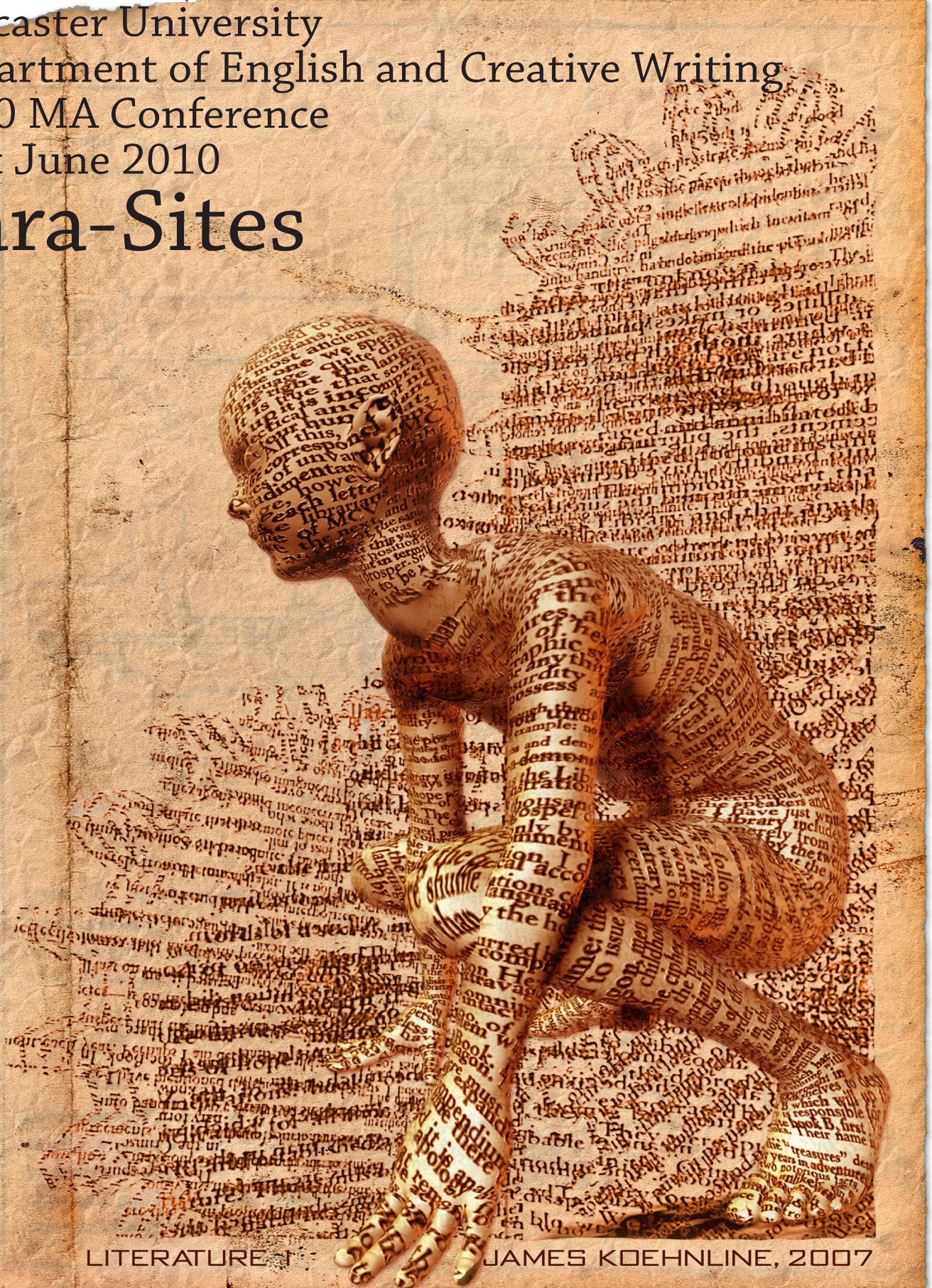




Lancaster University
Department of English and Creative Writing
2010 MA Conference
21st June 2010
Para-Sites



LITERATURE | JAMES KOEHLIN, 2007

Time	Room 5	Room 6
09:30 - 10:00	GUEST SPEAKER: John Schad	
10:00 - 10:45	COMEDY AND INHUMAN LAUGHTER Chair: Joel Evans Mary Stringer : 'Evolving humour and genre development in Agatha Christie and Raymond Chandler' Maria Christou: "Inhuman' laughter in Anthony Burgess' <i>A Clockwork Orange</i> '	VICTORIAN FEMALE WRITERS Chair: Amanda Skelson Laura Swinburne: 'And they all lived happily ever after... or did they?' Yajie Wang: 'The impact of females upon males in <i>Middlemarch</i> '
10:45 - 11:15	Coffee / Tea Break	
11:15 - 12:15	HORROR AND VIOLENCE Chair: Rachel Holland Gareth Jones: 'Fitting In: The Films of Shane Meadows' Andreani Tomasiidou: 'Blame it on my parent!: Violence as a Solution to Negative Familial Influence in Noir Texts and Films' Lucy Hodge: 'At the Border of my Condition: Horror and Abjection in <i>Frankenstein</i> '	PLACE AND IDENTITY Chair: Abbie Lea O'Mahoney Emma Holiday: 'The postmodern geography of the city and the self in three key works of 1980s Blank Fiction' Charlotte McCool: 'Resisting the royal panoptic gaze in Thomas Wyatt's "blind maze chained"' Vadiveloo Anandarathnam: 'Waiting To Be Told - The Forgotten India of Mistry's Novels'
12:15 - 13:15	Lunch Break	
13:15 - 14:15	GOTHICS Chair: Rachel Holland Daniel Savage: 'The Gothic Anti-Hero and the Carnavalesque' Rachel Holland: 'Searching for the Other: Attachment Theory and Mark Z. Danielewski's <i>House of Leaves</i> ' Mehrunissa Shah: 'The Gothicness of Goths: Reading Ruskinian Gothic in Shakespeare's <i>Titus Andronicus</i> '	PLACE AND SPACE Chair: Richard Finn Sharon Taylor: 'Progressive Places Versus Stagnant Sites in Charlotte Brontë's <i>Jane Eyre</i> ' Marjan Yazdanpanahi: ' <i>David Copperfield</i> : Home and Un-Home' Tony Sims: 'Shelley's Sirens of Paradise'

Time	Room 5	Room 6
<p>14:15 - 15:15</p>	<p><i>IDENTITY AND THE BODY</i> Chair: Vadiveloo Anandaratnam Joel Evans : “What you’re telling me is about something else, and I was hoping for something about you” The (Im) possibility of originality in Caryl Churchill’s <i>A Number</i></p> <p>Abbie Lea O’Mahoney: ‘Coma: Parasite or Para(sites)?’</p> <p>Richard Finn: ‘Identity Construction and Possible Selves in Physical Trauma Narratives’</p>	<p><i>LANGUAGE AND RESPONSE</i> Chair: Tony Sims Athina Rafailidi: ‘A critical discussion on the role of semiotics in understanding media language, culture and society’</p> <p>Gözde Ersoy: ‘The effect of reading “Cheating at Canasta”’</p> <p>Chris Verity: ‘Love and Theft: Borrowing, Parody and Pastiche in the music of Bob Dylan’</p>
<p>15:15 - 15:45</p>	<p>Coffee / Tea Break</p>	
<p>15:45 - 16:15</p>	<p><i>SPECULATIVE FICTION</i> Chair: Daniel Savage John Almond: ‘Between X and A: Stories of the past and the future(s) in Douglas Coupland’s <i>Generation</i> novels.’</p> <p>Alicia McCray: ‘Full steam ahead? Exploring Steampunk Romance in Katie MacAlister’s <i>Steamed: A steampunk romance</i> and Gail Carriger’s <i>Soulless</i>’</p>	<p><i>CONCEPTS OF GENDER</i> Chair: Athina Rafailidi Amanda Skelson: ‘Victorian Angels’</p> <p>Joanna Zukunft: ‘Food, Consumption and the Female Body’</p>

ROOM FIVE

10:00 - 10:45

COMEDY

AND

INHUMAN

LAUGHTER



Mary Stringer:

'Evolving Humour and Genre Development in Agatha Christie and Raymond Chandler'

This paper will explore the themes of humour and genre development in the works of Agatha Christie and Raymond Chandler. In her 1971 essay 'The Desegregation of Art', Muriel Spark declares that the best way to attack violence is to 'ruthlessly mock' it (p24). This is certainly true in the case of crime fiction, in which humour has often been employed in order to create satiric effect across the genre. It is my belief that generic development within crime fiction has directly influenced the evolution of the type- and resulting effect- of the humour. Genre development in crime fiction has generally been attributed to contextual socio-political changes, and it is my belief that these changes can also be made accountable for the changing strains of humour; for example, gentle grotesque parody is traditionally well suited for use in a country house mystery plot designed for a pre-war audience, whereas a 'tough', cynical, wise-cracking humour is naturally more appropriate to the post-war sensibility of social realism which is so often reflected in the 'hard-boiled' novels of writers like Hammett and Chandler. I feel that little has been done to explore the resulting effects of the change in humour over time in crime fiction; satire is well known for both its potential distancing effect and its capacity to induce reader collusion, and it is my belief that these effects take place in different measures across the genre. With the development of genre and the resulting alteration in humour, the participation of the reader necessarily increases; the satiric mode of humour induces higher levels of collusion in the reader, who is forced to position himself within the text- most often on the side of the protagonist. The purpose of my thesis, then, will be to document and analyse the collusive effects of satire in relation to the generic development of the crime novel.

Maria Christou:

"Inhuman' laughter in Anthony Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange*'

Laughter, by being considered to be a spontaneous response that is produced through a rational understanding of a situation, is included in the litany of the differentiating characteristics between man and animal, or machines. This paper will start by reciting some of the main arguments of the claim that 'laughter cannot exist outside the pale of what is strictly Human' (Bergson, p.3). The purpose is to introduce counter-arguments that ultimately expose laughter as an automatic reaction, through the use of the concepts of reaction (as opposed to response) and the idea of conditioning the body. This will be illustrated through examples mainly from Anthony Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange* but also with brief references to other texts such as Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* and Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*. The argument will not be limited to literary texts but will make extensive references to philosophy, history and biology since laughter is a subject that demands a multi-disciplinary approach. The final aim of the paper will be to, through the examination of laughter, examine the way in which humanist concepts can be fundamentally challenged.

ROOM SIX

10:00 - 10:45

VICTORIAN

FEMALE

WRITERS



Laura Swinburne:

'And They All Lived Happily Ever After... Or Did They?'

This paper will examine the narrative ending of the gothic romance novel using Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* and Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*. Alexander Welsh suggested that 'endings are critical points for analysis in all examinations of plot; quite literally, any action is defined by its ending.' Considering both novels are seen as classics in contemporary literature and as such they have both received ample amounts of criticism, many critics have often failed to explore the endings of both novels in much detail. Therefore this paper will explore the conventions that are used by both authors to end their novels, especially the use of marriage. Karen Newman argued that by using 'the theme of marriage as an ending, writers inevitably become submissive to the traditional masculine narrative that allots women with love and men with the world.' In *Jane Eyre* Mr Rochester and Jane only marry after he is maimed and blinded by his first wife Bertha Mason and as a result the traditional gender roles are subverted because Jane is placed in dominant position over Rochester. In *Wuthering Heights* Young Catherine Linton marries Hareton Earnshaw who is illiterate and as such she is placed in a dominant position over him. Therefore I will argue that even though both authors use marriage to conclude their novels they do so in order to deconstruct the traditional masculine conventions rather than to support them.

Yajie Wang:

'The impact of females upon males in *Middlemarch*'

This paper will examine the influences of females upon males in George Eliot's *Middlemarch: A Study of Provincial Life*. Though George Eliot, as one of the greatest female writers in the Victorian period, has attracted a great number of critics' interests, few commentators have devoted much attention to the contribution made by her fiction to debates about the influence of females upon males in the patriarchal society. The focus of their arguments can be summarized in two ways. The first is that, in the process of her writing, she tries to escape the bonds of gender bias so that she is able to praise the virtues and criticize the weakness of both genders. The second is about the theme of her works. Under the male pseudonym "George Eliot", she avenged the patriarchal society by depicting the male characters in *Middlemarch* as moral weaklings. Women in her work walk as superior beings. Though females have to submit to the patriarchal values, they triumph inwardly and psychologically. They try to survive and succeed within the limited social environment and they use the only career available to them-marriage-to exert profound impact on the males around them for good or bad aspects, Dorothea and Mr. Casaubon; Mary Garth and Fred Vincy; Rosamond and Dr. Lydgate for instance. This paper will thus investigate the relationship between men and women in the Victorian society from the feminine perspective to reread George Eliot's masterpiece *Middlemarch*.

ROOM FIVE

11:15 - 12:15

HORROR AND VIOLENCE



Gareth Jones:

'Fitting In: The Films Of Shane Meadows'

My conference paper will focus on the ideas linking the presentation of the suburban environment in British cinema by utilising spatial theories through analysis of the films of Shane Meadows. Though little discussed in a critical context, recent debate has begun to draw attention to Meadows' works as a conveyor of "regional" as opposed to "national" film. In particular this analysis has begun to centre on the use of his native Midlands settings, an area rarely depicted in cinema previously, and in reference to his display of place and geographical representation. The mainstream success of this defiance of location convention, in a climate traditionally displaying a traditional North/South divide in British film and culture is the issue that I intend to analyse further. I will conduct this investigation by analysing Meadows' usage of physical landscape and the presentation of architecture in his films, alongside the depictions of interior spaces highlighting other issues such as their evocation of class status. I will also argue that Shane Meadows' use of non-descript Midlands towns and use of other unrecognisable places on screen elicits anonymity in the sense of place that allows the horror impact of a film to be greatly magnified. For example, the generic backdrop of *Dead Man's Shoes* signals viewers to realise perceptions of normality, that this is not happening in London, or "another" big city, but that it is entirely plausible that the terror is now localised to somewhere that is now eerily recognisable despite its unfamiliarity.

Andreani Tomasidou:

'Blame it on my Parent!: Violence as a Solution to Negative Familial Influence in Noir Texts and Films'

By focusing on a specific aspect of the noir thriller, that of violence, this paper is interested in examining the role of the family unit in the creation of perilous criminals. In so many examples of the noir genre, the family, and specifically the parent, is pinpointed as the primary reason for the dangerous actions of its offspring as the parent can significantly cause negative experiences to the young individual. The paper makes use of specific noir texts and films, such as Starr's *Cold Caller* and Hitchcock's *Psycho* respectively, and by fusing the results of the close reading of the texts, it attempts to examine three key points. Firstly, it examines the different representations of family in the specific texts and films. In relation to that, it studies the phenomenon of violence and focuses on the various degrees that it may acquire, from the level of masochism and self-inflicted pain to that of sadism and serial killing. Secondly, it seeks to locate the reasons why for the offspring violence is the sole available option in order to express his/her repressed desires, or fears. Thirdly, the paper explores the possibility whether this noir solution of violence is an attack towards single-headed families, whether these are lead by the mother or the father. This dissertation falls into the viewpoint category of papers. Since it examines noir novels and films, it is entirely library-based and, in addition to film theorists' and literary critics' perspectives, it uses surveys and charts that are parts of psychological research, so as to explore the degree to which these noir texts are a realistic response to real-life situations.

Lucy Hodge:

'At the Border of my Condition: Horror and Abjection in *Frankenstein*'

No clearer example of abjection exists in Romantic literature than that of Adam in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* – that 'monster' is a paradigm of Kristeva's theory of abjection. The most visceral example of abjection in life is that of the rotting corpse – it is not a sterile signifier, but a traumatic reminder of the fragility of the human body, and the transience of existence. A policeman vomiting at his first murder-site exemplifies that automatic abjecting of the corpse. How much worse, then, for Frankenstein, faced with a living corpse, his own creation? Thus is horror the centre-point for this paper. In *Powers of Horror*, Kristeva writes, 'From its place of banishment, the abject does not cease challenging its master.' The applicability of this statement to Adam as abject is clear; but I argue that Frankenstein is similarly abjected by his own creation. Thus, this paper explores the dual nature of abjection in Frankenstein, not merely the abjection of Adam. For Kristeva, abjection begins at the point of birth; it 'preserves what existed in the archaism of pre-objectal relationship, in the immemorial violence with which a body becomes separated from another body in order to be.' Frankenstein is not Adam's literal mother; he does not give a physical birth to the monster; but I argue that the emotional abjecting has the same function in Frankenstein, for the doctor is necessarily the mother-figure for his creation. Frankenstein's certain death at the hand of Adam is the final abjecting in a relationship that has mutual abjection at its heart.

ROOM SIX

11:15 - 12:15

PLACE AND IDENTITY



Emma Holiday:

'The postmodern geography of the city and the self in three key works of 1980s Blank Fiction'

In New York in 1980, Jay McInerney lunched with a top publisher, who told him that, 'the novel was dead, that [his] own generation didn't read books any more, certainly not fiction [... and] that there had never really been a great New York novel.' Throughout the 1980's there was an abundance of literature written about the state of America, dealing with issues such as politics, the economy and class; but two main themes stand out as having a huge impact on the novels of this time, and they are place and identity. Some key examples of this type of fiction were written by Bret Easton Ellis, Jay McInerney and Tama Janowitz who formed the core of what was dubbed by the media of the time as the 'Literary Brat Pack', a group of exciting young authors who were making waves on the literary scene with controversial fictions, which today have been, 'hailed, and condemned as [defining] document[s] of the '80's zeitgeist.' A sense of angst prevails in their work and provides a conflicted view of not only New York but the whole of America, leaving the reader with a real sense of both the highs and lows of the 'city' in '80's America. I will be asking how they use both place and identity to create their critiques of an America in a time of great economic contrast and political change, and this has affected the development of the postmodern American city novel.

Charlotte McCool:

'Resisting the Royal Panoptic Gaze in Thomas Wyatt's 'Blind Maze Chained''

In the sixteenth-century a hedge maze was constructed underneath King Henry VIII's royal apartment window at the Palace of Nonsuch. Sarah Van der Laan has suggested that Henry's gaze over his courtiers in the labyrinth would have functioned as an analogy of his masterful position at court. [1] In Foucauldian terms, this is suggestive of the power dynamics of the panopticon. Strikingly, Thomas Wyatt – Henrician courtier, diplomat and poet – takes up the trope of the labyrinth as an important spatial metaphor in his writings. Critics such as Tom Betteridge view Wyatt's negotiation of this symbol as a subtle inscription of Henry's tyrannical rule, a 'blind maze chained'. ('If amorous faith', line 1). My paper however, seeks to challenge and complicate this restrictive view of Wyatt as a static figure with limited agency. I want to suggest that on closer inspection, Wyatt's labyrinth conceit suggests more complex contours to his subjectivity. By theorising the poet's identity spatially and drawing on theoretical approaches associated with Stephen Greenblatt, I will argue that Wyatt creates a rhetorical shifting self which refuses to 'stand...fast' (line 7) within his subjugated position in the maze. Forging links between material and metaphoric mazes, I will suggest that Wyatt's poems themselves are labyrinthine sites endlessly imbued with different interpretations. Ultimately, my purpose is to explore the textual manoeuvres by which Wyatt's poetic persona negotiates the labyrinth, questioning the extent to which his poetic strategies reshape the hierarchical apportionment of authority between king and courtier.

Vadiveloo Anandaratham:

'Waiting To Be Told - The Forgotten India of Mistry's Novels'

My proposed paper will highlight how Mistry's novels foreground alternative voices/histories that significantly reconfigure the plurality and partiality of the Sub-continent's recent past. It will also examine the view how the author's fiction is also about heroism in an age where mere survival is a heroic act. In endeavouring to postulate these alternative histories and voices of the marginalised, Mistry's novels irrevocably undermine many existing, traditional narratives of India's recent past. The implications of this, my study will demonstrate, are equally significant and deserving of close scrutiny. By mapping the shifts between the local and the universal in Mistry's novels, my project aims also to identify how a process of "Othering" is central to the author's critique of post-Independence India and more significantly, how this process addresses his interest in politics in two spheres – the national and the cultural. Whereas many postcolonial writers disrupt the very form of the novel as a means of reasserting the central relevance of their experience, Mistry chooses to do otherwise. He does not challenge the classical form of the novel, but reasserts its predominance in the telling of tales. My project will explore Mistry's preferred style of realism and will examine the author's decision to introduce a multiplicity of perspectives within an overall omniscient realist narrative. Particular attention will be focused on the humanism of his narration and the grandeur of his narrative tapestry which gives a universal dimension to his characters, who, therefore, become embodiments of a universal human condition.

ROOM FIVE

13:15 - 14:15

GOTHICS



Daniel Savage:

'Conference Abstract: The Gothic Anti-hero and the Carnavalesque'

// Carnival is the people's second life, organized on the basis of laughter [...] As opposed to the official feast, one might say that carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms and prohibitions. Carnival was the true feast of time...". Rabelais's views on the carnivalesque could have been made for the Gothic. It is a genre dealing with social disruption, populated by outsiders and rebels, where everything you know can be inverted and destroyed. Dracula brings the unknown to Victorian society, leaving, amongst other things, their perception of women in tatters, thanks to his transformation of Lucy. In a more contemporary example, Neil Gaiman's *American Gods* features immigrant Gods; the old, abandoned Gods of Egypt and Norway trapped in America, desperately trying to attract belief. Brett Easton Ellis writes about the drug-fuelled, responsibility free world of yuppie America, his 'heroes' living in a permanent Carnival feast. Joss Whedon, in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Angel*, brings us vampires who embrace the outsider, party lifestyle, in addition to their natural disregard for social norms. In Mervyn Peake's *Gormenghast*, Steerpike embraces responsibility to further his anarchic goals. All of these texts have their anti-heroes and villains feeding from society in different ways, with no regard for the consequences. I aim to discuss precisely how the carnivalesque turns these texts parasitic.

Rachel Holland:

'Searching for the Other: Attachment Theory and Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves*'

Psychoanalytic interpretations of Gothic texts tend to figure horror as a projection of inner fragmentation, and an abjection of those parts of ourselves which we must cast off in order to maintain the imago of unified selfhood. An understanding of attachment theory can expand on this critical orthodoxy, opening up avenues of interpretation which provide space for the role of the Other in the experience of insecurity and anxiety. Attachment theory is becoming increasingly influential in the fields of psychoanalysis and psychotherapy, and the relational view of subjectivity that it propounds is now widely adhered to. *House of Leaves* is a notoriously dense and problematic text to analyze. Danielewski is ambivalent to say the least with regard to the critical community, and his novel has a tendency to arm itself against interpretation; meaning that any attempt at exegesis is fraught with difficulty. However, an examination of the vital function that the concept of the Other carries in the thematic labyrinth of *House of Leaves* can provide interesting readings of this influential text, revealing links between some of its myriad concerns. This paper will argue that fear in *House of Leaves* is, ultimately, a consequence of estrangement from the Other, and not merely an intra-psychic phenomenon. Through an exploration of the themes of the labyrinth, the Minotaur, darkness, and, most importantly, the ethics of reading, the paper will illustrate the persistent preoccupation with the Other which characterizes Danielewski's novel. In *House of Leaves* what is frightening is not the irreconcilable contradictions which form the basis of selfhood, but rather the prospect of an existence without the love and understanding of our fellow humans.

Mehrunissa Shah:

'The Gothicness of Goths: Reading Ruskinian Gothic in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*'

Ruskin wrote extensively on the merits of Gothic architecture and art in his *Stones Of Venice* and the need to preserve Gothic architecture. In *Titus Andronicus* Shakespeare writes of a profound desire to perpetuate Gothicness in Rome. Can it be that there is then a possibility of reading Ruskin's works with an intertextual approach and illuminate Shakespeare's most detested and controversial play? Whilst Ruskin never discusses having read *Titus Andronicus*, the critic held Shakespeare in relatively high esteem. Is it possible that in reading Gothicism in *Titus Andronicus* from a Ruskinian perspective forces us to consider the modus operandi of the Goth tribe that infiltrates Roman society? I propose that Ruskin's allusions to what the Gothic is comprised of, is what Shakespeare portrays in his Gothic tribe in *Titus Andronicus*. There are marked affinities between nineteenth century defined 'Gothic' and the historical Gothic tribes portrayed in works such as Shakespeare's. Ruskin wrote in 'Gothic Palaces' that, 'The other Gothic structures are much injured by the continual juxtaposition of the Renaissance palaces, as the latter are aided by it; they exhaust their own life by breathing it into Renaissance coldness' (Vol 10: 271-272). In *Titus Andronicus* the Goths are injured by the Roman establishment, which gives rise to the barbarity that ensues. I propose here is a consistency in Ruskin's Gothic traits and those exhibited by Tamora and her sons in the play and their interaction with Roman culture. What is praised in Ruskinian is stigmatised in Shakespeare, much as Renaissance historiographers claimed darkness fell over Europe when the Goths and Vandals ran over Rome becoming a parasitic race. This is reflective of the authors own standpoints; Ruskin as defender of the Gothic and Shakespeare a dramatist of the Renaissance.

ROOM SIX

13:15 - 14:15

PLACE AND SPACE



Sharon Taylor:

'Progressive Places Versus Stagnant Sites in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*'

This paper will explore the concept of place as presented in *Jane Eyre*. It will draw on spatial theory and will examine two different approaches to place. Firstly it will look at place from the humanistic perspective of Yi-Fu Tuan who views place in terms of 'rootedness' and considers place to be "... about stopping and resting and becoming involved." ¹ He defines place from an 'inside' viewpoint and considers place as being where somebody belongs. In contrast to this is Doreen Massey's perspective of place. She adopts a more modern, social constructionist approach and considers place from an 'outside' perspective. Place, for her, is not simply about being rooted to one spot, but is instead concerned with progressiveness and mobility. Place is thought of as an 'event' and "...is marked by openness and change rather than boundedness and permanence." This paper will argue that Brontë's text can be seen to draw parallels with Massey's theory of place as *Jane Eyre* moves between five different locations throughout the novel, from Gateshead to Ferndean. Jane opts for movement rather than stasis, initiating each change of place of her own free will. This paper will discuss the ambiguities regarding place however, and will consider the problem of "non-place" if one chooses to adopt Massey's mode of thinking. The fact that Jane ultimately returns to Rochester could also be seen as more indicative of Tuan's perspective of place. The concept of place, therefore, is not clear-cut and this paper will consider such irresolution.

Marjan Yazdanpanahi:

'David Copperfield: 'Home' or 'Un-Home''

This paper will look at the moments when David Copperfield feels homeless at home. Home has a special meaning for Dickens. In fact, a house won't guarantee a 'home'. Someone could be living in his own house but still feel homeless. It is because one important factor for Dickens for someone to feel at home is the extent to which that person feels happy at home. Therefore, if someone is staying with some people and is happy there, it can be considered as home. That's what exactly happens to David Copperfield. He starts to feel homeless at home as soon as Murdstones come to live with them. This paper will look at these moments and the reason why David feels so. The paper will also discuss David's attitude towards his mother because she plays a very important role in David's feelings.

Tony Sims:

'Shelley's Sirens of Paradise'

This paper will seek to examine the manner in which Percy Bysshe Shelley, a famously atheist writer, applies the Christian concept of 'paradise' to secular ideas. In particular, it will examine the longing for paradise which is present in Shelley's love poetry, especially those poems addressed to Jane Williams. As Jonathan Bate suggests in *The Song of the Earth*, Shelley seems to take a religious concept and commit an 'act of violence' upon it in order to create a new, secularised 'work of art' – this can be seen in the poem 'The Serpent is Shut Out From Paradise', where Shelley directly references Genesis 3:12 in reference to the relationship between Jane and her husband, Edward, to whom the poem was sent. This poem is largely representative of Shelley's love poetry, and seems to be founded upon the Platonic idea that love arises from a lack or a feeling of deficiency in the lover, who seeks the beloved to fill this gaping void. Although Shelley is obviously building upon the traditional form of the love poem, as particularly exemplified by the courtly sonnets of Petrarch, Wyatt and many others, it is interesting to note that he continually uses religious imagery in his love poetry. This paper will argue that this repeated Platonic representation of the romantic relationship between lovers presents it as an analogue of the Biblical 'fall', and as such equates the unobtainable beloved with the lost Garden of Eden, in other words, with paradise.

ROOM FIVE

14:15 - 15:15

IDENTITY AND BODY



Joel Evans:

“What you’re telling me is about something else, and I was hoping for something about you’: The (Im)possibility of Originality in Caryl Churchill’s *A Number*”

This paper will deal with the concept of originality in relation to Caryl Churchill’s play, *A Number*. Churchill’s play deals with a number of issues regarding this concept, via the use of this clone-orientated script. The main way this is navigated is through the treatment of identity, and the self. The play focuses on one father, and three sons, two of which are clones. The play then deals with a number of ways one might view identity; from a perspective of one’s own identity or self, to another’s perception of one’s own identity/self. Jean Baudrillard has said that turning the double ‘into flesh and blood’ transforms ‘the operation of the double from a subtle interplay involving death and the Other into the bland eternity of the same’. In many ways Churchill’s play can be seen as evoking this sentiment. However, the issue of originality within the play is something which makes this notion problematic. Can anyone be said to have an “original” mode of life? From whose perspective is originality produced? What might the political and cultural implications be for certain forms of originality? Does this confirm or challenge the idea of the loss of the Other? These are some of the main questions which this paper will seek to address, whilst providing close readings of Churchill’s script.

Abbie Lea O'Mahoney:

'Coma: Parasite or Para(sites)?'

The coma is a recurrent motif in modern fiction and as such opens up debates on the concept of the body in space. Both vulnerable and protected, the comatose individual is simultaneously victim and explorer. For Alex Garland, Robin Cook and Jonathon Coe, the coma presents its sufferer with the loss of self-control leaving the body a vulnerable entity to attack. Coma can therefore represent a parasitic form of sleep that in essence maims and controls its host. The sleep state is hijacked by this entity and elements of the uncanny are explored when the coma mimics and disturbs our perception of sleep as beneficial. Consequently, the coma doubles sleep as luring device, exploring our desire and fear of this state. Scrutinizing the coma as a parasite reveals the ambiguity of the word itself. Coma embodies the para-site that offers diverse and varying perception of reality whether utopian or dystopian, emphasised in the fiction of Alex Garland, Scarlet Thomas and Douglas Coupland. Threat is never far away in the state of the coma, yet the protagonists in this array of fiction readily dismiss the lurking danger in search of escapism, whether more rewarding or more terrifying than the reality they occupy. Furthermore, the coma both attracts and repulses us with its dual promise of threat and escape. I propose that the coma can act as both a parasitic entity and a portal that explores alternate realms of experience in its manipulation of ontological theories.

Richard Finn:

'Identity Construction and Possible Selves in Physical Trauma Narratives'

Recent work on oral narrative posits identity as a social function collaboratively negotiated and achieved in conversation, particularly through narratives or similar genres of communication. That identity is constituted in (particularly verbal) interaction denies the previously established dichotomy of distinct personal and social identities—i.e. an internalized sense of self and a separate, externally generated identity—rather, a person's self image (both internal and external) is established through social interaction and subsequent reflection. Working within this theoretical paradigm, I have been analyzing strategies of identity construction in narratives elicited in historic interviews. Looking at data taken from the Oral History Archives at the Centre for North West Regional Studies, which comprise a selection of interviews and interview transcripts from 1970—1990 documenting individuals' recollections of social life from the turn of the twentieth century through to the early 1950s, I found that nearly half of the narratives in the corpus made non-elicited reference to medical problems or physical trauma, signalling it as a theme of particular relevance to identity construction. Injuries and illnesses are highly personal experiences which often have a practical impact on the course of individuals' lives and tend to involve complex instances of social positioning due to the interaction between medical and familial institutions. Owing to the many layers of meaning-making that contribute to identity construction my analysis combines elements of discourse, conversation and text analysis to explore how the self is communicated and affected by broad social, interactional and individual influences. In this discussion I focus on a particular facet of identity construction that has come to light during my analysis which is the latent presence of 'possible selves'—thwarted chains of causality in a person's perceived life story—in the coherent 'present' self-identity. I propose that identities are not only based on the evaluation of past experiences, but also, in certain instances, on the evaluation and re-evaluation of hypothetical chains of events which emanate from key decisions that crucially affect the course of a life—nexuses of regret, relief and unexplored possibility that define who a person is, what they could have been and everything in-between.

ROOM SIX

14:15 - 15:15

**LANGUAGE
AND
RESPONSE**



Athina Rafailidi:

**'A Critical Discussion on the Role of Semiotics in
Understanding Media Language, Culture and
Society'**

The aim of this research study is a critical discussion on the role and impact of semiotics upon media language, culture and society. The deployment of semiotic approach in specific contemporary media texts will be useful in order to explore the 'obvious' messages and underlying connotations as well as raise a number of questions about the use of semiotics in media language and communication. Semiotics constitutes an influential analytic approach which is principally utilized in the field of media and cultural studies. As a key founder of semiotics, Saussure suggested in his work that it would become a part of social sciences. Even though it is relatively seen as a critical practice, semiotics is the focal point in understanding media language and communications. Living in a society inundated by various media messages and meanings the study of signs comprises an essential part in understanding the miscellaneous and dynamic communications we are surrounded by. Thus, in relation to a more general understanding of culture and society, semiotics can be used for instance as a method of understanding visual political images. With reference to selected contemporary media texts, by conducting semiotic analysis this research will illustrate some key ideas in relation to the media and semiotic disciplines.

Gözde Ersoy:

This paper is about the effect the short story "Cheating at Canasta" by William Trevor creates on readers. On reading the short story, it naturally evokes the feeling of reading it again and again to be able to understand the temporal and spatial aspects of it along with the memories or realities of indecisiveness which dominates nearly the entire story. That's why this need led to the stylistic analysis of the short story to unearth the possible reasons. How is that memory helps to convey the intervening of the past and present in this short story? The answer for this question will be explored by using the textual devices of point of view (Simpson, 1993) and speech and thought presentation (Short, 1996).

Chris Verity:

'Love and Theft: Borrowing, Parody and Pastiche in the music of Bob Dylan'

'Name me someone who isn't a parasite and I'll go out and say a prayer for him' Visions of Johanna. Acclaimed singer songwriter Joni Mitchell recently accused Bob Dylan of being a 'plagiarist' and a 'fake'. Certainly, Dylan has heavily borrowed lyrics and verse from a long tradition of blues, folk and rockabilly music, not to mention poetry and literature. I aim to argue however that this redefinition and amalgamation of cultural artefacts is atypical of the postmodern artist. Dylan holds a role in respect to these past artefacts that transcends the position of mere parasite where the relationship between text and reader is increasingly liberal and democratic. I aim to explore how Dylan has continually shrugged off any identity that has been placed upon him, through his engagement with the American cultural past and his own mythology that first came to life at the start of the 1960's. The Basement Tapes recorded with The Band in 1967 will be used to show Dylan as a salvager of forgotten cultural works; Sam Peckinpah's Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid will be shown as an example of Dylan redefining and liberating hegemonic American myths whilst Dylan's own autobiography Chronicles will be explored as an example of artistic self creation. All three of these aspects are central to the Postmodern condition.

ROOM FIVE

15:45 - 16:30

**SPECULATIVE
FICTION**



John Almond:

'Between X and A: Stories of the Past and the Future(s) in Douglas Coupland's *Generation* Novels'

/ ... almonds are pretty much a thing of the past.'

In his novels *Generation X* and *Generation A* Douglas Coupland imagines futures in which the very foundations of our past are disrupted. By extracting emerging trends and movements from the past and accelerating them within his narratives Coupland offers feasible near-futures that can serve as a socio-political critique of the present. Inextricably linked with this temporal manipulation is the inclusion of stories within Coupland's narratives. The stories of *Generation X* and *Generation A* function in a number of ways. Characters revisit and reformulate their pasts in narrative form and look forward to increasingly abstract futures that embody their innermost anxieties. It is the story within a story structure of these novels, aside from the titles, that connects them, and will be the focus of this paper. Therefore, what the paper aims to illustrate is that Coupland's unique conceptions of the notions of past, present, and future is bound up within his characters individual narratives. These novels illustrate, I will argue, that a reading of the near-future must be informed by an understanding of the past, and, more crucially, Coupland's characters' narrative conceptions of the future are vital to understanding their pasts. What emerges from this, in *Generation X* and *Generation A*, is a unique relationship between characters and time. The 'present' of Coupland's novels becomes, quite literally, a site for story telling and the past and the future become 'Para-sites' for creative influence.

Alicia McCray:

'Full steam ahead? Exploring Steampunk Romance in Katie MacAlister's *Steamed: A Steampunk Romance* and Gail Carriger's *Soulless*'

Steampunk is a relatively recent aesthetic movement which acclaims the craftsmanship and artistry of the technologies of the Victorian steam-powered era. It demonstrates a desire to return to a period before machines were mass produced. Usually set in an alternative nineteenth century England, steampunk literature attempts a reclamation of the aesthetics of brass, wood and copper machines filled with cogs and pumps. It combines them with a mix of futuristic and speculative technologies presenting the imagined results of a world in which interactions with these machines has altered society to create a new pseudo-Victorian world. This paper will briefly outline the way in which steampunk has appeared and increased in popularity during the past few decades, mapping the way it has spread through various mediums of popular culture - appearing in comic books, graphic novels, films and anime. From this I attempt evaluate steampunk as more than just an aesthetic affectation, seeking to draw out the key ideas which underpin steampunk as a movement. Finally I will explore how Katie MacAlister's *Steamed: A steampunk romance* and Gail Carriger's *Soulless* attempt to carry steampunk firmly into the realm of romantic fiction and questioning whether these texts manage to assimilate the ideas which lie at the heart of steampunk literature into the text along with the surface fixtures and fittings.

ROOM SIX

15:45 - 16:30

**CONCEPTS
OF GENDER**



Amanda Skelson:

'Victorian Angels'

I am going to explore Victorian depictions of Angels and Victorians themselves, particularly focusing on their identity, both physical and internal. I will investigate the way in which these interact - their relationship / dialogue - in both Victorian literature and painting. Although in my dissertation I will cover both genders and children, in this conference I will focalise upon female Angels and Victorian women. In the Victorian period there was a shift towards the feminisation of Angels; although Angels, previously masculine, were effeminate from the Renaissance onwards, the Victorians depicted the female Angel. Coinciding with this gender change there was a degeneration of the power of the Angel image, Angels losing their majesty and potency. Corresponding with this degeneration grew the image of the 'Angel in the House', the Victorian ideal of human femininity – the rise of the angelic woman. I will explore these changes and its impact on Angels and Victorian women and their relationship. Ultimately I will argue that Angels were used as a tool of control, a guide of behaviour to follow, and their decrease in power as an icon left a vacuum to be filled – a vacuum the 'Angel in the House' filled.

Joanna Zukunft:

'Food, Consumption and the Female Body'

Food is a fundamental part of everyday life. We all need it and none of us can function without it. What we eat, the amount we eat, how we eat it and who we eat it with, are all factors which offer an insight into our lives and the culture which shapes them. What I intend to show is that food is not only a biological necessity, but also holds a high degree of symbolic resonance; in particular in regard to its effect on shaping self-identity, self-worth and self-confidence. This paper is an examination into the world of food and fiction. I will be exploring the presentation of food and consumption in contemporary fiction, with particular focus on the feminine; this focus on the feminine results from women's paradoxical relationship with food. On the one hand both their natural and culturally constructed role depicts them as 'feeders', the primary food giver. But, on the other, they are more statistically prone to eating disorders and hold more negative feelings towards food. I will be raising such questions as: why women hold this paradoxical relationship to food? What eating disorders reveal about the sufferer? How these disorders come about? And most importantly how do women writers present food and the consumption of it in their novels? I hope to show how although food is a biological necessity it has become ritualised and culturally constructed, as shown through eating disorders and the associations of the consuming or non-consuming feminine.