

CAFÉ CONVERSATIONS NOV '12- MAY '13

WHITE LION CAFE – 19-21 WHITE LION STREET NORWICH NR2 1PX

LITERATURE , CULTURE & LANGUAGE SERIES		NOVEMBER
Can Writing be Taught? UEA pioneered the teaching of creative writing as a university subject in 1970, and for the next 25 years it remained almost the only university to offer an MA in creative writing, despite the enormous success of some of its alumni, such as Ian McEwan and Kazuo Ishiguro. In the last 15 years, however, the subject has really caught on, until there is barely a university anywhere that doesn't offer creative writing in some form. And yet still the question is asked, Can writing be taught? Andrew Cowan is a graduate of the UEA MA, where he was taught by Malcolm Bradbury and Angela Carter. He is now the Director of the UEA programme. And he is asking the same question.	Professor Andrew Cowan	Mon 19 Nov 2pm White Lion Cafe, Norwich
Through the Looking-Glass: <i>Origins & Afterlife of Nonsense Literature</i> Dr Thomas Karshan What is a snark? what is a boojum? must they be something, or nothing? where do they come from? and do we need to know, if we are to enjoy and appreciate nonsense literature? This café conversation will explore nonsense literature, especially through Lewis Carroll's "Jabberwocky", saying a little about its origins, and exploring the philosophical issues around sense and nonsense with which Carroll was concerned. We'll think together about why all great literature, and not just nonsense, needs to invent its own words, and we'll look a little at a passage of Joyce's <i>Finnegans Wake</i> , much influenced by Carroll's <i>Alice</i> , which is only invented words. And then we'll have a go at inventing our own words - and ask if in doing so we have invented, if only for a moment, our own new world.	Dr Thomas Karshan	Wed 28 Nov 2pm White Lion Cafe, Norwich
DECEMBER		
God Loveth Adverbs Why does God love adverbs? And why does Stephen King hate them? And what does this tell us about literature? This session explores the contention that literature is about showing, not telling, and investigates ways that writers approach their task and the difference between literature and genre fiction.	Dr Philip Wilson	Wed 5 Dec 2pm White Lion Cafe, Norwich
Politicomics Just how political can comics be? Can they (or have they) be used for propaganda purposes? We will discuss the ideological messages that the comics medium can convey. The texts we will look at range from the most explicit (e.g. <i>Palestine</i> , by Joe Sacco, or <i>V for Vendetta</i> , by Alan Moore and David Lloyd) to those that hide their political agendas a little deeper.	Alex Valente	Fri 14 Dec 2pm White Lion Cafe, Norwich
JANUARY		
American Ghost Towns All across the United States there are eerily abandoned towns - where tumbleweeds roll along empty Main Streets, where only the shells of buildings remain. These so-called ghost towns are familiar cultural references and seem to say something about the other side of the American Dream. Some are former mining settlements, which boomed and declined with equal rapidity. Some are towns that were left stranded when interstate highways cut through the land in the	Dr Malcolm McLaughlin	Wed 16 Jan 2pm White Lion Cafe, Norwich Contd.

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<p>1950s, and passed them by. But, since the 1970s, some of America's once-famous cities have been equally stricken by depopulation: when factories packed up and left town, so did the people. Even "Motor City" Detroit has been shrinking. What can we learn about America from looking at its historical ghost towns and modern-day shrinking cities? And how have the people who remain been working to reinvent their cities and make them liveable for the twenty-first century?</p>	<p>Contd.</p>
<p>Bearing Witness: <i>Seen but not Witnessed</i> Dr Rachael McLennan & Dr Rebecca Fraser</p> <p>This café will reflect on how we talk about and understand traumatic experiences that we have not borne direct witness to. It will consider to what extent representations, both visual and scholarly, of traumatic events distort or assist in understanding such experiences. Dr Rachael McLennan and Dr Rebecca Fraser will be drawing on their own research concerning the Holocaust in American literature and culture and slavery in the United States respectively as case studies for further exploration of these issues.</p>	<p>Wed 30 Jan 2pm White Lion Cafe, Norwich</p>
<p>FEBRUARY</p>	
<p>The Pleasures and Politics of Historical Fiction Dr Hilary Emmett</p> <p>This café will engage the problem of how to balance our pleasure in reading historical fiction with some of the ethical issues that arise in rewriting the past to entertain audiences of the present. Possible novels for consideration include historical fictions that are closely aligned to verifiable historical events (such as Hilary Mantel's recent Booker Prize-winning blockbusters in comparison with more controversial re-imaginings of history like Kathryn Stockett's <i>The Help</i>) as well as novels that seek to tell forgotten, repressed or traumatic stories such as Toni Morrison's Pulitzer Prize-winning <i>Beloved</i> or Caryl Phillips' <i>The Nature of Blood</i>.</p>	<p>Wed 6 Feb 2pm White Lion Cafe, Norwich</p>
<p>Meet the Pastons: <i>Introducing Norwich's Best Known Medieval Family</i> Elizabeth McDonald</p> <p>Norwich's medieval past can simultaneously seem a palpable and enigmatic part of our city's history: we are surrounded by stunning examples of medieval architecture but imagining or understanding who used these buildings can be challenging. Thankfully the Paston family left us numerous letters, written between 1425-1495, in which we get a vibrant glimpse of what life in Norwich was like for a wealthy (but socially insecure) family. These letters provide a rich tapestry of personalities: surprisingly strong, willful, female characters; respectable men of the Law; feckless sons and problematic daughters. We find the family concerned with castle defenses, "keeping up with the joneses," life at court, and poorly made love matches. We will look at some of these letters and come face-to-face with life in Medieval Norwich.</p>	<p>Mon 18 Feb 2pm White Lion Cafe, Norwich</p>
<p>Telling it Well? <i>Mourning Autobiography</i> Dr Rachael McLennan</p> <p>This café attempts to account for the popularity of autobiographies of illness and grief. These might be understood as a subgenre of the 'misery memoir', which has been especially successful since the 1990s. With reference to Joan Didion's <i>The Year of Magical Thinking</i> (2005) and <i>Blue Nights</i> (2011), Dr Rachael McLennan will consider the following questions: what pleasures and risks do such autobiographical projects present for writers and readers? How might autobiographies of grief, in particular, challenge traditional definitions and understanding?</p>	<p>Wed 27 Feb 2pm White Lion Cafe, Norwich</p>

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MARCH		
Introduction to Translation What is involved in translating a piece of writing from one language to another? Why is translation one of the most fascinating and important careers? Why does translation matter? After a general background to what translation is, we will practice a short translation/adaptation exercise together, either into another language or from English to English. Then we will discuss the joys and challenges of translation.	Dr B.J. Epstein	Wed 6 Mar 2pm White Lion Cafe, Norwich
Who Do You Think You Are and Should You Care? <i>Genealogy & the Pitfalls of Family History</i> With the explosion of accessible material tracing one's own family history through genealogical sites such as ancestry.com everybody can be an amateur historian. Yet, what is we dig back into our own histories and discover things about our ancestors that we find uncomfortable, disturbing, or even damaging to our own sense of self and who we are? This cafe will reflect on the very real value of genealogical research but also consider the limitations of the resources available and the possibility that we might not always like what we find. Dr Rebecca Fraser will be drawing on her own research concerning tracing the life story of Sarah Hicks Williams, a relatively unknown woman, living in nineteenth century America.	Dr Rebecca Fraser	Wed 13 Mar 2pm White Lion Cafe, Norwich
Norfolk Noir I'll be talking about my new novel My Criminal World, which is being published by Harvill Secker on 2 April 2013. The novel addresses issues of violence and entertainment, genre writing and so-called literary writing and what makes popular fiction work. It is also effectively set in Norwich/Norfolk, and it/my talk will look at aspects of provincialism, and what I'd like to call Norfolk Noir.	Henry Sutton	Thurs 21 Mar 2pm White Lion Cafe, Norwich
APRIL		
Proving Beauty We can prove that the chemical properties of water are H ₂ O; we can prove that the earth orbits the sun; but can we prove that an object is beautiful? This conversation will discussion this question by working, in particular, with a number of poems that may or may not be 'beautiful'.	Dr Ross Wilson	Tues 2 Apr 2pm White Lion Cafe, Norwich
Writers, Interviews and Journalism, with Henry James Most of us will have had job interviews and we will at times have read interviews with famous writers and other celebrities. The kind of interviews that we know in journalism have been around for considerably less than two hundred years. After glancing at their history, this conversation explores some of the issues that interviews by writers and with writers raise, with discussion of two or three interviews, including the response of a famous writer, Henry James, in a rare interview that might have been a hoax.	Dr Kate Campbell	Wed 17 Apr 2pm White Lion Cafe, Norwich
What's the Point of Holocaust Poetry? We will look at a poem about the Holocaust by Rose Auslaender and ask why she and others chose to put their experiences of the Holocaust into poetry. How does it make us feel? Can we relate to things that happened so long ago and in another place?	Professor Jean Boase-Beier	Fri 26 Apr 2pm White Lion Cafe, Norwich

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MAY		
Here Be Monsters Vampires and zombies stalk the contemporary cultural landscape, more prevalent and popular than ever before. What is it that makes these modern representations of monstrosity such a pervasive force – and what do they mean? Monstrosity has always provided a valuable way of expressing fears or taboos, providing symbolic representation for what is unknown or misunderstood, or as a way of designating Otherness. Whether they are social metaphors – such as Romero's shopping mall zombies – or figurations of unconscious forces – such as, incubi, Lamia or Mr Hyde – these demonstrative presences are all around us.	Dr Jacob Huntley	Wed 1 May 2pm White Lion Cafe, Norwich
Can Machines Translate? This cafe builds on BJ Epstein's event on 6 March (but attendance at that session is not a prerequisite). How far can machines carry out the 'fascinating and important' task of translation? Even before modern computers were invented, authors such as H.G. Wells and popular science fiction such as Star Trek had imagined 'Universal Translators', enabling communication across all languages. Do recent advances such as Google Translate and smartphones bring these technologies within our grasp? What are their uses and limits? Feel free to try out free translation apps online or on your phone before the cafe.	Dr Jo Drugan	Wed 8 May 2pm White Lion Cafe, Norwich
The Writing of Disaster It has been said that disaster shuts down language, renders words meaningless and art inadequate, for how can we describe or depict the indescribable, put words to suffering and trauma when it is so total? This café considers the role of the writer and writing in a decade marked in America by 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina. The café will pose questions such as, what kind of cultural representation of disaster is possible, or, indeed, necessary? What role do ethics play in the writing of disaster? What can words really achieve in light of such trauma? It is hoped, by the end of the café, that we will have worked some way towards answering these types of questions, and considered the place of culture in national healing narratives.	Dr Wendy McMahon	Wed 15 May 2pm White Lion Cafe, Norwich

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