

**Atelier 5 : Société d'Études Anglaises Contemporaines (SEAC)  
La Nouvelle de langue anglaise**

**Jeudi 2 juin 2022**

13h30 **Clémence Laburthe-Tolra** (Université Paul Valéry Montpellier 3): “Fractured Landscape, Divided Society, Split Selves – the Blitzed London as “Third landscape” in Rose Macaulay’s *The World My Wilderness* (1951)”

As she roamed across London to explore the ruins and the impact of the Blitz on the urban landscape (Emery 1991), Rose Macaulay was deeply aware of faults permeating both city and society. Set in 1945, *The World my Wilderness* (1951) follows the journey of Barbary Deniston as she leaves the maquis in Collioure and makes her way through a ruin-like and jungle-like London (Mellor 2011). As such, the novel encompasses geological, social and psychological faults dividing individuals in the aftermath of the Second World War.

Rather than focusing on the redemptive dimension of the landscape healing split characters (Dickey 2010), I wish to ponder over the “deep chasms, the pits, the broken walls and foundations, the tangled greenery, the roofless, gaping churches” to examine the blitzed landscape as a space of in-betweenness for faulty characters.

Not only is this fractured landscape inherent to the “wrecked city”, but it also holds various strata of time (Schama 1996). As Barbary wanders across London, she unearths memories, losses and traumas which are all magnified by architectural fault lines. The fractured urban landscape thus becomes a middle-ground for characters like Barbary who prove to be split, as Barbary claims she is a “heretic” who does not “fit” in society. Indeed, it levels out time gaps and spatial discontinuities in a “shamble”. I intend here to draw on Gilles Clément’s concept of “third landscape” (Clément 2020) to read the ruins of London as a space providing a sense of in-betweenness amongst fault lines for outcasts and biodiversity. Ultimately, I will argue that the novel does not solely display fault lines; rather, it is built on lines of faults. I will thus address the role of the page regarding faults, pondering over whether the page frames (Caws 2014), magnifies, bridges, or duplicates faults.

14h **Catherine Hoffmann** (Université du Havre-Normandie): “Mental, Perceptual, Communicative Dislocations and Generic Destabilization in Jocelyn Brooke’s *The Image of a Drawn Sword* (1950)”

In Jocelyn Brooke’s novel, *The Image of a Drawn Sword* (1950), the protagonist, Reynard Langrish, presented from the outset as on the brink of disintegration, finds himself caught up in an unsettling chain of events. The heterodiegetic narrative, entirely focalised through Reynard, is set in Brooke’s own Kentish territory in the aftermath of World War II, a narrowly circumscribed spatio-temporal framework which accentuates a sense of claustrophobic oppression.

The series of events which leads to Reynard’s absorption into the rough masculinity of the army – an object of both repulsion and homoerotic/sadomasochistic fantasies – is triggered, on a stormy night, by the arrival of a young officer at the cottage which the protagonist shares with his mother. A few months later, Reynard, while on a familiar walk, decides to enter a disused dug-out, an ominous military version of the rabbit-hole in *Alice’s Adventures*, and emerges in an army camp where he is treated like a deserter. The incomprehensible situation leads to an intensification of mental, perceptual and communicative dislocation, distorting Reynard’s perception of time and place, upsetting rational expectations and conversation.

Topoi suggesting generic affiliations with narratives of dream or madness and with the fantastic contribute to tearing apart the fabric of the ordinary world, while leaving both protagonist and reader in doubt about the true nature of the events. Uncertainties arising from Reynard's inner dislocation should not, however, obscure the subversive dimension of a novel which, in its own fantastical way, registers anxiety about renewed war after 1945. By locating the camp and impending military action in the midst of a Kentish rural area, Brooke destabilises the pastoral and reveals the continuing military presence in rural England to be "a core element of English nature in its function as a component of cultural identity" (Rawlinson 115).

Ultimately, it will be suggested that, from a rhetorical perspective, though the narrative is ostensibly informed by metonymy, the disturbing effects of its association of contrary states and the paradoxical attribution of positive effects to terrifying situations may be fruitfully approached through the figure of oxymoron.

**14h30 Lea Sinoimeri** (Université de Paris): "Theatres of the Mind: Split Selves and Liminality in Contemporary Northern Irish Short Fiction"

The paper will explore short fiction by contemporary Northern Irish authors Lucy Caldwell and Jan Carson analysing the modes through which their experimental writing highlights the multiple fractures and fault lines of Northern Irish reality, while imagining new, liminal and hybrid modes of being and belonging in Northern Ireland.

The analysis will focus on the way in which these two authors revisit and innovate the genre of the short story by exploring both, fault lines and continuities with other genres and media. Authors of several novels and short story collections, both, Caldwell and Carson also write for the radio, often blurring the lines between short fiction and radiophonic work. Commissioned by the BBC in 2020, Carson's *The Last Resort* (2021) was first broadcast on BBC 4 as a ten-episode series, before being published as a short fiction collection. Similarly, Caldwell's *Mayday* was first broadcast as a radioplay on BBC 4 in 2018 and later included into her last collection *Intimacies* (2021), while many of her short stories have been adapted and produced by the BBC.

Analysing differences and specificities of each collection, Caldwell's two short story collections *Multitudes* (2016) and *Intimacies* (2021) and Carson's *Children's Children* (2016) and *The Last Resort* (2021) will be read as hybrid and liminal works that challenge the reader's perception of generic identity and demonstrate Caldwell's and Carson's far-reaching intertextual and intermedial aspect of writing. Special attention will be drawn to the way in which both Caldwell and Carson experiment with narrative voice. Their short stories alternate first person interior monologue with second person narrative, thus setting the scene of a theatre of the mind where multiple spatial and temporal dimensions overlap. Split between their past and present selves, between their inner and outer voices, the often-unnamed narrators of Caldwell's and Carson's stories narrate their intimate, dramatic ruptures, losses and dislocations in and out of Northern Ireland. The analysis would finally like to suggest that, despite the alienating effect of this fractured narration, each collection weaves the different stories together through thematic echoes and multiple, intratextual connections thus imagining collective and plural ways of overcoming the dramatic fractures of the past.

**15h Isabelle Roblin** (Université du Littoral-Côte d'Opale): "Geology as a Metaphor in Graham Swift's *Ever After* (1992)"

In *Ever After*, Graham Swift's fifth novel, Matthew Pearce, the main narrator's ancestor, is a Victorian surveyor who chronicles in his *Notebooks* how his reading of Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology* (1830-1833) and Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859) shattered his vision of the world, opening up "epistemological fault lines" and "yawning fractures" in his "teleological understanding" of human life: "If Lyell is right", he exclaims, "if

the world existed so long without Man upon it, why should we suppose [...] that we occupy any special and permanent place in Creation?" (*Ever After*, 135). This of course echoes the seismic debates between "creationists" and "evolutionists" that bisected Victorian society and which are often represented in neo-Victorian fiction. However, this is not the only fault line in the novel. The text itself of the *Notebooks* is fragmented, presented achronologically, used by the main late twentieth-century narrator, Bill Unwin, for his own ends, creating a feeling of unease and uncertainty in the reader, who feels the fictional ground beneath his/her feet moving and his/her reading comfort zone shaken. Geology and fault lines are thus very much an essential component of Swift's novel, both literally and metaphorically.

15h30 **Armelle Parey** (Université de Caen-Normandie): "Memory Slippages and Biofiction in Maggie O'Farrell's *Hamnet*"

Maggie O'Farrell's 8<sup>th</sup> novel, *Hamnet* was published to great acclaim in 2020, winning the Woman's Prize for Fiction in the UK and the National Book Critics Circle prize for fiction in the USA. The title of the novel refers to one of the protagonists, William Shakespeare's son, who died aged 11. The narrative however very much focuses on his mother, usually known as Ann Hathaway and here referred to as Agnes, as in her father's will. *Hamnet* is similar to Claire Tomalin's *The Invisible Woman* about Charles's Dickens's mistress insofar as it too attaches itself to a figure one hardly knows anything about, now hiding its object behind another character's name (*Hamnet*, another figure one knows nothing about). However, while Tomalin's approach is biographical, O'Farrell's is fictional and because Ann is a historical figure, I propose to read *Hamnet* as a variation on the genre of biofiction. Biofiction, which conflates history, biography and fiction, often focuses on well-known figures and this paper proposes to examine *Hamnet* to consider how and to what effects the genre works with minor figures.

After summing up what is generally known about Shakespeare's family, this paper will examine what is now said about them and how. Indeed, *Hamnet* does not try to explain why these figures have been forgotten in a two-level narrative as in A.S. Byatt's *Possession* where 20th-century scholars unearth new elements that challenge the view commonly held on two Victorian authors. Contrary too to the long view offered to the reader in Alan Hollinghurst's *The Stranger's Child* that depicts the fortunes of a poet and his reputation across 100 years, *Hamnet*'s reader is immersed in the lives and sorrows of the playwright's family in the space of a few years. Finally, this paper will deal with what seems to be the attraction of the empty slate — the gaps in history like a mystery to be interpreted— and the revisionist dimension present in O'Farrell's novel put forward in the novelist's interviews. If repairing, making up for what is missing, filling in the blanks is the object, a biofiction of minor figures like *Hamnet* can be considered as a form of revisionism. We shall conclude with remarks on Ben Elton's TV show *Upstart Crow* and his film *All is True* that also revise the usual view on Shakespeare's wife.

### **Vendredi 3 juin 2022**

9h **Xavier Le Brun** (Université d'Angers): "'Positional Elegy': Mode, Perspective and the Readers-Characters Fault Line in Virginia Woolf's 'Kew Gardens.'"

One of Virginia Woolf's best-known stories, "Kew Gardens" has been read from varying perspectives—as an example of formalist fiction, marked by the influence of Post-Impressionism (Quick, Briggs), as an "autopoietic narrative" (Stevenson) or an "experimentation with representing nonhuman existence and subjectivity" (Swanson 54); it has been described as "emphasising the importance of embodiment" and "the creative potential of getting lost" (Taylor 124), while also partaking in the elegiac mode (Smythe).

In the wake of these last two interpretations, whose perspectives it partly melds, this paper recognises that “Kew Gardens” is indeed steeped in “the conventions and tropes of elegy,” thereby offering a “multi-subjective meditation on loss” (Smythe 67); it does so, however, in a most original manner, as the elegiac subtext in the story is not so much verbally expressed as it is embodied, or *enacted* through the perspective occupied by the narrative voice. As groups of characters successively make their appearance and leave the stage—the narrative voice all the while adhering to the same focal point: the “oval-shaped flower-bed” at the centre of the story—the emphasis shifts from the different couples depicted to the very process of passing away and the emptiness they leave behind them.

Elegy in “Kew Gardens” can thus be described as *positional*: its expression is contingent on proximity to and distance from the characters, so that a fault line is implicitly drawn, separating us—the readers, standing immobile—from them—those who are shown to pass away. Woolf’s art in the story lies in preserving a separation that is both unbreachable—so as to create a sense of loss—and thin enough for readers to be emotionally affected by the fragments of human lives that dissolve one after another in front of their eyes.

9h30 **Héloïse Lecomte** (École Normale Supérieure de Lyon): “‘On this near side of a cut’: Fault Lines as ‘principles of song’ in Denise Riley’s Grief-Writing”

After losing her son Jacob to a previously-undiagnosed heart condition, English poet and philosopher Denise Riley published a collection of poems entitled *Say Something Back*, among which features the famous piece “A Part Song”, in 2016. The devastating loss also led her to write *Time Lived without its Flow*, a short piece of non-fiction, part-philosophical essay, part grief-memoir, in 2012. In this earlier work that sheds light on her poetics of grief, Riley metaphorises the catastrophic event as a seismic shift that causes the wounded self to experience life “on this near side of a cut” (77). As a result, the wounding experience, which derails the apprehension of time, but also entails a faulty memorialization of the deceased and cognitive failures, seems to preclude the possibility of a complete recovery. Riley’s multi-generic grief-writing probes the nature of the cut and represents it stylistically in order to showcase the vulnerability of the grieving subject.

While traditional elegy is described as a “poem of mortal loss and consolation” (Sacks 1987, 3), whose goal is to heal the wounds of grief, the 20<sup>th</sup>-century emergence of its melancholic counterpart, anti-elegy, strives “not to achieve but to resist consolation, [...] not to heal but to reopen the wounds of loss” (Ramazani 1994, xi). In this paper, I intend to investigate the nature of the friction between elegy and anti-elegy at the heart of Riley’s philosophical, autobiographical and poetic grief-writing. My aim is to show that this fault line can result in the opening up of a third category, which eschews binary distinctions between mourning and melancholy, healing and (re-)opening the wound. Riley’s aesthetics of grief could be conceptualised as a poetics of vibration, i.e. an oscillation that results from a loss of equilibrium and sets in motion an emotional response, which becomes a creative “principle of song” (Riley 2016).

10h **Valérie Favre** (Université Lumière Lyon 2): “Faulty Woolf? Exploring the Fault Lines of Virginia Woolf’s Literary and Feminist Heritage in Contemporary British Literature and Culture”

In her 1931 essay devoted to *Aurora Leigh* and its author, Elizabeth Barrett-Browning, Virginia Woolf asserts: “Her ‘intention’ survives; the interest of her theory redeems much that is faulty in her practice”<sup>1</sup>. I would argue that this characterisation as well as its reversed

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<sup>1</sup> Virginia WOOLF, “Aurora Leigh” [1931], *The Essays of Virginia Woolf – Volume 5 (1929-1932)*, Stuart N. CLARKE (Ed.), New York, Mariner, 2009, p. 519-529, p. 524.

alternative “the *interest of her practice* redeems much that is *faulty in her theory*” offer an insightful and stimulating entryway into Woolf’s literary and feminist heritage in contemporary British literature and culture.

That Woolf’s intentions have survived well into the 21st century is a statement that would be hard to disprove,<sup>2</sup> yet the fault lines between theory and practice, success and failure, both within and between her literary endeavour and her feminist thinking permeate her posterity. The works of authors and artists such as A.S Byatt, Rachel Cusk, Maggy Gee, Olivia Laing, Ali Smith, Kabe Wilson, or Jeanette Winterson have repeatedly engaged with this tension, highlighting at times Woolf’s aptness, at times her faults. In the age of #MeToo, #BlackLivesMatter, #TransLivesMatter, the fault lines of Woolf’s contemporary heritage keep running alongside those of contemporary feminisms, and across the fractures of gender, class and race in British society and literature, while contemporary British writers and artists keep highlighting how the friction between literature and feminism (be it feminist praxis and activism, or feminist writing) is another fault line that lies at the core of both Woolf’s and their own endeavours.

This paper intends to examine the various ways in which Woolf’s figure, her fictional and essayistic works as well as her feminist thinking have been, for the past thirty years or so, considered faulty, if not at fault, but also, how, beyond this rejecting and/or this reclaiming of Woolf, both her figure and her work have had the effect of a literary and feminist earthquake whose shock waves keep influencing contemporary British literature and culture.

### **Samedi 4 juin 2022**

10h **Shirley Bricout** (Université Paul Valéry Montpellier 3): “Textual Tectonics in ‘The Man Who Died’ by D. H. Lawrence”

Earthquakes feature prominently at key moments in the Bible, with which D. H. Lawrence was very familiar owing to his Congregationalist upbringing. For instance, in the New Testament, an earthquake occurred when Christ “yielded up the ghost” (Matthew XXVII, 51–53) and also, three days later, when the stone sealing his grave rolled away (Matthew XXVIII, 2).

In this paper, I first use tectonics as a critical trope to examine how Lawrence’s rewriting of Christ’s resurrection, in the novella “The Man Who Died” (1929), also known as “The Escaped Cock,” operates along the fault-lines between textual tensions. While Lawrence’s narrative breaks away from the conventional creed of Christ’s redemption of the Original Sin (or Fault), the materiality of rocks, chinks, cracks and slits, described throughout “The Man Who Died,” enhances the corporeality of the resurrection to the flesh that Lawrence resolutely emphasizes in his works.

The frictions created between the biblical master text and Lawrence’s modernist short story are further amplified by disruptive shifts which pertain to iconoclasm and syncretism. Indeed, while the Christ-like figure rejects his mission as redeemer of the Original Sin, he turns to the phenomenal world to find his own means of redemption, in a sexual encounter, dramatized with borrowings from the Egyptian myth of the dismemberment of Osiris.

However, as I also show, tectonics are not only a convenient critical trope to discuss Lawrence’s short story; tectonics are astutely embedded in Lawrence’s text in the unexpected frictions within language (hypallages, zeugmas, puns, etc...) that question the conventional Christian ordering of the world. These disruptions, heralded in the clash between the competing titles of the story, release the mythopoetic potentialities of the short story as genre and restore the redemptive power of writing.

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<sup>2</sup> As recently shown in Monica LATHAM, Caroline MARIE & Anne-Laure RIGEADE (Eds.), *Recycling Virginia Woolf in Contemporary Art and Literature*, London, Routledge, 2021.

10h30 **Elodie Trolé** (Université Paris 8): “Cracking the (in)credible Open: A Study of the Rift between the Real and the Imaginary in the Short Stories of Steven Millhauser and Patricia Eakins”

The short stories of Patricia Eakins and Steven Millhauser are very different; however, we will see that both writers can be qualified of “enchanters of the real”. Their short stories indeed constantly remind the reader of his own reality, but also create new, highly imaginative, highly (in)credible fictive worlds. These unheimlich worlds are actually created in the very rift between the real and the imaginary; this paper aims at studying this rift, its modalities and its consequences on fiction and on language.

This paper will first focus on the way Millhauser and Eakins seem to be constantly reminding the reader of their own reality, through spatial and temporal references, intertextuality and “effets de réel”, for instance. As paradoxical as it may seem, these references do not take the reader out of the fictive worlds that are created in the fictions of these authors: they contribute to reinforcing the very imaginative fictive worlds which are built by the narrative voices.

Because they are still, in some way, tied to the real, the incredible worlds Eakins and Millhauser create are Other, but not totally: they belong to the realm of the probable, of the plausible. The reader allows these fictive worlds to penetrate their own referential, and even to transform it. The fictive and the imaginary end up modifying, enchanting the real.

These fictive worlds modify the real of the reader in many ways, but the last part of this paper will focus on how their impact on fiction itself, and on language. We will indeed explore how these new worlds, born from the rift between the real and the imaginary, transform literary and narrative conventions and also language. In other words, the experimentation which started in the rift between the real and the imaginary seems to give rise to another experimentation, one which transforms fiction and language.

11h **Emilie Walezak** (Université de Nantes): “Fault Lines: Viral Disquiet in Sarah Moss’ Fiction”

Sarah Moss’ latest novel, *The Fell*, is a pandemic novel which explores the social fractures that the Covid 19 lockdown blatantly exposed. Its oppressive atmosphere of rising anxiety in the self-isolating context of the epidemic, however, has pervaded Moss’ fiction from the beginning of her career. Her first novel, *Cold Earth* (2009), published a few months before the swine flu pandemic, imagined a group of archaeologists cut off from the world in Greenland as a consequence of the global spread of a virus. Her 2020 novel, *Summerwater*, similarly pictures a group of tourists isolated by the rain in Scotland. Moss uses extreme quarantine-like circumstances to question individual responses and group behaviours. The environment she opts for in her fiction features remote places that allow for dire seclusion: from the imaginary Hebridean island of Colsay in *Night Waking* (2011) to the Peak District in *The Fell*. Embeddedness in the environment is not simply the background to her stories but the trigger to question human embodiment, as she outlined in an interview: “I think the reason I’m interested in ‘bad’ weather is because that is when you’re most aware of your own embodiment in the world; when your skin is being rained on and your hair is being blown around. You really know you’re alive when you’re most physically present to the world and the elements.” Thus, the various confining circumstances of her novels unfold as political fault lines questioning single motherhood, domestic abuse, xenophobia, scapegoating, class and gender divides. The paper will explore such rifts through attention to Moss’ diverse writing procedures from the 1<sup>st</sup> person polyphony of her first novel to the disjointed use of free indirect speech, characteristic of pandemic writing, in her latest novel.