

difficult conversations



in modernist studies

**A Series of Online Events Organised by Five  
International Associations of Modernists:  
AMSN, BAMS, MSA, MSiA, and SEM**

**25 July – 4 August 2023**

Difficulty has long been associated with modernism – and modernist studies. This series of online, free, and open events understand difficulty in the broadest sense possible, including:

- difficult topics in modernist literature (fascism, misogyny, racism)
- technical and formal difficulty (long novels, short novels, experimentalism)
- archives and the difficulty of accessing material and sources
- the difficulty of working collaboratively, internationally, across languages and disciplines
- difficult situations within the profession (precarity, the state of the discipline, discrimination, gender pay gap)

Open to all and **FREE**, but registration advised:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/650869146137>

**Zoom link** (for all sessions):

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81889515718?pwd=cFdtR1hzM09KOVoyN0gzTjFidU5Rdz09>

# THE PROGRAMME

**Tuesday 25 July**

2-4pm UK/3-5pm CEST/9-11am EST/11pm-1am Sydney/9-11pm HK

## **Difficult Careers in Modernist Studies [roundtable] (organised by BAMS)**

**Chair:** Rob Hawkes (Teesside)

Participants:

- James Bailey (Arts Council England)
- Stanislava Dikova (Essex)
- Noreen Masud (Bristol)

As a 'traditional' academic career becomes more difficult to access and the phrase 'alt-ac' trends on social media, we ask: what is difficult about our careers? What might PhDs in modernist literature, or English Literature more broadly aspire to post study? What obstacles are there and what rewards? We will discuss precarity inside academia and outside of it; alternative routes to a fulfilling career not in academia, or academia-adjacent; publishing; post-doctoral scholarships; metrics and mental health; aspiration, and the institutions which encourage or stifle our ambitions. We would like this to be an interactive discussion and will be taking your questions in the second half of the session. If you have a question you'd like us to think about in advance, please send to: [r.m.bowler@keele.ac.uk](mailto:r.m.bowler@keele.ac.uk).

James Bailey is a writer from Manchester. He is a Literature Relationship Manager at Arts Council England, where he works to support writers, bookshops, literary festivals and publishers, while also managing ACE's relationship with organisations including The Poetry Society and the Poetry Translation Centre. James did his PhD in English Literature and is the author of *Muriel Spark's Early Fiction* (Edinburgh University Press, 2021). He is currently writing a new book about Spark's weird and wonderful life.

Stanislava Dikova is a postdoctoral researcher and a Research Impact Officer at the University of Essex. Her work to date has been published in the *LSE Review of Books*, *The Modernist Review*, and *Feminist Modernist Studies*. She is also the co-editor of *Love and the Politics of Care* (Bloomsbury, 2022) and *Love and the Politics of Intimacy* (Bloomsbury, 2023). In her research support role, Stanislava provides training for researchers on all aspects of the research lifecycle that relate to generating and demonstrating impact, including funding applications, public engagement, and contributions to policymaking on local, national, and international levels.

Noreen Masud is a Lecturer in Twentieth Century Literature at the University of Bristol, and an AHRC/BBC New Generation Thinker 2020. Her first academic book is *Stevie Smith and the Aphorism: Hard Language* (Oxford University Press, 2022); her first creative non-fiction book is *A Flat Place* (Hamish Hamilton (UK) and Melville House (US), 2023).

## Wednesday 26 July

2-4pm UK/3-5pm CEST/9-11am EST/11pm-1am Sydney/9-11pm HK

### The Politics of Poetics: Revisiting Modernist Difficulty [roundtable] (organised by SEM):

**Chair:** Louise Kane (University of Central Florida)

Participants:

- Sean Mark (Université Catholique de Lille): “‘Beauty is difficult’”: On (still) reading Pound’
- Kit Kumiko Toda (Université de la Réunion): “‘How unpleasant to meet Mr. Eliot!’”: Steering through two difficulties in Eliot Studies’
- Yasna Bozhkova (Université Paris Nanterre): ‘Touching (on) Difficulty: The Case of Claude McKay’
- Nell Wasserstrom (Boston College/Université Sorbonne Nouvelle): ‘Difficult Pleasures, or *L’Ecole des Femmes*: The Poetics of Hope Mirrlees’s *Paris*’
- Juliette Bouanani (Université Paris Nanterre): ‘Howe, Hejinian, Stein, H.D: The Difficult Politics of Women’s Legibility’

This roundtable, organised by the *Société d’études modernistes* (the French Society of Modernist Studies), discusses examples from the work of both more canonic modernist authors and more marginalized ones, in order to revisit the intersections between the formal difficulty of modernist poetics and the broader concerns of politics, gender, race, and disability.

Sean Mark is Associate Professor in literature and translation at Université Catholique de Lille. He is the author of *Pound and Pasolini: Poetics of Crisis* (Palgrave, 2022).

Kit Kumiko Toda is Associate Professor in English Literature and Translation at l’Université de la Réunion. She is the author of *T.S. Eliot’s Elizabethan Imagination* (Routledge, forthcoming).

Yasna Bozhkova is Associate Professor in English Literature at Paris Nanterre University. She is the author of *Between Worlds: Mina Loy’s Aesthetic Itineraries* (Clemson UP/Liverpool UP, 2022).

Nell Wasserstrom is Visiting Research Scholar at Boston College and an Associate Researcher for Sorbonne Nouvelle’s research laboratory, “19-21: Modernités critiques.” Her articles and translation work have appeared in *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, *Modern Philology*, and *Critical Inquiry*.

Juliette Bouanani is a PhD student under the direction of Hélène Aji and Nicholas Manning, at Paris Nanterre university. Her research focuses on the feminine lyric in contemporary American poetry in the works of four poets: Lyn Hejinian, Louise Glück, Susan Howe and Sharon Olds.

## Thursday 27 July

3am-5am UK / 4am-6am CEST / 10pm-12am EST / 12pm-2pm Sydney  
/ 10am-12pm HK / 11am-1pm Japan & Korea

**Difficult Engagements: Transmedial and Transnational Modernism [panel] (organised by MSIA)**

**Chair:** Ryan Johnson (U Tokyo)

Participants:

- Julian Murphet (U Adelaide)
- Olga Solovieva (Nicolaus Copernicus University)
- Takayuki Tatsumi (Keio University)

For the past few decades, modernist studies has been reoriented along transnational lines. Alternative temporalities, overlooked methods of dissemination, and contact zones on the fuzzy boundaries between cultures, languages, and traditions have increasingly received overdue recognition. This roundtable seeks to harness these energies in Modernist Studies to assess the state of the field now. It gathers scholars of comparative literature, English, Japanese, and Russian literatures, cinema, and literary theory. Panelists will discuss topics including the role of anarchists and non-state actors in the dissemination of modernism and modernity, the role of Japanese academics and writers in shaping modernism's contours, and the theoretical possibilities that the current challenges of modernist studies disclose.

Julian Murphet is Jury Chair of English Language and Literature at the University of Adelaide. He is the author of *Literature and Race in Los Angeles* (Cambridge, 2001), *Multimedia Modernism* (Cambridge, 2009), *Faulkner's Media Romance* (Oxford, 2017) and *Todd Solondz* (Northern Illinois, 2019), and of the forthcoming *Modern Character: 1888–1905* (Oxford, 2023) and *Twentieth-Century Prison Writing: A Literary Guide* (Edinburgh, 2023).

Olga V. Solovieva studied at the Moscow State University, Freie Universität Berlin, and Yale and currently teaches Comparative Literature at Nicolaus Copernicus University. She is the author of *Christ's Subversive Body: Practices of Religious Rhetoric in Culture and Politics* (Northwestern, 2018) and *The Russian Kurosawa: Transnational Cinema, or the Art of Speaking Differently* (Oxford, 2023), and co-editor of *Japan's Russia: Challenging the East-West Paradigm* (Cambria Press, 2021).

Takayuki Tatsumi is Professor Emeritus of Keio University, Tokyo, Japan. Completing a dissertation on the American Renaissance writers, he received his Ph.D. from Cornell University in 1987. He served as president of the American Literature Society of Japan (2014-2017), president of the Poe Society of Japan (2009-2020) and vice president of the Melville Society of Japan (2012-). In 2022, a year after his retirement, he was appointed headmaster of Keio Academy of New York. His major books include: *Full Metal Apache: Transactions between Cyberpunk Japan and Avant-Pop America* (Duke UP, 2006, the winner of the 2010 IAFA [International Association for the Fantastic in the Arts] Distinguished

Scholarship Award) and *Young Americans in Literature: The Post-Romantic Turn in the Age of Poe, Hawthorne and Melville* (Sairyusha, 2018). He is co-editor of *The Routledge Companion to Transnational American Studies* (Routledge, 2019) while he has also published a variety of essays in PMLA, Critique, Extrapolation, American Book Review, Mechademia, The Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Literature and elsewhere on subjects ranging from the American Renaissance to post-cyberpunk fiction and film.

## **Thursday 27 July**

3-4pm UK/4-5pm CEST/10-11am EST/12pm-1am Sydney/10-11pm HK

### **Digital Advocacy: A Virtual Roundtable [roundtable] (organised by MSA)**

**Chair:** Kate Schnur (Queens College, CUNY)

Participants:

- Jordan Osserman and Aimée Le: '#coronacontract'
- Gabriel Hankins (Clemson): 'Organizing With and Against Resistances in the Marketized University'
- Lydia Curliss (U of Maryland)
- Ece Turnator (The Future Libraries, Archives, and Museums in Excavation podcast series)

This virtual roundtable sponsored by the MSA's Caucus for Contingent and Independent Scholars brings together academics interested in using digital methods for addressing contingency in the academy, advocating for equity in academic labor and scholarly practices, and representing marginalized scholars and subjects. Each panelist will give a position statement followed by a moderated conversation. We will discuss strategies for using social media, big (or small) data, and formal and informal digital networks for spreading awareness, organizing, and pushing for institutional change.

## **Friday 28 July**

1-3pm UK/2-4pm CEST/8-10 am EST/10pm-12am Sydney/8-10pm HK

### **Difficulty in/and Modernist Publishers' Archives [panel]**

**Chair:** Tim Sommer (Passau)

Participants:

- Evi Heinz (Münster): 'A Tricky Business: Modernist Writers as "Amateur" Publishers'
- James Dowthwaite (Jena): 'Ezra Pound and the Ethics of the Archive'
- Benjamin Bruce (Reading): 'A Little Local Difficulty: Beverley Nichols, Greece, and his Lost Novel'

- Louise Kane (Central Florida): 'Lost Archives: *Caribbean Voices* at the BBC'

What narratives of difficulty lie hidden in the modernist archive? What are the ethical implications of working with sensitive unpublished materials? And how do scholars of modernism deal with the problematic absence of archival records, the lacunae left by chance, design or neglect? This panel brings together current research in modernist print and media history to reflect on the theme of 'difficulty' in relation to archival work in modernist studies. In four papers covering a range of publishers' and media archives – from private presses to commercial publishers, from small-scale 'amateur' endeavours to large public institutions – we want to explore how modernist difficulty presents itself to us in the archival record of its production, distribution and reception. In addition to uncovering some challenging aspects of modernism's material history, we also want to reflect on the complexities inherent in archival research itself. Following on from our four short research papers outlining a range of theoretical and methodological approaches to modernist publishers' archives as sites of difficulty, we invite a wider discussion of the intricacies and challenges and of archival research in the study of modernist print culture and within modernist studies more broadly.

Evi Heinz is a Research Associate in Book Studies at the English Department of the University of Münster, Germany. Her research into modernist print culture focuses on small press publishing, private presses, periodicals and print as a medium of cultural transmission. She has a chapter (co-authored with Gareth Mills) on 'The Modernist Publisher's Archive' in the forthcoming *Bloomsbury Handbook of Modernist Archives*.

James Dowthwaite teaches English literature at the University of Jena, where he is currently completing a project on concept of fate in aestheticist, decadent, and symbolist writing. His first book, *Ezra Pound and 20th Century Theories of Language: Faith with the Word* came out with Routledge in 2019 and was awarded the Ezra Pound Society Book Award. Benjamin Bruce is a final year PhD candidate in the Department of English Literature, University of Reading, researching popular writing and publishing in 1922. He has worked as a secondary school teacher and his MPhil. was a study of the early poetry of Seamus Heaney.

Louise Kane is Assistant Professor of Global Modernisms at the University of Central Florida. She has published widely on periodical cultures and global contexts and is the General Editor of the forthcoming three-volume *Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Global Modernist Magazines* (Oxford University Press, 2024-6).

## **Saturday 29 July**

3-5pm UK/4-6pm CEST/10am-12pm EST/12-2am Sydney/10pm-12am

HK

### **Race and Racism in Modernist Criticism [guided discussion]**

**Chairs:** Amy Clukey (University of Louisville) and Sabrina Lee (University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign)

Participants:

- Dominique Townsend (University of Rochester)
- Eric Kappeler (Tulane University)
- Cyraina Johnson-Roullier (University of Notre Dame)

This guided discussion will focus on histories of racism in modernist criticism and scholarly communities; structures of exclusion in modernist studies today; and strategies for equity and belonging in modernist studies and scholarly organizations. Panelists will respond to pre-circulated questions, while the audience is invited to post follow-up questions and comments in the chat box, to raise their hands to answer questions themselves, or to ask their own original questions.

### **Sunday 30 July**

9-11am UK/10am-12pm CEST/4-6am EST/6-8pm Sydney/4-6pm HK

**Teaching Modernism in the Antipodes: Pedagogy and Periphery [roundtable] (organised by AMSN):**

**Chair:** Lorraine Sim (Western Sydney University)

Participants:

- Andrew Dean (Deakin University)
- Maebh Long (University of Waikato)
- Naomi Milthorpe (University of Tasmania)
- Robbie Moore (University of Tasmania)
- Nycole Prowse (University of Southern Queensland)
- Sean Pryor (UNSW)

This roundtable organised by the Australasian Modernist Studies Network will discuss methods and approaches for teaching modernism, from the geographic perspective of Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. Panellists will discuss a range of issues at the intersection of pedagogy and peripherality, including teaching neglected works, understanding modernist networks through assessment design, reading Anglo-American texts from the perspective of the colonial South, and reckoning with the national in relation to global modernism.

### **Monday 31 July (\*\*Sunday 30 July in EST!\*\*)**

2-4am UK/3-5am CEST/9-11pm EST/11am-1pm Sydney/9-11am HK  
10am-12pm Japan & Taiwan

**Conrad and Asia [panel] (organised by MSIA)**

**Chair:** Kevin Riordan (Yale-NUS College)

Participants:

- Asako Nakai (Hitotsubashi University): 'Reading *Heart of Darkness* in Everyday Life'
- Kevin Riordan (Yale-NUS College): 'Siting Conrad's Singapore Fiction'
- Tung-An Wei (Soochow University): 'Tracking Conrad's "Typhoon", Charting the China Sea'

Joseph Conrad's life and work, as Maya Jasanoff writes, document the "history of globalization seen from the inside out." For global modernism, Conrad is an especially well-travelled witness, an astute documentarian. Born to Polish parents in present-day Ukraine and eventually naturalized as English, Conrad captures still other scenes on the world stage in his fiction: the Belgian Congo, South America, the open sea. Yet, as Jasanoff observes, the majority of this exceptionally worldly writer's work is set in and around Asia. This session returns there, showcasing recent scholarship on Conrad's Asia and on this global writer's legacy for Asian readers.

Asako Nakai is Professor at Hitotsubashi University (Tokyo). Her research interests include modernist and postcolonial literatures in English, modern and contemporary Japanese literature, critical theory, life-writing studies. Her most recent book is *Reading in Everyday Life: Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness* (『日常の読書学——ジョゼフ・コンラッド『闇の奥』を読む』).

Kevin Riordan is the author of *Modernist Circumnavigations: Around the World in Jules Verne's Wake* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022) and editor of *Tales of an Eastern Port: The Singapore Novellas of Joseph Conrad* (NUS Press, 2023). He teaches in Singapore and is a co-founder of the Modernist Studies in Asia research network.

Tung-An Wei is Assistant Professor of English at Soochow University in Taiwan. Her articles have appeared in *Conradiana*, *The Conradian*, and *Narrative*. She is working on Conrad's fiction set in Southeast Asia as well as Malaysian Anglophone literature.

## Monday 31 July

2-4pm UK/3-5pm CEST/9-11am EST/11pm-1am Sydney/9-11pm HK

**Modernism, Fascism, and the Avant-Garde: A Conversation [discussion] (organised by BAMS)**

**Chair:** TBD

Participants:

- Selena Daly (University College London)
- Gemma Moss (Birmingham City University)
- Nathan Waddell (University of Birmingham)

This session informally covers the difficulties in researching and writing about modernists and avant-gardists—here Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, Ezra Pound, and Wyndham Lewis—who were attracted to authoritarian politics and politicians. Selena Daly will address the relationships between Futurism and Fascism and between Marinetti and Mussolini, which have always been marked by debate and contention. Gemma Moss will consider Pound’s longstanding commitment to aesthetic hierarchies and communities of exclusion, which predates and outlasts his turn to fascism in the 1930s. And Nathan Waddell will think through the metaphors we use to describe Lewis’s relationship to Italian Fascism and to Nazism, and how these obscure the details of his interactions with and attempts to distance himself from these movements.

Selena Daly (University College London) is an historian of modern Italy, with a particular interest in the politics, art, and culture of the Futurist movement, led by Filippo Tommaso Marinetti from 1909 until his death in 1944. She is the author of *Italian Futurism and the First World War* (University of Toronto Press, 2016).

Gemma Moss (Birmingham City University) is the author of *Modernism, Music and the Politics of Aesthetics* (Edinburgh University Press, 2021). She is currently editing E. M. Forster’s first novel, *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, for the Cambridge Edition of the Fiction of E. M. Forster.

Nathan Waddell (University of Birmingham) is the author of *Modernist Nowheres* (Palgrave, 2012) and *Moonlighting: Beethoven and Literary Modernism* (Oxford University Press, 2019). He’s currently writing a book about Wyndham Lewis and fascism, and editing Lewis’s novel *Snooty Baronet* for Oxford University Press.

## **Tuesday 1 August**

1-3pm UK/2-4pm CEST/8-10am EST/10pm-12am Sydney/8-10pm HK/  
9-11pm Japan & Korea

**Reception, Translation, Transculturation: Virginia Woolf and East Asia [roundtable]  
(organised by MSiA)**

**Chair:** Boosung Kim (Ewha Womans University)

Participants:

- Karina Jakubowicz (University College London)
- Aki Katayama (Dokkyo University)
- Jingjing Cao (University of Exeter)
- Hyunji Choi (Ewha Womans University)

This roundtable organised by the Modernist Studies in Asia will discuss Virginia Woolf's reception in East Asia and the inter-influence between East Asian culture and her literary works. Panelists from the UK, China, Japan, and South Korea and in different positions will discuss how Woolf's writings have been understood and received within East Asian literary and cultural contexts and how Woolf's ideas and narratives, despite their difficulty and unreadability, resonate with readers in East Asia. This session aims to illuminate the dynamic relationship between Woolf's oeuvre and East Asian perspectives, highlighting the enduring impact of her work across cultures and fostering a deeper understanding of her global literary significance.

Karina Jakubowicz is a graduate of University College London, Clare College Cambridge and Trinity College Dublin. She is interested in modernist representations of space and place. She is the author of *Garsington Manor and the Bloomsbury Group* (Cecil Woolf Press, 2016) and is the winner of the 2017 Katherine Mansfield essay prize for an essay on Woolf, Mansfield and 'Kew Gardens', published in *Katherine Mansfield Studies* (2018). She is currently writing a book entitled *Gardens in Virginia Woolf's Fiction: Modernism, Nature and Space*. She teaches at James Madison University Virginia and Florida State University. Karina creates and produces the Virginia Woolf Podcast for Literature Cambridge.

Aki Katayama did her PhD at the University of East Anglia. Since then, she has taught English literature at Dokkyo University and other universities in Japan. She translated *A Room of One's Own*, *Three Guineas*, *Between the Acts*, and some of Woolf's essays into Japanese. Her translation of "Monday or Tuesday" will come out this year.

Jingjing Cao is a PhD student at University of Exeter under the supervision of Prof. Regenia Gagnier and Dr. Beci Carver. Her dissertation is a comparative study on Virginia Woolf and two Chinese female writers, Ling Shuhua and Lin Huiyin, in the context of global modernisms. It focuses on the participation of these three women writers in shaping modernism in Britain and China, and their literary responses to the crisis of modernity and modernization.

Hyunji Choi is a PhD student at Ewha Woman's University. She is interested in literary sound studies, ecocriticism, and modernist women writers such as Virginia Woolf and Dorothy Richardson. She is a regular book club host in local bookstores in Seoul and performs in experimental plays about reading as a reciter and actor. She translated works by Edith Wharton, Emmeline Richardson, Scarlett St. Clair, and Eileen Garvin into Korean.

## **Tuesday 1 August**

3-5pm UK/4-6pm CEST/10am-12pm EST/12-2am Sydney/10pm-12am

HK

**Pedagogy and Race in the Modernist Studies Classroom [Guided Discussion] (organised by MSA)**

**Moderator:** Octavio R. González

Participants:

- Scott Challener
- Laura Winkiel
- Michelle Moore
- Molly Hall

This session, structured like a roundtable or guided discussion, will feature 5-minute position papers and a robust Q&A among the panelists and then with the audience.

Scott Challener: 'Wallace Stevens and the Fate of Modernism'

This paper argues for "contention"—a word I take from Stevens himself—as a pedagogical and critical method of thinking agonistically about Stevens's racism as well as his postwar reception among writers of color. The essay ends with a discussion of the HBCU classroom. I describe how teaching Stevens in a Black space on a Black syllabus—through the appropriations of Raymond Patterson, Terrance Hayes, and Claudia Rankine, among others—helped me to teach how to "disread," in Evie Shockley's words, the canonical core of modernism.

Laura Winkiel: 'Jean Rhys and White Privilege'

What I'd like to speak about is my experience teaching Jean Rhys's novels, especially *Wide Sargasso Sea*. What I love about her novels is that they anatomize white privilege which, I think, is one of the hardest factors to get students to think about in my university (predominately white but from a wide range of class positions. There are out-of-state privileged kids who come to Colorado to ski and in-state, often underprivileged kids who work many hours to put themselves through school). It's easy to jump on the "I'm for the oppressed" bandwagon at our university, but far more difficult to convince students that they benefit from the racial structures of US society and imperialism, especially with regard to in-state students. Rhys throws white privilege in their faces. What I'd like to do is relate some teaching experiences around this difficult issue, talk about how Rhys helps, and bring in Robin DiAngelo's wonderful book *White Fragility*.

Michelle Moore:

I have found myself spending more time contextualizing and emphasizing patronage and editing in the classroom with regards to who is editing whom and why and in what way. Sarah Winnemucca's "memoir" presents particular challenges, as does Claude McKay and Zora Neale Hurston, and more recently, Louise Erdrich who speaks directly to these concerns. "Outdated word choices" are fluid, meaning that they reveal context, whether of the time a piece was written, or how it was edited. This approach creates an environment where students, mostly of color and from working class backgrounds who want to be teachers, are able to have difficult conversations about inclusion, exclusion, and why this framework exists in a Modernist classroom.

Molly Hall:

My discussion would grow from pedagogical questions about balancing the critique of white voices with the amplification and centering of black voices in the British modernist

canon/classroom--in my intro to modernism classes, but also other elective and first year courses. So, I think the “difficult” part I would focus on would be how to have conversations about texts by black authors in ways that don't reduce the value of their works to a marginalized or reactionary status, and as part and parcel of this: how to talk about whiteness as race rather than neutral without centering white authors once again within the British modernist canon. I might bring in Wyndham Lewis and George Lamming as examples.

## Wednesday 2 August

9-11am UK/10am-12pm CEST/4-6am EST/6-8pm Sydney/4-6pm HK

### Close Reading Modernist Difficulty [roundtable] (organised by AMSN)

**Chair:** John Attridge (UNSW)

Participants:

- Emmett Stinson (University of Tasmania), “Gerald Murnane’s Missing References”
- Sarah Balkin (University of Melbourne), “Black Cakewalkers and The Difficulty of Smiling”
- Sarah Fantini (University of Melbourne), “This and That: Gertrude Stein’s Slippery Deixis”
- Astrid Lorange (UNSW), “On the literary headache in Faulkner (and beyond)”
- Mark Byron (University of Sydney), “Said said missaid”
- Tamlyn Avery (University of Queensland), “The Racial Politics of Difficulty in Jean Toomer’s ‘Withered Skin of Berries’”

Modernist difficulty is sometimes associated with magnitude: the totalising ambition of an encyclopedic novel, say, or a multivolume *roman fleuve*. In this roundtable, conversely, we will direct our attention to the more granular end of difficulty’s scale. Each 10-minute presentation focuses on a short, sharp example of modernist difficulty, ranging in size from the phrase or line to the paragraph, page or scene. As Julie Orlemanski notes in her 2014 essay “Scales of Reading,” “[s]cales of reading happen in performances of reading.” This roundtable brings together a series of such performances, which model the small-scale strengths of close reading, but also consider how these local examples of difficulty index larger textual strategies and overarching historical processes.

**The paper abstracts as well as the excerpts and clips to be discussed can be accessed [here](#).**

Emmett Stinson is Head of English and Lecturer in Literary Cultures at the University of Tasmania. He is the author of *Known Unknowns* (2010), *Satirizing Modernism* (2017), and *Murnane* (forthcoming 2023).

Sarah Balkin is a Senior Lecturer in English and Theatre Studies at the University of Melbourne. Her current research focus is on the historical emergence of deadpan

performance styles (1830-1930) and contemporary comedy's relationship to humorlessness. Her monograph, *Spectral Characters: Genre and Materiality on the Modern Stage*, was published by the University of Michigan Press in 2019. Her work appears in journals such as *Modern Drama*, *TDR/The Drama Review*, *Performance Research*, and *Textual Practice*. Her article in *Theatre Research International*, "The Killjoy Comedian: Hannah Gadsby's *Nanette*," won the Australasian Association for Theatre, Drama and Performance Studies' Marlis Thiersch Prize for research excellence. With Marc Mierowsky, she is the co-author of *Comedy and Controversy: Scripting Public Speech* (forthcoming, Cambridge University Press).

Sarah Fantini is a PhD candidate at the University of Melbourne. Her thesis considers what an ecocritical orientation can bring to close readings of poetry by Gertrude Stein, Mina Loy, and the Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven.

Astrid Lorange is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Art & Design at UNSW, as well as a writer, researcher, editor, and artist. She studied writing and cultural studies at the University of Technology Sydney, where she completed her doctoral thesis on Gertrude Stein and contemporary poetics. *How Reading is Written: A Brief Index to Gertrude Stein* was published by Wesleyan University Press in 2014.

Mark Byron is Professor of Modern Literature in the Department of English at the University of Sydney. He is author of the monographs *Ezra Pound's Eriugena* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014) and *Samuel Beckett's Geological Imagination* (Cambridge UP, 2020), and with Sophia Barnes the critical manuscript edition *Ezra Pound's and Olga Rudge's The Blue Spill* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019). Mark co-edited a dossier with Stefano Rosignoli on Samuel Beckett and the Middle Ages in the *Journal of Beckett Studies* 25.1 (2016), and is editor of the essay collection *The New Ezra Pound Studies* (Cambridge UP, 2019). He is President of the Ezra Pound Society.

Tamlyn Avery is Lecturer in American Studies at the University of Queensland, and author of *The Regional Development of the American Bildungsroman* (Edinburgh UP). Her research on race, classical music, and typewriters in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century literature has appeared or is forthcoming in *PMLA*, *American Literature*, *Modernism/Modernity*, *The Mississippi Quarterly*, and elsewhere.

## **Wednesday 2 August**

**2-4pm UK/3-5pm CEST/9-11am EST/11pm-1am Sydney/9pm-11pm  
HK**

**The Long (and Difficult) Novel [roundtable] (organised by BAMS)**

**Chair:** Rebecca Bowler (Keele)

**Participants:**

- Andrew Frayn (Edinburgh Napier)
- James Gifford (Fairleigh Dickinson)
- Scott McCracken (Queen Mary, London)
- Jennifer Rushworth (UCL)

This roundtable will discuss the modernist long novel, in particular Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage*, Ford Madox Ford's *Parade's End*, Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*, and Lawrence Durrell's *The Alexandria Quartet* and *The Avignon Quartet*. Why did the long novel come into such prominence in the early twentieth century? What is modernist about the longform novel (how do we think of them differently to the way we think about serialised long nineteenth century novels)? What is it about the long novel that lends itself so well to modernist concerns? How might we find these novels difficult now: difficult to read, or difficult to teach? Or how might we find them productively complicated, philosophically rich, definition-expanding?

Andrew Frayn is Lecturer in Twentieth-Century Literature and Culture at Edinburgh Napier University. He has published widely at the intersection of modernist studies and First World War literature, notably in *Writing Disenchantment: British First World War Prose 1914-1930* (Manchester University Press, 2014), and is currently working on a project quantifying and qualifying the War Books Boom, on which an article has been published recently in *First World War Studies* (13.1, 2022). He has written numerous chapters on Ford Madox Ford and the First World War, and was Secretary to the Ford Madox Ford Society (2011-19).

James Gifford is Professor of Humanities at Fairleigh Dickinson University and the Director of FDU Press. He is the author and editor of several books, including *Personal Modernisms* (2014) and *A Modernist Fantasy* (2018), the latter of which won the 2020 Mythopoeic Scholarship Award. His most recent book is *Of Sunken Islands and Pestilence: Restoring the Voice of Edward Taylor Fletcher to Nineteenth-Century Canadian Literature*.

Scott McCracken is Professor of Twentieth-Century Literature at Queen Mary, University of London. He is General Editor of the Oxford Edition of Dorothy Richardson, the first volume of which appeared in 2020. His books include *Masculinities, Modernist Fiction, and the Urban Public Sphere* (Manchester University Press, 2007), *Pulp: Reading Popular Fiction* (Manchester, 1998) and, as co-author, *Benjamin's Arcades: an unguided tour* (Manchester 2006). He is co-editor with David Glover of *The Cambridge Companion to Popular Fiction* (2012) and with Sally Ledger of *Cultural Politics at the Fin de Siècle* (Cambridge, 1995).

Jennifer Rushworth is Associate Professor in French and Comparative Literature at University College London. Her research interests span French and Italian literature and include mourning, medievalism, and music. She has published two monographs, *Discourses of Mourning in Dante, Petrarch, and Proust* (2016) and *Petrarch and the Literary Culture of Nineteenth-Century France* (2017), and has co-edited volumes on *Mediating Vulnerability* (2021) and *Dwelling on Grief* (2022), as well as special issues on 'The Case for a Medieval Barthes' (*Exemplaria*, 33/3 (2021)) and 'Proust at Home: A Centennial Celebration of *Le Côté de Guermantes*' (*H-France Salon*, 13/13 (2021)). Her third monograph, on Proust and song, is forthcoming with Penn Press in 2024.

## **Thursday 3 August**

1-3pm UK/2-4pm CEST/8-10am EST/10pm-12am Sydney/8-10pm HK

### **Collaborating Internationally [discussion]**

**Chair:** Christos Hadjiyiannis (Regensburg, MSA Chair of International Relations)

Participants:

- Amy Clukey (Louisville, MSA President)
- Rebecca Bowler (Keele, BAMS Chair)
- Nan Zhang (Hong Kong, MSiA President)
- Yasna Bozhkova (Université Paris Nanterre, SEM Board)
- Lorraine Sim (Western Sydney University, AMSN Chair)
- Jeffrey Belnap (Texas Tech University-Costa Rica)
- Angeliki Spiropoulou (University of the Peloponnese)
- Jūratė Levina (Vilnius)

In this open discussion, representatives from the five associations co-organising this festival of events are joined by modernists working and living across different countries to discuss with participants the challenges of international collaboration, reflect on global modernism, look back at the series just organised – and forward, too.

## **Friday 4 August**

3-5pm UK/4-6pm CEST/10am-12pm EST/12-2am Sydney/10pm-12am  
HK

### **Translation and the Difficulty of Global Modernism [discussion] (organised by MSA)**

**Chair:** María del Pilar Blanco (Oxford)

Participants:

- Charlotte Whittle
- Harris Feinsod (Northwestern)
- Alejandra Uslenghi (Northwestern)

How do we translate difficulty? What are the difficulties of translation? And what difficulties are involved in thinking about modernism across countries, continents, languages, and cultures? This session brings together writer and translator Charlotte Whittle and translator and scholar Haris Feinsod. Taking the Argentinian modernist Norah Lange as the jumping off point, participants will discuss Lange's work, translation, working, thinking, and writing comparatively, forgotten modernists, and the problem of what we once called 'global modernism'.

Charlotte Whittle is an editor, writer and literary translator. Alongside Norah Lange's *People in the Room* (And Other Stories, 2018) and *Notes from Childhood* (And Other Stories, 2021), she has translated Mexican writer Jorge Comensal's *The Mutations* (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2019) and, most recently, Irene Vallejo's global bestseller, *Papyrus* (Houghton & Stoughton, 2022).

Harris Feinsod is a literary and cultural historian of the United States, Latin America, and the Atlantic world. His teaching and research emphasize poetry and poetics, modernism and the avant-garde in Europe and the Americas, multiethnic US literature, and transnational studies (especially hemispheric and oceanic approaches). He is the author of *The Poetry of the Americas: From Good Neighbors to Countercultures* (Oxford, 2017). He is also a translator, having co-translated Oliverio Girondo's early poems (*Decals: Complete Early Poems of Oliverio Girondo*, Open Letter, 2018).

Alejandra Uslenghi is Associate Professor of Spanish & Portuguese and Comparative Literary Studies at Northwestern. She is the author of *Latin America at fin-de-siècle Universal Exhibitions. Modern Cultures of Visuality* (Palgrave, New Directions in Latino American Cultures, 2016) and the editor of *Walter Benjamin: Culturas de la imagen* (Eterna Cadencia, Buenos Aires, 2011). She co-edited a special issue of *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies* on Argentine Modern Photography (2015). Her research focuses on modern literature and visual culture; photography and modern art in Latin America; critical theory and comparative modernist studies. She is currently at work on a book-length project that examines the intersection of modernist literary experimentation and photography, in particular twentieth-century women photographers. Alejandra is core faculty in the Critical Theory Program and she participates in the Mellon-funded ICCTP Critical Theory in the Global South Project. She is affiliated with the Global Avant-Garde and Modernisms Studies Cluster and the Latin American and Caribbean Studies program.

María del Pilar Blanco is an Associate Professor in Spanish American Literature in the Faculty of Medieval and Modern Languages at Oxford. Her current research focuses on the emergence of popular science writing in Spanish American periodicals of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. She is the author of *Ghost-Watching American Modernity: Haunting, Landscape, and the Hemispheric Imagination* and has co-edited, with Esther Peeren, two collections on the topic of ghosts: *Popular Ghosts: The Haunted Spaces of Everyday Culture* (Continuum, 2010) and *The Spectralities Reader: Ghosts and Haunting in Contemporary Cultural Theory* (Bloomsbury, 2013). Her current book project, entitled *Modernist Laboratories: Science and the Poetics of Progress in Fin-de-Siècle Spanish America*, explores the growth of science writing in Spanish-American literature from the 1870s to 1930.