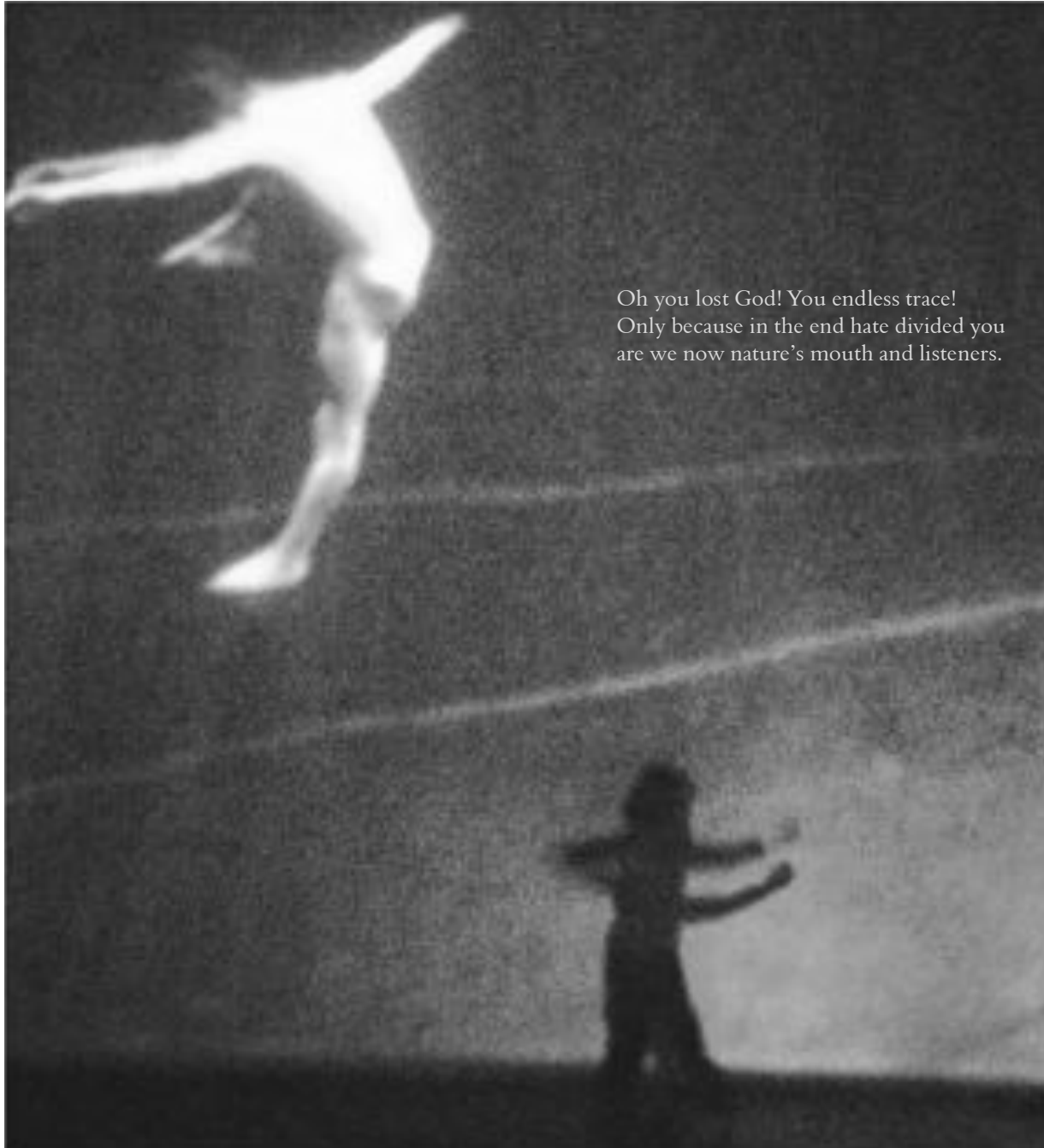


GLITS Interdisciplinary Conference

TRACES

Friday 14 June 2013

Goldsmiths College, University of London, UK



Oh you lost God! You endless trace!
Only because in the end hate divided you
are we now nature's mouth and listeners.

Keynote speaker: Professor Mark Currie
(Queen Mary, University of London)

**GLITS Interdisciplinary Conference:
TRACES**

Friday 14 June 2013

Richard Hoggart Building (RHB), Rooms 342, 342a, 343

9.00–10.00 Registration and coffee (RHB 342)

10.00–11.00 Keynote Address: 'A Trace of the Future'
Professor Mark Currie (Queen Mary, University of London)

11.00–11.20 Coffee break

11.20–1.00 Panel 1a: Material Make-Up (RHB 342a)
Chair: Marina Kassianidou (Chelsea College of Art and Design)

Diana J. Brooke,
Goldsmiths College
The Footprint in *Robinson Crusoe*

Lora V. Koycheva,
University College London
Fading Ink and the Elusive State: Technologies of (Dis)Trust, the
Permeability of Paperwork, and Postsocialist Bureaucracy in Bulgaria

Ery Shin,
Oxford University
Gertrude Stein's Queer America

Christien Garcia,
McMaster University
Home, Sinthome, and the Filth of Queer Domesticity

Panel 1b: Panel 1b: Stitches in Time (RHB 343)
Chair: Marta Wąsik (University of Warwick)

Helena Tomlin,
*Manchester Metropolitan
University*
Lace, Fear and Longing

Lyndsey Smith,
University of York
All That Glitters is Not Gold: Tracing Surviving Anglo-Saxon Ivory
and the (In)Visible Vestiges of Secondary Materials

Naomi Braithwaite,
*Manchester Metropolitan
University*
Hidden Heels: Material Traces of a Shoe Designer's Creative and
Cultural Biography

Scott Jennings
Melbourne,
University of Hong Kong
Mainland Quality: Meaning and Endurance in China's Contemporary
Landscape

1.30–2.00 Lunch

2.00–3.40 Panel 2a: The Ghost of the Academy (RHB 342a)
Chair: Jocelyn Page (Goldsmiths)

Beth Guilding,
Goldsmiths College
What is the Disaster? The Gaze to the Sky

John Woolf,
Traces

Goldsmiths College

Gabriel Renggli,
University of York

Mauro Di Lullo,
University of Stirling

'The author, in fact, was mardred': Trace and Spectre in *Finnegan's Wake*

Maurice Blanchot: From Surrealist Experience to the Trace of Communism

Panel 2b: Ghosts of the Past (RHB 343)

Chair: Lyndsey Smith (University of York)

Carlie Sorosiak,
Oxford University

Vicarious Historicism: "Rememory" and Appropriation in Neo-Slave Narratives – *Beloved* and *Native Guard*

Season Butler,
Goldsmiths College

Ghosts of Futures Past: Writing Anxiety and Desire

Marta Wąsik,
University of Warwick

'It's like she's still here': Absent Mothers as Celluloid Spectres and Electromagnetic Ghosts in *Super 8* and *Family Viewing*

Chris Lloyd,
Goldsmiths College

Traces of the South: Sally Mann's Landscape Photographs

3.40–4.00 Coffee break

4.00–5.40

Panel 3a: (Inter)textual Traces (RHB 342a)

Chair: Mauro Di Lullo (Stirling)

Jocelyn Page
Goldsmiths College

'The word, the image, and the space between...': A Close Reading of Philip Gross' 'Triologue ... by way of a Preface'

Claire Ashworth,
Loughborough University

The Problematic Retrospect in *David Copperfield*

Sophie Corser,
Goldsmiths College

Tea, Texts, and Traces: Breakfast with the Blooms, in James Joyce's *Ulysses*

Diletta De Cristofaro,
University of Nottingham

The Apocalypse as Absent Referent in Jim Crace's *The Pesthouse*

Panel 3b: Tracing and Erasing (RHB 343)

Chair: Lora Koycheva (University College London)

Marina Kassianidou,
Chelsea College of Art and Design

The Artist's Trace or The Trace of the Trace of the Other

Clare Samuel,
Ryerson Image Centre

All the World

Katherine Da Cunha
Lewin,
University of Sussex

Negative Theology: The Possibility for Fiction

Rob Lederer,
University of Edinburgh

Seeing the Unseen: Blindness and the Collection in Recent American Fiction

5.40–6.00 'The End...'

6.00–... Wine and dinner at restaurant

Abstracts

Claire Ashworth

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The Problematic Retrospect in *David Copperfield*

Panel 3a (342a)

‘It’s in vain, Trot, to recall the past, unless it works some influence upon the present’ (Aunt Betsy in *David Copperfield*)

David Copperfield is described by its narrator as a ‘written memory’ but the unreliable nature of this claim is often overlooked by readers and critics alike. As the narrator of his own history, David is understandably subjective and chooses to relate memories which are relevant to the main plot whilst evading painful memories, such as those surrounding his wife’s death. At several stages in the novel, David confesses to his inability to distinguish ‘impression’ from ‘actual remembrance’ and admits to the ‘mist of fancy’ which hangs over ‘well-remembered facts’. The disparity between childhood innocence and adult perspective renders David’s memories unreliable and sometimes, it seems that forgetting is better, if it can be achieved. Nicholas Dames has referred to this memory extirpation as ‘the characteristically Dickensian cure of the obsessive rememberer’ and Rosemarie Bodenheimer has described the novel as a ‘deceiving exchange’ of new memories for old, thereby questioning the reliability of a narrative described as ‘written memory’.

By relying on associative memories, David is effectively able to reconstruct himself; simultaneously editing his imperfect past whilst escaping the guilt that, perhaps, ought to accompany it. David’s mind acts as a palimpsest and, because his memories are often subject to mnemonic errancy, he deceives both himself and the reader, thus creating a newly coherent and newly organised psyche. This paper considers the problematic nature of David’s narrative and argues that *David Copperfield* is Dickens’ personal study into the capabilities of the mind and, especially, how memory can both faithfully represent and distort the past, this being, perhaps, necessary to the creative impulse in the adult David.

Bio: I am a final-year PhD student at Loughborough University and I also teach English for Academic Purposes at Lincoln University. I regularly publish teaching resources for ZigZag Education Ltd and recent publications include a teacher’s scheme of work for *Frankenstein*.

Naomi Braithwaite

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Hidden Heels: Material Traces of a Shoe Designer’s Creative and Cultural Biography

Panel 1b (RHB 343)

This paper evolves from an extensive research into the creative and commercial practice of a select number of British based luxury shoe designers. Assuming a material culture approach to this study of creativity a series of object based, life history interviews were carried out with the designers. The intention of this approach was to unravel the creative biography of the designed shoes. However as the designers narrated the creative history of their past designs they also revealed that behind the aesthetic, material exteriors of these shoes, lay hidden, traces of their own personal histories and biographies. As each designer traced the history behind their created designs they picked up the shoes, handled them connecting with their materiality. Through this process of sensorial engagement the designs became intrinsically active, triggering memory and recollections of their past. Through this material connection the designer’s invisible, absent past was narrated and brought into the present. This paper will argue how shoes serve as material traces of a designer’s creative and biographical self.

Ingold terms the trace as an enduring mark that has been left in or on a solid surface by

continuous movements. Designer shoes serve as representations of fashion and the mark and biography of their creators lies hidden beneath the aesthetic exteriors. Drawn from a twenty month long ethnography with twenty-three shoe designers, the research findings will reveal that although invisible to the consumer and wearer of shoes, there is embedded within these material structures an enduring mark of the designer's biography and self-identity. As each designer moves through a creative journey their designed shoes stand as material representations of a history, which is both absent and present. Drawing from the work of particular shoe designers the paper will demonstrate how their past may be traced through the silhouette and materiality of shoes.

Bio: Dr Naomi Braithwaite is a Senior Lecturer in Fashion Communication, Manchester Metropolitan University. In 2012, she was awarded a doctorate in Material Culture from Nottingham Trent University. Her forthcoming publications include various encyclopedia entries to be published in *The Altamira Encyclopedia of Ethnic Clothing in the US* (2013). She will be presenting her paper on 'Sequins, Snakeskin and Stilettos: Shoe Design and the Study of Material Agency' at Fashion, the 5th Global Conference in Oxford (September 2013).

Diana J. Brooke

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The Footprint in *Robinson Crusoe*

Panel 1a (RHB 342a)

The most famous 'trace' in English Literature must be the footprint in the sand which Robinson Crusoe discovers on his island. I would like to explore this event as an example of the uncanny in literature. At each point of analysis, I would like to read Defoe's own words.

What is 'the uncanny'? This usually involves the disturbance of familiarity, often by the intrusion of a perceived 'other world' into this one. Examples are given and reference is made to Freud's essay, 'Das Unheimliche' (1919) and to Nicholas Royle's work 'The Uncanny' (2003).

But here, the trace is disturbed by something normal. Or is it normal? The nature of the footprint is examined; it is a 'trace' of the human and normal yet it defies normality. It is irrational and unexplained, thereby calling into question the great narrative of the Enlightenment, with its emphasis on reason and its importance to human life and progress.

However, it is through reason that Crusoe comes to terms with the discovery of the footprint. He establishes that it is not the work of 'the Devil', nor a figment of his own imagination. Aware of the irony, he remembers that the only thing missing on 'his' island is the sound of another human voice; yet the possibility of someone who might provide this fills him with terror. He gains temporary comfort from the thought that he made the print himself; but on revisiting the scene he finds that it is considerably larger than his own foot. The footprint is thus 'uncanny'.

The definition assumes boundaries and raises questions about the liminal nature of selfhood. What is the relationship between imagination and reason? The 'uncanny' nature of the footprint forces the reader to question the dividing line between what is real and what is imagined. The episode changes Crusoe's attitude towards his island. He perceives it differently. What was his home becomes his castle, a fortification against potential attack. Hence perception is contiguous.

As a result of this uncanny 'trace' we uncover a number of things, notably, the fact that what goes on in Crusoe's mind dictates the way he sees the outer world, and the same of course is true for us.

Bio: I started a part time PhD at Kings, London. When my supervisor, David Nokes, died I moved to Goldsmiths in 2010, under the supervision of Professor J.A.Downie. My PhD is in Defoe's *The Family Instructor*. I retired from a career in Further Education in 2006, as Deputy Principal of Greenwich Community College. I worked for 11 years as a freelance consultant in 16+ education, completing my MA in Eighteenth Century Literature with the Open University.

Season Butler
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Ghosts of Futures Past: Writing Anxiety and Desire
Panel 2b (RHB 343)

This paper will explore the spectral presence of the future in fiction and how optimism – specifically Lauren Berlant’s ‘Cruel Optimism’ – operates in the lives of characters when a promised future begins to reveal itself as increasingly improbable, and the likely future is so toxic that the character can only survive psychically by clinging to worn-out mythologies of a future in which she now only partly believes.

This crisis creates, I think, a kind of *ecosublime* anxiety wherein the future hovers oppressively, a storm on the brink of breaking. In stories set in the contemporary era – a time of environmental collapse, economic crises, protracted global wars – the future can feel overwhelming to a character forced to confront its full implications. Belief in the future is a kind of default, quotidian optimism, with the child as a recurring symbol of hope. As resources dwindle, myths of the future also degrade, erasing the forward-pointing path they may once have provided, becoming mere traces of past optimisms. The child’s hope must now seem to us misplaced.

In my novel-in-progress, *Hanging from the Hammer of the Bell*, I have tried to create a character who will inspire the reader’s concern, but whose situation she is able to recognise as hopeless. My aim here is to create the kind of problematic attachment to a possibility, the loss of which will, as Berlant puts it, threaten to ‘defeat the capacity to have any hope about anything’. The release from this attachment is a near-metaphor for a kind of coming-of-age, but one where the subject must emerge into an adult world for which there is no precedent, pushing the exciting/anxious experience of growing up firmly into the realm of the sublime. A character on the brink of her 18th birthday seemed to me an apt subject through which to explore these themes.

Even the title is a reference to the oppressive presence of the future. *Hanging from the Hammer of the Bell* is what the protagonist believes she will be doing when then world ends, certain as she is that this will occur in her lifetime, indeed ‘Probably tomorrow’. For her, the future is a dictator, unseen but active and omnipotent. Tomorrow is an event. Attendance is mandatory. It is the abyss that spreads out just in front of the present moment, an abyss into which she knows she must step.

Drawing on arguments in Berlant’s *Cruel Optimism*, Lee Edelman’s *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*, Lee Rozelle’s *Ecosublime*, and illustrating these with examples from my own novel, this paper will explore the changing figure of the child as a symbol of hope and the psyche of a character living with this reverse trace of the future, experiencing anxiety of life on the precipice of the end of the world.

Bio: Season Butler is a writer and performance artist currently reading a PhD in Creative Writing at Goldsmiths College. Her writing, research and performance practice centres around narratives of otherness, isolation, the end of the world and its metaphors.

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Tea, Texts, and Traces: Breakfast with the Blooms, in James Joyce’s *Ulysses*
Panel 3a (RHB 342a)

In an exercise of close reading, this paper will address the relationship between reading implicit and explicit traces of signification in language, and reading James Joyce’s *Ulysses* – an intertextual novel that paraphrases a wealth of meaning through rewriting and reference. Taking one sentence from the fourth episode, ‘Calypso’, I hope to investigate the effects of making that which is inherent apparent : puns as words of many meanings, clichés as words referring to their previous usage, a rewriting as a text which is woven of previous texts.

‘The sluggish cream wound curdling spirals through her tea.’ When picking apart the possible readings of this seemingly innocuous sentence from breakfast in the Bloom household, is it possible to place a limit on that which one finds signified? As a thin line of cream disseminates through Molly Bloom’s tea, the sentence points one to ‘the stream of life we trace’, repeated in ‘Lotus Eaters’ and ‘Lestrygonians’, to ‘traces of food’ on Leopold Bloom’s lips hundreds of pages later in ‘Ithaca’; to Bloom’s early morning mind and Molly lazily propped up in bed, to tea consumed by Stephen Dedalus and Buck Mulligan that morning, and cocoa shared by Dedalus and Bloom in the early hours of the next; to traces of other texts, of Homeric goddesses, of metamorphosis and metempsychosis; to the purrs of the Blooms’ cat. How can an echo or trace once found be refused? This focused activity can illuminate what may provoke arguments for a polysemantic freedom in all texts, as the layers of intertextuality throughout *Ulysses* can aid an understanding of any text being a ‘tissue of quotations’.

In placing a specific reading of woven textual traces within a framework of ideas informed by Roland Barthes’ theorising of the Text, this paper aims to approach how the seemingly endless references which imbue *Ulysses* are an extrapolation of the uncontrollable signifiers of language, and touch upon the implications this may have for the authority of one’s reading of a textual echo.

Bio: Sophie Corser is a first year Mphil/PhD student in the English and Comparative Literature department at Goldsmiths. Her research explores authorship and readership, focusing on, but not restricted by, questions provoked by specificities of reading James Joyce’s *Ulysses*.

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The Apocalypse as Absent Referent in Jim Crace’s *The Pesthouse*
Panel 3a (RHB 342a)

Jim Crace’s *The Pesthouse* (2007) portrays a future America regressed to a medieval state after an unspecified catastrophe. The novel provides the ideal springboard for a discussion about the apocalypse and representation because the disaster remains an unspeakable, and hence unrepresented, traumatic event, an element which suggests the presence of epistemological limits.

In the first part of the paper I will argue that there is a representational impasse which makes the depiction of the apocalypse and its aftermath impossible, and which post-apocalyptic fiction has to address, in order to grant its own existence. The apocalypse is to be considered the ultimate iconoclastic concept, utterly beyond our abilities as image-makers and story-tellers, because it has either to do with the notion of an absolute end or with that of the radical alterity of a new beginning.

What defines the apocalypse is its uniqueness, its intensity and scale, the vastness of its consequences, and the fact of being totally unprecedented – in other words, its radical otherness from anything human beings may have experienced before. This same characteristic, though, makes the apocalypse and its aftermath, if there is any, unimaginable and unrepresentable.

In the second part of the paper I will contend that Crace engages with this unrepresentability through what might be defined as the logic of the absent referent. The apocalyptic event remains inaccessible to language, and thus a void in the narrative, while several elements point to this absence. It is therefore absent and yet uncannily present in *The Pesthouse*. On the one hand, I will focus on the disaster which opens the novel, arguing that it is to be interpreted as an icon of the apocalyptic event, in Charles Sanders Peirce’s terms, in that its characteristics stand for those of the absent cataclysm. On the other, I will examine the relationship between the fictional post-apocalyptic future and its past, namely the readers’ present. The characters of *The Pesthouse* know that there existed a different America – they see its traces – but they seem to ignore how this came

to an end and how their medieval world came to be. In other words, they do not perceive the past of the so-called 'antiquities' as continuous with their present and, hence, they exhibit an ahistorical attitude towards these traces. Crace's readers, instead, are living in a world which is informed by history and their engagement with the novel cannot but be framed by this way of conceiving time. To them the only possible connection between their own present and the fictional future is an event that affects mankind so deeply that previous conceptual frameworks, including history, no longer hold. The novel, therefore, comes to be defined by two absences, that of the apocalypse and that of a historical narration, which are inherently connected, as the latter inevitably points to the former.

Bio: Diletta De Cristofaro is a second year PhD student in American and Canadian Studies at the University of Nottingham. Her research deals with time and temporality in contemporary post-apocalyptic fiction. She holds a Mphil in Philosophy from the University of Milan and has attended an Erasmus year at Sorbonne University. An extended version of the paper she is presenting at the conference has been published in May in the journal *Other Modernities*.

Katherine Da Cunha Lewin

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Negative theology: The Possibility for Fiction

Panel 3b (RHB 343)

'God is the voice that says 'I am not here'' is the most important line from Don DeLillo's 2007 novel *Falling Man*. This voice that goes on to claim not just its lack of existence, but spatial presence ('I am not *here*', wherever *here* means) whilst simultaneously voicing this is the God that I would suggest, lives in every one of DeLillo's novels. Discussions and depictions of God feature in all of DeLillo's work and so it follows that theological criticism is becoming a key area in DeLillo Studies. However thus far, the most prominent work about DeLillo and religion has been carried out by scholars who claim him as a religious (specifically in some cases a Catholic) writer. Yet, what these scholars seem to over-look is that the God in these texts is absent, the *deus absconditus*: the God of negative theology.

According to Derrida negative theology is the 'excessive practice of language'. We can and cannot speak of God because God lies at once *in* the centre and *outside* it. This duality of at once attempting to describe God whilst being aware that we cannot manifests itself in negativity that sees us simultaneously attempting to negate language whilst demonstrating the impossibility of this by using language in the first place. Language becomes a site for us to use words for their meaning but to also attempt to traverse their confines. The fact that apophasis lies *in* language not only demonstrates the limits of language, but directs us to the space outside of language that we cannot describe. What my paper will explore is exactly that space created by negative theology that lies outside the limits of language, and how this manifests itself in the work of Don DeLillo. I will also include some reference to other contemporary writers such as Samuel Beckett and J. M. Coetzee, both of whom are incredibly important to this burgeoning critical area.

Literary criticism has over-looked the importance that negative theology could have in assessing the boundaries of the contemporary novel. Peter Boxall's book *Don DeLillo: The possibility of fiction* states that DeLillo's work characterizes what is possible for the novel; I believe that we can begin to delve further and define this possibility using negative theology and its further reaches. The writers analysed in this paper are key to exploring the importance of apophasis but the repercussions of negative theology are by no means limited to these writers; it has an extremely important role to play in the future of literary criticism.

Bio: Katherine Da Cunha Lewin is a first year English PhD student from the University of Sussex. She completed her BA English in 2011 at the University of Bristol and her MA in Modern &

Contemporary Literature, Culture and Thought at the University of Sussex in 2012. Her research focuses on negative theology and its relation to the novel in the work of Samuel Beckett, Don DeLillo and J.M. Coetzee.

Christien Garcia

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Home, Sinthome, and the Filth of Queer Domesticity

Panel 1a (RHB 342a)

This paper considers the concept of trace through the lens of psychoanalytic discourses that emphasize the subject's relationship to language. I conceive of the trace in relation to the remainder that accompanies language's inherent incapacity to fully render subjective experience. For Jacques Lacan, this failure of signification runs internal to the logic of subjectivity, establishing the subject's existence as a product of absence rather than presence and defining desire as that which exceeds the subject's capacity to articulate the object of its fulfillment. Lionel Bailly succinctly recasts this Lacanian construction as such: 'the articulation of need must pass through the narrow gateway of language and what cannot squeeze through and is left behind constitutes desire' (2009: 111).

Picking up on Bailly's architectural metaphor (language as a gateway), I seek to locate the trace of desire by considering the absence-presence of queer sexuality in post-World War II renderings of English domesticity. Joseph Losey's 1963 film, *The Servant*, which takes place almost exclusively in a smart Chelsea townhouse, uses the material boundaries within the home and at its external threshold (doorways, passages, staircases and other liminal spaces) as a means of dramatizing the class and gender dynamics of its protagonists – Tony, a foppish, minor aristocrat, and his duplicitous manservant, Berrett. Tony and Berrett fail to move in accordance with the domestic thresholds that establish each other's 'rightful' place as master and servant within the home. As Tony and Barrett intrude on one another, the house itself becomes subject to the intrusion of filth: the spectre of 'muck', 'slime', 'dregs' and 'leavings' becomes an increasingly important motif. However, rather than threatening the sanctity of 'home' outright, this abject materiality becomes the ordering principle of the affective and bodily circulation that defines the men's domesticity. As this relationship is beyond proper signification – Tony and Barrett are not quite master and servant, nor husband and wife, nor lovers – the filth that literally accumulates at the thresholds of the home's architectural-cum-ideological boundaries comes to signify the remainder *beyond* signification that constitutes desire. The name Lacan gives to this impossible sign – the sign without meaning – is the sinthome. This impossible sign, as Lee Edelman puts it, 'materializes the threat to the subject's faith that its proper home is in meaning' and establishes queerness's 'link to a less reassuring 'home': the sinthome' (2004: 39).

In a recent review of *The Servant*, the Guardian journalist Peter Bradshaw suggests that 'gay sexuality is everywhere and nowhere in this movie' (27 March 2013). Rather than understanding this absence-presence dynamic of queer desire in terms of occlusion, as previous readings have done (gay sexuality as hidden or encoded), my own analysis of *The Servant* casts queerness as an irrepressible excess. This remainder like the sinthome is superfluous to meaning and denies the prospect that desire is ever something that can be made visible, that it can ever be more than a trace.

Bio: Christien Garcia is a PhD candidate in English and Cultural Studies at McMaster University in Hamilton, Canada. His research considers psychoanalytic discourse and notions of absence as it pertains to desire and subjectivity. His recent publications include 'Limited Intimacy: Bareback Culture and the Imaginary' (forthcoming 2013, *Textual Practice*) and 'Queering the Praxis Divide' (2010, *Psychology & Sexuality*). Christien invites you to visit whenwebuildagain.org where he regularly contributes writing and images.

Beth Guilding*Goldsmiths College*

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What is the Disaster? The Gaze to the Sky

Panel 2a (RHB 342a)

For man dwells by spanning 'on the earth' and 'beneath the sky'. This 'on' and 'beneath' belong together. Their interplay is the span that man traverses at every moment insofar as he *is* as an earthly being.

Thus speaks Heidegger, whilst discussing Hölderlin's poem 'In lieblicher Blaue' ['In Lovely Blue'], in his essay '... Poetically Man Dwells ...' Here, he suggests that man's very nature is dependent on this interplay between earth and sky, and man or woman's status as a being who resides between them. But what does he mean by this? Furthermore, how does this dwelling, or 'spanning' relate to art (that is to say, to poetry, which is, Heidegger tells us in an earlier essay, 'the founding of truth')?

These are huge questions that arise from what Heidegger also calls the 'riddle of art', questions that require time, perhaps endless time, to address; thus, in this paper our task shall be to explore just one aspect of this riddle: the riddle of the sky. And we shall be exploring this riddle not only through the eyes of Heidegger, but also, more poignantly, through the eyes of the child we meet in Blanchot's 1980 text *The Writing of the Disaster*, the child who arises in Blanchot's fragment '(A primal scene?)'.

Taken together, both the Heidegger's essay and Blanchot's primal scene can be seen to pertain to the same event: an event whereby the gaze to the sky brings about a rupture in the spectator's relationship to and with language, as well as with the Self. The aim of this paper is to explore the meaning of this gaze, what happens to the sky and how, in turn, this brings us back to the opening lines of *The Writing of the Disaster*, that 'the disaster ruins everything, all the while leaving everything intact'.

Bio: Beth Guilding is an MPhil/PhD student, currently in her first year at Goldsmiths University. Her PhD focuses on the image of the child in the works of Maurice Blanchot from a psychoanalytic, philosophical and literary perspective. Beth has been studying the works of Blanchot since her undergraduate degree, during which time she was awarded second place in the international Emory Elliott Award for her essay on the limits of literature and death in the works of Blanchot and Derrida.

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Mainland Quality: Meaning and Endurance in China's Contemporary Landscape

Panel 2a (RHB 342a)

Economic reforms initiated by the Chinese political establishment in the early 1980s triggered an accelerating rush to development that may now safely be regarded as the largest building boom in human history. There have been remarkable achievements attained as part this effort, most notably the establishment of extensive infrastructure networks and the construction of housing facilities to accommodate the hundreds of millions of individuals who have migrated from countryside to city. These conditions of rapid change that have born such dramatic accomplishments have, however, also resulted in a multitude of built works that fall short of their potential. Despite significant effort and investment, many of these projects quickly face some combination of physical dilapidation or programmatic irrelevance. The accumulated result of this phenomenon may at times be witnessed as a distinct form of contemporary ruins, with underutilized sites revealing mere traces of their not-too-distant past uses.

This short documentary examines twenty of China's highest profile built works, selected primarily from the discipline of landscape architecture and distributed across some sixteen cities. As a collection, these investigated works form an illuminating cross-sectional snapshot of this moment in the country's physical development and cultural transformation. Through an assessment of project effectiveness and build quality, insight is gained regarding the values that have driven the

creation of these works in addition to the combined opportunities and challenges to be negotiated by those guiding the next phase of this region's growth.

Bio: Scott Jennings Melbourne is an Assistant Professor of Landscape Architecture at the University of Hong Kong who possesses more than a decade of experience in professional practice. His research investigates the role of landscape as a medium and discipline in rapidly developing regions, with a particular focus on the dramatic post-reform developments of contemporary China. Melbourne holds the degree of Master in Landscape Architecture with Distinction from Harvard University.

Marina Kassianidou
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The Artist's Trace or The Trace of the Trace of the Other
Panel 3b (RHB 343)

This paper will discuss the 'trace' in relation to two contemporary artistic practices that involve painting and drawing on already marked surfaces. The discussion will focus on the works on furnishing fabrics of British artist Louise Hopkins and my own drawings on marked surfaces. Both practices involve the duplication of pre-existing marks. Hopkins carefully replicates the printed marks found on the fabrics by painting over parts of the pre-existing images. She works on the back of the fabrics such that only traces of the printed design are visible. In my work, I often recreate pre-existing marks, made by people present in a space at some moment in the past. For instance, in a site-specific work, I recreated paint stains found on a wall in a studio by subtly drawing over them, using continuous lines that followed the shapes of the stains and the texture of the wall.

The painting or drawing of marks over the original pre-existing marks leads to the partial concealment of both. The original marks are partially covered by the artist's marks, which, in turn, visually mingle with the pre-existing marks. The juxtaposition of pre-existing marks with those of the artist, leads to confusion between the two—at times, the traces of the artist become indiscernible from the traces of the 'others'. These 'others' may be the designer(s) that designed the image on the fabric and the people whose actions caused the stains on the walls.

The paper will explore how notions of confusion that arise through these two practices might interact with or problematize Jacques Derrida's concept of the *trace* and of the traced *trait*. The word *trait* carries a variety of meanings including trait, feature, line, stroke, mark, trace, border or limit. In Derrida's account, the *trait* is always already a *retrait*, implying both repetition and withdrawal, a simultaneous recall and retreat. This echoes Derrida's writings on the *trace* in which the concept is discussed in terms of simultaneous presence and absence. I will argue that the methodologies followed by Hopkins and myself in our practices, attempt to approach this condition of recall and retreat, of presence and absence. This is first attempted by, quite literally, tracing over past traces, thus, remaking the past. It is, however, in the confusion that emerges between the different kinds of traces that this unstable condition is perhaps almost reached. The confusion between what was already there and what the artist subsequently added destabilizes the oppositions past/present and absence/presence and leads to temporary overlaps between these terms.

Furthermore, I will suggest that these overlaps open a path for an overlap between self and other, however temporary that may be. By tracing the trace of the other, the artist approaches the other. The artist's trace then becomes, or almost becomes, the trace of the trace of the other.

Bio: Marina Kassianidou is an artist and PhD candidate at Chelsea College of Art and Design. She studied at Stanford University, as a CASP/Fulbright scholar, and at Central Saint Martins. She has recently presented papers at the Engendering Dialogue II Conference at the University of Dundee, and at the Derrida Today Conference at UC Irvine. She has published papers in *The International Journal of the Image* and in *ArtSEEN* journal and she has exhibited work internationally.

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Fading Ink and the Elusive State: Technologies of (Dis)Trust, the Permeability of Paperwork, and Post-socialist Bureaucracy in Bulgaria – Panel 1a (RHB 342a)

This paper examines how bureaucratic traces – as ‘erasure, the simultaneous representation of all signs and nothing, a suspended present, imprint and ultimately the opening of new ideas’ – reveal the slippages of modernity in post-socialist Bulgaria, especially as they relate to the state. The larger theoretical preoccupation of the paper is how the ‘traces’ which an elusive post-socialist bureaucracy leaves behind its vanishing act make the state both semi-absent and semi-present. I explore what effect such elusiveness has on the relationship between the state and its subjects in Bulgaria, both as citizens and as consumers.

Specifically, I focus on everyday paperwork, through an ethnography of bureaucratic encounters and stories recounted about bureaucratic experiences, such as missing signatures, half-imprinted stamps or ink fading on official documents only a month after the document has been issued. Corruption is often an explanation about the highly dynamic relationship between the state and its citizens in the post-socialist and postcolonial sphere. This paper adopts a less normative stance and attempts to reconsider the frustration and opportunities which arise out of what I call here – through my theoretical discussion of traces and modernity -- ‘the permeability of paperwork.’ I draw on the literature on bureaucracy and on paperwork as a bureaucratic technology and contrast their assumptions and conclusions with the many creative ways in which the traces of the state allow an improvisational order to be achieved. I explore how this allows both a greater degree of agency and, simultaneously, the loss of it. I also attend to how, while such practices allow a great range of tactics and comfortably fuzzy technologies of ‘getting things done’ vis-à-vis a state apparatus which is under construction, they create a wide-spread societal distrust which turns the citizen into a stranger and deny in many cases his or her rights.

Bio: Dr Lora Koycheva is the Andrew W. Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow at University College London where she is working on several interdisciplinary projects on the continued importance of language-based area studies. An anthropologist by training, she is interested, among many other things, in urban, political and legal anthropology, social order and change, and semiotics. She is currently turning her dissertation – entitled ‘Speculative Normalcy: Time, Agency and Ambiguity in Changing Bulgaria’ – into a book-length ethnography.

Rob Lederer

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Seeing the Unseen: Blindness and the Collection in Recent American Fiction

Panel 3b (RHB 343)

Krzysztof Pomian suggests that the basic function of the collection is to render visible that which, because it is physically distant or intangible, remains unseen. But, we might ask, what kind of vision does the collection make available? What perspective does the archival trace throw into focus? In recent novels both Siri Hustvedt and E.L. Doctorow contemplate these questions by juxtaposing blindness with the collection.

Hustvedt’s novel *What I Loved* (2003) considers how we might contact those realms of experience that remain hidden: cultural trends that evade notice because they are normalised, for instance, become analysable when expressed as psychological symptoms. The self, I suggest, is similarly accessible when materialised, in this case in the form of the personal collection. Leo, whose eyesight deteriorates as the novel progresses, compiles an archive of objects left behind by people he has loved and lost to distance or death. This collection develops into a means of both gazing upon those people now departed and visualising his interior self. As Leo’s vision worsens, he

is forced to observe the world through his periphery. This trajectory of blindness, I argue, allegorises the perspective provided by the collection, which allows Leo a peak at his own interiority but only through indirect, sideways glances mediated by material traces.

Whereas in *What I Loved* the collection stages a therapeutic space where Leo can confront his past, the archive in Doctorow's *Homer and Langley* (2009) is a fatal threat to the subject. Here the blind narrator is Homer, and it is through him that we encounter his brother Langley, the curator of the novel's unruly collection. Doctorow's novels are characteristically American counter-histories, and *Homer and Langley* is no different: both the narrative written by the sightless Homer and the cultural detritus hoarded by Langley store alternative accounts of early twentieth-century modernisation. Yet, the novel also betrays an anxiety about the very enterprise of wild conservation, of preserving too much information and too much stuff. Langley's disengagement from the outside world finds a metaphorical mirror in Homer's failing senses: blind and newly deaf, he increasingly relies on his brother, whose movements are similarly determined by the archive, assembled into labyrinthine corridors within their mansion. Both men are finally conquered by the collection, its physical collapse crushing Langley, leaving Homer to starve, and articulating a vital question about the efficacy of archival vision in an era already awash in information and narrative.

Bio: Rob Lederer is a third-year PhD student at the University of Edinburgh, where he is researching the personal archive in contemporary American fiction. He has previously presented papers on Paul Auster, E. L. Doctorow, Jennifer Egan and Dana Spiotta and published a review with *Comparative Critical Studies*.

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Traces of the South: Sally Mann's Landscape Photographs
Panel 2b (RHB 343)

While shockingly little academic work has been produced on the photographer Sally Mann, she has usually been read in terms of the representation of her children. Academics such as Marianne Hirsch and Laura Di Prete, for example, foreground the apparently distorted, traumatized, wounded and marked bodies of Mann's children, highlighting the complicated 'maternal gaze' and traumas of childhood. This paper will attend to a more muted element of Mann's oeuvre: that of her natural landscapes. After photographing her children in various poses and locations, Mann turned her lens later in her career toward rural settings and natural forms. Moreover, these places are, I argue, regional ones. Living in the U.S. South, Mann is astutely aware of her Southern heritage and history and this is made visible in her landscapes.

Mann has long been interested in the Southern past: she writes, 'To identify a person as a Southerner suggests not only that her history is inescapable and formative but that it is also impossibly present.' Her landscape photography – I will argue – is committed to representing this regional history and testifying to its persistence and presence today. From her representations of Civil War battle sites and crumbling antebellum architecture to pictures of Louisianan swamps, Mann's photographic eye is drawn towards the lingering texture and presence of her region. Principally subdued and subtle, the photographs can be read without a Southern inflection; this paper, however, will address the traces of this regional past in various ways and foreground the South where many other critics overlook it.

Employing, particularly, theories of affect, I will – across four photographs – reveal traces of slavery, the Civil War and the wounded black body in Mann's images. The antiquated 'collodium method' of taking and developing her photographs will further be shown to contribute to this sense of the past in the present. 'Living in the South', Mann suggests, 'often means slipping out of temporal joint'. My point would be that this shifting of times is both created and represented in her own photography.

Bio: Chris Lloyd is a PhD student at Goldsmiths in the English and Comparative literature department. He is in the final stages of study, and is due to submit at the end of summer. Chris's thesis investigates notions of regionalism in the 21st century US South through various cultural forms including literature, photography and film. He has two essays accepted in forthcoming books on the American Gothic and Hurricane Katrina.

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Maurice Blanchot: From Surrealist Experience to the Trace of Communism

Panel 2a (RHB 342a)

There is not a domain of the fundamental. There is, however, a fundamentality for every(real) domain which cannot be regained from within it, so that without the disruption of thought a practice will inevitably remain buried in itself and incapable of shaking off a metaphysical limit, itself the source of various ideological exploitations, of which this practice has only a distant sense, or even no suspicion ...

In our neoliberal democracies, communism and freedom appear part of a remote and obscure past. Their traces have been lost.

This paper is about traces of freedom and communism in Maurice Blanchot's political thinking. I will suggest a defence of Maurice Blanchot's political and social thinking. In this defence I will question whether freedom should be considered exclusively as human freedom. I will argue that there is a sacred and ethical dimension Blanchot's conception of freedom: its political (let us leave this term in all of its ambiguity) significance will be explored and deconstructed in my quest for the lost trace of communism. By going beyond the human element, Maurice Blanchot designs an unconditioned and unconditional concern for an authentic form of freedom beyond narrow and contracted conceptions of subjectivity and existence; in his political thinking he affirms an absolute concern for the traces of freedom and communism.

This will set my readings within an interpretation and analysis of Blanchot's relation with the Surrealist movement through the works of Georges Bataille and Andre Breton. Surrealism between Art and Communism, its aim to achieve an absolute and unconditional freedom through art and language, their inner influence on Blanchot's post-war thinking, will be all examined and assessed in my work.

What are we looking for in this paper? Through a close explanation and engagement with Blanchot's surrealist works and its conception of negativity, I will make an attempt to reassess and re-trace 'Blanchot's 'communism of writing' as a 'measure' in my search for the lost traces of communism and freedom.

In a time of evident unstoppable neoliberalism, where the liberal state has rediscovered and rehabilitated its essentially authoritarian and in some aspects fascist foundation, is Blanchot's political thinking still relevant in our search of a trace of communism? In our Post-Marxist and Hegelian global society, where we reached the end of history and all the conflicts between classes have been settled by the new global order, ethics, freedom and authenticity appear unreachable and inaccessible.

How can we escape from this state of passive acceptance of the inevitability of neoliberal domination? Can Blanchot help us to understand our political failures? How can we find and protect the lost traces of communism and freedom through Blanchot's 'communism of writing?'

Bio: I am a PhD student at the School of Arts and Humanities at the University of Stirling. Before beginning my new learning experience at Stirling, I was a student at Strathclyde University and at the University of Glasgow. During the course of my previous degrees, I worked in

Amnesty International promoting and supporting struggles for gay groups and worldwide political prisoners. I was the co-ordinator of Strathclyde University's Amnesty International Group until January 2009. My work is about freedom, ethics and the idea of the sacred in Blanchot. In my thesis I will offer a defence of Maurice Blanchot's conception of freedom.

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'The word, the image, and the space between...' – A close reading of Philip Gross' 'Triologue ... by way of a Preface' – Panel 3a (RHB 342a)

This paper will examine the broad concept of 'traces' through a close reading of Philip Gross's 'Triologue ... by way of a Preface' from his 2006 collaborative collection *The Abstract Garden* (with artist Peter Reddick). With particular scrutiny of the poem's form, the villanelle, this presentation will discuss the repeated lines of Gross's verse, paying special attention to the ellipses as a symbol, a substitute and a strategy for successful collaboration. It will be proposed that Gross's imagery (including various triangular symbols in nature and popular culture), rhyme scheme and language support the themes of collaborative discourse, artistic process and inspiration. Roland Barthes's 1968 essay, 'What is an Author' will provide a useful platform for an associated discussion of how the study of collaboration can be widened to include and involve the reader, providing a counterpoint to long-held notions of Romantic authorial genius. Finally, the villanelle's traditional subject of loss will be explored in relation to Gross's poem, asking questions about the nature of absence, the representation of language and the human element of poetry.

Bio: Jocelyn Page is a poet from Connecticut currently living in South East London. Page's pamphlet, *smithereens*, was published by the tall-lighthouse press in 2010. Her work has also appeared in *Poetry Review*, *Smiths Knoll* and *The Rialto* and has recently been shortlisted for the Poetry School/Pighog Press pamphlet prize. She is a tutor and PhD candidate in Creative Writing at Goldsmiths and is working on a thesis, which explores the topics of collaboration and inspiration.

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'The author, in fact, was mardred': Trace and Spectre in *Finnegan's Wake*
Panel 2a (RHB 342a)

Paraphrasing Derrida, one could compare the trace to the ghost of an entity which has never been alive. Even as it bases the functionality of the sign on iterability and difference, the trace inscribes onto the sign the memory of an origin which relies neither on repetition nor on contextualisation. It is the memory of a fictional moment of immobility and absoluteness. The trace, which is the undying echo of that imaginary moment, hence finds itself in an antagonistic relation to the actual moment of such immobility, which we call death.

In his final work, James Joyce explores with great inventiveness both the concept of the sign and the meaning of death. Though sometimes perceived as nonsensical, *Finnegans Wake* engages its reader in a serious dialogue revolving around questions of meaning and authority. Written to a significant extent in neologisms which both necessitate and defy reduction to standard words, it renders palpable that our reading practices are based on the identification of the *signifier* as well as of the *signified*. It is a book which asks to what degree the text we are deciphering is a phantom text created by the reader in absence of that personified origin, the author.

In my paper, I propose to interrogate Joyce's absence as a simultaneous lack and excess of death. On the one hand, the words of *Finnegans Wake* are not only Joyce's, as there is always the possibility that the reader has partly invented them. This is an exemplary case of 'the birth of the reader' and 'the death of the author', to borrow Roland Barthes's juxtaposition. On the other hand,

the text which opens up the space for the reader's inventiveness has been created by Joyce, whose spectre hence reclaims our interpretations.

By demonstrating how an analysis gets stuck when it tries to attribute particular meanings either to Joyce or to the reader, I will show that death – understood as the moment which ends the protean play of oppositions, and reduces it to a finite and containable past – is a moment which never comes for the words of the *Wake*. *Finnegans Wake* is a text which talks back to the reader and through which, as Derrida puts it, Joyce can still be heard laughing at the success of his ploy.

The significance of the *Wake's* dialogic effect extends beyond Joyce's work. Read in the way I propose, *Finnegans Wake* becomes the exemplification of processes which are at work in all manifestations of cultural heritage, and which, crucially, are not unidirectional: neither it in the sense of the past programming us, nor in the sense of us ventriloquizing the past. Instead, Joyce's text imagines the tension between remembrance and creation – that tension which in the linguistic sign is marked by the trace – as an intrinsic aspect of cultural discourse. *Finnegans Wake* envisions heritage as an interaction that is radically bilateral, and therefore open-ended.

Bio: I am a graduate, in English Literature, of the University of Fribourg, Switzerland, and of Trinity College, Dublin. I am currently writing my PhD on James Joyce and myths of origin at the University of York.

Clare Samuel

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All the World

Panel 3b (RHB 343)

My presentation will concern the ideas and experiences surrounding my photographic series *All the World* (2009–the present). The talk will be illustrated by these images as well as historical examples of mapmaking.

In this work I asked participants to draw a map of the world from memory or imagination, then photographed them in their own interior domestic spaces with the finished drawings. The name of this work comes from the French term for 'everyone' *tout le monde*, literally 'all the world'. Is this idea of the 'whole' world something that can ever be represented? Cartography is always an abstraction, it allows us to navigate the world and yet distances us from direct experience of it. The continents are so familiar that we can detect them in the most vague outlines, but few of us will ever see these shapes in real life, from such a distance.

Maps represent collective identities, and express the social and political interests of the cultures that produce them. The 'world' that they trace is always tied up with questions of ownership, boundaries and attitudes to the natural environment. Accuracy is something that is hotly debated in mapping, yet it is impossible to render the (living, and constantly changing) spherical Earth on a flat piece of paper. Decisions on how to do so often manifest political bias, as shown by the controversy surrounding the Peter's Projection Map, which showed the comparatively accurate size of the African continent much larger than we are used to seeing.

Inherently associated with movement and journeying, maps articulate the 'there' that can give rise to a 'here'. My project involves photographing subjects in a range of different geographic locations, with the final intention of a publication, almost an 'Atlas' of people. I am interested in the overlaps, ellipsis, and disconnects between individuals in particular places, as well as the interplay of their outlines of the outer 'wide' world, and their inner domestic spaces in which they are shown.

Bio: Clare Samuel is a Northern Irish artist and researcher now living in Canada, and working at the Ryerson Image Centre. She began her studies at Napier in Edinburgh, completing her BFA at Ryerson University, and going on to an MFA at Concordia University. She has exhibited internationally and been recognized by various awards including the Roloff Beny

Foundation Fellowship in Photography. Her images have been published in magazines such as Blackflash, Next Level and Prefix Photo.

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Gertrude Stein's Queer America

Panel 1a (RHB 342a)

Phenomenology's call to gaze upon the world afresh finds its correlate in queer theory's effort to unsettle sex and gender from their 'normal' mould. In particular, Merleau-Ponty's emphasis on how bodily experiences condition perception makes him an attractive thinker for queer-feminist theorists. That turning-inward is what Sara Ahmed, for instance, explores in *Queer Phenomenology*. Bodies 'acquire orientation through the repetitions of some actions over others,' she writes, since 'what we "do do" affects what we "can do".' The notion that sexual orientation is partly ingrained isn't new, yet to say it in such phenomenological terms lends it a certain viscosity that was missing before. Our bodies become what we need them to be, and queer possibilities have to be imaginable in order to be pursued. The implications, then, of breaking away from the 'straight' horizon become a lesson in reorientation.

It is this lesson that Gertrude Stein most poignantly evokes in 'early-repetitive' pieces such as 'Miss Furr and Miss Skeene', 'Many Many Women', and *The Making of Americans*. They all convey sexual orientation as a by-product of living habits and do so in a language that rhetorically bolsters this idea by its form: repetitiveness. 'Furr and Skeene' traces the effects of traditional family arrangements upon alternative sexual identities. 'Many Many Women' shows us a way out of mainstream-marginal tensions through a philosophy of eclecticism. *The Making of Americans*, conversely, reveals a transgendered narrative consciousness from which class prejudices are so deeply entrenched as to be unthinkable without. Stein's effort to reorient sexuality away from what Husserl calls 'the natural attitude' (common-sense) distinguishes her as a phenomenological writer but also exposes the impossibility of a complete detour. No matter how far Stein moves away from the straight(ened) body, she's still inextricably linked with what's left behind—in this case, elitism.

This paper consequently examines those traces of class bias underlying *The Making of Americans'* queer identity politics. Stein's otherwise progressive narrative consciousness reveals an underhanded bourgeois elitism that demands queerness be embraced only on the grounds that it's a certain 'strain of singularity'. Not necessarily one 'well within the limits of conventional respectability a singularity that is, so to speak, well dressed and well set up', but an as yet 'unknown product'. This queerness is 'neither crazy, sporty, faddish, or a fashion, or low class with distinction'. Thus, different varieties of queerness exist in different intensities for the narrator (not all of them sexual), but 'poor queerness' lacks that unique refinement, that nobleness s/he associates with genuine singularity. A voice that chants of strange and compelling tomorrows remains just as embroiled in yesterday's attitudes as many of the characters it recapitulates. Literature that interrogates the inevitability of certain orientations takes for granted its own slant against the poor, erecting new barriers as it breaches others. *The Making of Americans* eerily anticipates class divisions within contemporary LGBT circles in that regard, by assuming that the ideal queer America is still a tastefully discerning (white) middle-class one.

Bio: Ery Shin is a doctoral candidate in English literature at the University of Oxford. Among her areas of interest are modernism, queer theory, and phenomenology. Her dissertation approaches the modernism of Djuna Barnes and Gertrude Stein through theories and representations of queer loss and embodiment.

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All That Glitters is Not Gold: Tracing Surviving Anglo-Saxon Ivory and the (In)Visible Vestiges of Secondary Materials – Panel 1b (RHB 343)

One of the most interesting aspects found in the surviving examples of Anglo-Saxon carved ivory is the concept of ‘trace’. These ivories can in themselves be considered only a hint, or remainder of the possible extensive amount of ivories that were carved in the early medieval period in England, but also, many display traces of polychromy and other inset materials that were used to embellish this already costly and valued medium.

On a smaller level, this paper will analyse the several examples of the ‘seen and unseen’ as highlighted by individual Anglo-Saxon ivories. The use of polychromy as well as inset materials such as jet or precious metals and gilding has long been practiced on ivory of any type and age. Here I will explore this more intimate concept with a few case studies that display the presence, absence or trace of these extra materials within their compositions.

Interestingly, Anglo-Saxon ivory as a whole can be considered on many levels as both ‘seen and unseen’. The bulk of this paper will consider the examples of Anglo-Saxon ivory shown in museums that have been carved in some manner and then conversely, the unseen, often archaeological, evidence that is not utilized to contextualise the more aesthetic ivories in regards to trade and economic practices in early medieval England will also be explored. By highlighting the surviving examples as most likely being only a shadow of what could have possibly been a large group of ivories belonging to Anglo-Saxon England, the question therefore will be raised as to how we expand upon the present examples to explore the unseen or absent objects? Comparative stylistic and iconographic analysis to stone, metal or manuscript illumination has served in the past to ‘place’ these ivories to English shores, but utilizing this practice instead to explore the possibilities of carvings that do not survive would serve as an interesting concluding exploration into the concept of memory, loss and absence.

Bio: Having attained a BA in History of Art from Pennsylvania State University in 2010, I moved to the University of York to further research the field of medieval ivories. After achieving my MA in 2011, thesis entitled ‘The Kiss of Peace: Gothic Ivory Paxes in British Collections’, I am now pursuing a PhD under the supervision of Dr. Jane Hawkes, and my current research relates specifically to the ivories created in Anglo-Saxon England between 550–1066.

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Vicarious Historicism: ‘Rememory’ and Appropriation in Neo-Slave Narratives – *Beloved* and *Native Guard*
Panel 2b (RHB 343)

The 1967 publication of William Styron’s *The Confessions of Nat Turner*, an imaginative account of an 1831 slave revolt written in the first-person voice of its leader, deeply troubled black intellectuals who castigated the novel’s conservative historiographical approach and its presumptive over-appropriation of the slave’s voice. While criticism chiefly surrounded Styron’s racial background and his inability, as a white man, to express meaningfully the black American experience, objections to the novel raised broader questions about contemporary representations of chattel slavery, such as: who may memorialize or speak for the silenced, and what is the proper way to reconstruct artistically and linguistically historical trauma that one has not personally lived? Along with the rise of Black Power, *Confessions* and its surrounding controversy spawned a profusion of Neo-slave narratives by black authors who, like Styron, had never corporally experienced slavery, yet exhumed the past to fulfil present, political needs. By excavating and subsequently renewing the historical trauma of slavery, authors such as Toni Morrison and Natasha Trethewey produce these recovery

fictions to suggest traces of the past within the present, but one must wonder if contemporary authors are guilty, as Styron was, of over-appropriation – imaginatively recreating the slave’s voice in the present and thus eliding diverse historical moments. According to recent scholarship by Kenneth Warren, the stringent association between African American survivor discourse and the historical strife of slavery has eroded in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, yet Morrison’s *Beloved* (1987) and Trethewey’s *Native Guard* (2007) still employ racial history as raw material for recovery literature; this essay will explore what is both lost and gained through this levelling of history, pointing to black cultural nationalism, the 1980s recovery movement, and briefly to postmodernism and late capitalism to explain the compulsion to claim ‘survival’ over traumas never personally experienced. Through Morrison’s concept of ‘rememory’, I will examine imaginatively depicted traces of historical trauma within the present, questioning if the wholly subjective idea of ‘rememory’ more accurately mirrors the present subject’s contemporary identity than the remembered continuity of the past.

Bio: Carlie Sorosiak is in the MSt. English and American Studies program at St. Hugh’s College, University of Oxford. Her research currently focuses on contemporary narratives of slavery and the work of Toni Morrison and Natasha Trethewey, but she is additionally interested in memory and war studies. Carlie received her undergraduate degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Helena Tomlin

Manchester Metropolitan University

Lace, Fear and Longing

Panel 1b (RHB 343)

My research project explores through a fine art practice the impact of working with objects related to lace histories and the relationship this has to a family history of exile and survival. I am investigating the relationship between the lace collections in archives, museums and libraries in Nottingham (pattern books, design portfolios, wages books, items of lace and rare books) and its significance for older women who worked in lace. Through a series of oral history pilot projects with older people and staff who had trained at the Nottingham Art School between 1975 – 1990, I found that the oral history method I had originally chosen did not enable me to develop an embodied enquiry that engaged with my own relationship with the project. My mother was a lace designer who had trained at the Nottingham Art School and my grandparents also ran a lingerie business after they settled in Nottingham from Eastern Europe. It is this close relationship (with the accompanying confused and hidden histories) that I am now placing at the heart of the research.

I am completing my practice based project at Manchester Institute of Art and Design (MIRIAD) using the experience of working with the Nottingham collections as a case study and through my art practice exploring the ‘encounter’ with a particular set of objects related to my family’s involvement in textile production in the East Midlands. My research questions consider the powerful emotions; both the fear and the longing, that are generated by these encounters. The artworks themselves explore dislocation and relocation and are related to a body of work I have completed over the past fifteen years.

My main research question will ask whether objects that are not ‘testimonial objects’ (usually these are part of a family collection) but objects found in museum, archive and library collections can evoke a similar response. In particular I will ask whether objects related to my particular family history of lingerie manufacture are of importance in developing a practice that makes visible what can be described as ‘memory texts’. The term ‘memory texts’ was used by Annette Kuhn to describe recorded acts of remembering, where the past is produced in the activity of remembering and stories are sometimes tainted by forgetting, selective memory and hindsight (Kuhn, 1005:162). My other research questions ask how the form of the work produced can make visible a celebration of

the women's narratives in my family and how the experience of handling and touching original records and artefacts has impact on the work created. The artwork records 'intergenerational acts of transfer' (Hirsch, 2008:106) which concerns the passing down of stories between one generation to the next. I will consider the importance of a lace design portfolio, a photograph and a local archive record from Nottingham in its construction. The project will be set within a feminist framework concerned with embodied art practice.

This paper will explore the working methods I have used to date with a particular emphasis on showing how invisible histories are made partially visible in my work.

Bio: My PhD research, 'Lace, Fear and Longing' at Manchester Institute for Research and Innovation in Art and Design (MIRIAD) explores through a fine art practice the impact of working with 'evocative' objects related to lace histories and the relationship this has to a family history of exile and survival. My publications as an artist-curator consider the importance of touch within museums. Exhibitions include work at Cornerhouse, Manchester and Kultur Bunker, Cologne.

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'It's like she's still here': Absent Mothers as Celluloid Spectres and Electromagnetic Ghosts in *Super 8* and *Family Viewing*' – Panel 2b (RHB 343)

This paper will interrogate the cinematic representation of family films (home movies and videos) in relation to narratives of maternal loss. I will examine the roles played by home mode media in structuring the protagonists' perception of and relation to the past focusing on two texts which dramatise the ties between the son and his absent mother – *Super 8* (J. J. Abrams, 2011) and *Family Viewing* (Atom Egoyan, 1988). Concentrating on the fetishistic attachment of the child to the trace of the maternal, I will address the nature of the relationship between the mother and the medium, and ask how this technological mediation affects the son's perception of the loss. Central to my argument is Roland Barthes' *Camera Lucida*, and especially his account of the Winter Garden photograph which depicts his deceased mother as a young girl. Barthes searches for an extension to the wholeness and plenitude which preceded the fracture caused by her death emphasising the indexical quality of the photographic image (the photograph as an imprint of the real). A similar desire guides Joe and Van (the protagonists of the films) in their engagement with their mothers' images. Yet, while family photography and home movies fulfil a similar role, their material qualities are distinct: a photograph arrests time, while a film captures motion. The snapshot is a corporeal object whereas the family film is more akin to a ghostly apparition: intangible and looming over the space where it is projected (home movies) or flickering on the television screen (videos). If the *punctum* (the wound) of the Winter Garden photograph relies on the *ça a été* ('that which was') confirming the painful irrevocability of the mother's absence, family films – while still possessing an indexical quality – animate the past. It is as if 'that which was' still is. In both *Super 8* and *Family Viewing*, family films depicted are collages of memory; they are a compilation of fragments and glances rendering the past as a dream-like state, where events blend into one another and images are partially obscured by the haptic textures of decaying analogue. They offer a ghostly extension of the maternal presence, problematising the successful separation of the son from the mother's image. As they are passed from one generation to the next – from the father (he creator of the imagery) to the son — they are adjusted and manipulated, becoming a contested site riddled by Oedipal drama. Edited, erased and salvaged the traces of the maternal become palimpsests accommodating the families conflicting desires and longings. Yet, is the mother only a silent mirror, a ghostly object exchanged between the men, or do the films also contain a residue of her desires? Or perhaps, constructed entirely by and for the men, she was an absence in the first place.

Bio: Marta Wašik is a first year PhD student in Film and Television Studies at the University of Warwick. Her thesis focuses on the representation of family through the lens of the home movie in contemporary cinema. Her interests include the study of Minority and Other cinemas, gender studies, and the cultural construction of memory and identity.

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Traces
Panel 2a (RHB 342a)

When I received the call for papers, I rejected the idea of sending an abstract: Not more theoreticism, I thought! Convinced that I had gleaned all I needed from Derrida, I continued my research: wading through an array of ephemeral material on 19th century freak shows. My PhD is concerned with the sites in which the freaky body was exhibited and displayed in 19th-century London; illuminating the experience propagated by showman and received by audiences who came to stare at (or should I say study?) the anomalous body. As I continued to immerse myself in miscellaneous collections at the London Metropolitan Archives, my mind kept referring back to the notion of 'traces' and the call for papers. Reflecting on why this was so, I decided I better write an abstract and submit my proposal – my initial prejudice was a mistaken one!

I remain rather stubborn in my belief that overt theorising, impenetrable postmodernist texts, are not only elitist but potentially restrictive to the actual practice of history. But Derrida's concept of traces encapsulates, in my mind, the very essence of history; so the paper I propose seeks to explore the practice of history as it relates to Derrida's notion. History is fundamentally about retracing, rebuilding aspects of the past left to us in a variety of manifestations. Arguably, our endeavour is ultimately bound for failure because, even if we adopt the totalising history of the annals, we are fundamentally dealing with a trace, separated in time, which can never be reconstructed in entirety. When we consider the plethora of approaches to bygone ages, we realise that encapsulation is a mirage: the best historians can hope for is a joining of the dots, a coloured-in template, an interpretative gesture.

I hope to illuminate by reference to my own work in reconstructing certain freak shows: the themes, experience and motives derivative from freaky exhibitions. In exploring diary extracts from Arthur Munby and textual and visual traces of freak shows at Bartholomew Fair, I hope to demonstrate the aforementioned while raising further issues as they relate to traces. What material is existent that allows a reconstruction of a nineteenth century freak show? What is absent in these traces? How can auditory, sensory and visual landscapes, contemporaneous reactions and emotions be captured? How can these be explained in a historical study and, indeed, through 'traces' of the past? What, indeed, is the boundary between past and present, can a trace of the former ever remain truly historical or, in entering present-day collections, does the trace become redundant?

As a PhD student, who only recently graduated from Cambridge University with a BA in History, this paper seeks to showcase the trials and tribulation, the difficulties and excitements of a recently started PhD student grappling with the nature of the historical enterprise and the reconstruction of traces to create a doctoral dissertation at Goldsmiths. It is meant as a deliberation, aided by the use of Derrida's concept, to fundamentally ask: am I to accept limitations and proceed, does this create the potential for new ideas or am I, ultimately, doomed to failure?

Bio: John Woolf graduated from Cambridge University with a BA in History, before embarking on a funded-PhD at Goldsmiths College, University of London. His research into the history of freak shows has led to work with the BBC, where he wrote a three-part series for BBC4 to be aired next year. Woolf has worked in public policy, is an active member of the Labour Party and currently publishes monthly articles for an online journal, *The Inkling*.