



Recycling Myths, Inventing Nations

Abstracts

Session 1: Nation building

Kamau Brathwaite's Visual Mythopoetics

Mandy Bloomfield, University of Southampton

Poet, essayist and historian Kamau Brathwaite is well known for his articulation of 'nation language', comprising those vernacular forms of speech which, in the islands of the Caribbean, have been influenced by 'submerged' (Brathwaite) African aspects of culture. As a literary form of enunciation, 'nation language' aims to recover and redeploy traces of African heritage in an attempt to forge a mythopoetics of intercultural Caribbean identity out of the fragments of a violent history. This paper will examine how Brathwaite's own poetry since the 1990s extends this project via his development of a visual poetics, which he calls his 'Sycorax video style'. It will primarily focus on a key work of the 1990s, *Middle Passages*. Returning time and again to 'points of entanglement' (Glissant), this poetry re-imagines and re-articulates the history of slavery and European colonialism, various pre-colonial West African cultural traditions, and literary history. My paper will explore the role of Brathwaite's reinvention of the printed page in his attempt to give form and voice to the 'gods of the Middle Passage' (Brathwaite) engendered by these entanglements. I will suggest that this poetry deploys the visual resources of the poetic page to make these mythic presences materially palpable. In so doing, Brathwaite's experimentation with visual aesthetics revisits and rethinks the 'voice' in which 'nation language' enunciates a mythopoetics of the African Diaspora in the Caribbean.

Session 1: Nation building

The Myth of Danish Design and the Formation of National Identity: From Made in Denmark to Designed in Denmark

Stina Teilmann-Lock, The Danish Design School, Copenhagen

Through the past century design has been a central element in the national identity of many European countries. Thus categories such as 'British Design', 'Italian Design' and 'Danish Design' have acquired a certain mythic status in the rhetoric of both business and culture.

My focus will be on 'Danish Design' as an example of how a category has been exploited to both shape and promote a national distinctiveness, within Denmark and abroad. 'Danish Design' in modernist furniture was a movement first identified and celebrated in the mid-twentieth century. Today, 'Danish Design' continues to be a strong 'brand' in the promotion of Denmark's identity - and particularly in the clothing industry. However, there is a crucial difference between what 'Danish Design' meant fifty or sixty years ago, and what it means today. An item labelled 'Danish design' used to be implicitly 'Made in Denmark'; nowadays, however, Danish contemporary design is produced in China, India, Turkey or elsewhere, but hardly ever in Denmark. Danish Design has become 'Designed in Denmark' with the unspoken proviso, 'though manufactured elsewhere'. We have moved from a Romantic myth of origins to a post-modern myth that conceals the origin of commodities.

This change and its impact upon national self-representation will be presented in terms of national myth-making; I will argue that such a shift could not have taken place without recent developments in intellectual property law; this has turned design into a vital 'asset' in the national 'economy of knowledge' and 'cultural capital'. In this domain it is the law itself that is facilitating the promotion of a national myth.

Session 1: Nation building

From Caput Mundi to Culus Mundi: Medieval and Early Modern Myths of the Roman Colosseum

Lila Yawn, Cornell University in Rome / John Cabot University

The Flavian Amphitheatre in Rome underwent a remarkable series of functional and symbolic transformations beginning in late antiquity. Built in the 70s C.E. as a venue for blood sports, the building in the sixth century became a quarry for stone and other materials and, by the early tenth century, a thriving artisan's quarter, with houses and gardens filling the former arena. By the twelfth century, the structure's ancient *raison d'être* had also been forgotten—or, rather, replaced with fanciful identities, which vacillated between the celestial and the chthonic. Medieval and early Renaissance pilgrims' guides characterized it as temple of the Sun, once covered by a dome infused with fire and lightning, or as a temple of all of the gods, where pagan pilgrims fasted and offered sacrifice. Long before, however, Tertullian had identified amphitheatres, with their ritualized killings, as temples of the Manes, spirits of the underworld, an idea that resurfaced in the Renaissance, when the Colosseum became both an abandoned ruin and a place of magic, necromancy, and underworld activity. My paper will examine the material and cultural conditions that accompanied the transition between the predominance of these celestial and chthonic myths. In particular, it will consider how the edifice and its reputation functioned as emblems of Rome during the early decades of the sixteenth century, when Benvenuto Cellini, who went there to conjure up demons in c. 1533, and other authors called it "Culiseo," likening it to an anus and associating it with the "Italian vice," i.e. sodomy.

Session 1: Madwomen & Matriarchs

Mary Economou Bailey, Ryerson University

To Aeschylus in *Agamemnon* and Euripides in *The Trojan Women*, the character Cassandra is imaged as madwoman and victim: she is victim of the god Apollo in that she foretells the future but is never believed; she is victim of the Trojan War, since as a princess of the conquered Troy she becomes Agamemnon's concubine/slave; she is victim of Clytemnestra, as she becomes enmeshed in Clytemnestra's vengeful plot against Agamemnon. She is, ultimately, a victim of the chaotic cosmos before and after the war, and as we see in Shakespeare, foresees the truth but is helpless to change the course of fate or destiny.

This paper will deal with Cassandra's (re)presentation and her story as it continues in modern and contemporary writers, who pull Cassandra out of the past and transpose her to our own still-ravaged world, thus blurring, in postmodern fashion as Linda Hutcheon notes, the boundaries between the past and present. Cassandra remains a symbol of the tragedy of war, and becomes a spokesperson for the madness of present wars – and issues. Thus while Edwin Arlington Robinson's and Robinson Jeffers' 'modernized' Cassandra speaks the truth, she continues to be viewed as mad and therefore is ignored. For Jean Giraudoux in *La guerre de Troie n'aura pas lieu*, Cassandra sees the "tigers at the gate" but like Ulysses, is helpless to change destiny.

For women writers though, the mythic figure Cassandra offers the opportunity to retell or "re-vision," in Adrienne Rich's term, the story with a newfound voice and identity. As Rachel Blau-Duplessis notes, writing the woman's voice becomes "an intense play between subject and object(ified) for the semi-silenced, or unheard female." Christa Wolf in *Cassandra*, Marion Zimmer Bradley in *The Firebrand* and poets Louise Bogan and Eleanor Wilner give Cassandra her own voice to speak her 'truth', a voice that protests heroic ideals, expresses human suffering, and reveals the consequences of silencing the female voice.

Session 1: Madwomen & Matriarchs

"Our land's an Eden": A dramatic resurrection of Queen Elizabeth I in English Restoration.

Katarzyna Bronk, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznan, Poland

The spectacular return of the Stuart dynasty to the throne reawakened the 'puritanized' spirit of the English. Not without difficulty, the nation enthusiastically began restoring the forgotten glory of their fatherland. With time, the fervour began to wane, and was replaced by disappointment and growing uneasiness. In 1681, England was slowly coming out of the Exclusion Crisis. The political turmoil concerning the future of the Empire was intensified by fear concerning the possible restoration of Catholicism, and by association, to the reassertion of external powers over the nation. Even though the commotion was most intensely felt in Parliament and at court, the spirit of unrest penetrated the late seventeenth-century stages.

This paper takes John Banks' political tragedy, *The unhappy favourite; or The Earl of Essex*, as the artistic expression of political and social anxieties of the late seventeenth-century English. Theatrical records indicate that the Restoration public found comfort in the cult of the female monarch, Queen Elizabeth I, "[i]n whose advancement and ... her princely governance, it cannot sufficiently be expressed what felicity and blessed happiness this realm hath received, in receiving her at the Lord's almighty and gracious hand", as John Foxe openly claimed (Foxe 2004: 989). The dramatic rendition of her quasi-sacramental status posed a nostalgic return to the golden days of the Empire, when the monarch was a solid foundation of the nation, its (Protestant) rock. Restoration audiences took pleasure in the themes of romantic affection, rebellion against a divine and kingly father-mother figure and the Christian myth of the Fall, easily casting away the historical garb of Banks' tragedy.

Session 1: Madwomen & Matriarchs

Don't Mention the War: Selectively Commemorating Helen of Troy in John Trussell's *The First Rape of Faire Hellen* (1595)

Katherine Heavey, Durham University

In this paper, I will discuss the unique questions raised by a little-known Elizabethan rendering of the story of Helen of Troy, John Trussell's *The First Rape of Faire Hellen*. The poem is a complaint, a fashionable genre in Elizabeth's reign, and is anchored in the classical mythology that was key to much Elizabethan writing. Thus at first, Trussell's poem might seem deeply conventional. Indeed, Helen had received dozens of treatments in English literature by the last decade of the sixteenth century. However, Trussell's poem is original on at least one count, in that it is the first extended English account of Helen's childhood ravishment, by the Athenian prince Theseus. While Helen's abduction by the Trojan Paris raised troubling questions about her own complicity, her desire for a man who was not her husband, and her disregard for her family's honour, she is unequivocally the innocent in this "First Rape". However, though this innocence, and the feelings of shame she articulates, might seem to ally her to less complicated heroines such as Lucrece, it was always difficult to defend or redeem Helen in the early modern period, because she was so associated in the early modern imagination with female lustfulness, and the fall of Troy. My paper explores Trussell's arguably futile attempt to divorce his Helen from the notorious harlot she was to become, his determination to ignore the most famous episode in his subject's life, while paradoxically displaying his own classical knowledge, and marrying this to current literary fashion.

Session 1: Madwomen & Matriarchs

Phaedra: Classical Mythology in Modern Cinema

Claire Odeon Hershman

In Greek tragedy it is the gods who seek and get vengeance; humans forgive and the gods bear murderous grudges. Humans are the servants or playthings of the gods. Jungian psychology sees the gods as unconscious forces, the archetypes, and it is unconscious archetypal forces inside us, not gods outside us, that move us. A major theme in Greek tragedy is the suffering of innocent humans. The story of Phaedra is the story of a seductress, whether incestuous or not, who subsequently accuses her object of desire of rape. The story has inspired writers from Euripides to Seneca, Racine and O'Neill.

In this presentation I will be drawing on the 1962 film *Phaedra*, directed by Jules Dassin, starring Anthony Perkins and Melina Mercouri. Set in the euro trash world of 60s jet set wealth and shipping, this modern reworking of Euripides' tragedy symbolises the narcissistic desire for incredible wealth and eternal youth and beauty that corrupts the protagonists as much as lust impels them to break the laws of society. Phaedra is the stepmother; her husband is a Greek shipping magnate of unimaginable power and wealth. The implication is that Theseus (the bravest of all the Greek Heroes) has been transformed into Onassis. In the Greek myth individuals are torn apart in the struggle between Artemis and Aphrodite – chastity and lustful indulgence. Hippolytus, as Alexis, is the teenager who does not want to grow up. He is the eternal youth who is fascinated by fast cars, not women.

In the film, when Phaedra discovers that her young lover is to marry and have a future she betrays her lover to his father. In this modern version it is Phaedra's narcissistic rage and jealousy, directed against her lover's youth and her realisation of her own aging that leads Phaedra to destroy. In the final scene between Phaedra and her lover she says 'there is only one thing more terrible than what we have done, and that is to leave each other. Alexis replies, "I want you to die."

Session 2: Scandinavian myths

The Land of Heroes: The Kalevala Myth and Finnish National Identity

Charlotte Ashby, Birkbeck, University of London

This paper will explore the key role played by the Kalevala stories in the creation of Finnish identity in the nineteenth century. The Kalevala stories were collected and compiled as a cycle by Elias Lönnrot from the vernacular oral tradition of Eastern Finland and Karelia and published in 1835. The Kalevala performed multiple roles within the nation-building project. Firstly, with its reception at home and abroad as a great work of literature, it cemented the status of Finnish as a 'real' language. Secondly, it functioned as history, with the hero-bards of the stories adopted as forefathers of the Finnish people. Thirdly, it provided an important shared imaginative point of reference with which to anchor and then to disseminate developing ideas of the Finnish spirit or character.

The second half of my paper will focus on this illusive third element and look at how the world of the Kalevala and the idea of the Finnish spirit was brought alive by artists and designers. They drew on the Kalevala myths and on ethnographic research, which conflated the material culture of the people of Karelia with the legendary world of the Kalevala. Their work created and promulgated an image of the Finnish spirit as rugged and simple and closely tied to nature. From paintings to mass-produced ceramics to architecture, the Kalevala provided the imaginative framework within which the Finns could see themselves as different but, at last, not inferior to the rest of Europe. The mythology also functioned as an imaginative bridge between the ancient Finn and the modern Finn, which helped in the negotiation of the transition from peasant society to modern nation. The Kalevala was the lynch pin in the invention of Finnish identity and it was its ephemeral nature as myth that gave it the flexibility to serve in this role.

Session 2: Scandinavian myths

Abstract Title: 'Neil Gaiman's American Gods and the Mythologies of Snorri Sturluson'

Michael Papadopoulos, University of Leeds

American Gods is an unlikely book: one of its main preoccupations is to redraw the culture and history of the United States in mythical terms and does so not only by drawing on European, Oriental and other myths but also by recasting American folklore and popular culture as myth. As such, it is a surprising book to have been written by Neil Gaiman, for whom America is only his adopted homeland.

Nevertheless, his appropriation of Old Norse mythology to construct an American national identity closely parallels, I wish to argue, the use which Snorri Sturluson made of the same myths in the Thirteenth Century. His *Heimskringla* was carefully calculated to appeal to his Norwegian patrons, King Hákon and Jarl Skúli, and his *Prose Edda* was intended to present the author in accordance with Norwegian stereotypes of Icelanders (carefully cultivated by the Icelanders themselves too) as gifted skalds with a deep knowledge of Scandinavia's pre-Christian past.

Yet Snorri's manipulation of mythology is itself reflected in the self-mythologisations of the pagan deities who take centre-stage in his literary creations, in particular in *The Prose Edda*, where the efforts of the *Æsir* to establish a religion with themselves as gods form the narrative in which Snorri frames the narration of the actual myths themselves.

The power of stories to shape the world has been a recurring theme in Gaiman's work since the *Sandman* series. It is my intent to demonstrate, through comparison with the thirteenth-century Icelandic texts which he drew from, that *American Gods* was inspired not only by Old Norse mythology itself, but by the mythologisations and literary craft of Snorri Sturluson, in whom Gaiman perhaps saw a kindred spirit.

Session 2: Scandinavian myths

Bable, Pentecost and Rock'n Roll – Exploring linguistic identity through myth in Mikael Niemi's *Populärmusik från Vittula*

Sabine Strümper-Krobb, University College Dublin

When the Swedish author Mikael Niemi published his novel *Populärmusik från Vittula* in 2000, an autobiographically based coming-of-age story set in the 1960s in the remote area of Tornedalen in the far North of Sweden, its instant success astonished the writer who had expected the interest in his book to be confined to just a few thousand people on both sides of the Swedish-Finnish border.

One of the main reasons for the surprising appeal of the novel (which was awarded the prestigious Swedish August Prize in 2000, has since been translated in numerous languages, as well as having been made into a successful film) is arguably the fact that Niemi uses the regional background to address universal themes such as growing up, family relations, identity, and problems with communication and self-expression. This paper examines how Niemi makes use of commonly known myths to carry his story beyond the confines of its regional setting, and to show the 'universal' in the 'local'. The emphasis is in particular on the exploration of linguistic identity – one of the central themes of Niemi's novel. The paper argues that the novel uses the myth of Babelian language confusion to show the narrator's home region as a place of regional and global linguistic diversification and, at the same time, as a place of communication crisis and loss of identity. As potential solution, the novel explores – often ironically – the possibility of a universal language, symbolised both by the references to the miracle of Pentecost and to the modern myth of Pop- and Rock 'n Roll music.

Session 2: Cultures in contact

Language as a metaphor for unrepresentable realities: when all we have are flexible ‘myths’

Laiz Chen, University of Nottingham, on behalf of Vanessa Andreotti, University of Canterbury, Aotearoa/NZ & Garrick Cooper, University of Canterbury, Aotearoa/NZ

This paper explores the use and conceptualisation of myths in cosmologies that construct language as a metaphor for realities that are unrepresentable in language. Drawing on the works of Vine Deloria, Marie Battiste, Wally Penetito, Moana Jackson, and Jacqui Alexander, as well as on scholarship related to Amazonian perspectivism and Aboriginal Dreamtime, we argue that different conceptualisations of correlations between language and reality in the use and interpretation of myths generate different insights into their role in social praxis. We first outline the implications of the notion of flexible myths as interpreted from what Walter Mignolo (2002) calls the ‘epistemic privilege of modernity’. We explore the Māori narratives of Tawhaki and Maui (Cooper, 2008) to illustrate the idea of ‘change and changelessness’ in the construction of myths in both cosmologies. We finish this paper by interrogating the impact of education and alphabetic writing in the construction of epistemologies that foreclose the possibility of realities that are unrepresentable in language.

Session 2: Cultures in contact

Accessing the Maori Epistemological Archive: Myth as Value Added Education

Rangimarie Hunia & Shane Edwards, Te Wananga o Aotearoa, New Zealand

This is a dialogue of and on indigenous ways of knowing that informs and extrapolates indigenous ways of being through story. Accessing the Maori epistemological archive, forms powerful ways of thinking about and building up knowledge with contemporary relevance and application of tradition and values as value added education.

Story describes the body of knowledge, loosely referred to in different contexts and from different perspectives, discussed in multiple ways as myth, legend and history. We examine what many refer to as myth or what might be better (re)presented as Māori story as inherent within and as a constructor of Māori epistemological ideas of understanding, clarity, wisdom and life.

Māori story is one epistemological element, one way of knowing, that has relevance for Māori and that may have wider appeal for others. Other epistemological elements, including land, the body, visions, dreams, time and relationships also exist within a system that operationalises Māori worldview, and that interacts holistically for a wider and deeper understanding of aspects of Māori worldview.

Session 2: Displacement & identity

Is the Coloniser an Ancestor?

Ben Grant, University of Kent

This paper will explore the complex relationship between origin myths and colonialism by asking, 'Is the coloniser an ancestor?', a question which is central to postcolonial debates about identity and nation. We might say that the coloniser is not an ancestor. Paradoxically, though, this denial could result in a very colonial essentialism. In *Totem and Taboo*, Freud proposes what he calls his 'scientific myth' of the origin of man, in which a band of cannibal brothers kill their 'primal father' and consume his body, an act which unites them in deference to the father, now an ancestor more powerful than ever he was when alive. This myth, as an appropriation of the origin, structures the colonial enterprise, with the coloniser as primal father. It also provides the basis of forms of resistance to the coloniser and colonial culture, such as Fanon's observation that the native wants to put himself in the place of the white man, or in de Andrade's *Anthropophagic Manifesto*, which subverts the trope of cannibalism. Might it, though, be possible to accept the coloniser as ancestor, but not on these terms? Or, are there myths in which the coloniser appears which are different from that which Freud proposes? These questions lead to insights into the invention of postcolonial nations, to ways of thinking about ancestry which are not dependent on a discourse of blood, and to engagement with the hegemony of the Oedipus myth.

Session 2: Displacement & identity

National salvation history, crisis, and the modern nation-state: the myth and cult surrounding a sixteenth century Thai princess

James Taylor, University of Adelaide

This paper discusses the myth of a little known sixteenth-century Thai cult saviour, Princess Suphankalaya, the elder sister of King Naresuan of Ayutthaya (r.1590–1605). The princess, who reputedly sacrificed herself to save the Thai kingdom from Burmese occupation, was re-invented post-1997 economic crisis to revive a nation shaken and uprooted following the collapse of national financial institutions. The impacts were felt widely, not just within the economy, and found expression through various articulations of urban religiosity, revival of Indic devotional cults, indigenous spirit cults, and reinvented local salvation histories. Truth, fiction, imagination – these mattered little to cult devotees.

Myths, the creation of specific historical conditions and perceived crisis, exemplify the work of unconscious logical processes; they, in a sense, mediate significant contradictions in everyday life as illusion. The really real is what believers unconsciously take in the lived imaginary. The tale of a female superhero is not simply a case of rethinking the homogeneous plot of national history, as an exercise in stretching historical memory, or even a question of whether this hero appeared in the embodied form as the imagining artist portrayed her in the mid–late 1990s. This modern myth-making articulates a contemporary relevance in a crisis of national identity, as a politics of memory and cultural reterritorialization, contextualized by the seeming amoral forces of globalization.

Session 2: Displacement & identity

Mythologies of Progress, Mythologies of Tradition: Subversion and Displacement in Contemporary Nigerian Identity

Madhu Krishnan, University of Nottingham

In Nigerian Igbo tradition, the myth of the ogbanje refers to the human-born child of the spirit world, whose life is marked by conflicting desires and loyalties. Ogbanje is used in current practice to explain the behaviour of any individual who is removed from or at odds with traditional society, reflecting the psychological provenance of the community. This paper will examine the rewriting of the ogbanje myth in Chris Abani's *GraceLand*, arguing that his appropriation of the myth subverts and refines postcolonial relations between the self and society.

In *GraceLand*, Abani re-imagines the ogbanje myth through the trajectory of its main character, Elvis. This paper will focus on the foregrounding of identity and alterity as well as the interaction of elements of traditional Igbo mythology within the framework of postcolonial selfhood and progress. In *GraceLand*, Abani reassembles traditional mythical and religious symbols together with elements taken from Western popular culture and the so-called 'American dream', the narrative presents a contemporary myth paradoxically grounded in the realities of urban life in the postcolony. This paper will argue that Abani, through the morphology of elements of the ogbanje myth, inversion and displacement of actants and the use of dual-scope stories (Turner 2003), ultimately creates a new myth of postcolonial survival, through a negotiation of what the very idea of mythologizing means for the displaced and un-homely individual.

Session 3: Myth, media and popular culture

Recycling Histories, Reinventing Stories: A look at Jin Yong's Wuxia Novels and the manifestations of Jianghu in Chinese Culture

Helena Yuen Wai Wu, University of Hong Kong

The notion of jianghu (in Chinese: 江湖; literal meaning: rivers and lakes) long exists in Chinese culture and the versatile term is very often utilized as an expression, a notion, an ideal and even a setting in different texts. Jianghu is associated to a great number of free-flowing spaces, such as the fantastical world of wuxia, the criminal realm of triad societies, an anarchic condition located beyond the reach of government and even the mythical world “out there”. Different representations of jianghu can be found in poems, folktales, novels, songs, paintings, animations, films, television series, comics, theatrical performances and so on. jianghu carries a strong degree of ambiguity and, at the same time, there also lacks a settled and coherent definition in its meaning. Yet, be it in the mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, or any other Chinese-speaking communities, jianghu is deemed to be one of the most widely retained elements of Chinese-ness throughout different generations.

In this paper, selected pieces of Jin Yong's¹ martial arts novels² will be looked into, in order to decipher different representations of jianghu with its linkage to history, myth, folklore and Chinese folk culture. The paper will basically be divided into three main parts. Firstly, I will draw on the interpenetration of

¹ Jin Yong (金庸) is the pen name of Louis Cha (查鏞1924-). Based in Hong Kong, he is deemed one of the most influential martial arts novelists of modern Chinese language. From 1955 to 1972, Jin Yong had written more than 14 martial arts novels and most of them are constantly adapted into films, television dramas, comics and video games even until nowadays. *The Book and the Sword* (書劍錄), *The Legend of the Condor Heroes* (射鵰傳) and *The Smiling, Proud Wanderer* (笑傲) are just some of his widely known masterpieces across different Chinese-speaking communities.

² Martial arts novel (武俠說 also known as wuxia novel) is a specific genre of Chinese novel that is defined by its theme and content which are mainly based on the imaginary adventures of *jianghu* dwellers and the related happenings in the realm of *Jianghu*. Very often, the personae in such stories are coined as the *jianghu* dwellers while *jianghu* is viewed as their adventurous world of drifting and dwelling.

history with story in myth, folklore and martial arts novels, in order to propose that the possible intrusion of history into story indeed produce a space for jianghu to emerge. Secondly, I will argue that the construction of the imaginary jianghu in martial arts novels is indeed closely related to the process of myth-making. Jianghu in this case could be viewed as a form of myth. This can also further explicate why martial arts novels can always induce a paradoxical feeling of real and unreal through its writerly representation of jianghu. Lastly, I will also see how imagination and representation work together to produce and re-produce different interpretations of jianghu over the generations, by examining different adaptations of Jin Yong's novels in filmic and television productions. As a whole, this paper attempts to decipher the relationship between myth, history, story and imagination through studying the representations of jianghu in Chinese martial arts novels.

Session 3: Myth, media and popular culture

Progressive Rock and the Mythic Naturalisation of a Subcultural Identity

Benjamin Earl, University of Glamorgan

When Rick Wakeman released his album *The Myths and Legends of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table* in 1975, it proved to be a best seller. Yet why should Wakeman choose to appropriate the Arthurian Myth in the first place?

Utilising the cultural capital that exists in the dominant chivalric interpretation of the tale (built up over the years by authors such as Malory and Tennyson) Wakeman was able to create a product of distinction, key to the Progressive Rock subculture that looked to differentiate their culture from that of the mainstream. Unwilling to be seen as mere commercially packaged pop, Progressive Rock always had leanings toward the high culture of classical music with its emphasis on virtuosity, musicianship and lengthy pieces of work far removed from a three minute pop song. The high cultural version of the Myth (in Barthes' sense of the term) helped naturalise Progressive Rock's subcultural identity as superior to 'mere' pop acts and lent a cultural legitimacy to the project.

Yet to the mainstream, this album was seen as pretentious, portentous, overblown and consisting of the depthless, meaningless pastiche of postmodernity. "Wakeman's follies," were ridiculed repeatedly in the press for aspiring to a high culture that they were not. 'Pure taste' it could never be, and instead it was condemned as an example of Bourdieu's 'barbarous taste,' a "naïve exhibitionism of 'conspicuous consumption', which seeks distinction in the crude display of ill-mastered luxury" (Bourdieu).

Session 3: Myth, media and popular culture

Revisiting the Courtesan: the persistent modern cinematic myth of the courtesan in Bollywood cinema as allegory for Mauritian Muslim identification with the Bollywood text

Farhad Abdool Kader Sulliman Khoyratty, University of Mauritius

Myth, both in terms of content and form, has always been closely related to power. In this respect, it is no coincidence that cinema, itself so subliminal, so powerful, power-driving and power-driven, has proven so central to modern myth-construction. The ritual aura of art (after Benjamin), both as veneration and taboo, survives as trace in cinema to varying degrees and most certainly in the Mauritian Muslim reception of Bollywood, especially through the undecidable figure of the courtesan. The persistence of the myth of the courtesan in Bollywood since the 1940s is inherited from an Islamic literary tradition of the tragic female figure that is said to stretch up to the Portuguese fado. For Devdutt Pattanaik, myths “capture the collective unconsciousness of a people”. The courtesan inhabits a semi-mythopoeic space of contradiction and uncertainty, a hybrid space that reflects the unconsciously hybrid position of the Mauritian Muslim spectator of Bollywood cinema. Thus the myth of the courtesan uncovers an adaptive strategy based on hybridity that underlies the official homogeneity of the Islamic discourse and the more conscious rejection of the image and the myth as potentially idolatrous. Identification with the myth also reflects a Mauritian Muslim everydayness that hovers between power and powerlessness, the complex space occupied by a moderately affluent minority in a liberal democracy. This study proposes a phenomenological survey of a sample of Mauritian Muslim families in relation to their consumption of Bollywood cinema. The gesture is situated in phenomenology as an intuitive charting of an existential relationship beyond official histories, which, in Mauritius, remain doggedly elitist and materialist. The image of the Bollywood courtesan is used as *aletheia* (in Heidegger’s sense, as ‘disclosedness’) to investigate the individual Mauritian Muslim’s strategies of cultural affirmation and infer a map of the continued reinvention of a community through the recycling of the existing myth, imported but revisited.

Session 3: Inventing nations

Classics in Cambria - Late Eighteenth-Century Anglophone Welsh Poetry

Mary Chadwick, Aberystwyth University

Bright Wisdom then, with late – but partial smile,
Shall bid her sons erect the Attic pile
To infant Science and the Muse's lore –
And fix her standard on the Cambrian shore.

Amongst the archives of the National Library of Wales are a number of poems written by eighteenth-century Masters of Ruthin school in Denbighshire, North Wales. The lines quoted above are taken from the untitled, unpublished work of the Reverend David Hughes who presided over the school between 1795 and 1800. Hughes manipulates the conventions of “a discernible English-language poetic tradition [taking] Welsh history and literature as its theme” (Bards and Britons, 2008) in order to craft a call for improved education for young men in Wales.

During the second half of the eighteenth century a debate raged between those who believed that a classical education equipped young men with the knowledge and skills necessary for almost any calling in life and those who felt that a broader and more practical range of subjects should be taught. Hughes acknowledges this debate through the references to classical Greece scattered throughout his poem.

I argue in this paper that Hughes' intertwined recyclings of Welsh and Greek mythology represent his awareness of the needs, demands and national and cultural identities of his charges and their parents. Two generations of the family in whose archive Hughes' poem is found are Welsh in their hearts but pragmatically British in their interests. The education which Ruthin provided for young Welshmen - the ethos of which Hughes reflects in his poetry - contributed to the representations of Wales embodied by former pupils as they went out into the world.

Session 3: Inventing nations

Historiographic Metatheatre: Five Nations, Four Plays, Three Centuries, Two Myths and a Genre

Alex Feldman, UT Austin

This paper derives from a D.Phil thesis which defines a seminal, though previously unformulated genre of dramatic writing. Historiographic metatheatre is a category that can be applied to those works in which self-reflexive engagements with the traditions and forms of dramatic art illuminate historical themes and aid the recreation of past events. The exemplary works of the genre employ the device of the play-within-a-play, dramatising either performances of pre-existing dramatic works, in historical contexts which endow them with new significance, or dramatising productions of plays on historical themes.

My paper will focus on four works: Peter Weiss's *Marat/Sade* (1964), Tom Stoppard's *Travesties* (1974), Howard Brenton's *The Churchill Play* (1974) and Timberlake Wertenbaker's *Our Country's Good* (1988). The plays-within-plays here are versions, respectively, of the murder of Jean-Paul Marat, *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895), the career of Winston Churchill and George Farquhar's *The Recruiting Officer* (1706). Though the pre-existing works might seem to belong to a separate category from the historical re-enactments, it is the contention of this paper that all of the interior plays are mythic structures which underpin or reflect the identity of nations. The interior plays are performed, respectively, by the inmates of a lunatic asylum, the British in Zurich, the internees of a detention camp and a group of Australian convicts. All of these mythic dramas are reproduced in places of exile where the marginalised negotiate the terms of national identity through performance.

Session 3: Inventing nations

Britain: The 'Great-est' Invention of the Eighteenth Century

Anita Raghunath, Vrije Universiteit

Critics from a variety of academic fields have established that a homogenous British identity was to a large extent a constructed myth, predicated on a desire to create a cohesive nation from divergent cultures within the British Isles. However, little attention has been given to analysing how this mythology took such a strong hold on the imagination and culture of Britain. As Roy Porter states, "Great Britain was not the least important eighteenth-century invention," and it is the invented, fictional aspect of this national identity, and the part that contemporary works of literature played in this invention, that provides the foundation of this paper.

The fictional literature of the early eighteenth century both created and sustained an image of Britishness that functioned as a consolidating trope for the divisions within the old regional nationalisms in Britain. Prior to the Act of Union 1707, which marked the political union of Scotland with England, national allegiance had been located in the separate nations of England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland, and the task to be overcome in 1707 was therefore much more complex than that of creating a nation, because the idea of patriotism and national allegiance already existed. This paper investigates the way literary texts written by contemporary polemic authors such as Daniel Defoe, Alexander Pope and James Thomson made the 'imagined nation' - a reality.

Session 3: Identity politics

Mentioning the war: The myth of the Blitz spirit in British newspaper responses to the July 7th bombings

Darren Kelsey, Cardiff University

British newspaper responses to July 7th featured a classic myth of British, national identity: the Blitz spirit. Angus Calder (1991) and Clive Ponting (1990) among others have examined this myth and discussed the way that propagandistic messages from the Ministry of Information in 1940 provided a limited account of British morale during the Second World War. By retelling this story of stoic 'Britishness', resilience and defiance, the recurrence of this myth after July 7th had ideological implications. Dominant discourses were complicit in condoning the war on terror, 'othering' Muslim communities, and opposing human rights laws. In this paper I discuss how memories of the past defined (and distorted) British identity in the present. I argue that mythic conventions in journalism misrepresent the problems that we face (and cause) in our response to global terrorism.

By analysing myth, I apply the approach of Roland Barthes (1993) who defined myth as a naturalising process, which depoliticises meanings by denying them of complexity and history. A Barthesian spectacle of morality also offers an understanding of the binary conventions of myth. Jack Lule (2001) analysed the role of myth and archetypal storytelling in contemporary journalism, which provides some present context to a Barthesian framework. The mythic conventions of national identity that this paper explores reflect Stuart Hall's (1996) proposal that "National cultures construct identities by producing meanings about 'the nation' with which we can identify" in stories, memories and images that connect the past with the present. I will consider the problems of these connections in understandings of 'Britishness'.

Session 3: Identity politics

World within a World: The Conspiracy Theory as Monomyth

Tim Leadbeater, Leeds Trinity University College

This paper proposes that the conspiracy theory is one of the most culturally significant explanatory frames for many traumatic events involving brave and tragic individuals (our heroes) caught up in the strategies of higher powers (our gods). Conspiracy theory puts the plot in the story.

Whilst the label “theory” indicates unproven-ness, it also points to its generic utility as hypothesis and paradigm. As such, it may be described as a meta-myth, abstracted from specific events, lives and deaths.

This paper reviews the theory of conspiracy theory and key structural elements such as: The strange detail and odd behaviour; The faulty arithmetic (things don’t add up); The admissions of foreknowledge; The murky motives and coincidental connections; The partial rebuttal; The counter-proof.

Accepted versions of historical events show that first appearances are indeed often deceptive and the casus belli is particularly suspicious. However, the evident hunger for alternative explanations has clearly developed alongside popular literary genres such as the detective stories, spy thrillers and science fiction. The paper examines the appeal of conspiracy theory in aesthetics, literature and punk-sociology.

Finally, the paper analyses the conspiracy investigator in relation to the monomyth of Joseph Campbell. Undermining the official version of events, especially through media such as the internet, allows the public to play the journalist as hero and feel it is speaking truth to power. Existentially, the conspiracy theory tries to satisfy a desire for complexity, agency and drama in the face of banality, incompetence and sheer chance: The Agents of Conspiracy at least keep the Forces of SNAFU at bay.

Session 3: Identity politics

Uchronic myth in political rhetoric: the creation of national identity in BNP texts

Gwilym Thear, Cardiff School of Journalism

Nick Griffin's widely derided assertion on the BBC's Question Time that the 'indigenous races' of the UK have been here for at least 17,000 years is perhaps the most extreme recent example of uchronic thinking in the party. Uchronia – an imaginary time that purports to a historical reality – can be read in most political rhetoric yet the BNP's foregrounding of racial policy means that their sense of national identity is acutely dependent upon the creation and dissemination of a specific uchronic history.

This paper does not intend to engage with BNP policy but to examine the ways that their various political texts seek to outline and flesh out a mythological history of Great Britain. Engaging with theories of narrative temporality, it will explore the fundamental role that national myth plays in political rhetoric and consider the importance and power of the (ab)use of history for a sense of national identity. The BNP make a particularly interesting study due to their widespread use of media texts in support of their position and this paper will concentrate on a reading of their extensive website and its use of vintage photographs and videos to justify their construction of what they describe as 'OUR green and pleasant land'.

Session 4: Reused myths

Transgressive National Identity on Stage: The Recycling of Myth's Otherness and the Decentring of British Past and Present in Tony Harrison's *Phaedra Britannica* and Sarah Kane's *Phaedra's Love*

Uwe Mayer, University of Giessen

The politics of the nation and “the modern construction of myth” (Andrew Von Hendy) in theory, public discourse, literature and the arts both gained momentum in the late 18th century – and they have been closely connected ever since (cf. Bruce Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth*). But although the relationship of myth and nation is undoubtedly a powerful one, it is not straightforward. As has been pointed out occasionally in recent years, myth is often “a sign of otherness”. Many theories of myth perceive or construct their object as the other – or at least locate it between the poles of self and other. E.g. myth is usually considered to be archaic as opposed to civilised, oral as opposed to written, ritualistic as opposed to narrative etc. On the one hand, this might impede attempts to recycle myth for contemporary purposes. On the other hand, myth's otherness can provide a starting point for challenging and decentring perceived identities.

After elaborating this theoretical argument, the presentation will analyse two dramatic adaptations of the story of Phaedra: Tony Harrison's *Phaedra Britannica* (1975) and Sarah Kane's *Phaedra's Love* (1996). Both plays present stories of personal and political transgression and thereby negotiate various questions of identity and politics. Moreover, they offer powerful portrayals of Britain. Harrison mythologically re-visions the former Empire as superficially cultured and civilised but inherently transgressive. Kane takes on “Cool Britannia” as a corrupt consumer society that is constantly on the brink of violence. Interestingly, it is especially myth's otherness, the archaic and seemingly outdated features, that drives the modernising/actualising of myth in both plays.

Session 4: Reused myths

The Trojan War in the British Isles: Anglo-Scottish Conflict and the Invention of Myth

Katherine H. Terrell, Hamilton College

In this paper, I discuss the competing English and Scottish origin myths as they develop in response to political tensions in the 12th through 14th centuries. These myths, which pit (English) Trojan against (Scottish) Greek ancestries in a latter-day recasting of the Trojan war, find their fullest expression in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* and John of Fordun's *Chronica Gentis Scotorum*, but are also invoked in legal and diplomatic discourses and extensively cited in arguments before the papal court. Geoffrey's tale of England's Trojan ancestry was frequently cited as a political precedent proving English superiority over the Scots; it supplied the historical basis for the fantasy of a united Britain, and justified later English attempts to turn this fantasy into reality through conquest. This paper particularly attends to the effects of two English claims, both based on Geoffrey's myth, that bookend the fourteenth century: Edward I's demand for Scottish homage in 1301, and Henry IV's similar demand in 1401. I argue that in the face of this aggression, it wasn't enough for Scottish historiographers to follow the 12th-c. English historian William of Newburgh, who had accused Geoffrey of having propagated "a laughable web of fiction." Once the intimate link between historical and political authority had been established, contesting its legitimacy was insufficient; only a counter-legend would do. I demonstrate that Scottish historiography really comes into its own as a nationalist movement in response to English aggression; Baldred Bisset and John of Fordun develop ancient legends of the Scots' Greek ancestors into an origin myth that retroactively establishes the Scots' primacy in Britain. Projecting the past victory of their Greek ancestors over their Trojan foes into an imagined future, these Scottish histories challenge their nation's embattled status quo by predicting eventual Scottish pre-eminence.

Session 4: Reused myths

'My Father Left Me Nothing But The Waters': A Poet Responds to Ovid's Metamorphoses

Siân Thomas, University of Sussex

This paper will explore the process involved in the construction of myth-making (and re-making) through an examination of my current project, a poetic response to Ovid's Metamorphoses. By examining the creative process of the poet, I will question whether in exploring myths of metamorphosis, we are forced somehow to encounter the divine. My reading will be informed by Carl Jung's theories of the creative imagination, and ideas of writing as return and transformation, of going, 'in the direction of truth,' as posited by Hélène Cixous. Using these theories I will explore how we can,

[...]hope to move closer to everything we can't say without dying of fright[...]

What makes us flee, what makes us come running down the mountain, what

no man, no prophet could ever do, is look straight at God, look him in the eye.

This is a metaphor. It's looking at what must not be looked at, at what would prevent us from existing, from continuing our ordinary, domestic lives, and what I call, for better or worse: 'the truth.'

(Cixous, Three Steps on the Ladder of Writing)

I will discuss how I have recycled myth by writing further into the text, exploring characters and events in greater detail. By reflecting on my own metamorphoses, I will seek to demonstrate how ultimately this can lead to a new poetic vision and understanding of both the original and the 'recycled' text.

Session 4: Monarchs, pirates & forgers: “constructing” myth and identity

Making monarchs: myths and mirrors

Tom Davies, Aberystwyth University

For God’s sake let us sit upon the ground
And tell sad stories of the death of kings-
How some have been deposed, some slain in war,
Some haunted by the ghosts they have deposed,
Some poisoned by their wives, some sleeping killed –
All murdered.
William Shakespeare’s Richard II (3.2.155-60).

The *Speculum Principes* or ‘Mirror for Princes’ tradition purports to illuminate princes’ spiritual, moral and physical qualities through exemplary actions against which their readers could assess their own behaviour. While a mirror was considered to be ‘a model of excellence’, it was also ‘a person or thing [that] embod[ied] something to be avoided’. Paradoxically, the mirror of this tradition worked not so much by representing positive but negative examples, that is, by showing what not to do. Recycling, social, political and cultural materials across numerous genres, including myth writings, the ‘Mirror for Princes’ tradition draws on history, since history, for some, was seen as a collection of both good and bad episodes from which virtuous behaviour could be acquired and lessons could be learnt. Defined as a story “typically involving supernatural beings or forces”, myths and, likewise many of the tropes in the mirror tradition, provide an explanation, or “justification for something such as the early history of a society, a religious belief or ritual” while offering didactic interpretations. Writing in a period, when it was believed that lessons could be learnt from history, William Shakespeare appropriated elements of many tales, stories and myths as material through which to highlight and comment upon socio-political issues of the period. This paper will explore issues of recycling cultural material by focussing on Shakespeare’s engagement with the ‘Mirror for Princes’ tradition.

Session 4: Monarchs, pirates & forgers: “constructing” myth and identity

"Coterminous with Mankind": Piracy and Dreams of Empire

Elissa DeFalco, SUNY Maritime College

The interplay between the factual and the fictional pirates at the start of the long eighteenth century reveals many of the crucial fissures of the era. The escapades of pirates demonstrate the increasingly global scope of the economy and as well as its vulnerability. Instilling both admiration and fear in the contemporary reading public, pirates were among the most popular subjects in fiction in this period, particularly among architects of the early novel such as Daniel Defoe. The stories that are woven together from newspapers, memoirs, and journals (as well as pure speculation) illustrate a crucial step in the evolution of modern British identity.

As Carla Rahn Phillips points out, in considering the eighteenth century, “we might argue that publicity itself became a primary result of seaborne exploration.”³ As a result, the kinship among British pirates reveals a fascinating variant on one of Benedict Anderson’s “imagined communities.” Normally, he argues, “The nation is imagined as limited because [it] has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations. No nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind.”⁴ Pirates might seem too isolated from each other to imagine a contiguous bond. However, a close study of their practice confirms that their sense of community was truly global in scope (and threatened the evolution of early modern British identity).

³ Carla Rahn Phillips, “Exploring from Early Modern to Modern Times,” in *Maritime History and World History*, ed. Daniel Finnamore (Salem, Massachusetts: Peabody Essex Museum, 2004), 75-6.

⁴ Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 2003) 6.

Session 4: Monarchs, pirates & forgers: “constructing” myth and identity

Václav Hanka’s Nationalist Project: Czech Scholarship and Myth in the 19th Century

Molly Zimmerman-Feeley, University of Chicago

During the nineteenth century, there were numerous forgeries of historical documents. One such incident occurred in Bohemia in 1817. Václav Hanka, a young student of the Czech nationalist scholar Josef Dobrovský, claimed he had found a collection of epic poetry in the bell-tower of a rural church. Referred to as the Královédvorský manuscript, Hanka designed the collection to appear to have been created between the 13th and 14th centuries. While at first Czechs celebrated the discovery as an indication of a truly cultured past, within several decades Hanka’s forgery came to light. Scholars of Czech history have written off the forgery as a misguided and unethical project. However, this simple dismissal fails to recognize the powerful ideological message contained in the manuscripts and their success in reaching a popular audience. Indeed, analysis of Hanka’s project shines a light on the role of myth in disseminating ideology, and reveals a striking continuity with the projects of other Czech nationalist scholars. The Královédvorský manuscript was a set of myths designed to encourage nationalism in its readers. The work of Hanka’s contemporaries, such as the linguists Pavel Josef Šafařík and Jan Kollár, were directed to a different audience, but were designed to encourage the same nationalist beliefs. Hanka’s manuscripts and the scholarship of his contemporaries did not share the same form, but they certainly served the same ideological function.

Session 4: Myth and gender

I have been wanting to mourn: Solidarity and Heroism in Recent American and British Poetry Based on the Myth of Demeter and Persephone

Susan Joseph, Catholic University of America

With her poem's title *Wanting to mourn*, English poet and novelist Michèle Roberts, challenges the female passivity encoded in classical myth of the rape of Persephone. Nor is Roberts' choice unique. Because it allegorizes eternal renewal as reunions of a mother with her daughter, many British and American women poets have embraced this story in the last 30 years. These poets have identified with and heroically changed the story of Persephone and her mother Demeter. Their responses to the myth address how the sexual revolution and newer concepts of family have deformed the mother-daughter bond.

Taking the point of view of one of the goddesses or the other, women poets have composed two sorts of poems responding to this mother-daughter theme. In the terminology of feminism, second-wave poets accept the story, embroidering it with their own life experiences, breathing life into the two goddesses and giving them subjectivity. As Judith Johnson has noted concerning Carolyn Kizer's mythological poetry, revisioned myths are "examinations of woman as Figure: as muse, goddess, archetype, idea, object, subject in the process of becoming subject; woman in relation both to the view the traditional male-dominated culture has taken of her and to the view she must take of herself." Johnson's analysis comprehends poets like Eavan Boland and Alicia Ostriker who celebrate the emotional bond between the two goddesses and also younger American post-feminist poets like Rachel Zucker and Annie Finch who re-present recognizable versions that nonetheless, for literary, personal and political reasons, resist significant features of the familiar story.

This paper is part of a project about women poets' distinctive use of Greek myth. I have benefited from quick and generous responses of women poets contacted through the Women Poets' Listserv.

Session 4: Myth and gender

Patriotism, Bellicism and the Mythical Hero in Dutch and German Epic around 1750

Cornelis van der Haven, Freie Universität Berlin

The eighteenth century is the age of patriotism. The longing for 'a fatherland' took root especially in politically and culturally fragmented territories. The Dutch Republic and the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation were two such as yet strongly fragmented territories. Literature proved to be an important means in forging a cultural and moral tie between the citizens of the Dutch Republic and the German Empire. Regional differences could thus be overcome and the citizens were turned into 'Dutchmen' and 'Germans' respectively.

Different German scholars described the entry, around 1750, of the combative mythical hero (Hermann) in German literature, as an example of patriotism driven by a search for models of an aggressive masculinity. This development seems to be eminently comparable to the Netherlands where the ancient myth of the courageous Batavians was revived in the same period. Partly in the light of current discussions on national identity, these literary germs of national awareness will be studied in relation to two epic texts: *De Gevalen van Friso* by Willem van Haren (Amsterdam 1742) and *Hermann oder das Befreyte Deutschland* by Christoph Otto von Schönaich (Leipzig 1751).

The analysis of these texts will be guided by a number of questions, such as: What kind of 'new' combative patriotic ideals were defended by these heroes? Can it be said they already embodied a 'national character' which was strongly influenced by early national ideology, based on shifts in the understanding of nationhood? How were national myths used to propagate bellicism and war politics of Dutch and German powers around 1750?

Black Dwarf and Radical Satire: Interrogating Britishness from the Margin

Jing-Huey Hwang, National Taiwan University

Thomas Jonathan Wooler's radical weekly *The Black Dwarf* (1817-24) appropriated its legendary narrator from Sir Walter Scott's recent novel of the same title. By having a fictional alien traveller comment on British politics, Wooler draws on a well-known literary device in the previous century popularized by Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes*. Nevertheless, the marginalized and deformed figure of the black dwarf, and its supernatural powers of communicating with goblins as well as multiplying and dividing itself to investigate ministerial secrets distinguish Wooler's fictional narrator from its more mundane predecessors. In the post-1815 demobilized Britain, where radicals calling for parliamentary reforms were faced with government's prosecution against seditious libel, the black dwarf as a supernatural narrator helped Wooler minimize the danger of criticism. Furthermore, this paper maintains that the alien identity of the black dwarf helped Wooler interrogate notions of Britishness. That the black dwarf is disappointed by his British experience, and that his comments often prove more liberal-minded than his British hosts at once hint at a lost or corrupted state of free Britain and underline the universal relevance of unprejudiced tolerance. The perspective of the black dwarf highlights the despotic high-handedness of the British ministry, his impartiality and frankness deriving from his qualifications as an outsider and a jester. His correspondence with various infernal or foreign friends creates a sense of all-knowing scrutiny of contemporary politics. With his creative adaptation of the black dwarf, Wooler's influential weekly articulates and reinterprets British identity in that transitional time of unrest and nation formation.

Session 5: Dystopias / Utopias

In The Year 2525: (Re)constructions of biblical myths in *Oryx and Crake* (2003) and *The Year of the Flood* (2009) by Margaret Atwood

Katarina Labudová, Catholic University Slovakia

The paper deals with two speculative fiction novels by Margaret Atwood: *Oryx and Crake* and *The Year of the Flood*. Both books allude to biblical myths of creation, reproduction, extinction, and punishment and they present a synthesis of political, social, religious and environmental concerns transformed into what if question.

In *The Year of the Flood* (2009) Atwood returns to the post-apocalyptic wasteland she first depicted in *Oryx and Crake* (2003) in a paralleling and complimentary story. *The Year of the Flood* balances the first novel, which was narrated from a perspective of a male narrator Jimmy. Jimmy, the inhabitant of the Compounds, is the last human survivor of the cataclysm caused by Crake. In *The Year of the Flood*, the narrative is focused on women survivors coming from the pleeblands.

The ambiguous ending of *Oryx and Crake* allows Atwood to tell the story from the perspective of the marginalized group of the God's Gardeners. This eco-religious cult rewrites the biblical myths of Paradise, Adam and Eve, Ararat and Noah's ark to prophet the waterless flood. The suspenseful (and sometimes humorous) infusion of scientific knowledge, ecological insights and biblical allusions produces a new myth which predicts a bleak version of current environmental and technological issues. In *Oryx and Crake*, the need for myth is found harmful for human race and humanoid Crakers have it extracted from their genetic information. However, in *The Year of the Flood*, the myth offers a chance how to survive apocalypse and stay humane.

Session 5: Dystopias / Utopias

The Ark in All Its Forms: Revisiting the Flood Myth in Julian Barnes's *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters*

Maria Daniela Oancea , University of Bucharest, Romania

Part history and part fiction, conceived and written as a novel, but perceived as a collection of short-stories, Barnes's *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* is probably the best example of the many ways in which "official" history may be challenged. To this end, not only does the British novelist rely greatly on irony, fragmentation and chronological discontinuity, he also makes use of recurrent patterns and multiple and highly subjective narrative voices that seem to undermine the uniqueness and objectivity of the traditional historical discourse. Starting from a close reading of the novel, this paper will attempt to prove that Julian Barnes uses the flood myth and the archetypal image of the ark as a "backbone" to connect different stories and people across the centuries. The myth is expanded to include various accounts of shipwrecks and deluge, while the primordial Ark takes many shapes and sizes, ranging from a mere raft to the "unsinkable" Titanic. Apart from being one of the recurrent themes in the novel, the biblical flood also acts as a sort of starting point for a more generalized fear of water that transcends continents and centuries and eventually leads to an image of humankind drifting away on a sea of uncertainty.

Session 5: Irish myth

The Recycling of Myths through the Literature of Northern Ireland

Peter Breheny, University of Derby

This paper looks at a section of work from my current PhD investigation into Troubles literature and how cultural loyalties inform the work of creative writers and where I analyze my own prejudices as a third generation British, Roman Catholic Irish immigrant writer.

The paper looks at the work of writers who grew up in Northern Ireland immediately before or during the Troubles which started in 1969 and finished with the Good Friday peace agreement signed on 10 April 1998. I am especially interested in the history of sectarianism as portrayed through the media of fiction, by both Catholics and Protestants and those other writers who explore the pressures of identity, tradition and self-censorship - and how authors might view their responsibilities to readers and society

My research looks at the work of writers who in the light of the cultural divisions of Northern Ireland are perceived as being from the opposite side, the other side to me and who provide an alternative perspective on the conflict. It is this otherness or sense of difference which forms the focus of my investigation and my growth as a writer.

The aim of my research is to see how the making and recycling of cultural mythologies in Troubles literature could perpetuate notions of conflict by reinforcing competing cultural stereotypes.

Session 5: Irish myth

Invoking Ireland – Aliu Iath n-hErend

Jonathan O'Neill, Australian National University

John Moriarty's *Invoking Ireland* is striking for its use of language and myth as an attempt at re-imagining contemporary Ireland. Moriarty seeks a new way of being, in line with the *Birdreign* not the republic (in mythology, *Énflaith* – “the reign of King Conaire Mór in which all things lived ecumenically with all things”) and *Silver Branch* perception (“the marvellous way of seeing things that Manannán Mac Lir god of the sea, sent into the world”). He proposes these as an alternative to the nationalist Ireland of 1916. He does this by refracting his imaginings through Gaelic language, myth and legend, through an earlier way of reading and understanding the world; a looking back but also a looking forward. The book is interesting for its juxtaposing of these myths with Hindu, Buddhist, Hebraic, and Christian traditions as well as excerpts from European literature and philosophy. In this paper I would like to analyse Moriarty's deployment of myth and language. Does his re-imagining correspond with a romantic and utopian impulse to lament or revive a lost Gaelic past? Is it comparable to what Peadar Kirby has called ‘Ireland's identity angst’, or a postcolonial search for a distinguishable and identifiable past civilisation?

Session 5: Irish myth

The Mythologizing of Myth in the Construction of the Irish Nation: The Cú Chulainn Saga

John Poulter, Leeds Trinity University College

Cú Chulainn is the pre-eminent mythical hero of Irish literature. The lover of the beautiful Emer and the mystical Fand, the victor over the army of Queen Mebd and the bravest of the famed Red Branch Knights. His story has, over the course of the last century, become an integral part of modern Irish culture and, in particular, the mythology of Irish nationalism within which he has acted as a central pillar in the discursive construction of the Irish nation. Indeed, Republican murals in the north spelt out his centrality with the legend 'Mise Eire' ('I am Ireland') above his image. In the last couple of decades, however, this myth of Cú Chulainn has been challenged in a most spectacular fashion. This intervention encourages a re-examination of the history of this hero's story which reveals the ways in which myths are subject to an eternal process of mythologizing. Our journey with Cú Chulainn will take us from the monastery to the theatre; the schoolroom to the back-street; the battle-ford to the battlefield; and the big house to the bathhouse. Along the way we shall observe the poet and the sculptor, the playwright and translator, and the politician and the painter in the act of representing our hero to their world. This saga has much to teach us of the life of myths, the craft in their telling and their role in the interweaving of past, present and future: history, politics and fantasy.

Revising Mythologies of Englishness: Anna Kavan's Horror Fiction

Sara-Patricia Wasson, Edinburgh Napier University

This paper emerges from a monograph investigating how Second World War horror fiction revises popular mythologies of the British home front. Historians such as Angus Calder and Stuart Hylton have already challenged the veracity of the 'Blitz myth,' and this paper does not merely reiterate their findings. Rather, I argue that the supernatural strands of Anna Kavan's novel *Sleep Has His House* (1948) and her short story 'Our City' (1945) subvert the narrative form of the dominant mythology by representing the temporality of home front and pre-war Britain in radically unsettling ways.

A particular conception of time is central to both the established Blitz myth and to the nostalgia that gathers around pre-war representations of England. Both are predicated on a concept of the nation similar to Benedict Anderson's idea of the imagined community, in which the nation is imagined as a unified collective moving through time, 'a solid community moving steadily down (or up) history' (26). Texts in the Gothic mode often challenge such linearity. Kavan's fiction depicts time as unstable in two ways. First, it depicts anachronistic return of ancient horrors; second, it collapses the notion of meaningful progress through time, instead depicting people as victim to helpless cycles of deadening repetition. The vampires and ghosts of these texts mark fracture points in two potent mythologies of Englishness.

Session 6: Fantasy & myth

Harry Potter – A Return to Myth?

Christina Flotmann, University of Paderborn

The Harry Potter novels are organised around mythical structures which do not only order them but also transport certain ideologies. Claude Lévi-Strauss' "The Structural Study of Myth" highlights the binary nature of myth and its resolution of oppositions into a balanced middle ground.

The dissolution of binaries in the Harry Potter novels takes place in two different ways, one seemingly good and one supposedly evil. Harry Potter, representative of the first case, manages to unite and balance out mutually exclusive concepts such as life and death or good and evil. By finally cutting his ties with Voldemort, he re-establishes good and evil as separate categories and restores the mythical construction of the story.

Voldemort on the other hand, seriously damages the distinct mythical framework of the narrative. His violations of boundaries (self and other, life and death) threaten the society of the novels which has to ostracise him to ensure a return to clear-cut mythical binaries. Voldemort, importantly, parts the world into the powerful and the weak rather than the good and the evil. This new polarity has astonishing consequences. His reign, evil as it may be, empowers several figures who did not have a chance to exert their power before, such as some of the female characters and creatures other than wizards. It is not clear what happens to these figures after Voldemort's end. Is Professor McGonagall going to be Hogwarts' new headmistress, for instance? And are the house elves finally going to demand pay for their services? Voldemort certainly attacks and wounds many of the society's moral foundations but he also (unwittingly) eradicates some distinctions existing in 'good' wizarding society (the narrative?) which are not as unassailable as that between morally right and wrong behaviour. Voldemort gives the readers the opportunity of recognising mythical naturalisation and the workings of ideologies. What do we as readers make of the series' ending in this light? Does Voldemort's death herald a return to the complacency of mythical structures or does some of his 'power' remain behind?

Session 6: Fantasy & myth

The Anti-Myth Mythographer: How Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* fights the consequences of the form on which it relies

Andrew Rayment, Aberystwyth University

In his epic Fantasy trilogy, *His Dark Materials*, Philip Pullman launches an attack on institutional religion's utilization of *dangerous myths*, dangerous because they may be exploited to legitimize the exercise of power. Focusing on the myth of the Fall, Pullman not only *stages* how this myth may become a (Levi-Straussian) "machine for restricting choices", but also *re-enacts* it, integrating the myth into the fabric of the text in a *transformative* way that subverts the (as Pullman sees it) life-hating doctrine that the 'real' Christian myth sustains. Yet, the fact that this attack is attempted in the Fantasy genre certainly has implications as all texts in this genre are formally reliant on tropes that are often associated with mythical stories, and *His Dark Materials* is no exception. Pullman's attack on myth *in the medium of a myth* leads, then, to a contradiction in the text where its political content is inevitably undermined by the consequences of the form on which it relies. But is there an escape from this impasse? The final part of this presentation will speculate on how a resolution may be attempted through the construction of the text/book as *object*.

Session 6: Landscaping mythology

'Every Map is a Fiction': Reassessing English myths and (re)imagining the country in the contemporary English 'Home Tour'

Christine Berberich , University of Portsmouth

This paper proposes to examine the relationship between the physical process of 'travelling the land' and the creative process of travel writing. Over the past few years, a plethora of travel writing specifically focusing on 'England' has emerged – England is being travelled, crossed, circumnavigated and traversed on foot, by car, by boat, by bus, by bike and by train. Some authors focus on specific parts of the country, East Anglia or the North of England, for example, others aim for the bigger picture by looking at the country as a whole. The result is a huge variety of very different texts that are, however, all united in one thing: the English landscape the individual travellers see and encounter is used as the trigger for sometimes entertaining and amusing, sometimes philosophical and profound ponderings not only on what is actually seen, but, more specifically, what this might mean for 'belonging', for national identity and, here in particular, for a specific 'Englishness' in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. In this way, travel writers actively engage with mythical notions of Englishness, often in an attempt to subvert them in order to imagine a new version of England. Travelling the land, often slowly, on foot or canal boat or entirely relying on public transport, offers the travel writers new perspectives and insights which help them to, literally, (re)imagine their country.

The interlinked process of 'looking' on the one hand and 'philosophising' and 'writing' on the other are thus assessed in relation to texts as diverse as W.G. Sebald's *The Rings of Saturn*, Jonathan Raban's *Coasting* and Paul Gogarty's *The Coast Road* and *The Water Road*. While theoretical concepts such as Pierre Nora's *lieux de mémoire* and Benedict Andersen's 'imagined communities' are considered, the emphasis is clearly on the above process which shows, in the words of D.J. Waldie, that 'every map is a fiction' that it is up to the individual traveller to explore and decipher.

Session 6: Landscaping mythology

Arthurian Legend Then and Now

John K. Bollard and Margaret G. Lloyd, Florence, Massachusetts

Tales of Arthur have been told in Wales for 1400 years and through much of Europe and elsewhere for some 900. Each generation has had its own reasons for retelling, remodelling, and extending these tales, as Arthur himself came to embody the shifting cultural, national, and personal ideals of successive generations. John Bollard will be reading from his recent translations of the tales of *Peredur*, *Owain*, and *Geraint*, 12th- or 13th-century Welsh versions of tales that were also recast in French by Chrétien de Troyes in the 12th century and made famous throughout Europe.

Margaret Lloyd will be reading from her collection, *A Moment in the Field: Voices from Arthurian Legend*. These poems are written from the perspectives of characters familiar from the great retelling of Arthur's life and death by Thomas Malory in the 15th century, though they also reflect details and aspects of earlier Welsh tradition. The poems are simultaneously specific to the narrative context from which they are drawn and general as expressions of the emotional complexities of all our lives.

The landscapes of Wales and, to a lesser extent, of Brittany, Cornwall, Scotland, and parts of England also commemorate and preserve Arthurian tradition, and this reading will be illustrated with Anthony Griffiths' photographs of sites throughout Wales connected with Arthur and other figures within the Arthurian tradition.

John K. Bollard, MA (Wales), PhD (Leeds), is an editor and lexicographer also well known as a scholar of *The Mabinogi* and other medieval Welsh narratives. He has recently translated three volumes of medieval Welsh tales, illustrated with photographs by Anthony Griffiths of places connected to the tales throughout Wales: *The Mabinogi* (2006), *Companion Tales to The Mabinogi* (2007), and *Tales of Arthur* (2010), comprising all the tales commonly known as "The Mabinogion."

Margaret Lloyd, PhD (Leeds), is chair of the Humanities Department at Springfield College in Springfield, Massachusetts. In addition to *A Moment in the Field: Voices from Arthurian Legend* (2006), she has published a collection of poems, *This Particular Earthly Scene* (1993), and *William Carlos Williams' Paterson: A Critical Reappraisal* (1980). Her poetry has been published in numerous journals and literary magazines in both the United States and Britain, and pairings of her poems and paintings have been accepted in *Poetry Wales* (Spring 2010) and *Planet* (forthcoming).

Session 6: South Africa

A Martyr in the Foundation Myth of the Liberation Struggle: South Africa's Commemoration of Solomon Mahlangu

Gary Baines, Rhodes University

The South African Post Office has recently issued a standard postage stamp to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the death of Solomon Mahlangu. As far as I am aware, this is the first issue to honour a liberation hero who engaged in – rather than endorsed – the armed struggle against the apartheid regime. The maxi card carries the inscription “The Legend of Freedom!” and the last words Mahlangu reputedly uttered before being hanged. These are: “...my blood will nourish the tree that will bare the fruits of freedom.” The reiteration of the quote lends substance to Mahlangu’s immortalisation as someone who sacrificed his life for the liberation struggle.

All countries require heroes and martyrs in the process of nation building. Mahlangu’s canonisation signals that he has joined the pantheon of the liberation struggle which serves as the foundation myth of post-apartheid South Africa. Fifteen years into the democratic dispensation, the issue of a postage stamp amounts to government endorsement of his status for commemoration is tantamount to a process of legitimation. This paper will explore how stamps reflect official history. It will show that the narrative that has been constructed by the ruling African National Congress about Mahlangu’s life history has all the hallmarks of martyrology. And it will examine the relationship between story-telling, identity and mythology.

Session 6: South Africa

Grandmother-Martyr-Heroine: Placing Sara Baartman in South African Post-apartheid Foundational Mythology

Simone Kerseboom, Rhodes University

This paper examines the many roles that the iconic figure of Sara Baartman has been assigned in South African post-apartheid nation-building politics. The mythologizing of Baartman as grandmother, martyr, and heroine is indicative of the creation of a new foundational mythology for post-apartheid South Africa. This paper will show that the return of Baartman's remains to South Africa initiated the creation of the myth of Baartman as a national grandmother, martyr, and heroine as government rhetoric and the media generated significant publicity around the repatriation process that began in 1994. New and invented meanings were inscribed on her remains and lived experiences that would allow for the re-invention of her story within the context of firstly, Nelson Mandela's Rainbow Nation, and later of Thabo Mbeki's African Renaissance. This paper contends that Baartman's return to and burial in her "home-soil" serves as a symbolic ending to colonialism, slavery and racism - the central signifiers of Baartman's life - and that this has made her a significant founding figure within the creation of a new foundational mythology in South Africa. This paper will demonstrate how Baartman's history was re-shaped, re-cast and re-invented into an ideal story for the South African transition thus separating and dis-remembering the real, lived personality from the myth created to serve the process of nation-building.

Session 7: Devolved identities and mythologised peripheries

“Through a glass, darkly’: Re-visions of myth and landscape in the poetry of Lynette Roberts”

Siriol McAvoy, Independent Scholar

Air white with cold. Cycloid wind prevails.
On ichnolithic plain where no print runs
And winter hardens into plates of ice;
Shoots an anthracite glitter of death
From their eyes - these men shine darkly.

The poetry of Lynette Roberts still shines with the same dark and powerful urgency as it did on its first publication in 1944. This extract, taken from the poem “Cwmcelyn”, was incorporated into Roberts’s “heroic” narrative poem “Gods with Stainless Ears,” published just after the Second World War. Roberts’s work is seemingly inspired by the rich cultural heritage and wild beauty of the small Welsh village of Llanybri in which she lived during the war years, and in her poetry the intimacy of village life is projected against a vertiginous background of myth and wartime conflict.

Despite being lauded by the likes of T.S. Eliot and Wyndham Lewis, Roberts has until very recently been relegated to the margins of British literary history. In my paper, I intend to rescue Roberts from charges of obscurity by emphasising the bright originality- and continued relevancy- of her mythic vision. Roberts’s ethnographic interest in classical and Welsh mythology does not represent a flight from the harsh realities of warfare and increasing modernisation. Instead, it posits the archaic as “a luminous guide to the contemporary” (Patrick McGuinness, 2005, xxxvi). Welsh mythology provides the alienated modernist poet with a life-giving connection to a culture of depth and rootedness; “belonging” is represented by Roberts not in terms of ethnicity or geographical boundaries, but in terms of the imaginative relationship between culture, landscape and the self, as it is expressed through time in popular mythology and literature.

Mythology offers Roberts a genealogical mode for the investigation of the imaginative and collective history of a people, providing an insight into the momentary and mobile human experience and emotion prioritized by Foucault. It offers an alternative terrain for the exploration of the relationship of the self to time and place, free from the restrictive and alienating influence of conventional historiography, with its emphasis on individualist conquest and domination.

Roberts looked on her very marginality as artistically productive; she nurtures the obscure, and posits the naïve or “primitive” as central to the modernist project. In her work, she mines the rich strata of Welsh mythology and infuses it with modern technology in the form of hard, metallic and reflective surfaces, chemical compounds and “magnesium light”. The dogs of Annwm and prophets of Cwmcelyn thus emerge, not from a wild, pre-technological idyll of the past, but from a surreal present-future landscape where a “stiff line of trees” overshadows the “antiseptic grass.” Mythological and technological cadences are overlapped in her poetry, making the familiar, pastoral terrain of the Welsh countryside suddenly and compelling “other”, and inviting the reader to look at the landscape in radically new ways. Myth in this way opens up new ways of being by illuminating new ways of seeing. Mythology is deployed on one level as an attempt to challenge, and offer an alternative to, traditionally masculine epic narrative modes and the violent, extreme right-wing undertones that these had accrued during the modernist era. It is also utilized not just in opposition to, but also in accordance with, the “mythic method” propounded by Eliot in his 1925 review of *Ulysses*, operating as a “scientific” or “inductive” mode for the exploration of the origins of the self and of society. If *The Waste Land* generates the resonances that enable a reader to tap into the grandeur of a larger mythological consciousness, then the poetical language of Roberts provides “the mirror in which ordinary life looks to find itself reflected in myth” (McGuinness, 2005, xxvii). Myth and domestic ordinariness coalesce within the Welsh landscape of Roberts’s work. In this way, Roberts re-inscribes the marginalised worlds of the provinces, female domesticity, and motherhood within the wider sweep of socio-political and literary history, as a centrally important component of civilisation.

Session 7: Devolved identities and mythologised peripheries

Gillian Clarke's 'Sabrina': the role of myth in a bio-regional sense of place

Bill Welstead, Aberystwyth University

Californian poet, Gary Snyder, has for thirty years advocated that we define our sense of place by ecological boundaries such as watershed basins. It is by listening to the myths and stories of that place that we shall feel at home. The conference paper will consider Gillian Clarke's poem 'Sabrina', part of an eight poem sequence on the River Severn, against this model.

The Severn rises on the Cambrian Mountains near Pumlumon before flowing through England to an estuary that divides England from Wales. The ecological and cultural attributes of this river basin are therefore pertinent to a study of Welsh identity. Further the river has its own goddess, in Welsh Hafren or Latinised as Sabrina. Currently the river and its ecosystems face their biggest challenge since the end of the last Ice Age. The government has opened consultation on possible tidal power schemes that include a barrage from Weston-super-Mare to Cardiff.

What part can Sabrina play in the environmental debate? The goddess already features in the mythical history of Wales and England. Milton invoked her as the virginal heroine in the rescue of the Lady whose own virtue was threatened by Comus. Clarke introduces her own poem with an extract from 'Comus'. Poet Anna Seward (1785) deplored the industrial spoliation of Coalbrookdale. A river with a resident spirit to inspire poets did not deserve such a fate. Environmental campaigners are banking on Sabrina coming once more to the rescue.

Session 7: Devolved identities and mythologised peripheries

Islands of English Quintessences?: *England, England* (1998) Caught Between Empire and Devolution

Claire Westall, University of Warwick

Tripping through circles/cycles of postmodern uncertainty and sometimes reductive self-referentiality, Julian Barnes' intricately ironic novel *England, England* depicts England as a 'scarecrow' of moral and economic decline, ripe for corporate exploitation, replication and minituration via resettlement. The 'Pittman empire' (read Maxwell or Murdoch) sifts England, and its problematic conflation with Britain, through a filter of 'ye olde' clichés in order to construct a new 'Quality Leisure' island of English 'Quintessences' on the Isle of White (itself decimated, redeveloped and then anarchic). Supported by academic ambivalence, political salesmanship ('spin') and global Capital, the physical (re)enactment of English myths is dependent upon England's inability to know itself as a nation-state in a new world system. That is, England's inability to comprehend its relationship with Empire and Union, to come to terms with its postimperial reality and the pressures of devolutionary articulation, to manage its engagement with Europe or evade Americanisation, leads, in Barnes' world, to structural collapse on the small island ('England, England') and retreatism on the large island ('Old England' or 'Anglia'). Further, this failure of England-as-island-nation means that human communication, individual and communal, is inhibited, if not blocked altogether, and those trapped cannot escape the paralysing alienation of their present. This paper examines Barnes' book as an expression of Englishness and England's identity in the late 1990s – after the 1996 football-inspired flag waving, but before the devolutionary moment of 1999, the post-9/11 British move to follow American neo-Conservative imperial policies, and the recent manoeuvres of the British 'Far Right'.

Session 7: Supernatural and spectral mythologies

'Boundaries of Ice and Bone': Liminality and Spirituality in the Poetry of John Burnside

David Borthwick, University of Glasgow

In his memoir *A Lie About My Father* (2006) John Burnside remarks that he celebrates Halloween as a 'private, local festival of penance and celebration,' an occasion observed with both 'scepticism and... total conviction.' He seeks the fellowship of 'ghosts who are so like ourselves that we are all interchangeable: living and dead; guest and host... my father, myself.'

One of Britain's most prominent and prolific poets, John Burnside employs Halloween as a touchstone in a range of his poetic output. The occasion is of personal significance to the poet, but its ambiguous nature—a Christian occasion since the late Middle Ages, yet retaining in the popular imagination elements of the Celtic festival Samhain—permits the poet to employ a diverse range of imagery, exercising a brand of mytho-spiritual bricolage to interrogate specific spiritual encounters: with ghosts, doppelgangers, angels and animals.

An environmental poet, Burnside uses Halloween, with its origins in harvest festival, rooted in the 'secular wheeling of the seasons,' to invoke the ways in which human ritual and spirituality is intimately connected to a natural world now reified into resource in Western society.

In this paper I will argue that Burnside views Halloween's customs as at once personal and indicative of the precious nature of collective cultural memory. I will show that his verse posits Halloween as a locus for multivalent relationships to tradition and place, nature and dwelling, a recycling of partly-forgotten practices to inform new conceptions of environmental consciousness at the beginning of the 21st century.

Session 7: Supernatural and spectral mythologies

Ghosts, Trauma and National Identity in Guillermo del Toro's *The Devil's Backbone*

Enrique Ajuria Ibarra, Lancaster University

To establish the relationship between haunting and trauma is to admit the presence and permanence of the ghost in the formation of national identity. Guillermo del Toro's *The Devil's Backbone* (2001) symbolically locates in an orphanage the struggling sides of the Spanish Civil War and tries to come into terms with the ghosts of the historical past by means of the constant repetition of a traumatic event triggered by the presence of the revenant, or ghost. Since the ghost stands at the border between presence and absence and brings with itself a break in time, it is a trace and a constant reminder of past events that still need to be addressed in the present. As a haunting, it makes the subject relive what has been silenced, allowing the revenant to be intrinsically related to trauma, a psychical action that compulsively repeats events that have marked the subject's psyche.

In *The Devil's Backbone* the ghost stands at the crossroads of haunting and trauma. It speaks of a traumatic event that haunts the other characters of the orphanage, and it also haunts the cultural discourse of a nation shaped by a historical discourse that leaves certain events in silence. Taking fantasy as a scenario of desire, the ghost is the pivotal element in the channelling of desire of the subject, thus establishing a narrative structure from where to define itself in a community with a shared traumatic past. The ghosts in del Toro's film do not tell how to live with them once they are found; on the contrary, they admit the fact that they have always already been there and that they need to stay to elaborate the contemporary Spanish national image.

Session 7: Supernatural and spectral mythologies

Ibejis, iconoclasts and the spectre of the double in contemporary Nigerian British fiction

Kate Wright, Aberystwyth University

Drawing upon the Ibeji myth of Yoruba and Igbo pre-colonial mythology, twinship has become a defining motif in contemporary Nigerian and Nigerian British fiction. It can function as a means of dramatising a quest for selfhood, or, within a more specific context, as a negotiation of Nigerian identity and within a British location. This paper will discuss the motif within the following novels by contemporary women writers: *Kehinde* (1994) by Nigerian-born, British-based Buchi Emecheta, *The Icarus Girl* (2005) by British Helen Oyeyemi and *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006) by Nigerian Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Writing across geographical and generational divides, their novels share a common fascination with precolonial ibeji narratives and with the 'changeling' figure of the ogbanje (Igbo: 'children who come and go'). Over the course of this paper, I will suggest that this cultural heritage is used in two principal ways. Firstly, that the protagonist's twin functions as a double, or doppelganger, a manifestation of her unconscious mind. In each case one twin, whether they are living or deceased, punctures the reality of the other. Secondly, I will argue that in some of these novels the experience of twinship is a metaphor for a contemporary diasporic experience. There is a growing trend amongst Nigerian British women writers to utilise the figure of the ghost of a deceased twin sister to illustrate the impact of a Nigerian cultural heritage within a contemporary British setting. The ghostly spectre of the twin enables a metaphor for the negotiation of a dual, or split identity between two cultures and geographical locations.

Unreadable Books: Inscrutable Histories of Tasmania and Biafra in the Novels of Richard Flanagan and Chris Abani

Hamish Dalley, ANU College of Arts and Social Sciences

If the production of national identities often depends on imagining a mythologised past, what happens when access to history is blocked? Postcolonial analyses often associate radical historical ambivalence with settler societies, arguing that knowledge of foundational dispossession renders settler nationalism problematic. Yet comparing two recent novels—Richard Flanagan’s *Gould’s Book of Fish* (2001) and Chris Abani’s *Graceland* (2004)—complicates this argument, showing that a similar foundational anxiety exists in both settler and non-settler (post)colonies. Both novels contain ‘books-within-books,’ fictional manuscripts that relate aspects of the Tasmanian or Biafran/Nigerian pasts that contemporary society is unwilling to admit. In Flanagan’s novel, a rediscovered (or forged) journal recounts an alternative history of the nineteenth-century penal settlement of Tasmania, revealing the brutality and megalomania of the imperial government and its genocidal attack on Aboriginal society. Similarly, in Abani’s work memories of the Nigerian Civil War of 1967-70 surface in highly disguised form in the protagonist’s mother’s notebook, providing hints that can be decoded to give a fragmented, partial understanding of her wartime experiences. While residues of the past linger in manuscript form, these documents are in certain ways unreadable to their contemporary discoverers; blockages prevent traumatic memories from surfacing. Both societies are thus haunted by histories that cannot be accessed. As a result, the impossibility of national mythmaking hollows out identity, generating a sense of alienation. While both novels gesture toward hybridity as a model for unifying history, political differences between Australia and Nigeria demand nuanced approaches to mythmaking, and elude easy resolution.

Session 7: Myths of self

Narcissus, the Actor and the Replicated Self

Joanna Morrison, Murdoch University, Western Australia

Oscar Wilde's quip 'It is the spectator, and not life, that art really mirrors' (Wilde, 2008:4) suggests that spectators are drawn to art as they are drawn to mirrors; to find reflections of themselves. Taking 'art' to encompass theatre and film, this paper investigates how Ovid's myth of Narcissus and Echo, as taken up in Wilde's novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, can help us better understand the subjective experience of today's celebrity-actor in relation to the spectator Wilde describes.

Derived from research for my English and Comparative Literature PhD - a work of fiction exploring the experience of an actor in crisis, and an accompanying dissertation - *Narcissus, the Actor and the Replicated Self* investigates the destabilising role of the simulacrum, both in Wilde's and Ovid's narratives, and in the life of the celebrity-actor.

In today's celebrity culture, our technological capacity for simulation and visual replication means an image-hungry audience has endless access to representations of its icons. The celebrity-actor, thus replicated and surveyed, confronts a distorted self in the mirror of fame; a fragmented self he or she cannot escape, and may struggle to make sense of. It is to better understand this 'existential anguish' (Giles, 2000:90) that I turn to the narratives of Wilde and Ovid.

Session 7: Myths of self

The Phantom Ear of Memory: May Sinclair's Ghostly Myth'

Luke Thurston, Aberystwyth University

This paper will explore a story by May Sinclair (1863-1946), an early modernist innovator greatly influenced by Henry James and psychoanalysis. 'The Intercessor' (1911) is set in a mythical, Brontësque landscape where the advent of a stranger precipitates a symbolic crisis, the unearthing of family secrets and a final confrontation with the unspoken truth. I argue that through a mesh of intertextual allusions Sinclair's narrative unfolds a myth of self-realisation through an encounter with the past, centred on the problem of cultural transmission and the passion of "bare life".

Session 8: Identities in conflict

Orpheus in Hell: Jean Anouilh and Petar Neznakomov

Velichka Ivanova, IUFM d'Alsace-University of Strasbourg

The paper explores the social and political function of the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice in two twentieth century authors, the French playwright Jean Anouilh (1910-1987) and the Bulgarian writer Petar Neznakomov (1920-1997).

Anouilh's play *Eurydice* (1941) places Orpheus, a young musician, in the pre-war French bourgeois society. Saturated with selfishness and vulgarity, the banality of everyday life stifles love. In order to preserve his ideal of a flawless Eurydice, Orpheus murders his beloved a second time, then chooses to join her in death.

In Neznakomov's satirical short story "The Case Orpheus & Eurydice in a new light" (1969) Orpheus faces the bureaucracy of the communist regime. Unable to overcome it, he abandons Eurydice and breaks his lyre.

Although Anouilh published his play in 1941, the impending war does not seem to have influenced his imagination. On the contrary, in the seventies the Bulgarian writer had to resist the pressure of the ideology and the bureaucracy of the communist regime.

The study examines the dialogue between the works and the myth in order to show how literature in Eastern and Western Europe reacted to the socio-political and historical constraints of the time. Anouilh and Neznakomov rewrite the myth not to reinstate the norm, but to transform it: the French author wrote a play, the Bulgarian published a satirical short story. Both works respond to history in entirely different manners. Full of irony, both represent new kinds of individual and collective identity.

Session 8: Identities in conflict

The Arthurian short stories by Joseba Sarrionandia (1958-): drawing on ancient myths and legends to (re)tell the conflicting story and identity of the Basque people

Juan Miguel Zarandona, Universidad de Valladolid

Joseba Sarrionandia (1958-) is one of the most popular Spanish contemporary writers in Basque language. Although a fugitive from Spanish justice whose whereabouts are unknown, every time a new book of fiction by him is published in Spain, it becomes a bestseller among Basque language readers. Among his many literary talents, Sarrionandia is also very fond of taking advantage and recycling all kinds of myths, and of using them to assess and explain the difficult conflicts and troubled personality of his real or invented nation, Euskal Herria or Land of the Basque People. The Arthurian plots, characters and motifs, so popular among contemporary writers and readers, also attracted his attention in different occasions. From 1983 to 1996, Sarrionandia published a total number of four Arthurian short stories dealing with Arthur, Galahad, Lancelot, Guinevere, Merlin, Perceval, etc. In other words, the main characters and subject matters of the traditional matter of Britain, but fully transformed in order to carry new meanings associated with the Basque culture and nation. To begin with, all his stories are set within the geographical limits of the Basque Country, where he makes Arthurian heroes exile, retire or travel, and where you can see them meet or combine with Basque typical social and natural backgrounds. These four stories were not translated into Spanish until the year 2002.

This paper will seek to study in some detail the original creative process which made it possible to transform such ancient legendary and mythical constructions as those belonging to the world of Arthur, and make them meaningful for present-day Basque Land conflicts and nation-building processes.

Session 8: Identities in conflict

Scanderbeg, myth, heroism and the eighteenth-century stage

Louise Marshall, Aberystwyth University

One of the most interesting and dynamic causes of political factionalism during the Walpole era were not the domestic issues surrounding preferment and placemen but reactions to, and commentary on, Britain's role as a developing colonial power. The London theatres, frequently cited as a "useful barometer of political, economic, and social currents", took an active role in representing the nation to itself. But of course this self-reflection was rarely direct and often Britishness, or its antithesis, was represented to audiences as an echo from the past.

This paper will focus on three plays that offer just such a distant echo. Written and performed in close proximity during the 1730s, all three plays take the hero Scanderbeg as their focus. Through the representation of a Christian/Turk hero and his struggle against the Ottoman empire I will consider the ways in which the mythology surrounding this ambiguous historical character is moulded and transformed to suit the taste, and the anxieties, of eighteenth-century British audiences. In particular I will discuss the simultaneous criticism of colonialism - and its attendant myths - and the celebration of colonial endeavour - particularly Christian colonial expansion - with which these texts engage.

Session 8: Myths of place

The origin myth of Antwerp ‘recycled’ into a political allegory

Adelheid Ceulemans, University of Antwerp

In 1841 the Flemish poet Theodoor Van Ryswyck (1811-1849, Antwerp) wrote *Antigonus, or the complaints of the common people* (*Antigonus, of de volksklagten*). This is a revised version of the popular myth about the origin of Antwerp. Van Ryswyck ‘recycled’ the origin myth into a political satire about the Belgian nation under the rule of so called foreign dictators, Napoleon I and William I, and under the rule of Leopold I, the first king of the independent Belgian state (1830). The myth functioned as a political allegory with an actual message: the common Flemish people have always been misled by ideas of freedom and equality. In fact, they always meet with the same unhappy fate, determined by their political rulers.

This is an excellent case study for the (cultural-political) functioning, recycling and actualization of myths. The textual analysis will be strongly contextualized and broadened to a larger literary, cultural-political perspective. Van Ryswyck’s text is inextricably bound up with the nineteenth century nation building process in Belgium. The author tightens the bonds between the Antwerp citizens (and by extension between the Flemish people) by telling the story of their common origin. Furthermore, by raising political and social matters like the abuse of power by ‘foreign’ political leaders and the misery of the common people, the author contributed to the (discursive) construction of a Flemish identity. Such a common identity is the *conditio sine qua non* for the creation of a Flemish ‘imagined community’, or a Flemish (Dutch speaking) sub nation in the nineteenth century Belgian nation state (in which French was the dominant language).

Session 8: Myths of place

Title: Identity and Myth-Making in the Bohemian Borderlands: The Curious Case of the Chodové People.

Kelly Hignett, University of Hull

This paper draws on the rich history of Chodsko - a small region comprised of eleven villages on the south-western border between Bohemia and Bavaria – and the inhabitants of this region, known as the Chodové (or ‘Chods’) to illustrate and explore the creation and recycling of myths within varying ideological frameworks. Between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries the Chodové enjoyed an independent and ‘privileged status’ in Bohemian society, due to their traditional, time-honoured role as ‘guardians of the Bohemian borderland’, however a gradual erosion of their traditional privileges culminated in an attempted rebellion against the Bohemian authorities in 1693. In the intervening centuries, the significance of the ‘farmers’ revolt’ (as the 1693 rising came to be known) has been variously interpreted to correspond with and promote various dominant beliefs and ideologies, which has resulted in the historical role of the Chodové and their rebellion attaining mythical status. For example, Czech historian Eduard Maur claims the popular, romanticised image of the Chodové ‘does not always correspond with the historical reality’ as the topic has been ‘embellished with several literary freedoms and afflicted with ideology’ while Jitka Janecova, writing in her recent study on the Chod ‘hero’ (and martyr) of the 1693 revolt, Kozina, concludes that popular representations of Chod history have resulted in ‘a considerable amount of inaccurate notions, ungrounded conjectures and fabrications’.

Between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries, the story of the Chodové has been widely reproduced within the Czech lands, popularly depicted through folk tales, literature, art and music. Through these mediums, examples from which will be highlighted in this paper, various ‘myths’ were constructed and widely popularised. Initially presented as religious martyrs, constituting evidence of the manifestation of anti-Catholic sentiment and ongoing religious tensions in Bohemian society in the post-Hussite period, in

the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the history of the Chodové was then 'claimed' by the growing Czech nationalist movement, which celebrated the Chodsko region as a bastion of Czech nationalism against foreign intrusion, symbolic of the emergent national struggle against 'German oppression'. Finally, after the communist coup of 1948, the story of the 'farmers' revolt' was widely promoted by communist propaganda as personifying an early example of Marxist consciousness and socialist brotherhood, an example of the peasant masses rising up against their feudal masters.

Session 8: Myths of place

Myth and Protest in Cherrie Moraga's Theatre

Liz Jacobs, Aberystwyth University

This research paper is based on the theatre of the contemporary Mexican American woman playwright, Cherrie Moraga. It examines a trilogy of plays written and produced during the mid 1990s, and principally explores the playwrights' staging of the myths associated with the Chicano or Mexican American people of California.

Using postcolonial and feminist theory as a framework the research will consider how and why the playwright constructs a sense of indigeneity or 'indigenismo' through the performance of myth in *Heroes and Saints* (1994), *Circle in the Dirt: El Pueblo de East Palo Alto* (1995) and *Watsonville some place not here* (1996). In the tradition of Chicano and Mexican American theatre myth is often staged as a syncretic and symbolic re-enactment of Catholic practices as well as the performativity of the pre-colonial past. The paper seeks to examine how Moraga engages with these dramatic traditions while exploring the representation of female subjectivity and sexuality and the staging of liminal theatrical spaces. The paper will also make reference to other writing by Moraga including other plays, poetry and political essays. The research for the paper is part of a wider book project that traces Moraga's Hispanic and Latino/a theatre and performance practices, while at the same time discussing the centrality of her female characters.

List of Delegates

Enrique Ajuria Ibarra, e.ajuriaibarra1@lancaster.ac.uk
Roy Alain, aroy@inconvenient.ca
Laiz Chen, asxlc@nottingham.ac.uk
Charlotte Ashby, charlotte.ashby@network.rca.ac.uk
Tiffany Atkinson, vvn@aber.ac.uk
Mary Economou Bailey, mebailey3@sympatico.ca
Gary Baines, G.Baines@ru.ac.za
Christine Berberich, Christine.Berberich@port.ac.uk
Mandy Bloomfield, AR.Bloomfield@soton.ac.uk
John Bollard, jkbollard@gmail.com
David Borthwick, db143x@udcf.gla.ac.uk
Peter Breheny, peterbreheny@aol.com
Katarzyna Bronk, kbronk@ifa.amu.edu.pl
Adelheid Ceulemans, Adelheid.Ceulemans@ua.ac.be
Mary Chadwick, mfc07@aber.ac.uk
Gillian Clarke, <http://www.gillianclarke.co.uk/home.htm>
Hamish Dalley, Hamish.Dalley@anu.edu.au
Tom Davies, tod07@aber.ac.uk
Oswald de Bruin, snake_oswald@hotmail.com
Elissa DeFalco, edefalco@sunymaritime.edu
Ben Earl, moses_lawn@yahoo.co.uk
Shane Edwards, Shane.edwards@twoa.ac.nz
Alex Feldman, alex_feldman@mail.utexas.edu
Christina Flotmann, christina.flotmann@upb.de
Ben Grant, B.J.Grant@kent.ac.uk
Laura Green, L.K.Green@liverpool.ac.uk
Katherine Heavey, K.J.A.Heavey@durham.ac.uk
Claire Odeon Hershman, claire.odeon@googlemail.com
Kelly Hignett, kelly.hignett@googlemail.com
Rangimarie Hunia, rhunia@gmail.com
Jing-Huey Hwang, aloevera.j@gmail.com
Velichka Ivanova, velichka.ivanova@yahoo.com
Liz Jacobs, elj@aber.ac.uk
Susan Joseph, sujosef@mac.com
Heidi Kefer, cortica@yahoo.com
Darren Kelsey, kelseydl@Cardiff.ac.uk
Simone Kerseboom, g02k2659@campus.ru.ac.za
Farhad Khoyratty, ffsskk72@yahoo.com

Madhu Krishnan, aexmk6@nottingham.ac.uk
Katarína Labudová, katarina.labudova@ku.sk
Tim Leadbeater, T.Leadbeater@leedstrinity.ac.uk
Margaret Lloyd, mlloyd@spfldcol.edu
Louise Marshall, lom@aber.ac.uk
Uwe Mayer, Uwe.Mayer@anglistik.uni-giessen.de
Siriol McAvoy, siriolmcavoy@yahoo.fr
Joanna Morrison, jbmorrison@inet.net.au
Maria Daniela Oancea, daniela.oancea@gmail.com
Jonathan O'Neill, jonathan.oneill@foa.anu.edu.au
Michael Papadopoulos mpapadopoulos@gmail.com
Murray Pittock, M.Pittock@englit.arts.gla.ac.uk
John Poulter, J.Poulter@leedstrinity.ac.uk
Anita Raghunath, a.raghunath@let.vu.nl
Andrew Rayment, aar09@aber.ac.uk
Alastair Reynolds, <http://voxish.tripod.com/>
David Smith, dsmith@rts.com.au
Sabine Strümper-Krobb, strumper.krobb@ucd.ie
James Taylor, jim.taylor@adelaide.edu.au
Stina Teilmann, ste@dkds.dk
Katherine Terrell, kterrell@hamilton.edu
Gwilym Thear, theargt@Cardiff.ac.uk
Siân Thomas, minimash@hotmail.com
Luke Thurston, lut@aber.ac.uk
Cornelis van der Haven, haven@zedat.fu-berlin.de
Sara Wasson, S.Wasson@napier.ac.uk
William Welstead, william.welste@btconnect.com
Claire Westall, C.L.Westall@warwick.ac.uk
Noortje Wijkamp, noortje.wijkamp@gmail.com
Kate Wright, kbw@aber.ac.uk
Helena Wu, helenawu@hkusua.hku.hk
Lila Yawn, lila.yawn@gmail.com
Juan Zarandona, zarandon@lia.uva.es
Molly Zimmerman-Feeley, mollyzf@uchicago.edu