably his two memoirs, "And When Did You Last See Your Father?" and "Things My Mother Never Told Me." Since 2003, Blake has been Professor of Creative and Life Writing at Goldsmiths College. He lives in south London, with his wife and three children.

Michael Sala was born in Holland and spent much of his childhood moving between Europe and Australia. He was last year awarded an Australian Society of Authors mentorship and short-listed for the Australian Vogel literary competition. He is currently working on a memoir.



Saturday 17th May 2008

PROGRAM

Crowne Plaza Hotel
Cnr Merewether St and Wharf Rd, Newcastle

9.00 - 9.30 Tea/Coffee/Registration

9.30 - 10.30 **Keynote: Shirley Geok-lin Lim**

Shirley Geok-lin Lim (1944) was born in Malacca, Malaysia, came over to the United States as a Fulbright and Wein International Scholar in 1969, and completed her Ph.D. in British and American Literature at Brandeis University in 1973. Her first collection of poems, *Crossing the Peninsula* (1980), received the Commonwealth Poetry Prize. She has also published four volumes of poetry: *No Man's Grove* (1985); *Modern Secrets* (1989); *Monsoon History* (1994), which is a retrospective selection of her work; and *What the Fortune Teller Didn't Say* (1998).

Bill Moyers featured Lim for a PBS special on American poetry, "Fooling with Words" in 1999, and again on the program "Now" in February 2002. She is also the author of three books of short stories and a memoir, *Among the White Moon Faces* (1996), which received the 1997 American Book Award for non-fiction. Her first novel, *Joss and Gold* (Feminist Press, 2001), has been welcomed by Rey Chow as an "elegantly crafted tale [that] places Lim among the most imaginative and dexterous storytellers writing in the English language today."

She has published a second novel, *Sister Swing* (Marshall Cavendish, 2006). Lim's co-edited anthology *The Forbidden Stitch: An Asian American Women's Anthology* received the 1990 American Book Award. She has published two critical studies, *Nationalism and Literature: Writing in English from the Philippines and Singapore* (1993) and *Writing South East/Asia in English: Against the Grain* (1994), and has edited/co-edited many volumes and two special issues of journals, including the recent collections *Transnational Asia Pacific; Power, Race and Gender in Academe; Asian American Literature: An Anthology; Tilting the Continent: An Anthology of South-east Asian American Writing*, and the special issue of *Ariel* (2001) on microstates.

Her work has appeared in journals such as *New Literary History*, *Feminist Studies*, *Signs*, *MELUS*, *ARIEL*, *New Literatures Review*, *World Englishes*, and *American Studies International*. Among her recent honors, Lim has received the UCSB Faculty Research Lecture Award (2002) and the Chair Professorship of English at the University of Hong Kong (1999 to 2001), as well as the University of Western Australia Distinguished Lecturer award, Fulbright Distinguished Lecturer award, and the J.T. Stewart Hedgebrook award. She has served as chair of Women's Studies and is currently professor of English at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

10.30 - 11.00 Morning Tea

Saturday 17th May, 11 – 12.30

Room 1 - Ethics and Publishing
With David Carlin, Victor Marsh and Susan Currie
Chaired by Brooke Collins-Gearing

David Carlin is a writer, film-maker and Lecturer in Media at RMIT's School of Applied Communication. He is currently completing his PhD, of which the creative non-fiction discussed in his paper forms a part. A version of the first chapter of his non-fiction is to be published in *Overland* in March. He has previously had plays professionally produced, and directed and produced documentary films, theatre and circus.

Abstract: Do you mind if I invent you? Ethical questions in the writing of creative non-fiction

This paper explores issues of ethics and the politics of representation as they have emerged in the writing of a work of creative non-fiction. The paper steps in and out of the work of non-fiction, somewhat in the spirit of ficto-criticism, to place the audience in a shifting position, alternately immersed in and distanced from the writing. The creative non-fiction itself is a memoir that begins without memories, an attempt, knowingly impossible, to recreate the character of the father who died when the author/narrator – myself – was six months old. My father, it turns out, had committed suicide, with the surrounding story so traumatic that it had remained virtually unspoken within the family ever since. Perhaps because being six months old, I never met him and thus found the entire story somewhat overpowering in its sheer blankness, it was me who had a strong desire to find a way to tell it. I subsequently interviewed all the surviving family members, as well as gaining a copy of my father's complete medical records from the archives. But in writing such a story, which inevitably involves an intersection of history, memory and fantasy, and may involve as characters real, living people, there are constantly ethical questions, both stark and subtle, to be considered. Who has the right to tell a story? How should it be told? Who stands to win or lose by its telling? This paper attempts to tease out some of these questions, situating its discussion with reference to recent debates on ethics and representation within memory studies.

Victor Marsh received his PhD in the School of English, Media Studies and Art History at the University of Queensland. His research focuses on shifting subject positions in life writing by gay men in the late Twentieth Century, contrasting autobiographical works where the "I" is located through politics, sexuality and aesthetics (Altman, Wojnarowicz, Dessaix) with a group of writers (Isherwood, Harvey, Matousek) in whose texts the "I" is relocated through spiritual praxis.

Victor is also working on a memoir, *The Boy in the Yellow Dress*, about a boy growing up in a homophobic society whose spiral into self-destruction is alleviated by an encounter with a young guru.

Abstract: Finessing Fromm's Filter: Life writing and the resignification of culturally contested (queer) subjectivities

In Erich Fromm's analysis, experience can enter awareness only under the condition that it can be perceived and ordered in terms of socially evolved categories, which work like a filter to determine the forms of awareness (Fromm 1960: 99).

I will present extracts from my memoir, a work in progress titled "The Boy in the Yellow Dress", to demonstrate how the practice of life writing can produce versions of subjectivity that are resistant to homophobic constructions, bypassing Fromm's filter by drawing on sources of knowledge only liminally present in the socialised mind.

Such praxis works not only to 'talk back' to the culture (hooks 1990: 337) but to uncover and reclaim previously unrecognised knowledge resources, detoxified of the homophobia embedded in conventional religion and the pathologising discourses of medicine.

Religion (like its bedmates Medicine, the Law, and the Family) queers the relationship of marginalised subjectivities to its embedded heteronormative values, as it strives to drive a wedge between queer folk and their sexuality. Further, spirituality as a knowledge resource is relegated firmly out of bounds for queer folk. Yet there is plenty of evidence that many queer lives are open to bandwidths of 'spiritual' awareness (as I will define it), beyond the heteronormative filters of the standard model.

Susan Currie BA/LLB (UQ), MLaws (QUT), MA (Research) (QUT), MLaws (QUT) is a PhD student in the School of Arts and Creative Enterprise at Central Queensland University where she is completing a biography of feminist activist, Dr Janet Irwin. Currently a part-time Legal Member of the Queensland Mental Health Review Tribunal, she was formerly a tenured Senior Lecturer and Director of Undergraduate Programs in Justice Studies in the Faculty of Law at QUT. Susan has also worked as a barrister and solicitor, high school teacher, and librarian. She is the co-author of *Your Law: a course in legal studies*, has contributed 8 in-depth profiles to *A Woman's Place; 100 years of Queensland Women Lawyers* edited by Susan Purdon and Aladin Rahemtula, and has published numerous legal articles, poems and short stories. She can be contacted at curriesm@bigpond.net.au.

Abstract: Biography as Bestseller? Donna Lee Brien & Susan Currie

'Biography – that is to say, our creative and non-fictional output devoted to recording and interpreting real lives – has enjoyed an extraordinary renaissance in recent years', writes Nigel Hamilton in his prologue to his 2007 book *Biography: a brief history*. Likewise, in the feature article of the November 2006 *Australian Book Review*, Ian Donaldson argues that, 'Once neglected within the academy and relegated to the dustier recesses of public bookstores, biography has made a notable return over recent years, emerging, somewhat surprisingly, as a new cultural phenomenon, and a new academic adventure.' Various theories and explanations have been offered for the current popularity of biography, as of its siblings, autobiography and memoir. Focusing on the written biography, this paper will examine the *Publishers Weekly* non-fiction bestseller booklists from their inception in 1912 to the present time. While acknowledging the limitations of these lists, it will argue firstly that they do not evidence the current golden age that is currently under discussion; and, secondly, that these lists reveal a book-buying public with an ongoing interest in biography which waxes and wanes throughout this period. It will further engage with the questions that are raised by these findings.

Room 2 - Pedagogy

With Helena Pastor, Alexis Harley, Molly Blair and Catherine Dunne

Chaired by Kim Cheng Boey

Helena Pastor writes fiction and creative nonfiction and completed a homebirth memoir as part of a Masters in Creative Writing at the University of Queensland. She was recently commended for the 2007 Marian Eldridge Award for aspiring women writers and her essays and short stories have been accepted by Griffith REVIEW, Island, Hecate, and Idiom 23. She is now working on a PhD in Communication at the University of Canberra, researching and writing The Iron Man Welders Project, a work of creative nonfiction which documents an innovative welding program for teenage boys who are at risk of failing in their transition from school to the workplace.

AUTHORS:

Pastor, Helena; Kellett, John

Abstract: Sharing your work with the people you are writing about: an innovative strategy for dealing with early school-leavers involved in a youth project.

Many practitioners of creative nonfiction advocate that there are strong ethical and literary reasons for writers to allow the people who are the subject of their writing to read and comment on early drafts of the work. Such practitioners assert that the writer of creative non-fiction has a clear moral obligation to present a truthful account, and that a large part of this obligation can be met by sharing one's work with one's subjects. Not only can this strategy alert the writer to any errors or inaccuracies in the text, it can also reveal to the writer something of the character of her subjects as they respond to the writer's written representation of their words and actions. This paper tests this hypothesis and presents an innovative strategy by which the writer of creative non-fiction may share her work when her subjects include a group of early school-leavers who may lack the personal and literacy skills necessary to comprehend and respond to a written text.

Alexis Harley is a literary critic and a writer, with particular interests in diary and the blog, Romanticism, the conjunctions of literature, science and philosophy, and in post-Enlightenment intellectual history. She lectures in the English Program at La Trobe University, where she teaches life-writing and autobiographical theory. She has published on Victorian autobiographers, including Charles Darwin, Edmund Gosse, and Herbert Spencer, and recently edited and annotated an anthology of nineteenth-century William Blake reception (Chelsea House, 2008). Her poetry and short fiction have appeared in a number of venues, including HQ, Hermes and Red Hot Go. She is writing an essay on the relationship between rhetoric and empathy and a novella about the life of a cross-dressing eighteenth-century Parisian botanist's assistant.

Abstract: What shall it profit, if I write a spanking good story but lose my soul? Finding value in autobiography

An autobiography's protagonist shares identity with its narrator, this narrator reifying a version of the author's identity. Reading autobiography, we scrutinize not just what is said of younger selves, but how the writing self speaks. Words and images, omissions, erasures, slips of pen and tongue, idiosyncratic grammar, nonstandard spellings, highfalutin diction: these construct and reveal the writing subject's identity in a way that a biography, covering the same life history, could not. The self revealed by narrative voice is partly the product of an author's deliberate manipulation of language, and partly transcends the author's conscious control. I read autobiography as if I were a psychoanalyst, trying to retrieve the self that slips through the chinks of the story.

But while I am interested in the dynamics of how autobiographical writing reveals and constructs its author identity, others locate autobiography's value in its aesthetic achievement, the extent of its truth-telling, its usefulness as a historical source, the singularity of its author's life, its revelation of what it is like to be a particular person. This paper will explore what happens when these ideas about autobiography come into contact with the life-writing class. What makes "good" autobiographical writing? Is it writing that meets standard creative writing assessment criteria (awareness of genre convention, correct formatting, originality, use of concrete significant details, evasion of cliché, etc)? Is good autobiography entertaining, shapely, beautiful? Or is an earnest attempt at self-realisation good enough? Is inadvertent self-realisation good enough? What do teaching and assessment practices imply for how we view autobiography?

Molly Blair has worked as a newspaper journalist, sub-editor and photographer and is currently co-writing a textbook on feature writing and creative non-fiction for Oxford University Press. Molly has also worked in film and television as (among many things) a cable puller, an AD, a story researcher and script editor on shows including *Blue Heelers*, *Paradise Beach*, and the *Man from Snowy River* (TV series). Molly is the Media Officer for the Journalism Education Association and won the 2004 Journalism Education Award for Early Career Academics. She was Bond's Valedictorian in 2003 and won the Australian Press Council research award in 2002. Molly has just completed her PhD which looked into including creative non-fiction in the journalism curriculum.

Abstract: 'Coming home: the place of creative non-fiction in tertiary education'

This paper looks at the place of creative non-fiction in tertiary education and recommends a model for its inclusion. Three studies revealed that while creative non-fiction - a genre of writing based on the techniques of the fiction writer - has had a rocky relationship with journalism, these two areas are intertwined. Creative non-fiction has a place in tertiary education - in the journalism curriculum - where students can learn the ethics and responsibilities of the genre and be given the creative outlet they crave. Today, journalism is facing some significant challenges - the rise of new media and the decline of newspaper readership. A new generation of journalists, armed with the techniques of creative non-fiction, offers answers to these challenges. This paper reveals that these new journalism graduates are also equipped with a range of career choices through this diverse education - they are able to file hard news stories for the local paper, look forward to careers in the array of magazines which publish creative non-fiction, and even join the ever-increasing number of authors who have published books in this dynamic and popular field. Finally, this study offers a model for creative non-fiction in journalism education based on research into curricular and pedagogical issues surrounding the genre.

Catherine Dunne won the prize for Best Thesis on a Topic in Australian Literature at the University of Sydney and in her PhD coined the term 'ado/aptive' to describe her style of *l'écriture du corp*, writing and reading as an adopted body. She is particularly interested in the Australian closed-records adoptee demographic and their potential impact on psychoanalytic and literary theory. She has a book chapter in the recently published collection, *Australia: Who Cares?* David Callahan (ed.) Perth: Network Books, 2007.

Abstract: The Pedagogy of Creative Non-fiction; the PhD as Life Writing

Writers of PhDs have a unique, personal and in-depth relationship with their subject-matter, which develops over a number of years. What happens when life intrudes so much into the research and writing that it takes over the subject matter, so that the original struggle for objective scholarship threatens to become subsumed in emotion and self-discovery? How does the supervisor, forced to keep a certain distance from an intimate and tumultuous relationship, still teach? The supervisor can do worse than guide their student toward the genre of Life-Writing, within which a flourishing of sub-

genres may be accommodating to such a journey. For a closed-records adoptee caught up in the reunion processes sparked by the 1990 changes to the Adoption Act, the literary criticism of Peter Carey and Janette Turner Hospital soon became the literary invention of the Adopted Body, the Subject Adoptee and a new way of seeing: ado/aptive reading and writing. Perhaps in the field of ado/aptive theory, the stolen generations, intercountry adoptees and the white closed-record adoptees of Australia can re-invent themselves, develop their identities and create another genre of academic theory unique to Australia.

Room 3 - Ecocriticism

With Scott Brewer, Cameron Muir and Lorraine Shannon

Chaired by Keri Glastonbury

Scott Brewer is a postgraduate student at the University of Newcastle. He has interests in ecocriticism, literary theory, nature writing and anyone who could explain those things to him. Fittingly, since he has little of it, he is currently researching the problem of experience.

Abstract: Horizons of Experience: The Problem of Distance in the Non-Fiction of Barry Lopez

Barry Lopez describes himself as a "writer who travels", one whose life has been prefigured by "the twinned desires – to go; to see". This paper explores the problems of distance and experience in the non-fiction writing of Barry Lopez. Writing in 1936, Walter Benjamin suggested that the figure of the storyteller was becoming increasingly distant due to the poverty of communicable experience. This paper draws connections between Benjamin's storyteller and Barry Lopez, suggesting that, as a nature-writer, Lopez is both concerned with the contemporary poverty of nature experience and involved in an attempt to enrich the reader's experience of nature by communicating his own. Lopez is then caught in another twinned desire: to decrease the distance between himself and the nature of which he writes; and himself and the reader for whom he writes. The animal encounter is emblematic of the difficulties Lopez faces in overcoming these experiential distances. Drawing on Derrida's essay "The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)", this paper will conclude with a reading of the spatial logic of the animal encounter, suggesting an ethically productive reading of that distance.

Cameron Muir is an environmental historian undertaking doctoral studies on the search for sustainability in the semi-arid grass and woodland plains of western New South Wales. He is based at the Fenner School of Environment and Society, Australian National University. Email: cameron.muir@anu.edu.au

Abstract: Burrendong Dam - Opera House of the West

Two decades of delays, revisions, and massive cost blow-outs during the construction of the Burrendong Dam led to it being linked to the similarly troubled building of the Sydney Opera House. It became a running joke amongst locals on the Macquarie River 'from Bathurst to Brewarrina', as well as in the metropolitan newspapers and State Parliament - Burrendong Dam was dubbed 'the Opera House of the West'. These two projects share more than difficult early phases. Both were the product of the aspirations of a new nation coming to terms with itself and its place in the world. The Opera House with its gleaming white and cream tiles is celebrated as the architectural embodiment of high art and optimistic visions for Australia's future. Few people would say the roughly quarried grey rocks that form the Burrendong Dam embody the heights of imagination, yet it is just as much a cultural product. There are no guided tours of the dam wall and foreshores in the back blocks of western New South Wales.

I am piecing together my own tour of the deep, dead water of the dam and the river below it. The technical debates concerning resource management, of so many mega litres in and out, ignore the cultural foundations of environmental degradation. In state visions for development of settler capitalism and resource conservation, complex river ecologies became abstracted into simply 'water'. Creative nonfiction provides opportunities to engage with place and environment in different ways to a bureaucrat's report on inputs and outputs, and enables us to ask overlooked questions, such as what might be the unintended consequences of our own society's ideals and cultural visions in shaping the environment of the future.

Lorraine Shannon - BA (hons 1st class) M Litt, PhD Trinity College Dublin in postcolonial literature. Part-time lecturer in English Dept Trinity College and University College Galway until 1999 when she moved to Australia. Casual tutor in Cultural Studies at UTS and UNSW for several years. Since then working free-lance as academic editor and has returned to student life! Two years into a non-traditional PhD in UTS in environmental writing.

Abstract: Narration as Ecosystem

Much nature writing has been aligned with modern scientific observation and has thereby gained a privileged position in terms of describing reality. Objectivity is, of course, an illusion and nature writing cannot escape being writing about how the mind sees nature and at times how the mind sees itself. The present day emphasis on complexity theory opens a space for nature writing to explore structures of narration that move beyond the binary of either a celebration of nature or the power of nature to resist or evade the meanings authors attempt to impose on it.

This paper explores the possible forms nature writing might take if it is informed by scientific knowledge in ecology that emphasises dynamic change, disturbance and non-equilibrium and thereby privileges aesthetic qualities such as imbalance, disorder and disharmony.

12.30 – 1.30

Lunch

Saturday 17th May, 1.30 – 3.00

Room 1 - Illness, Grief and Death
With Stephen Mansfield, Jennifer Wilson and Janene Carey
Chaired by Therese Davis

Stephen Mansfield is a PhD candidate at Sydney University. His thesis topic is Australian autobiography as eulogy.

Abstract: The Son's Work of The Father: Reversing Self-Denial In Raimond Gaita's *Romulus, My Father* and Richard Freadman's *Shadow of Doubt: My Father and Myself*

The figures of Romulus Gaita and Paul Freadman in the memoirs written by their sons make for unusual central characters, given that their stories are typified by a kind of absence of self. In the case of Romulus Gaita, as David Parker argues, this is caused in part by the good or virtue of self-denial, a living out of Aristotle's claim that 'it is better to suffer evil than to do it.' For Paul Freadman, this absence of self stems from what his son describes as "unrelenting...self-doubt" (Freadman 17). However, in both cases the sons of these disappointed men write with a deep sense that their fathers could have *been* more than they otherwise were, had they not been afflicted by great personal struggles, including mental illness.

What then is the work of these tributes to difficult and flawed lives? Do the telling of these stories somehow reverse the self-denial, constituting a textual self for Romulus and Paul that they refused themselves in life? That these are memoirs written about very private men who have passed away seems to complicate these questions all the more.

This paper will occupy itself with three essential aspects of relational autobiography generally and its sub-genre The Son's Book of the Father, of which *Romulus, My Father* and *Shadow of Doubt* are useful exemplars. The first relates to the difficult task this kind of text is given of being required to in some way bear the weight both of the subject's life and the author's debt and mourning. The second relates to the author's perceived sense of duty in carrying out this task, as the only person with access to the facts and memories of the story who is willing to speak. This sense of duty is sharpened by the knowledge that if they do not tell this story, it will remain untold, leading to yet more loss. The third revolves around the central role that suffering plays in this discourse – the fact that most often when autobiographical writing functions as eulogy it is not so much (or not simply) a desire to 'speak well of' the dead, but rather a documentation of hardship and tragedy, a kind of 'speaking of suffering' that becomes the focus. Does the telling of tragedy somehow make good the debt? If it does, how so? Can a narrative be asked to carry this weight of reparation?

Jennifer Wilson – has worked for twenty years as a psychotherapist, in the specialised area of adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse. She then returned to university where she is completing a doctorate in Creative Writing which is comprised of a memoir, and a theoretical analysis of the main themes of the memoir, which are dying and death, domestic and political terrorism, and forgiveness. Her short stories and poetry have been published in several anthologies, included *Fictions 88* edited by Frank Moorhouse, and *M/C Journal*. She has received a grant from the Literature Board of The Australia Council, and a Fellowship at The Varuna Writer's Centre. Previous conference papers are 'Dangerous Fictions: Narratives of Propaganda,' Turku University, Finland; 'Confessional Narrative in Literature and Psychotherapy,' University of East London, and 'Woomera as a Site of Contemporary Australian Othering,' International Human Rights Conference, Byron Bay.

Abstract: Thanatography and Memory: 'Before the imminence of death, language rushes forth...' (Foucault).

The writing of autobiography or memoir takes on a particular and poignant intensity when its inspiration is the imminence of the writer's death. Though the death of the writer has become a literary metaphor, one that I would argue is non-viable, when the writer's death is literal and foreseeable, the work assumes the urgency of a non-negotiable deadline that cannot help but have influence over the narrating voice. Emotions are present in the writer that are entirely to do with her confrontation with her mortality. In the process of dying the writer has entered the realm of the abject, in the sense that the abject can be understood as death intruding itself upon life, transgressive of borders, and utterly unknowable by the subject.

From this site of intensity and abjection, the writer of thanatography creates her life story. This is a conscious act of preparation for death through an accounting of the life she has lived; it is a struggle to broker a level of peace with the reality of death's inevitability. The act is simultaneously a birth, for autobiographical writing creates another self and circumstances for that self which are, unlike the lived life, within the writer's control to fashion and order.

The Art of the Real is never more significantly present than in the genre of thanatography. What is real is my death: the light and shadow of this final reality that is rapidly approaching, colours the memoir of the lived life as nothing else can. Creative non-fiction is, in this instance, the form used to narrate the history and final memoir of the human heart. It is the emotional intelligence and imagination of the writer, that together with her memory and reason take the slurry that constitutes the remembered 'facts' of her life, and from it make story: in other words, they fashion the 'muck into gold', as Nietzsche expresses it.

Janene Carey's rather eclectic academic background includes computer science and philosophy as part of a Bachelor of Arts and a qualitative study of relationships between small business owners and web developers for a Master of Economics. She was an IT professional and consultant for a long time before realizing that what she really likes doing is writing. She is now in her second year of a creative arts PhD. For her thesis she is researching and writing biographically-oriented narratives about people's experiences of caring for a loved one with a terminal illness. The working title is 'A Hospital Bed at Home'. Janene's supervisors are Associate Professor Donna Lee Brien from Central Queensland University and Dr Glenda Parmenter from the University of New England.

Abstract: Whose story is it, anyway? Ethical tensions in creative non-fiction life writing

In *The Silent Woman: Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes*, Janet Malcolm likens biographers to burglars peeping through keyholes, rifling through drawers, triumphantly bearing away their loot: the dark family secrets and the never-before-told anecdotes. In the situation where the subject or family propose to cooperate with the enterprise of turning their life into a narrative, the metaphor she employs is that of the Great White Hunter. The friendly tribe trade their memories for a memorialising account, but they must not assume that their view of what it all means will prevail. Like an explorer appropriating the territory by exercising naming rights, the biographer stakes his or her claim to the dominant interpretation. To do otherwise supposedly threatens both the comprehensiveness of the tale and the integrity of the writer.

This paper discusses the challenge of doing creative non-fiction life writing when the biographical subjects are still living, the recounted experience is fraught with emotion, and two Human Research Ethics Committees are overseeing the project. The topic is home-based palliative caregiving. I will discuss the ethical tensions involved in taking a non-exploitative, non-maleficent, collaborative approach to the task of writing non-superficial, non-rose-tinted, nuanced accounts and also trying to incorporate the distinctive authorial voice that is characteristic of creative non-fiction writing.

Room 2 - Historical Method

With Lindsay Simpson, Robert Hodder and Samantha Young

Chaired by Meg Vertigan

Lindsay Simpson is the author and co-author of seven books, including the bestselling *Brothers In Arms* about the Milperra bikie massacre, *My Husband, My Killer*, the subject of a telemovie of the same name and *The Killer Next Door*, all co-authored with Sandra Harvey. She and Sandra received the Lifetime Achievement award Ned Kelly Awards last year for their contribution to crime writing. Lindsay's first novel, *The Curer of Souls*, was published by Random House, Vintage, in 2006. She is the Head of Journalism and Coordinator of the postgraduate writing program at James Cook University in Townsville.

Abstract: *Uninterpreted truth is as useless as burned gold; and art is the great interpreter. It alone can unify a vast multitude of facts into a significant whole, clarifying, accentuating, suppressing and lighting up the dark places with the torch of the imagination. (Strachey L. Eminent Victorians, 2002)*

The mere fact that Kate Grenville's comments on her novel, *The Secret River* and the follow up writing memoir, *Searching for the Secret River*, have ignited such ire from historians, suggests that they remain uncomfortable in their role as custodians of the facts. Fiction can produce a more complex reading of the past, particularly if it draws from unconventional primary sources which provide a different narrative emphasis. This paper draws on the research conducted for my novel, *The Curer of Souls*, an imagined history based on the real. Two of the characters, who become lovers, are inmates of the boys' prison at Point Puer, adjacent to the adult male prison of Port Arthur, at a time when homosexuality, although not known by that name, was included with crimes such as adultery, rape, incest, seducing a nun or engaging in sadism. In traversing issues abandoned by traditional historical texts, such as paedophilia, this paper suggests that the novelist is free to interpret the actual practices of consciousness in people. It discusses how important fictional history can be in reconstructing the archives to reshape the lived experience of historical characters. In so doing, it problematises the nature of history and historical documents as objective truth.

Robert Hodder is enrolled in Doctor of Philosophy, University of Ballarat;
Thesis: *Radical Tasmania: Rebellion, Reaction and Resistance: A Project in Creative Non-Fiction*.

Master of Arts in Communication, Victoria University.

Graduate Diploma in Professional Communication, University of Canberra.

Bachelor of Arts (Hons.), Monash University.

Fiction and nonfiction published in various journals, including *Overland*, *Southerly*, *Inlet*, *The Independent* and *The Canberra Review*.

Abstract: *Figurational Tension from Hell to Paradise: Creative Nonfiction for the True and the Truer in Radical Tasmania*

"Would the last person to leave please turn out the Enlightenment?"

This Is Serious Mum (TISM)

Radical Tasmania is thesis research in creative nonfiction for a political history of the "arts of resistance" amidst the brutal and the gorgeous. It explores the tension of fact into "storyscape" in the context of those two lines of struggle in the Culture Wars: the History Wars and the Story Wars. The project aspires to use fictional device to impel history as politics: evidence is contextualised with literary art so that the real might be changed. This is to emphasise emotion and meaning through truth as a moral effort; science and art "feel" for each other. Political writing is an art and yet it is dribble as text unless its claims are not only proven to be true, they must be overwhelmingly true, truer than true. This movement between fact and meaning, a movement driven by a

partisan passion and a yearning for empathy, is theorised as a “figurational tension” which draws a realisation towards an urge to act. If creative nonfiction can be developed from a mere performativity to cross the “ecotone” then it might realise an historical potential in radical praxis. The Culture Wars both affirm and deny a collective identity. So Tasmania has become a battleground for the “real gen”: facts woven into the story that everyone wants told, I was, I am, I shall be!

Samantha Young is a PhD candidate at Deakin University, Melbourne. Her research is multi-disciplinary, focusing on late-Cold War Soviet historiography, narrative methodologies and identity studies. Her doctorate project is a combination of traditional historical enquiry with threads of narrative representation. Samantha is a tutor in twentieth-century history at Deakin University. Her last conference paper, ‘Is Identity Historically Contingent’, was given at the Contemporary Europe Research Centre, University of Melbourne, in December 2007.

Abstract: ‘Based on a true story’

Narrative histories, or historical fictions, are a hard case to argue for. More than any other contemporary literary form, narrative history has struggled to find acceptance in the two terms that define it – should these works be deemed creative non-fiction, or simply fiction? To accept narrative as a precise, learned method of historical representation, we first have to overcome the demand that historical works must present clear, documented evidence to be taken as true; and to challenge the assumption that all fictions – be they real or imagined – are stories conjured in a writer’s mind. In this paper I will examine how much of the ‘real’ a fictive text can command, and argue that they are capable of offering readers access to a past unavailable to traditional, or ‘proper’, methods of historical research.

Room 3 – Auto/Biographical Fiction

With Jacinta Vandenberg, Amelia Scurry and Emily Bitto

Chaired by Patricia Pender

Jacinta van den Berg is a PhD candidate in the English Department of the University of Sydney. She is researching maternity and autobiography in the writing of Brian Castro

Abstract: Early in his career, Brian Castro rallied against the persistent autobiographical reading of his work. Is it any wonder when, as Ray Chow reminds us, 'ethnic writing' is always read as autobiographical.¹ Nonetheless, in his collection of essays *Looking for Estrellita* Castro acknowledges a late turn to autobiographical writing, beginning 'a dialogue with the dead', which he says 'has constituted the subject and form of much of my work since.' Indeed, any remaining doubt concerning the importance of autobiography to his work was dispelled with the publication in 2003 of his acclaimed 'fictional autobiography' *Shanghai Dancing. A Novel*. However, as the subtitle claims, this is not an autobiography of our Brian. The protagonist is teasingly named Antonio Castro and although his history bears some similarity to the little we know of Brian Castro, any sense of stable analogy quickly collapses as the narrative spins out in beautiful, often contradictory and irrational arabesques that obviously serve style as much as substance. But where it would be difficult and, for me, unproductive to ask what Antonio's autobiography shares with the life of Brian, it becomes obvious that Antonio does share aspects of his personal history with other figures across Castro's oeuvre. Across his body of work Castro creates an autobiographical space by writing what is explicitly fiction, which we are encouraged to read in the autobiographical mode. Castro creates a relatively stable autobiographical persona through recurring reference points of a life-story. Motifs and returning figures include a culturally-sophisticated, uncaring father figure, early abandonment in Australia, jumping and particularly leaping between ships, apparently inherited deformities including a writing wound, lameness and blindness in one eye, a love of jazz, a predilection for cousins and a desperately depressed mother. In this paper I will explore the characteristics of Brian Castro's autobiographical space as it stretches across his novels, short stories and essays.

Amelia Scurry is a PhD candidate with the School of Culture and Communication at The University of Melbourne. At undergraduate level she completed a BA (Hons), also at The University of Melbourne, with majors in Literary Studies and Art History. Her postgraduate study began in 2006 with a thesis proposal on the contemporary significance and appeal of historical fiction; however she soon found herself enthralled by the intersection of memory studies and genre theory. The possibilities offered by different constellations of these two major preoccupations in contemporary writing, and the different capacities they hold for transforming and transmitting personal, cultural and social histories, has become the major focus of her thesis. Recently, her research has turned to an analysis of the relationship between memory, genre and the visual medium of photography, and specifically the fascinating tensions created by these in the works of Brian Castro. The paper she presents today, "Image, Text and Memory in Brian Castro's *Shanghai Dancing*" is a consolidation of her findings to date.

Abstract: Image, Text and Memory in Brian Castro's *Shanghai Dancing*

Brian Castro describes *Shanghai Dancing* as a "fictional autobiography" concerned with the "twists and turns of fiction and personal history" (back-cover blurb). This text develops Castro's customary play with textual authority and extends his determination to challenge the artificiality of generic boundaries. Drawing on Castro's critical writings on genre and autobiography, this paper will address 'the art of the real' in the context of *Shanghai Dancing's* literal and thematic engagement with photography.

Raising issues of aesthetics and self-presentation, the photograph in traditional autobiography, biography and memoir operates as a tool of authorial self-presentation and offers an extra-textual point of reference and authority. There is a clear desire for synthesis between narrative, photograph and author, which incites an assumption that an illustrative relationship between image and text exists. Castro's *Shanghai Dancing* seeks to renegotiate this relationship in light of the flexibilities of fiction and imagination by casting photography at the centre of the complex relationship this text creates between creative fiction, memory, history, and critical theory.

This paper will argue that in photography (as a printed image on the page as well as a technical process examined thematically throughout the text) Castro finds a constructive and creative means of exploring the interplay between the real and the imagined, of renegotiating the duality of fact and fiction, and of examining aspects of critical theory in the context of creative autobiography.

Emily Bitto is a postgraduate student in the School of Culture and Communication at the University of Melbourne. She has recently submitted her Masters dissertation on cultural memory and its intersection with space in the poetry of David Malouf and Michael Ondaatje.

Abstract: 'A well-told lie is worth a thousand facts': Truth and Fiction in Michael Ondaatje's *Running in the Family*

Michael Ondaatje's "memoir" *Running in the Family* has been the subject of heated critical debate regarding its accuracy and genre, and the authority of its Sri Lankan-born Canadian author. The text has been variously labelled as "memoir," "travel memoir," "nonfiction novel," "fictionalized memoir," "fictional biography," "postmodern memoir novel," and "post/colonial post-modernist quest," and has been criticised for its refusal "to participate actively in the referential," clearly confounding critics expecting a straightforward work of non-fiction. As Graham Huggan has noted, *Running in the Family* represents a manipulation of the "conventions of exoticist travel memoir" ; with its collage of autobiography, fiction, travel writing, poetry, photographs, interviews and fictionalised family history, it may be read as a self-reflexive exploration of the 'memoir' genre, and of the permeable boundary between 'truth' and 'fiction.' This paper will examine *Running in the Family* as an investigation, through his own family past, of some of Ondaatje's abiding preoccupations: form and genre; the accessibility of the past and the status of its traces in the present; the distinction between "truth" and "fiction"; and the function of writing as "document." Beginning with an examination of the reception of *Running in the Family* and what it reveals about critical expectations of the memoir genre, the paper will explore Ondaatje's fictionalisation of the autobiographical subject as well as his implicit challenging of the very possibility of writing non-fiction.

Room 4 - Biography

**With Yvonne Lesley McLean, Simon Luckhurst and Adrian Hale
Chaired by Dianne Osland**

Yvonne Lesley McLean was born by the sea in Adelaide and grew up with her mother and grandmother. She has never been far away from formal study: library studies were completed and then followed by an undergraduate degree in theology from Melbourne College of Divinity and then a Masters' Degree in Religion and Theology from Monash. Lesley was ordained to the Anglican priesthood in St Paul's Cathedral Melbourne and now lives in the Adelaide Hills where she is associate priest part-time in the Parish of Stirling, has grandchildren nearby and pursues post-graduate studies with Adelaide College of Divinity and Flinders University.

Lesley is passionate about the role of women in the church and society. She is working for her PhD on the biography of her long-time friend and mentor, Alison Gent who formed by Alison in Adelaide to discuss Women's Ordination in the Anglican Church in 1981, the beginning of a long struggle. Alison Gent is an important figure in this struggle and in the wider struggle for the recognition of women as equal members of society.

Abstract: A biographical study of the life of Alison Gent: South Australian, Anglican and feminist activist, drawing theological and feminist propositions.

This paper will explain the interviewing technique which I have employed with my subject in order firstly to gain her acceptance of sharing her history, of my using a tape recorder and of accompanying her to functions and meetings. I will describe the technical difficulties of interviewing which are conducted at the kitchen table and illustrate the resistance, contradiction and negations of a subject who hesitates to cooperate. One feminist interviewing technique sets no agenda and trusts entirely that the input of the subject will determine the focus of the research. This technique, two years into the process, I call an art.

I will conclude the paper with some comments and questions that arise from the interviewing technique – have I or will I ever get, a complete picture of a life? Will she keep changing her views and opinions in reaction to what I write about her? Will she ever be open and straight forward, instead of cagey and withholding? And does that matter, is that part of the art of the real?

Simon Luckhurst is a third year PhD candidate at the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Technology, Sydney. He is the author of Eddie's Country, which looks at the story of the Murray family from north-west NSW after the loss of their son Eddie in police custody in 1981, and several plays. More information on his work can be found at www.simonluckhurst.com

Abstract: "What am I writing?"

43 year-old Australian Aboriginal Stolen Generations member Pauline McLeod passed away in 2003 leaving behind 34 boxes of writing – poems, scripts, notes, letters, diaries and associated ephemera. My task has been to write Pauline's life story using the material she created, but what am I writing? As the words will be all Pauline's, some consider it an autobiography, yet as I have compiled, structured and edited her story, others are calling it a biography. Where is the line between the genres? Is there in fact a point at which one can discern a difference, and if such a distinction is to be made, what are the arbiters of categorization? How do cultural authority, editorial requirement, purpose and intent, the framework of construction, intended readership and research integrity all contribute to the final decision to place on a written work what is, after all, just a label – although possibly a crucial one?

Adrian Hale (BA, BA:Hons, Grad Dip: Edn) has taught in English, History, Linguistics and Discourse Analysis. His primary research area is in the field of Biography, to which he brings perhaps an unorthodox approach which he likes to call "Collaborative Biography". He is currently finalising his PhD on the topic of "Reading Biography": a multidisciplinary research topic which foregrounds the 'democratisation' of biography over recent decades. This project grew out of the original research undertaken for the writing of a biography of his late father (a WW2 veteran and political activist), for which little documentary evidence existed, and for which it was necessary to interview 126 persons. The experience highlighted the power differentials and discourse dynamics embedded within the traditionally obscured process of negotiating the writing of a life. He suggests a more reflexive and consultative, open-ended solution which is inclusive and multi-voice: it is also perhaps the first real shift in Biographical theory which reflects the ubiquitous uses and ancient origins of the genre.

Abstract: "Creative Fraud": The Generic Limits of Tolerance for Fictionalising in Biography

From Demidenko to Ellis to Chopper Read to Greer and McCullough the field of creative non-fiction is strewn with heroic and not-so heroic failures, as well as outstanding literary and commercial successes. Between the creative elaborations *within* and exploratory testing *of* generic boundaries lie certain expectations held by normative definitions for genre itself. It is not always clear what these boundaries are, yet it is possible to evidence that certain parameters of social expectation do exist. What level of consistency there is between the gulf of opinion that separates critical acclaim and award-winning creative fiction from popular acceptance is often highlighted by scandals involving libel. Whether the rights of persons depicted libellously are infringed is a concept that must be weighed against the rights of a non-fiction writer for creative sophistication or creative license.

Indeed, the tension between creativity and obedience to genre is nowhere clearer than in the genre of Biography, which includes its so-called 'bastard progeny' of Autobiography.

This paper will discuss the rich history of Biography and the degree of creativity which has always been tolerated publicly and critically within the genre, particularly in the Australian context. It will also distinguish between the possibilities afforded by generic limits for subjectivity within Autobiography and the perceptions of accountability for the biographer. That is, there is a definable limit for creative fiction within Biography beyond which other forms of life writing continue to exist only in peripheral form.

3.00 – 3.30 Afternoon Tea

Saturday 17th May, 3.30 – 5.00

Room 1 - Trauma

With Kate Douglas, Christine Runnel and Robert Imre

Chaired by Scott Brewer

Dr Kate Douglas is a Lecturer in the Department of English, Creative Writing and Australian Studies at Flinders University (South Australia). Her primary research interest is the social work of life writing—the ways in which life narrative texts engage with the politics of the moment and affect social change. Her research investigates who is authorised to write autobiographically at particular historical moments, and the technologies they use to record their lives. Her forthcoming book *Contesting Childhood: Autobiography, Trauma and Memory* (Rutgers, 2008) explores autobiographies of childhood as vehicles of cultural memory. Kate has been published in the journals *Biography*, *a/b: Auto/Biographical Studies*, and *Life Writing*. Her work reflects a strong interest in, and commitment to, new modes of life writing, particularly those that emerge from the margins of culture. She is about to begin a major project titled 'Reading Trauma', and is a member of the research team of the 'Australian Memory Project', an on-line digital archive of everyday life narratives.

Abstract: Translating Trauma: Non-Fictional Approaches

Eight years into the new millennium the global community has witnessed countless traumas: civil wars, terrorist attacks, cultural genocide, famine, natural disasters and mass murders. Everyday people are witnessing atrocities in unparalleled ways, and this witnessing has resulted in an outpouring of traumatic life narrative texts, for example, recounting experiences of displacement—from popular autobiographies such as Ishmael Beah's *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier*—through to documentaries such as *Darfur Now*, and do-it-yourself cyber projects—such as the countless vlogs and amateur footage which can be found on social networking sites. Life narrative, as is its tradition, has provided crucial interventions into recent political and cultural conflicts.

Life narrative scholarship over the past decade has focused on the (often graphic, realist) ways in which trauma is represented within cultural texts, and the potential effects these traumatic representations might have on those consuming this trauma (witnessing/empathy, mourning transference of trauma, "wound culture" fetishism).¹ This is the focus of my current research: to examine some of the particular ways in which traumatic life narratives texts (relating to traumatic displacement) are taken up in scholarly environments. I focus on the ways in which readers/viewers are positioned to respond to traumatic texts—and then look at the range of critical responses which scholars are able to make to these texts.

I have become increasingly preoccupied with what I refer to as "antidote texts"—texts which opt to represent trauma in more indirect, subtle and perhaps less confronting ways. In this paper I dissect some of the strategies employed by creative artists in translating traumatic life narratives to mainstream audiences and/or readerships. By 'translate' I refer to the ways in which the traumatic life narratives are made more accessible, comprehensible and even more palatable to audiences and readers as they travel from the first-person experiential witness, to the second-person viewer/reader. How do such texts reflect the diverse ways in which trauma can circulate via cultural texts? And how do these texts work dynamically to reach audiences—to solicit empathetic and/or political responses?

I explore these questions in light of the documentary *Ayen's Cooking School for African Men* (Dir. Sieh Mchawala, 2007). This South Australian documentary tells the story of (male) Sudanese refugees in Adelaide through their experiences attending a cooking school. As cooking is taboo for men in Sudan, the cooking school becomes a metonym for change, tolerance and acceptance. The documentary, through its affectionate and humorous tone, consciously evades overt representations of the

traumatic experiences these refugees have endured prior to their arrival in South Australia. In doing so, the documentary uncovers the trauma in particularly potent ways.

¹ See Shoshana Felman, and Dori Laub. *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*. New York, Routledge, 1992; Leigh Gilmore "What Do We Teach When We Teach Trauma?" *Teaching Life Writing*. New York: MLA Options for Teaching Series, 2007. 367-375; Rosanne Kennedy "The Affective Work of Stolen Generations Testimony: From the Archives to the Classroom." *Biography* 27.1 (Winter 2004): 48-77; Mark Seltzer "Wound Culture: Trauma in the Pathological Public Sphere." *October* 80 (Spring 1997): 3-26;

Gillian Whitlock. "In the Second Person: Narrative Transactions in Stolen Generations Testimony." *Biography* 24.1 (Winter 2001): 197-214.

Christine Runnel is a PhD. student in English (Creative Writing) at Flinders University, Adelaide. She was born of Scottish descent, in Cambridge, England, but spent a good part of her early life abroad, in Kenya and Singapore. Christine came to Australia, with her parents, in 1968. Her life-experience includes a teaching career, two children and a passion for Drama, Screen Studies and Literature. She now lives in the Adelaide Hills.

Christine holds a BCA (Creative Writing) and her Honours thesis utilises a fictocritical approach to the work of the anime director Miyazaki Hayao. She intends to continue this line in her PhD. *research-by-writing* project; to wit, (to woo), Christine proposes a critical intervention and adaptation with attitude of three base texts from the oeuvre of popular Japanese writer Murakami Haruki: "...readings become writings that are themselves re read and re written." [Rob Pope, 2006] The chosen texts are *Norwegian Wood* (1987), *Kafka on the Shore* (2002) and *After Dark* (2004), with applied research in the form of a fictional piece set in South Australia.

Christine's current interest is on the Avant-garde movement and the culture and aesthetics of New Writing. For this conference, Christine places the theory of Slavoj Žižek in the same space with Peter Carey's non-fiction.

Abstract: The Art of the Real: Slavoj Žižek's theory and Peter Carey's memoirs"

Keywords New Writing * Slavoj Žižek * Hegelian Matrix * Lacanian Real * traumatic kernel * catharsis * subject * dialectical materialism * Peter Carey * memoir * didacticism * soft-power * fantasy * Japan

..."civic journalism for the soul" and "a sickly transfusion, whereby the weakling personal voice of sensitive fiction is inserted into the beery carcass of non-fiction," taunts James Wolcott in *Vanity Fair* (October 1997). I defend the first attribute and repudiate the second.

"Creative" and "Non-fiction" – the terms are an oxymoron. Is the combination of concepts an affectionate in-joke, perhaps, in the Freudian sense? Will the genre outlast the brouhaha of hoaxes and the debate over parameters? Is it possible to reconcile tensions in a moment of sublime understanding – through Slavoj Žižek's "impossible short circuit."?

Is the Art of the Real more than merely the Literature of Reality? Certainly, by the rigorous admix of Žižek's Hegelian philosophy and Lacanian psychology, and in an interpretive reading of Peter Carey's unique and lively brand of creative non-fiction.

I consider the Lacanian Real, the wound, the fearful emptiness represented only indirectly through metaphor and around which all social discourse and political activity are networked. Is the most important cultural work of art and literature recognition of "the traumatic kernel", whereby we apprehend the socio-political stakes and weigh the risks of our actions? Assuredly, the Art of the Real must recreate the *mise-en-scène* of our desire, in all its romantic glory, and inexorably lead us to the consequences – Žižek's upgrade on dialectical materialism.

But where does healing begin? Ancient wisdom – the Hegelian matrix suggests in the moment we recognise our fall from grace, in a *negation of negation* – catharsis. Genre conventions help construct meaning but experimentation serves the community through novelty and cathartic entertainment.

And how do we handle complex cross-cultural relations, both international and intergenerational? Soft power, perhaps, rather than violence...

...but Charley Carey does not acquire a taste for the omega fatty-acids in sashimi...and there is an erratum note on the title page of Peter Carey's *30 Days in Sydney: A wildly distorted account* (Bloomsbury, 2001), something about a Japanese attack on Sydney Harbour...

... and *Wrong About Japan* (Vintage, 2004) relies on meticulous and detailed research to create an authentic backdrop...but, at the same time, Carey takes risks with fictive storytelling techniques.

Is the colourful *otaku* that Charley meets on the Internet for real? Is he friendly like Totoro? Does Charley traverse his fantasy of Japan and return intact to the West?

Artificial, pretentious, and too clever by half? Or is the common reader moved to care for the plight of a New York teenager? Carey chooses the style and form he hopes will carry the content to the heart of the reader, for it is by affective engagement culture lives.

Dr. Robert Imre is a Senior Research Fellow for the Research Institute for Organisational and Institutional Performance, Faculty of Business and Law, University of Newcastle

Abstract: The Politics of Communicating Kertész: European Identity in the Postmodern Age

What does Imre Kertész' interpretation of the Holocaust mean for contemporary Europeans? What does the writing of Imre Kertész, especially *Fatelessness*, signal about European and global understandings of the Holocaust? And what does this understanding do for a European political community and/or discrete political communities in Europe and elsewhere?

Before we begin examining these questions, we need to address the particular problem of genre and the work of Kertész and others like him. This version of memoir, or autobiography, is controversial in the rejection of particular kinds of linear narratives and the development of 'memory' over 'history'. But this is not a new phenomenon and exists in several general categories of biography and travel writing that is centuries old. In a much more specific sense, the modern Hungarian diarists have been using these techniques for several decades as well. As a result, I claim that contemporary 'controversies' surrounding auto-biographies are at the very least constructs of our own anxieties rather than a degeneration of what is considered 'factual'.

The life-writing of Imre Kertész, Sandor Marai, Erno Szep, and George Konrad are cross-disciplinary works that blend the authors' own life-experiences in essays, short stories, novels, diaries, all of which are biographical in a sometimes elusive manner. And this biographical approach is always a critical one, rather than merely documentary in form. Specifically, these writers are exploring the cultural memory of the Holocaust in Hungary in a way in which popular Hungarian discourse does not. For them, the Shoah is the mirror of modernity.

Room 2 - Film

**With Alice Burgin, Christine Rogers and Hamish Ford
Chaired by Therese Davis**

Alice Burgin is currently completing her Masters dissertation on representations of subalternity in historical cinema with the School of Culture and Communication at the University of Melbourne.

Abstract: Rabbit-Proof Defence: can claims to historical truth damage Indigenous representation?

Can generations of Indigenous experiences be represented through a national, historical paradigm? In the film *Rabbit-Proof Fence* (Phillip Noyce, 2002), a true story about the journey home of an Aboriginal girl taken by white authorities in the 1930s, Indigenous Australian voice appears to have been given a podium from which to speak of a history of colonial violence. In addition, the film's classical realist narrative and empathetic universalism have produced a cultural artefact that has gained critical acclaim transnationally whilst working to introduce the filmic medium as a serious contributor to the primarily academic debate of the History Wars.

Yet, in adhering to the populist structure of the classical historical bio-pic, with its appeal to realism, verisimilitude and authenticity, this paradigm produces a troublesome impasse in the film's representation of the real. Reading the text as a "transition narrative" (Chakrabarty) that sees non-Western histories subsumed into official, historical, modernist paradigms, this paper will consider how Indigenous voice is aligned with discursive practices whose rhetoric and mythos could perniciously reify Aboriginality in order to fit a 'universal' model of historiography, celebrating an imagined colonial and national consciousness that continues to posit Australian Indigeneity within the realm of the subaltern.

Christine Rogers is a filmmaker, teacher and academic. Christine has written and directed five short films, and a short feature, which have screened at many local and international film festivals. Her latest film *Anne & Richard*, based on Shakespeare's Richard III, screened at the London Australian Film Festival in 2007 and will screen in LA as part of the International Festival of Cinema and Technology in 2008.

Christine also writes and produces educational videos for Video Education Australasia and RMIT Mediaworks. She is currently teaching screen writing and screen production at RMIT University and is completing her Masters of Creative Arts at Melbourne University, which comprises of a creative component (a feature film screenplay) and an exegesis on mainstream discourses surrounding women who kill.

Abstract: The Really Strange and The Strangely Real: Aileen Wuornos And Her Representation On Film

Psychopathic serial killer or rape-victim? Man-hating lesbian or feminist avenger? Aileen Wuornos was maybe all, and quite possibly none, of these. Wuornos was a rare creature indeed, a woman who killed multiple men over the course of a year in Florida in the early 90's.

Mainstream discourses around women who kill are invariably conservative. A close look at these narratives shows us where 'gender trouble' lies, and what happens to women who break out of gender norms. One of the functions of these discourses is to reassure us – these women are *monsters*, mad or bad, they are not like you or I – they are not normal. Contradictory and more deeply unsettling meanings are denied.

Through a close reading of Broomfield's two documentaries, *Aileen Wuornos: The Selling of a Serial Killer* (Broomfield 1992), *Aileen: Life and Death of a Serial Killer* (Broomfield 2003) and the fictional film *Monster* (Jenkins 2003), I look at how these narratives of Wuornos both adhere to conservative discourses around violent women

and open up different meanings, meanings that unsettle gender-based expectations around prostitution, victim-hood and agency.

Hamish Ford is a Lecturer in Film, Media and Cultural Studies at Newcastle University (Australia), where he teaches a course on Documentary Cinema. He is a regular contributor to RealTime magazine and Senses of Cinema.

Abstract: Untimely Provocations, Subjectivity and Lived History in Peter Watkins' Reflexive Real

For over four decades Peter Watkins has produced a unique brand of cinema that is and is not 'documentary' in nature, usually in the form of either speculative films set in the immediate future or those based around famous historical figures or events. What remains consistent is his work's developing self-reflexivity in presenting a complex on-screen real and its in-process relationship to subjectivities engaged with the lived-history of the film both as made and received, with the viewer almost forced into active participation.

Ever since the controversy over *The War Game* in 1965 – a confronting portrayal of the effects of a possible nuclear attack on England, promptly banned by the BBC (for whom Watkins had made the film) – there has been a pattern whereby his work is variously 'buried' by the same body that first contracted it. Continuing right up until the long battles over his last work, a nearly 6-hour French-funded film about the Paris Commune, *La Commune*, these controversies have resulted in something of a forcibly international career. This paper will seek to distil what it is about the work of this self-consciously marginalised filmmaker that results in such a vexed relationship between his work and the culture for and in which it is produced. If Watkins' provocations are usually out of step with the prevailing interests of the period and culture in which he is working, the films themselves also feature historical or speculative figures and events at odds with the powerful currents of the prevailing social and political milieu. But beyond filmmaker and primary on-screen subject or 'character', the films insist on the 'lived' nature of historical reality in the most immediate and reflexive sense whereby participants in the filmmaking process (notably the non-professional actors) are visibly engaged in being asked to bring – or indeed develop – their own opinions to the roles and scenarios on screen, resulting in the messy voicing of debate about a culture's contested history in its vital (though often disavowed) connection to contemporary life and global problems.

Central here is a particular stress on subjectivity as voiced both by the filmmaker in his refusal of the illusion (and ideological 'trick') of the objective documentary address, but also beyond authorial expression and that of the actors – and ultimately the film itself – as a called-upon quality in urgent need of re-engagement. The unrepentantly subjectivist voice/s or 'noise' characterising these films makes for a distinctly reflexive approach to rendering historical reality in the form of an untimely provocation. Rather than being forced to accept his or the film's understanding of what we see on screen, this cinema calls us into subjective accounting and responsibility in bringing to bear the lived history of film as an actively engaged event on both sides of the screen. 'What do *you* think?', we are asked.

Room 3 - Memoir

With Barbara Brooks, Kim Cheng Boey and Francesca Rendle-Short
Chaired by Shirley Geok-lin Lim

Barbara Brooks teaches Creative Nonfiction, and a short course Memoir and Place, at UTS. Her work on verandahs and houses is part of her DCA (also at UTS). She has published short stories, *Leaving Queensland*, and a biography, *Eleanor Dark: a Writer's Life*. Her essays and stories have also been published in the UK, the US, France and Asia.

Abstract: Memoir and place

I've been visiting the 'overlapping territories' and 'intertwined histories' of memoir and place. These are the memoirs that overflow into cultural histories and anthropologies: for example Rebecca Solnit on the American west, John Berger on rural France, Amithav Ghosh on Egypt. My interest was more specific: I'm writing about verandahs and reading memoirs about houses: domestic spaces, intimate spaces, spaces of change and transformation, and the way they reflect modes of being. As Foucault says, writing about spaces means writing about power, and *the great strategies of geo-politics* are reflected in *the little tactics of the habitat*. My reading ranges from Basho and Kamo no Chomei on huts and homelessness, David Malouf on his childhood house in Queensland and how houses form our maps of the world, and Carolyn Forché on why her memoir of El Salvador is a poem (in prose) about the colonel's house.

Kim Cheng Boey has published four collections of poetry: *Somewhere-Bound*, *Another Place*, *Days of No Name* and *After the Fire*. A collection of personal essays called *Between Stations* will be published by Giramondo. Kim Cheng teaches Creative Writing at the University of Newcastle.

Francesca Rendle-Short writes fiction and creative non-fiction. She is the author of the novel *Imago* (Spinifex Press, Fischer Verlag; 1997 ACT Book of the Year) and *Big Sister* (Redress Novellas) and in 2005 co-wrote a short one-act play with Felicity Packard called *Us* produced for Six Pack at The Street. She is the course convener of the creative writing program at the University of Canberra. This slideshow, *ÆSucking on pineapples*¹, comes from a two-book project she is currently writing: a novel and a companion *Æfaux memoir*¹ about the writing of this novel.

Abstract: Sucking on pineapples: writing shame and betrayal in Queensland

Some stories from life are hard to tell, best told obliquely, on a slant.

Touch (*tûch*) 1. v. concern, make a difference to, stir sympathy or other emotion in, allow to enter one's mouth

There is a story about a girl who grew up in Pineapple Country at a time when *Joh-don't-you-worry-about-that*-Bjelke-Petersen was in power, a girl who grew up watching slides while sucking on the juicy fruit. This girl had a mother who was an 'anti-smut' campaigner, moral guardian to the children of Queensland, a mother who thought her daughter was a 'goner' because she was reading *The Catcher in the Rye*. People thought her mother was mad. The story hysterical.

How do you write such a thing?

How do you transform flesh and blood into a linguistic body?

In my view, the only way to do it is through fiction. Like the thinking of protagonist Briony Tallis in Ian McEwan's *Atonement*, fiction is 'a final act of kindness, a stand against oblivion and despair'.

The slideshow I will present to 'light up' this Queensland world, to use a metaphor Milan Kundera might employ, is a playful exploration that touches on ideas of transgression, shame and betrayal; yet how writing like this can grow skin, grow bones, grow a heart.

Room 4 - Early Modern

With Kate Lilley, Patricia Pender and Catherine Padmore

Chaired by Ros Smith

Kate Lilley is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Sydney. Her research interests include Early Modern Literature and Culture, Literature and Cinema and Rhetoric. Her publications include:

"Dear Object": Katherine Philips' Love Elegies and their Readers' in *Women's Writing 1550-1750*, ed Salzman, Melbourne: Meridian, 2001, 163-178.

(edited and introduced) *The Blazing World and other Writings by Margaret Cavendish*. Pickering/Chatto; NYUP 1992; Penguin Classics 1994.

"Christina Stead: Writing Expatriation" in *Diverse Voices: 20th Century Women's Writing Around The World*, ed Jump, Brighton: Harvester 1991.

Abstract: "These Novels of My Life": "mistaken advantages" and "real damage" in the case of the German Princess

Mary Moders Carleton aka the "German Princess" (1642-1673) was the subject of a sensational trial in 1663 in which she successfully defended herself against charges of bigamy and imposture brought by her new husband, John Carleton, an 18 year old lawyer's clerk. Acquitted for lack of evidence, Mary had become a figure of scandalous celebrity with a reputation for formidable arts of deception and persuasion even before the trial began, the heroine of a series of bestselling pamphlets on both sides of the case. Of those surrounding the trial the most substantial and fascinating is *The Case of Madam Mary Carleton, lately Stiled the German Princess, truly stated, with an historical relation of her birth, education, and fortunes* (1663) by "M. Carleton", a sophisticated and sexually suggestive narrative which moves skilfully between different generic registers. Mary's authorship is likely but cannot be conclusively proved. Beyond dispute, however, is her starring role in a dramatisation of the case the following year on the London stage.

Public interest in Mary Carleton was revived a decade later when she was tried and hung for theft, again linked to the impersonation of a Lady of Quality, and recognised as the "German Princess". Chief among the second wave of publications was the well-known bookseller and bibliophile Francis Kirkman's *The Counterfeit Lady Unveiled* (1673), a comprehensive catalogue of the scandalous adventures of this low-born but talented Kentish woman's self-made career of bigamy, theft and imposture, and her eventual undoing. The case of Mary Carleton was incorporated into successive collections of sensational true crime narratives through the eighteenth century which came to be known as the Newgate Calendar, and was also a key source for a range of ambivalently admiring representations of passing women, "fictional" and "true", such as *The German Princess Revived; or the London Jilt, Being a True Account of the Life and Death of Jenney Voss* (1684) and Defoe's *Moll Flanders*.

Patricia Pender is Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the University of Newcastle. She completed her Ph.D. at Stanford University in 2004 and worked for three years as an Assistant Professor of English and Women's and Gender Studies at Pace University in New York City. She has previously published essays on Aphra Behn, Anne Bradstreet, and Mary Sidney, and is currently working on a study of early modern women's writing and the rhetoric of modesty.

Abstract: Desperately Seeking Dorothy: the "Perfect Electrometer"

Dorothy Wordsworth lost her mother and her father by the age of 12, "eloped" with her brother William at the age of 17, lived a life of "intense, uncharted freedom" with William at Dove Cottage, collapsed on the morning of his marriage to Mary Hutchinson having spent the night with his wedding ring on her finger, and, after helping to raise their many children, spent the last 20 years of her life prone to bouts of mental illness that left her unable to speak except in squawks, save for the ability to recite her

brother's now famous poetry. She wrote the Grasmere Journals so that she "would not quarrel" with herself and "to give William pleasure by it." He used this material – sometimes verbatim – in his own poetry, which subsequently and somewhat ironically became the cornerstone in the mythology of the singular, autonomous Romantic genius. William described Dorothy as his eyes and ears, Thomas De Quincey described Dorothy as the "very wildest . . . person I have ever known," and Samuel Coleridge Taylor described her as "the perfect electrometer." This paper considers Dorothy's self-representation in the Alfoxden and Grasmere Journals alongside a variety of biographical accounts, including Frances Wilson's acclaimed new work, in order to explore a set of questions concerning gender and genre: what poetics of self is recoverable from Dorothy's curiously impersonal journal entries? In what sense could she be seen as William's co-author and collaborator? And what does the critical and biographical desire to uncover Dorothy reveal of our investments in the very authorial categories she seemed to reject?

Dr Catherine Padmore teaches fiction writing and literary studies at La Trobe University. Her novel, *Sibyl's Cave* (Allen and Unwin, 2004), was short-listed for The Australian/ Vogel Award and was commended in The Commonwealth Writers' Prize 2005 (best first book category, SE Asia and South Pacific region).

Abstract: 'Writing Amy Robsart'

This paper explores the complex processes involved in creating a novel about Amy Robsart (1532-1560), wife of Robert Dudley, who was the favourite of Elizabeth I and said to be her lover. Amy died at twenty-eight in mysterious circumstances - possibly murder, accident, suicide or illness. Intrigued by this, I am using fiction to imagine what the last months of her life might have been like. Research presents overwhelming amounts of historical detail about the Elizabethan period but little direct evidence about Amy: Only two of her letters remain, while mere traces of her life appear in other people's letters and in the household accounts of the Dudley estate. The main question shaping the project is: How then to imagine the life of this woman who died over four hundred years before I was born? One useful strategy for me has been to hand-write a journal for her - forging an imaginative connection between her writing hand and my own.

5.00 - 6.00 Keynote: Ivor Indyk

Creative Non-Fiction and the Categorical Imperative

Ivor Indyk: Ph.D, University of London, 1980
BA Hons (1st class honours and University Medal in English and Australian Literature),
University of Sydney, 1972

Ivor Indyk is founding editor and publisher of HEAT magazine and the award-winning Giramondo book imprint, and Whitlam Chair and head of the Writing & Society Research Group at the University of Western Sydney. A critic, essayist and reviewer, he has written a monograph on David Malouf, and essays on many aspects of Australian literature, art and architecture. At Giramondo he has published a number of works which play more or less freely with the notion of non-fiction, including those by Brian Castro, John Hughes, Beverley Farmer, Gerald Murnane, and this year, *Antigone Kefala*, Dmetri Kakmi, Robert Gray and Kim Cheng Boey.

7.00 - 10.00 Conference Dinner (Restaurant II)
8 Bolton Street, Newcastle 2300



Sunday 18th May 2008

PROGRAM

Crowne Plaza Hotel
Cnr Merewether St and Wharf Rd, Newcastle

9.00 - 9.30 Tea/Coffee/Registration

9.30 - 10.30 **Keynote: Ross Gibson**

Ross Gibson makes books, films and art installations. Recent works include the book *Seven Versions of an Australian Badland*, the video installation 'Street X-Rays' and the interactive audiovisual environment BYSTANDER (a collaboration with Kate Richards). He is the Professor of New Media & Digital Culture at the University of Technology, Sydney.

10.30 - 11.00 Morning Tea

Sunday 18th May, 11 – 12.30

Room 1 - True Crime

With Rosalind Smith, Felicity Packard and Melissa Hardie

Chaired by Ross Gibson

Rosalind Smith is a senior lecturer at the University of Newcastle. She works on gender, genre, politics and history in Renaissance women's writing and has published a monograph with Palgrave Macmillan, *Sonnets and the English Woman Writer 1560-1620: The Politics of Absence*, as well as numerous journal articles and book chapters. More recently, she has been developing a new field of research: true crime writing in contemporary Australian culture and in Renaissance England, with a particular interest in the representation of women in true crime.

Abstract: Dark Places: true crime writing in Australia

The international genre of true crime writing has been adapted and reinvented in specific ways in an Australian context, where crime has a particular cultural resonance in rhetorics of nation. The settlement of Australia as a penal colony, the violent and unresolved history of relations between settler and Indigenous cultures, and our national mythmaking surrounding criminal figures highlight the centrality of true crime and its narration to formations of Australian national identity. Chloe Hooper's *A Child's Book of True Crime* recasts the history of colonization in Australia as an "Ur-true-crime-story," where "in volume after volume the bodies pile up" (97), but more typically Australian true crime texts concentrate upon particular events and figures as kinds of cultural flashpoints. Histories of the Kelly gang, the Pyjama Girl, Shark Arm and Azaria Chamberlain cases, biographies of underworld figures such as Neddy Smith and Chopper Read, as well as more ephemeral and local instances of crime, are returned to again and again in different forms and media in contemporary Australian writing. These recent forms are supplemented by a longer history of true crime writing in Australia, from colonial true crime narratives to mid twentieth-century pulp fiction. Yet it is a genre that has received little critical attention in any of its Australian forms. This paper begins to explore what constitutes true crime writing in Australia: examining its history, its distinctive generic markers of irresolution, truth claim, intimacy and horror, and the ramifications that this sensational genre might have for current constructions of nation, culture and history.

Felicity Packard's first script (aged 10) *Death on Treasure Island* saw characters shipwrecked on an apparently tranquil tropical island dying one by one in scenes of increasing self-recrimination, conflict and gore. It seems clear that from an early age her writing was suited to the verdant fields of popular culture - she now writes for television.

Felicity's work as a screenwriter over the past fifteen years has seen her write for all the free-to-air networks in Australia and many of the major independent production companies. She has written in medical, legal and police genres, as well as for soaps and true crime. She also co-wrote the stage play "Us" with Francesca Rendle-Short for the Street Theatre's 2005 spring season.

Felicity's paper seeks to explore some of the ethical, factual and storytelling issues she has confronted as one of the three writers of *Underbelly* - a 13 part TV mini series dramatising the Melbourne gangland war circa 1995-2004. Writing it, she found herself negotiating some very unfamiliar and fraught terrain wherein every creative footstep could lead to litigation, breaches of privacy, utter confusion on the part of the audience, cement shoes, or, scariest of all - poor storytelling.

As well as working as a screenwriter, Felicity is also a lecturer in the Creative Writing Program at the University of Canberra.

Abstract: "Is that what really happened?" The true crimes of writing *Underbelly*

- How do you write a story that is not a "story" with a neat beginning middle end but actually a decade's worth of overlapping, chaotic events including more than 30 murders?
- How do you maintain control of a narrative into which new players constantly burst, diverting any attempt at a conventional central dramatic question with their intruding desires, motives and secret hearts?
- How do you balance the principles of 3D character building and coherent motivation against the random actions and unpredictable behaviours of drug charged gun-wielding psychos?
- How do you "create" characters who already exist (or at least did until they were shot dead)?
- How do you do all this while trying to satisfy the demands of the most conservative free-to-air network in the country?

My talk will focus on my work as one of the three writers on the Screentime/9 Network "true crime" drama *Underbelly*.

Melissa Hardie is a lecturer at the University of Sydney. She is writing a book on true crime and the remediation of "fact" in a variety of genres and modes. She's recently written and published on televisual representations of crime in procedurals like *Law & Order* and *Cold Case*; Patty Jenkins' film *Monster*, representations of criminal ecologies and the Boston Strangler; Kitty Genovese. She's currently working on a genealogy of true crime writing through the Gothic, analysing representations of mental state and criminal intent: "cold blood." She's also pursuing work on the avant-garde and testimony through the work of Charles Reznikoff, Gary Indiana, and others. Historically Melissa's research has been contoured by an interest in psychoanalysis, rhetoric, deconstruction, and queer theory, and a specialisation in Modernism and Contemporary writing and film.

Abstract: Under the Sign of Schapelle: Passing through Customs.

On a recent trip to Kingsford Smith's domestic terminal I encountered a large advertisement for Schapelle Corby's autobiography at the entrance to the departure gates. This disproportionate icon reminds the passerby that the travelling body is read through a hermeneutics of suspicion; that imposture and deception are anticipated acts within this transitional precinct, and that criminal "identity" is understood to exist covertly in its realm. Equally, it serves the more prosaic but curiously cognate purpose of advancing "airport" literature as a form of intellectual escape, proposing the pleasure of ludic reading in the place of tedious voyage.

My paper reads events in the story of Schapelle Corby's arrest and conviction for their roles in a number of competing discursive regimes. Within the supermodern logic of the airport facility (Auge) the nation-state finds compelling vestiges in the process of customs inspections. In the case of the Corby arrest, trial, and imprisonment a knot of concerns over national, regional, and ethnic autonomy and privilege comes to structure her defence, which I will discuss through her autobiographical "My Story" (written with Kathryn Bonella 2006). My paper will argue for an understanding of the relationship between the body and its objects in the transitional space of customs as a proto-psychoanalytic site of melancholic loss whose passage imposes a one-way logic of irremediable progression in place of the networked "flows" that characterise hyper, post, or super-modern theories of space-time. Perhaps no contemporary space imposes a more binding relationship between bodies and their objects (passports, boogie bags) than customs. Here, you cannot turn back time; here you are discovered.

Room 2 - Modernity
With Caroline Webb, Brian Musgrove and Adrian Jones
Chaired by Astrid Lorange

Dr Caroline Webb lectures at the Ourimbah Campus of the University of Newcastle, where she is currently a Senior Lecturer in English. She specialises in study of the Modernist period in English literature and in contemporary fiction by women, and is particularly interested in speculative fiction including fantasy and magic realism, especially as deployed by recent British writers. She has written essays published in journals such as *Modern Fiction Studies* on works by Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, T.S. Eliot, A.S. Byatt, Janette Turner Hospital, and Terry Pratchett. She is currently working on a study of the British fantasy tradition.

Abstract: The Essayist as Flâneur: Mary Beton, Virginia Woolf, and the Language of A Room of One's Own

Virginia Woolf's 1928 essay *A Room of One's Own* has been much studied, and more quoted, for its pioneering examination of the relationship between women and literature. Scholars have also observed how the essay's rhetoric negotiates the expectations of Woolf's contemporary audience, subverting resistance to its feminist message through the deployment of a charm some readers still find suspect. In this paper I consider the extent to which Woolf deploys a characteristic figure of Modernist art, the flâneur, not only in the representation of the actions of her narrator but in the movement of her grammar. As she walks along river banks and across forbidden lawns, the language of Mary Beton likewise wanders from observation to question and to further observation. Moreover, the very presence of this narrator involves the reader in a constant movement between fact and fiction. Woolf performs a dance between fact, fantasy and opinion across a rhythm of semicolons and conjunctions that lengthen sentences and generate paragraphs that refuse to come to rest, frequently ending on a suspended thought. This grammatical as well as intellectual movement in turn requires the reader to question his or her own desire for objective certainties and to engage in Woolf's peripatetic approach to the discovery of social and intellectual realities.

Dr Brian Musgrove is Program Co-ordinator of the BA Honours and MA English Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Southern Queensland. He is a member of the Public Memory Research Centre, and his most recent publication is 'Junk International: The Symbolic Drug Trade', in *Economies of Representation 1790-2000: Colonialism and Commerce*, eds. Leigh Dale and Helen Gilbert (Ashgate Publishing Limited, UK and USA, 2006).

Abstract: Confessing What?: Addiction Narratives And Modernity

After the sensational publication of Thomas De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* in 1821, an international vogue for drug confessions (Theophile Gautier's *The Hashish Club*, Charles Baudelaire's *Artificial Paradises*, Fitz-Hugh Ludlow's *The Hasheesh Eater*, Marcus Clarke's *Cannabis Indica*) provided the foundations of a distinctive literary genre. As the addict confession persists today, it is instructive to ask what the addict writer actually 'confesses'? Superficially, addiction narratives are often patterned on a simple confessional line: temptation, fall, abjection, epiphany, the desire for redemption. More importantly, however, De Quincey's *Confessions* seeded a another major theme that governs drug writing as a genre. As this paper argues, addict writer habitually investigate the relationship of drug taking and mass modernity. In these terms, drug writing serves as social critique: it typically turns on the image of mass modernity as a phantasmagoria of consuming practices and insists that drug taking is merely symptomatic of the stresses and compulsions of modernity.

Adrian Jones is completing his PhD on Anne Sexton and the poetry of therapy, in the Department of English at the University of Sydney. His interests include queer theory, psychoanalysis and contemporary American poetry. His article 'The Poet's Folly: Anne Sexton's Immortality Box' is under review at the journal of Comparative Critical Studies, published by Edinburgh University Press. That article is based on the paper he gave in 2007 at the BCLA Conference on Folly at Goldsmiths College, University of London. At the moment, Adrian is working on an article entitled 'Those Blessed Glossy Pages', about the publication history of Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton in *The New Yorker*. His essay, 'Oprah on the Couch: Franzen, Frey, Foucault and the Book Club Confessions', is part of the forthcoming collection *Compelling Confessions: The Politics of Personal Disclosure*. The collection is under review at Fairleigh Dickinson University Press.

Abstract: The Art of the Gamble: Anne Sexton's play for a poetics of self

In her first book, *To Bedlam and Part Way Back* (1960), Anne Sexton constructs a seemingly autobiographical narrative of her experience of madness, as the basis for a poetics of self. As a patient, both in treatment and in the wards of the asylum, Sexton's intimacy with language reflects her privileged subject-position within the therapeutic discourse, a space constructed by words.

As an authority on madness, Sexton's therapy poems represent poetic gambles. As public, confessional performances, they are at once great therapeutic cheats, as well as genuine plays for the poet's sanity. This paper would like to ask the question: how did Sexton, through conscious play with the poetics of self, attempt to establish her authority as a poet?

Sexton began writing poetry at the suggestion of her psychiatrist and many of her early unpublished poems center on material that emerged during her treatment. In her 1960 therapy poem, "Said the Poet to the Analyst", Sexton examines questions of poetic authority and anxiety in terms of a poetics of self. The analyst, as a substitute for both the reader and the literary critic, silently interprets her meanings, both conscious and unconscious.

Yet Sexton's poems artfully resist biographical interpretation. Even in light of Diane Middlebrook's revelatory biography of the poet, somehow the art of Sexton's gambles resists the autobiographical trap. How does Sexton exploit the tension between the real and the fictional in order to simultaneously suggest and yet resist biographical interpretations of her work?

Room 3 - Creative Non-Fiction practice

With Jane Messer, Chris Pash and Amy Espeseth

Chaired by Barbara Brooks

Jane Messer convenes the Postgraduate Creative Writing Program in the Department of English, Macquarie University. Her most recent book publication is *Provenance* (Vintage, 2007). Other books include *Bedlam*, an anthology of world literature about sleeplessness and insomnia; *Certifiable Truths* – stories of love and madness, a collection of new Australian writing on the theme of madness. Areas of current research interest include ethnography and corporate culture, and representations of mothering in literature.

Abstract: Writing Corporate Culture: the tension of the real and the fictional

What happens to a person when they work in an environment of the constant risk and change that characterise the new capitalist enterprise? How might a writer engage with these impacts on people? My research has focused on high-end IT salespeople working in a number of Sydney-based transnationals. The investigative work has integrated extended interviews, short work-place immersions and observations with theoretical perspectives on 'the culture of new capitalism' (Sennett, 2006). The linked creative non-fiction and fiction projects arising out of these researches attempt to create a local understanding of a group of sales executives, the 'flexible' work regimes they work within and the impacts of their work on their experience of self. My work utilizes the narrative writer's skills (of observation and empathy, and the communicative skills of narrating character, place and time) with a more formal and scholarly immersion in, and communication of, theoretical research.

For many in the West the past two decades have been characterised by rapid globalisation of trade and communications, and major shifts in the balance from manufacturing to knowledge driven economies. These have been important changes for Australians who work in the corporations driving and shaping these changes: many of these employees are indeed personally shaped and changed by the meta-shifts in workplace organization.

Richard Sennett writes that, 'Perhaps the most confusing aspect of the new capitalism regime of 'flexibility' is its impact on personal character (1998, 10). By character he means not the more modern notion of 'personality' with its suggestion of momentary desires and attributes, but character as the long-term aspect of emotional experience, the sustained sentiments of lasting value, and the ethical values we place on our 'own desires and on our relations to others' (10).

A series of creative non-fiction essays based on the field work evoke the work-life experiences and character of the sales executives while drawing theoretically on the work around new capitalism and recognition theory by sociologists such as Richard Sennett and political philosopher Axel Honneth.

Complementing this collection of essays is a novel, 'The Happiness Project'. As a genre the novel aims to articulate the particular and the individual. It is one of the primary genres in our culture by which links are made between the internal life of characters and the external conditions of experience. 'The Happiness Project' develops (fictionally) on the possibilities for character and story which I was stimulated to consider by my interviewees.

While I expect the two projects to be published independently of each other, at completion I hope also to be able to comment on the ways the two genres (of creative non-fiction and fiction) have shaped both the scholarly and experiential knowledges that I drew upon in their writing.

This conference paper includes excerpts from some of the creative non-fiction essays now in progress. The excerpts describe a morning spent at the new Optus Sintel head-quarters in Sydney in relation to notions of organisational flexibility; the experience of risk for one of the interviewees who recently moved firms for the fourth time in as many years; and the experience of failure for another of the interviewees, unemployed for a year, though previously highly successful executive.

Chris Pash, former editor, correspondent, bureau chief and newswire chief executive, was a pimply cadet reporter at the Albany Advertiser in 1977 when activists launched Greenpeace's first direct action in Australia. He lives in Sydney and is Director of Content, Asia-Pacific, for the financial media group Dow Jones & Company. The Last Whale will be published in October by Fremantle Press.

Abstract: Reportage: Write inside the heads of Australia's last whalers

Jonny Lewis, long-haired activist son of a state Premier, met the Frenchman at a protest in June 1977. Jean-Paul Fortom-Gouin had bags of money and looked respectable in his sharp suits but he talked like a hippie and shared Jonny's passion for the whales. Together, they journeyed to the edge of the world in an open boat.

Kase Van Der Gaag, whaling ship master and gunner, called the boat a rubber ducky, a bathtub toy. It was a put down, one loved by his crew. He was going to lead these protesters around by their noses and teach them a lesson.

This paper discusses the paths and techniques to gift the reader with immediacy, a sense of now, of being inside the heads of real people creating history, sharing thoughts, fears, joys, wins and losses—and to do all that with an accuracy true to the experience.

The Last Whale narrative follows action recreated from memory mining through interviews, plus official documents including police witness statements, diaries and letters.

The use of scenes, and a minimum of summary, allows differing viewpoints of single events.

Language was used to give voice to each side of the saga: a whaler's point of view referred to 'rubber duckies' and used slang about wankers and useless bastards; anti-whaling activists had 'Zodiacs' and 1970s hippie talk of synchronicity and karma.

Amy Espeseth is originally from Barron, Wisconsin. She is pursuing a PhD in Creative Writing within the School of Culture and Communications at the University of Melbourne. She holds a MA in Creative Writing also from the University of Melbourne and teaches in both the Creative Arts and Creative Writing programs. Her research interests include the intersection of critical and creative perspectives on gender, place and religion and the ontological and spiritual revolution being led by radical ecofeminists. Her first novel will be published by Penguin Australia in 2008.

Abstract:

Creative: "Leaves" an Excerpt from *What Remains*

My novel-in-progress, *What Remains*, is essentially a confession regarding my life-long obsession with dead things (including the making, collecting and use thereof). As a young girl, I was raised not only as a fundamentalist christian but also to hunt and kill my own meat. As an adult woman, I am an ecofeminist theorist and nature-focused creative writer, most decidedly agnostic. I wish to explore the culture of fear and death in which I was raised while providing an apology, in both the senses of the word, for my deadly past. Although my first novel was based on real events, the membrane between fiction and creative-nonfiction is especially porous in my current work. The chapter to be read, "Leaves," explores historical embodied experiences of place, spiritual and cultural geography, and literary cartography as physical and physic mapping.

What Remains, is a narrative of metamorphosis. The female protagonist undertakes a journey of transformation from believer to heretic, helpmeet to feminist, virgin to not . . . and occasionally back again. Charting this path across America and Australia, the changing inner landscape of the character is mirrored by the outer landscape of freezing snow and burning dust. As a traditional nature writer, Sarah sees her world through the biology of the birds that surround her both physically and intellectually. When she begins to acknowledge the additional spiritual and psychic significance of her birds, she recognises that her world is populated by creatures and spirits both of and beyond the material world. Sarah divines her past, present and future from the sights and sounds of birds, moving her from fragmentation towards

integration, from inconsequential scribbler to influential augur. Via embrace of elements and alteration of virtues, *What Remains* seeks to embody the radical ecofeminist revolution.

Critical: "Meaning via Metamorphosis"

My research investigates different ways of understanding nature and the natural world through the intersection of Kathleen Norris' creative non-fiction and poetry and emerging ecofeminist theory. I posit ecosystems and landscapes as sites of investigation through which I explore the many perspectives of varying cultures, political beliefs, and philosophical paradigms towards the (alleged) human/nature divide. My work explores the evolving perception of the physical and spiritual world, the impact of landscape upon species and ecosystem, and the ongoing conversation and convergence of different religious, political, ethnic, scientific, and philosophical beliefs in regards to the natural world.

Although not considered an inherently ecological or feminist text, Norris' complex work will be extricated from its usually restrictive religious interpretation and instead be studied from a biographical and an existentialist, essentialist and panpsychic perspective. Norris' work focuses on metamorphosis of self including evolution, adaptation and acclimation. Both the process of becoming a believer or poet is one of formation: lived sensory experiences in the actual material world and in the spiritual world. The quest to constantly reinvent and renegotiate relations of power between gender and cultures results in ruptures, crisis, trauma, transition and growth. These dynamic states of being require the renegotiation of plural identities, including the relationship between woman and self, woman and another, woman and foresters, and woman and other.

12.30 – 1.30

Lunch

Sunday 18th May, 1.30 - 3.00

Room 1 - Exile

**With Aaron Mannion, Julie Fletcher and Susan Angel
Chaired by Danuta Raine**

Aaron Mannion is a Creative Writing PhD candidate at the University of Melbourne. Though born in Australia, he grew up in the Republic of Ireland. After a five year educational hiatus to pursue a sporting career, he finished his secondary education in England before reading English Literature at Emmanuel College, University of Cambridge. In 2006, he won the Jageurs Literary Competition organised by the Celtic Club in Melbourne for a story dealing with the Irish-Australian experience. His research interests include intimacy, 19th Century Literature, exile and autobiography. He was most recently published in the December 2007 edition of *Wet Ink*.

Abstract: The Hungry Grass: Travelling from Home

The title "The Hungry Grass" refers to a *pishrogue* (a superstitious story or belief) from Ireland where the unmarked graves of famine victims are said to cause weakness and wasting when walked upon. The hungry grass is a way of mapping cultural trauma onto a landscape and of explaining the deep relations of place and peoples. This creative non-fiction piece places the emotional hunger for particular landscapes and locales in tension with the desire to resist the consumption of a self-defined identity by its cultural context. It speaks to the rootedness of the individual in place as well as our desire to be unearthed and to live in the liberating discontinuity of exile.

Through both narrative events and an investment in the tradition of English literature, the story shows the particular challenges of reconciling a love of rural Ireland that is historically and geographically grounded with an absorption in British cultural products and traditions. Most importantly, the story is a love song for a landscape from the point of view of exile, both physical and psychological.

Julie Fletcher completed her PhD thesis, *Witnessing Tibet: Life Narrative as Testimony in the Tibetan Diaspora*, within the School of Communication and Creative Arts at Deakin University, Victoria, Australia. She is currently employed within the faculty of Arts and Education at Deakin University as a research assistant and sessional lecturer/tutor.

Abstract: Telling Stories: the art and the real in Tibetan testimony

"Tibetans longing to tell the truth to Westerners tell stories. They tell stories."

Laurie Hovell McMillin, *English in Tibet, Tibet in English*

The post-World War Two period has been described as the age of testimony, where, according to Felman and Laub (1992), testimony has become the literary mode *par excellence*. This same period has been characterised as the "third age" of human rights (Robertson 2002: xxxiii), when institutional frameworks have emerged for the hearing of the rights claims of individuals and peoples against state actors. At the same time, in recent years, an increasing number of scholars have begun to examine the "conjunctions" between the telling of (life) stories, and human rights movements and claims (Schaffer and Smith 2004).

Since the beginning of the Tibetan diaspora in 1959, English language life narratives – ranging from personal oral accounts to full-length autobiographical texts – have emerged as a central form of literary, cultural, and political practice among Tibetan refugees. In this development, personal stories have become increasingly gathered, translated, produced, published and mobilised transnationally as part of the political and rights-based activities of the Tibetan independence movement.

This paper examines examples of modern testimonial literature emerging within the Tibetan diaspora in the light of the tensions that emerge between the “art” and the “real” in narrative accounts that are mobilised as evidentiary, and as understood as “telling the true story of Tibet” to non-Tibetan audiences.

Susan Angel is a former radio news reporter for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation who now works as a Lecturer in Journalism at the University of Wollongong. Her interests in journalism extend beyond traditional reportage to literary non-fiction and fiction as well the intersection of these forms with History, English and Cultural studies. Her current research is concerned with issues of race, representation and identity in journalism, essay and creative writing.

Susan has a BA in communications majoring in Journalism and Politics from Canberra University, a MCA from University of Technology in Sydney and is currently working toward a DCA at the University of Wollongong.

Abstract: No one way of writing the interior: Creative non-fiction accounts of the journey to and from the Australian desert.

The Anglo Europeans who traveled to the desert as explorers, anthropologists and imperialists did so with ‘fixed’ notions of the Indigenous inhabitants and they documented their bizarre, dangerous and racist encounters in popular journalism and other non fiction texts.

The colonist’s journey was also a frequent trope in Australian literature such as Patrick White’s *Voss*, Xavier Herbert’s *Capricornia* and even in Aenus Gunn’s *We of the Never Never* remains a vivid and romantic one. Like *Voss*, Patrick White’s ‘othered’ German, many Anglo Europeans embark on the apocryphal journey to the ‘heart of darkness’ when undertaking the journey both to the centre of this country and to the heart of its colonial history.

This paper will interrogate contemporary literary and other cultural texts which are concerned with the European traveler, explorer, pioneer, saviour on their journey out, to and back from ‘the desert’; examine issues of identity construction on this journey and regard notions of place and space and how these are conceptualized in creative non fiction texts today.

Room 2 – Humour

With Peter Mitchell, Kylie Cardell and Will Noonan
Chaired by Brian Joyce

Peter Mitchell, MA (in Writing) (UWS), Dip. Ed. (UNE), BA Hons. (USYD), is in the third year of a PhD at Central Queensland University. Commissioned to write histories for the Clinical Oncological Society of Australia and the Freeman Sports Club, Peter has an MA in Creative Writing. He has an extensive history of published poetry and original song performance. He has reviewed poetry for TEXT: The Journal of the Australian Association of Writing Programs (2005). His triple compact disc and song-memoir *The Great Unknown* (Sydney: Mystery Woman Management, 1995) evokes the art and life of a hard working independent rock band in Sydney in the 1980s, and Peter is also the author of self-published travel memoirs *All About Shadows (Travelling in Italy, France and England)*, 1997, *Ulyses and Penelope (Travelling in Ireland)*, 2006; and *Forgotten Don Quixote (Travelling in Spain and Portugal)*, 2007. Peter worked for the Department of Immigration from 1990 to 2003. He was, amongst other things, Manager of the Villawood Immigration Detention Centre and, in 1999, Manager of the Kosovar and East Timorese 'Operation Safe Haven' at East Hills.

Abstract: A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Detention Centre: The use of humour in recounting serious, dramatic and sometimes tragic events in Immigration.

Is the use of humour, in the context of an Immigration memoir, a form of therapy, denial or something more sinister? Is it a 'coping mechanism' or a mask for inappropriate behaviour? The use of humour in Creative Non-Fiction has a long and proud history but few people in Australia have drawn on personal experience and attempted to write amusing stories about asylum seekers in mandatory detention. I will examine some of the ways 'black' or 'gallows humour' has been used in life-writing. I will also discuss my own efforts to ensure that my memoir laughs *with* people in detention or seeking asylum rather than *at* them.

Dr Kylie Cardell is a Lecturer in English and Creative Writing at Flinders University, Adelaide. Her work to date has focused on contemporary life narrative and in particular, on contemporary uses of the diary.

Abstract: Laughing and Forgetting: Ethics, the Author, and Humour Memoir.

In the recent turn to life narrative, in the turn to memoir that so many critics and cultural commentators have been noting as characteristic of nonfiction literary production in the last ten years, the authority of life narrative as 'real' and 'authentic' has been at the forefront of debate, scandal, and hoax. The very public flurry of recrimination around James Frey's memoir *A Million Little Pieces*, for example, or the scandal over Norma Khouris's *Forbidden Love* have been visible reminders that nonfiction, particularly autobiographical nonfiction, must tread carefully around boundaries between being 'creative' and being 'untruthful'. In humorous memoir, however, the opposite is true. The recent expose by *New Republic* journalist Alex Heard, that American humorist David Sedaris sometimes 'exaggerated' the truth, caused mostly ripples of derision among public commentators. *The Washington Post* called the revelation 'truly ridiculous.' Journalist Jon Carroll announced that he was "truly amazed that anyone thought David Sedaris' stories were literally true" and concluded that: "a humorist has lots of latitude because funny things don't usually write funny".

How do terms like creative non-fiction play into debates around authenticity and fact in life narrative? At what point must the author 'sacrifice' fact for story and to what point can they play with these boundaries. This paper follows these questions by reading the work of the American humorist David Sedaris, whose humorous vignette collections are variously labelled fact or fiction — and who is regularly exposed as a liar or a

deceiver in the popular press. In what circumstances are the facts not allowed to stand in the way of a good story? To what extent is the genre of humour one that life narrative has under examined? What are the ethics of the humour memoir?

Will Noonan is a PhD candidate jointly enrolled in the Department of English at the University of Sydney and at the University of Provence in France. His doctoral research focuses on the notion of "inappropriate humour" in French and English metafiction, including Sterne, Diderot, Flann O'Brien and Samuel Beckett. He also collaborates on the online journal "Philament" based at the University of Sydney.

Abstract: Reality through humour: the cunning art of metafiction

Humorous writing has traditionally had an uneasy relationship with reality, with categories such as parody, satire, Carnival and Menippeia implying a deformed and exaggerated mode of representation. Works such as Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* and Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds* tend to be read less as literary fiction than as self-conscious metafiction, and derive much of their humorous effect from violating the conventions of realistic narrative. But humour, while deforming, must also bear some relationship to reality in order to remain effective, suggesting that it is possible to read such works of literature as a type of creative non-fiction.

Drawing on examples from Sterne and O'Brien, this paper seeks to explore the productive tensions between humorous metafiction and the art of the real. Attempting to reconstruct forms of reality through humour highlights the need for a theoretical approach crossing between literature and history. Consequently, the paper will also consider some of the implications of Konstanz reception theory (Hans Robert Jauss, Wolfgang Iser) as well as the New Historicist notion of readerly negotiation via what is termed "the touch of the real".

Room 3 - The Poetics of Everyday
With Jill Jones, Astrid Lorange and Sarah Attfield
Chaired by Maria Freij

Jill Jones' fourth book, *Screens, Jets, Heaven: New and Selected Poems*, won the 2003 Kenneth Slessor Poetry Prize. Her latest books are *Broken/Open* (Salt, 2005), which was short-listed both for The Age Book of the Year 2005 and the Kenneth Slessor Poetry Prize 2006, and a 'tiny' hand-written book, *Speak Which: Hay(na)ku Poems* (Meritage Press, San Francisco, 2007). She has collaborated with photographer Annette Willis on a number of multi-media projects.

Abstract: How Poems Can Make Up A World

Experience enters the poem in many ways, of course. My paper explores a deliberate form of 'daily' (in this case, weekly) writing, the 'snapshots project'. The project began on the email list, poetryetc, first in 2001 and again in 2003. Essentially, various list members post poems to the list, in any form, to capture a 'moment', internal or exterior, 'the poetic equivalent of an instamatic photo', thereby making a kind of collective picture of that day around the world. Although I am no longer subscribed to the list, the project continues. I am still in contact with a number of these poets in Australia, the USA and elsewhere. Therefore, I am asking some of them to reflect on their experience of writing their 'snaps'. In particular, I want to explore how their daily experiences influenced (if at all) their posted poems in form and content, how list feedback or discussion affected them, what the project meant for the rest of their work and/or their poetics, and what they did with the writings they posted, ie have they been reworked or republished in other ways. I will also reflect on my own poetry and poetics in this light.

Astrid Lorange is at the fresh beginnings of a PhD on experimental language practice and radical modes of reading, writing and thinking about Gertrude Stein. She is doing her PhD at UTS, where she also works as a research assistant on a Cultural Studies project. She is part of a Sydney-based arts and performance collective, dkdc.

Abstract: Composing-As-Living: A Poetics Of The Essay

Gertrude Stein talks about composition as "the thing seen by every one living in the living they are doing." For Stein, composition is a mode of *living* one's contemporariness, that is, being connected to the contemporary (the everyday, the 'now' moment). This notion of composing-as-living is useful not only in terms of a critical engagement with Stein's oeuvre, but in a more general sense, in terms of *engagement with the real*. A commitment to the present is an ongoing process of experimentation, what Joan Retallack (referring to a Steinian notion of composition) calls an act of approaching the limits of near-unintelligibility. In other words, to compose in this contemporary space of real-time experimentation is to experience the very edge of what is (in a moment) possible and real.

Formal questions—say, for example, whether composition occurs as poetry or essay—are no longer particularly important. What is more important is the way in which composing-as-living can allow for a meaning-*full* engagement. Retallack describes the essay as a site of conversation and ongoing exchange between the composer and the reader; the essay as dynamic intercourse, dynamic discourse. The essay is part poem, part performance, part memoir and part meditation—and it is between these relationships that I would like to focus the paper.

Sarah Attfield has PhD in contemporary Australian working class poetry from UTS and is currently teaching in the cultural studies area at UTS. Her first collection of poetry, 'Hope in Hell' was published in 2000. She is working on a second collection that deals with working class London in the 1980s and includes punk rock, disaffected youth and lots of lager.

Abstract: Should poetry speak of the real? Can poetry be a vehicle for the truth? I would argue that some of the most memorable poetry is written about actual events and lived experiences. This poetry is often written with the intention of representing real people and exposing their lives to readers. There may be a powerful political message within the work – at times an overt, didactic message and at other times a more subtle one suggested by the subject matter or narrative. This can be seen in Australian poetry about working class experience – poetry that highlights the daily lives of working class people and reveals their particular hardships, values and successes. But why choose poetry to write about such themes? Wouldn't such messages about inequality and working class culture be easier to distribute in more accessible forms such as newspaper articles or even novels? Why would a working class writer decide to turn to poetry, when so few working class people attend poetry readings or buy collections of poems? I would suggest that contemporary Australian working class poetry shows how poetry can often be the most powerful and direct method of exposing the real.

3.00 – 3.30 Afternoon Tea

Sunday 18th May, 3.30 - 5.00

**Room 1 - Genre Truth Fiction
With Elizabeth Hanscombe, Martin Edmond and Maria Freij
Chaired by Katharine Aitken**

Elisabeth Hanscombe is a psychologist and writer who has published a number of short stories and articles in magazines and journals throughout Australia. She is currently undertaking a PhD at LaTrobe University on the topic 'Theories of Autobiography: Life writing and the desire for revenge'. She is interested in the ways in which psychoanalytic Object Relations theory intersects with that of narrative and the auto/biographical.

Abstract: Tensions between the real and the fictional in autobiography.

In this paper I write from an autobiographical perspective about the hazards of writing non-fiction and the impossibility of creating absolute truths about what is real. I also consider the ideas of writers such as Helen Garner, Lee Gutkind and Janet Malcolm to make the point that non-fiction writing and fiction writing are subject to similar constraints as regards creativity though both involve different writing processes from the onset. Arguments abound about the nature of the so-called 'Fourth Genre' of creative non-fiction writing and the degree to which the writer must declare the ambiguity of the writing from the onset to avoid duping the reader into a belief in its veracity. But the line is never clear however much we want to imagine. Even in journalism – the reporting of so-called facts – individual perspectives and subjectivity can significantly alter the translation and interpretation of those facts. The ideals of writing pure fiction and of writing pure fact are abstractions only. They cannot be realised, but we will no doubt continue to argue about them just as we continue to argue about the nature of truth and of what is real.

Martin Edmond was born Ohakune, New Zealand and grew up in small towns in the North Island. B.A. in Anthropology and English from Auckland University, 1974, M.A. with first class honours in English Language and Literature, Victoria University of Wellington, 1976. Joined Red Mole theatre troupe in 1977 and spent five years touring, working as an actor, writer, stage manager and lighting designer. Moved to Australia in 1981 via London, New York, Los Angeles and Auckland, to work in the film industry. Freelance writer of books and screenplays since 1984. 2004 literary fellow at the University of Auckland. Lives and writes in Sydney, Australia.

Abstract: The Fiction of Non-Fiction

Memory, Voice, Occasion

The fiction of non-fiction has a long history: there was alleged to be documentary evidence both for Plato's Atlantis and Euhemerus' Panchaea. For many medieval and early Renaissance readers the fantasies of Sir John Mandeville were truer than Rusticello's account of Marco Polo's travels. Daniel Defoe often framed his fictions as non-fictions. Fernando Pessoa's incomplete life work, *Fictions of the Interlude*, was to include the writings of all but one of his many heteronyms: the exception was the semi-heteronym Bernardo Soares, author of *The Book of Disquiet's* 'factless autobiography'. Some of Jorge Luis Borges' *ficciones* were first published as essays. W G Sebald called his longer books 'prose works of indeterminate form.' The archaic Greek muses were three: Mneme (memory), Aoide (voice, song) and Melete (occasion or practice); but our English word, fiction, comes from Latin, *fictio*, to fashion, to shape, with particular reference to the working of clay: is a work of non-fiction then not made? This paper will discuss the fiction of non-fiction with reference to the authors and works cited above,

and the key concepts of memory, voice and occasion—intrinsic to fiction and non-fiction alike, and a way perhaps beyond an increasingly irrelevant distinction.

Maria Freij is a Swedish poet who moved to Australia five years ago. She teaches at the University of Newcastle and is interested in literary representations of melancholy, place, and identity as well as in translation between English, Swedish, and French. She recently submitted her PhD in Creative Writing—a thesis focusing on the Swedish tradition, and a book of poetry called *I Was Here*. She is currently working on a collection of novellas, *Drowning and Other Stories*, and a children's book: *Looking for Laura*.

Abstract: "The Lingering Fog of Childhood: The Image as Truth in *I Was Here*"

This paper explores the relationship between the image and the truthful representation of self, landscape, and memory in the book of poems *I Was Here*. The obsession with childhood imagery in this collection, and in the works of two major influences: Swedish poets Lars Gustafsson and Tomas Tranströmer, is discussed in its relation to landscapes past. Writing to salvage moments, images, people, and selves from oblivion is likely to involve some form of revisionism in that it allows fictional responses. This allows for the other truth to be spoken, the emotional truth rather than the historical one. This is not to say that the autobiographical element of writing the past is untrue, but it allows for a reliving of moments and for the enunciation of outcomes which could not have occurred at the time. Few would argue that their truth is universal after postmodernism, but perhaps even fewer would admit to lying. This paper explores how the most honest of rhetorical tools: the image, allows for the poem as a whole to function as metaphor and for slivers of truth to come together allowing poetry to function as a place where physical and emotional truths are allowed to coexist.

Room 2 - Indigenous/Non-Indigenous Film With Brooke Collins-Gearing, Therese Davis and Nancy Wright Chaired by Hamish Ford

Brooke Collins-Gearing is a lecturer in the School of Humanities and Social Science, University of Newcastle. She is a Kamilaroi woman. She received her PhD from the University of Newcastle with an enormous amount of support from the people at Umulliko and Wollotuka. She taught at the University of Southern Queensland for two years until coming back home. She has two bossy little men.

Abstract: White women trippin over: non-Indigenous women and their need to represent the "real" Indigenous sista.

By focusing on popular non-Indigenous women children's authors of the twentieth century, this paper discusses the ways in which white women ignore, misrepresent, fabricate and trip over their own understanding and experiences of Indigenous peoples and knowledges. The research, which was the result of a fellowship from the New South Wales State Library, is not concerned with "how" white women represent Indigenous women, rather it examines how white women recognised, and at times, tripped over, their own awareness of Indigenous peoples. These moments of awareness expose the tensions between what is "real" and what is "fictional" and for the white women authors, what they can acknowledge and what they can't.

Therese Davis is a Senior Lecturer in Film and TV Studies at Monash University.

Abstract: The Realities of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Collaborative Creative Projects.

In 2002 the feature film *Australian Rules* sparked a heated debate about fictional stories dealing with Indigenous content. At issue was the film's fictionalisation of a real event - the death of two Aboriginal youths who were shot by a white publican in a small town in South Australia in 1977 - and the question of who 'owns' this story, who has the right to tell it. One of the aims of our panel is to draw on both Indigenous and non-Indigenous bodies of knowledge to unpack the culturally different conceptualisations of story, ownership and authorship at the heart of this controversy. Our main aim, however, is to consider other ways in which Indigenous and non-Indigenous people have come together to create artistic works dealing with Indigenous content, and how these collaborative projects might challenge the Romantic and, we suggest, colonial ideas of ownership and authorship promoted by the makers of *Australian Rules*. Presenting a range of case studies, we examine the realities of collaborative partnerships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous writers, filmmakers, artists and communities - that is, the actual dialogue and artistic practices that occur in these projects. We examine how these conversations and practices can inform the works' representations of Indigenous history, law, and identity, as well as the realities of colonisation, such as dispossession, and, more recently, ideas of reconciliation. Finally, we address the issue of reception and readership, paying particular attention to the ways in which collaborative projects are framed and packaged for consumption by non-Indigenous readers and viewers.

Professor Nancy Wright is Head of School, Humanities and Languages, at the University of Western Sydney.

Room 3 - Life-writing
With Danuta Raine, Oliver Haag and David Kelly
Chaired by Keri Glastonbury

Danuta Raine is a PhD candidate at The University of Newcastle in creative writing and English, focusing on personal and family stories as a part of post WWII European diaspora in Australia. Her work has taken the form of short stories, narrative fiction and ficto-critical essays, where she blends personal voice with critical discourse. In writing creative non-fiction, Danuta negotiates analysis and narrative so as to involve the reader within these experiences of ethnicity and identity.

Abstract: Fictocriticism: The Voice within Me

I grew up in Newcastle, in a street with a pipe works down the end. My mother was a migrant, my father was a teacher, but not a regular "Yes, Sir. No, Sir" sort of teacher. He was the type of teacher who had done his Leaving at Night School, while working as a carpenter during the day. So, in my house, instead of doing teacher type things like read Jane Austen, we shouted at each other through walls and ducked when fists flew wide. That is why it is strange to think that my life was shaped by essays, by Bacon, Robert Louise Stephenson and Orwell, but in this house of calamities, my father found a way to love his strangely academic daughter through his Night School texts of 19th and 20th Century essays, and with William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*. I suppose that is why that, even from an early age, I really couldn't see the difference between a good argument and a good story.

Fictocriticism is a powerful way of relating the presence of self with the broader culture of academia. Too often it is assumed that the academy is outside the regular world of day to day activities, that it is the 'ivory tower' in which out of touch magicians wield their wands. Fictocriticism puts lie to this claim, particularly in my case where it offers me a transparent voice. Through this genre I am able to convey the critical matters I find important by couching them within the social and personal stories which give them their strength.

Oliver Haag was born in Graz and studied History and Political Science at the University of Vienna, Austria. He specialised in the history of historiography and auto/biography, Indigenous Studies, and theories of nation-building, with particular interest in Australia and Canada. Oliver is the author of academic writings on published Indigenous auto/biographies and gender history.

Abstract: The Power of Form
Indigenous Australian Auto/Biography and the Question of Genre

Auto/Biography has become one of the most popular genres to which Indigenous writers and intellectuals excel. This has many reasons: The primarily self-referential nature of auto/biography maintains Indigenous truth regimes and ethical obligations not to impart foreign knowledge. The generic proximity between auto/biography and history provides the possibility of re-connecting with the past and re-telling history. Furthermore, the truth effects emanating from non-fictional genres are often deemed an adequate means to underpin the veracity of the respective story. Considering the current debates on truthfulness in inter-racial history, this appears to be of central importance. Lastly, audiences, as is sometimes said, tend to perceive 'factual' genres much more real and thus threatening than fictional forms. Auto/Biography, it seems, is an ideal genre.

At the same time, however, when applied to Indigenous writings, auto/biography counts among the most criticised forms: it has been decried as a 'battler genre', an expression of Western individualism and egocentrism. This resembles, in a sense, the feminist critique of the androcentric character of auto/biography. Moreover, the generic complexity and ambiguity of many Indigenous auto/biographies have led to a use of similar, though at times fictional, genres - *inter alia*, life writing, auto/ethnography, novel, and history.

This paper identifies and discusses the different forms assigned to Indigenous auto/biography in scholarly discourse. It examines the importance attached to non-fictional genres and, finally, it explores the question of whether there is something like a truth of form, which has a bearing on the text.

David Kelly's first novel *Fantastic Street*, was published by Picador in 2003 and he is currently enrolled in the PhD program within the school of creative writing.

Abstract: Zebra Crossings: non-indigenous writers writing Indigenous lives and the justifications used for this continuing practice.

Over the last decade Indigenous writers and artists have called for non-indigenous writers to cease writing the Indigenous experience: that Black stories are for Black writers. This call led the Australian Society of Authors to release a discussion paper titled *Writing about Indigenous Australia - Some issues to consider and protocols to follow*. Anxieties surrounding issues of appropriation, have given rise to polite and considered explanations (apologies of sorts), for this continuing practice within the work of non-indigenous writers. Set within introductions, conclusions, acknowledgements, these explanations serve as zebra crossings, supposedly allowing passage over, to, or through Indigenous stories. My paper will explore these explanations, including examples from within my own work.
