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ABSTRACTS

Eve Aldea

Your Local is Our Global: Contemporary British Fiction and the Curriculum

The technology used at the international video conference on Contemporary British Fiction at the British Council, London, in March 2007 highlighted some of the problematics of the label CBF. Participants found themselves both united and divided as they were speaking in a common forum, yet always from their own space. This tension between the local and the global was felt in the approaches to the viability of Contemporary British Fiction on the curriculum. While delegates in London unsurprisingly saw CBF as something diverse and global, it became clear that such a definition was not one which would render the label useful for all participants. Instead a return to the specific local of Contemporary British Fiction presented itself as necessary to make it relevant as the study of a national literature.

Eugene Arva

The Show Must Go On: The Simulated Search for the Real in the Society of the Spectacle

Six years after the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and on the Pentagon in Washington D.C., the controversial authenticity and meaningfulness of the world of images that we perceive as reality still invites the following questions: If our sense of the real is just an artifact made up of a complex of images, can we still hope ever to repossess reality? What would happen if we ultimately found out that the real is in fact a place (condition, state of being) we are never supposed to know? Must the “show” go on only

because, paradoxically, the more we wish for it to end – with a utopian or dystopian “unveiling” of the Real – the more we fear the return of an excess of meaning and, at the same time, the loss of a lot more convenient triviality? For Jean Baudrillard, we are past the moment of the society of the spectacle because of the loss of all referent: this is the world of simulacra and simulation, or, as I will show in resonance with Slavoj Žižek, the world of *The Matrix*. According to Žižek, it is our “passion for the Real” (the thrill of reality) that might also prompt us to avoid it. A post-9/11 analysis of a couple of cinematic narratives from the 1990s, Andy and Larry Wachowski’s *The Matrix* and Oliver Stone’s *Natural Born Killers*, comes to support the conclusion that genuine, non-“mediated” identities can be preserved as long as, aware of the spectacle and its perils, we keep up our search for the Real.

Wanda Balzano

Biancheria in the Shadow of Vesuvius

This photographic essay on the role of textiles in the culture of Naples, Italy, and particularly of their place in the lives of women, notably through the creation of a trousseau, is accompanied by a text which introduces the images and places them in their social context.

Keri Berg

Taming the Bourgeoisie: Grandville’s *Scènes de la vie privée et publique des animaux* (1840-1842)

J. J. Grandville’s illustrated book, *Scènes de la vie privée et publique des animaux* marks the height of the caricaturist’s popularity and the rise of book illustration in France. Behind both stands the bourgeoisie of the July Monarchy (1840-1842) in that the burgeoning class was simultaneously the primary target of period caricature and its biggest consumer. Grandville’s brand of caricature, however, is distinct, as the artist

employs the animal to mock the bourgeoisie, giving bankers, landlords, doctors and politicians animal heads. The article that follows explores this parody and the larger work as exemplary of the bourgeoisie and its role in fueling popular visual culture.

Tara Brabazon

Sex in the Spinning: Stationary Cycling and the Patrolling of Difference

This research project is based in an elite, lifestyle gym, with high membership fees that must be paid annually and in advance. Yet the study is not only located in a particular place but is compressed into a specific time, the “early riser” indoor cycling classes held at 6 am. The goal is not only to investigate the architecture of the cycling suite and how power and community are configured in this space, but how structures of belonging and exclusion are constructed and perpetuated. In applying Patricia Vertinsky’s cultural history of bicycling, her analysis is repositioned in a post-work, post-Fordist environment. Stationary cycles replace the outdoor road bikes. Similarly, the restrictions of dress and corsetry, which enacted a discipline imposed from outside the body, have been replaced by a corset of muscle and a cult of thinness, a discipline imposed from within. Yet through these changes, my analysis confirms Vertinsky’s argument that middle-class women gain most from sporting activity.

Tatjana Chorney

Hypertexts and Reader-Engagement: Reading, Writing, Adapting

Relying on recent adaptation theory, the essay looks at how the digital medium influences reading and writing, and changes the ways we interact with texts. Defining adaptation as a cognitive and “experiential” process, a way of thinking about reading, writing, creating, a way of being engaged with culture, the essay applies the concept to the investigation of the modes of engagement enabled in hypermedia. Providing examples from hyperpoetry, hyperfiction, and informational hypertexts, the essay focuses on reading situations in

hypermedia that pose new cognitive demands on readers, and examines some of their implications for reading, writing, and the changing nature of communication.

W. Keith Duffy

Sound Arguments: Composing Words and Music

In the following article, I describe a pedagogy that immerses students in two kinds of composing. First, students research and write argumentative essays in a traditional academic environment; then in a digital recording studio, students reframe those arguments in a different medium by composing original abstract electronic music. This pedagogy shows students the practical and theoretical connections among two seemingly disparate processes, and it provides them with an opportunity to explore and express their positions on controversial issues in multiple mediums. As an example of how this pedagogy works, I discuss the written and musical work of four students and how they have successfully responded to this pedagogy. Two mp3 audio files accompany this manuscript.

Roy Fox

Selling STEM Education through Fears of “Others”

Much of what occurred in America after the launch of the Russian satellite, *Sputnik I*, in 1957, can be regarded as happening all over again. The paper questions the wisdom of U.S. federal and state governments again “privileging” the STEM curriculum areas (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics education) by proposing large expenditures of funding. Some of the primary reasons that government leaders have recently offered for such expenditures are also questioned.

Adam Freeman

The Compassionate Nation: The Poetic Philosophy of Wilfred Owen

The Great War refracts Wilfred Owen's visions of poethood and personhood. By thinking of Owen as a "poet at war," rather than a "war poet," this paper reads his war works as re-enacted expressions of an already developing poetic voice. This complicates the cosmopolitan reading of Owen's mature poetry that traces its insistent physicality to a compassionate sensibility. We reverse the arrow between sympathy and physicality, and twist it by following the turn in Owen's poetry from a concern with idealized to frail bodies. The voice of compassion is not something Owen brings with him to the War; it is something enacted in the midst of war out of a disposition to linger on physical particulars. Where before these were "invitations to want," the horrors of war remake them as "invitations to warn."

Sarah Garland

Second Sight: Reading Twentieth-Century Self-Reflexivity through the Baroque

This paper re-examines the postmodernist turn to self-reflexivity in twentieth-century fiction, spectacle film, and theory, in the light of recent scholarship which suggests that some of the twentieth century's most stylised movements and works might profitably be read as a recurrence of many of the traits of seventeenth-century baroque style.

Foucault's reading of *Las Meninas* constitutes one repeating return, as does Borges' *Pierre Menard*, and in the wider interdisciplinary field, theorists such as Omar Calabrese, John Beverley, Gilles Deleuze, Angela Ndalianis and Greg Lambert, amongst others, all suggest that thinking about twentieth-century reflexivity needs to be extended beyond the usual consideration of modernism, into a longer stylistic tradition. This paper seeks to build on this work by politicising these excessive aesthetics and their meta-gestures, asking what positions self-reflexive texts might create for their authors, readers and viewers.

Robert Miltner

Raymond Carver and the Architecture of Emotion

The function of architectural space is discussed in relation to two of Carver's short stories in particular, "Neighbors" and "Gazebo." In the first, the liminal space between neighbours' houses is configured as the testing site of identity construction between actuality and aspiration, while in the second the transgressive relationship between a motel manager and the woman referred to only as the Mexican Maid expresses the realities of colonial and postcolonial dislocation. The binaries Carver presents are read as implying a further space, often beyond the text, which might lead to transformation. His stories are seen as giving architectural representation to emotion, in his characters' project to negotiate the boundaries and dimensions of their cultural identities.

Karen Schubert

Earthen Dreams: Writing Poems from the Art of Tony Armeni

The public sculpture of Ohio artist Tony Armeni who often works with recycled materials is introduced here, and accompanied by the author's poems which the sculpture has inspired.

Harold Veaser

The Politics of Autobiography in North American Criticism

Autobiography in critics' writings about literature marks a swerve from the elitist bent that dominated Modernist criticism and successor movements like New Criticism and poststructuralism. Prompted by the so-called culture wars in North America, critics began to question their own cult of difficulty and to try to justify their manifest privileges and immunities in a language comprehensible to readers outside the discipline. Feminism paved the way, since it, like autobiography, was inclined to defy scholarly conventions, embrace feeling-based criticism, lay open critics' personal struggles and emotions, and generally to use self-exposure as a critical strategy. Not everyone welcomed this swerve.

Leftists considered autobiographical moves just a reflex of capitalism and a further commodification of the self. The New Historicism was a “profoundly narcissistic method,” to one such naysayer, while autobiographical criticism was, to another Lefty, just further evidence of “the hypervisibility of the ideological category of the subject.” Frankly postmodern critics vigorously defended autobiography, proclaiming literature an extension of the marketplace and auction house. It is argued here that we are left with a style of criticism shorn of both elitism and political commitment alike.

Travis Vogan

“Inside Doesn’t Matter:” Ronald Reagan and *American Psycho*

Despite the fact that Ronald Reagan’s presidency marked America’s highest unemployment rate since the Great Depression and was riddled with scandals like the 1986 Iran Contra affair, his approval rating when he left office was the highest for any President since Franklin Roosevelt. The essay uses the film *American Psycho* (2000) to examine this curious predicament, specifically addressing how Reagan’s image politics enabled him to maintain public approval. Building from the work of Jean Baudrillard, Lawrence Grossberg, and Brian Massumi, it investigates Reagan’s affectivity and the manner in which *American Psycho* rather hyperbolically comments on it.

Katherine Weiss

“There’s no question that this is torture!” Electrocuting Patriotic Fervour in Sam Shepard’s *The God of Hell*

While Sam Shepard’s desperate attempt to influence the American voting public failed either to keep President George W. Bush out of office or to win the approval of theatre critics in New York or London, his play *The God of Hell* (2004) captivated the interest of renowned directors such as Kathy Burke and actors such as Ewen Bremner, Randy Quaid, and Tim Roth. Despite being rushed into production and refusing to offer its

audience positive solutions to what Shepard has called an invasion of “Republican fascism,” Shepard successfully manages to criticise American patriotism, capitalism and patriarchy through images of electric-shock torture. This paper examines images of patriotism and torture, employing Elaine Scarry’s *The Body in Pain* to argue that politically inflicted injury is both a tool used by unstable governments and a vehicle that destroys the body and family in the hopes of maintaining political power.