Research Events, Semester 1, 2010/11

Wednesday 13 Oct, 5.15pm
‘Musical modernism: Shell shock, hysterical fugue and why Mrs Dalloway likes Bach’
Speaker: Dr Emma Sutton (St Andrews)

Abstract: This paper offers a close reading of Virginia Woolf’s 1925 novel Mrs Dalloway, exploring the relationship between the novel’s form and that of musical fugue. Proposing that the novel is one of a number of Modernist literary experiments in fugal composition – other examples include Joyce’s Ulysses and Huxley’s Point Counter Point – it considers why fugue specifically may have seemed an apposite form for a novel about the aftermath of the First World War. Tracing fugue’s history in psychiatric, military and musical discourse, the paper considers the political as well as the aesthetic implications of reading Mrs Dalloway as a fugal text.

Monday 25 Oct, 7pm Parliament Hall
Winner of many awards, including the prestigious TS Eliot prize, Les Murray is regarded by many as Australia’s foremost poet.
Speaker: Les Murray

Abstract: Les Murray is widely regarded as Australia’s leading poet and one of the most important voices in contemporary literature. His extensive list of past works include The Ilex Tree (with Geoffrey Lehmann), Subhuman Redneck Poems and The Biplane Houses. In anticipation of his forthcoming work, Taller When Prone, due for UK publication in November, Les will be visiting St Andrews to share some of his thoughts on the creative process, along with some of the work that has established him as a master of his art. Taller When Prone has already been acknowledged as a valuable addition to his catalogue, with Clive James acknowledging that “The way he can register, in words nobody else would quite choose, a perception nobody else could quite have, is at the centre of his art, ensuring almost infallibly that a poem will work like a lucky charm for as long as he pours in the images.”

Wednesday 27 Oct, 2pm
‘A Pleasant and Profitable Discourse: Early Modern Dialogue’
Speaker: Cathy Shrank (Sheffield) & Jennifer Richards (Newcastle)

Abstract: Dr Shrank and Professor Richards will be discussing the subject of early modern dialogue, with direct reference to Thomas More, whose Utopia they regard as a key text in the emergence of English dialogues, despite the original text appearing in Latin. From there, they will make reference to authors including Thomas Elyot, Thomas Smith and William Baldwin, in order to examine the development of modes of dialogue during the early modern period. Early modern dialogue handout (DOC, 219 KB)

Thursday 4 Nov, 5.15pm
‘Efficiency, Imperialism and Waste in Joseph Conrad and H. G. Wells’
Speaker: Suzanne Raitt (William and Mary)

Abstract: In 1904, H.G. Wells delivered a lecture on local government to the Fabian Society, and declared that the only question a local official need ask about different administrative structures was: “Which will give the maximum efficiency?” Wells’s near-obsession with efficiency during this period was far from being an idiosyncrasy. The early decades of the twentieth century in Britain saw an explosion of exhortations and recommendations all aimed at increasing the efficiency of British society and minimizing its waste. Efficiency was an essential element in British imperial aspirations and in nationalist myth, and writers like Wells and Joseph Conrad who felt themselves to be in an oblique relation to the English ruling classes both welcomed and excoriated it as simultaneously democratic and #elitist. In this talk I shall examine the representation of efficiency as a profoundly ambiguous moral tool in Joseph Conrad’s Heart of Darkness (1899) and H.G Wells’ Tono-Bungay (1909).

Monday 15 Nov, 5pm
The author of acclaimed works of fiction and non-fiction including Wild: An Elemental Journey, adventurer Jay Griffiths will be talking about her work.
Speaker: Jay Griffiths
Abstract: Jay Griffiths has published three books, *Wild: An Elemental Journey*, *Pip Pip: A Sideways Look at Time*, and *Anarchipelago*. She insists that “she is not a journalist. She is also not an adventurer or an explorer nor an editor, nor an associate editor of any magazine. She is a writer”. Yet her passion for the wilderness, which inspired *Wild*, took her on a journey “with no knowing where it would lead, no idea how hard some of it would be, the days of havoc and the nights of loneliness, because the only thing I had to hold onto was the knife-sharp necessity to trust to the elements my elemental self”. Whether it is modesty or a resistance to excessive categorisation that has caused her to deny that she is either an adventurer or an explorer, this event promises to provide some insight into the award-winning work of a rising star of the literary field.

**Wednesday 17 Nov, 2pm, Lawson Room**  
Geographies of Orthodoxy: Project Review  
Speakers: Allan Westphall, Ian Johnson (St Andrews)

Abstract: This talk offers a project review of *Geographies of Orthodoxy*, the AHRC-sponsored research project hosted by the University of St Andrews and Queen's University Belfast. The aim of the project has been to offer a new account of English vernacular lives of Christ derived from the pseudo-Bonaventuran Meditationes vitae Christi. The handmade books belonging to this tradition that were copied, owned and read in the period c. 1350-1550 have never before been systematically analysed, yet these provide a key means for understanding religious aspirations and motives in the later Middle Ages, as well as an opportunity for a revised understanding of English pre-Reformation religious practices and textuality. In this talk we will discuss the outcomes of our work over the last three years, and the experience of working in a larger inter-institutional project. We will also present the research project website, which offers the wider scholarly community a series of innovative electronic outputs, including detailed textual profiles and manuscript descriptions of this important literary tradition in England.

**Wednesday 1 Dec, 5.15pm**  
Speaker: Professor Thomas Docherty (University of Warwick)  
**Title:** "The Student Experience, and Other Myths".

Abstract: Thomas Docherty, Professor of English Literature at the University of Warwick, will be speaking about current approaches to teaching and learning in HE, and about the constraints he feels are limiting the effective management of the student experience. Author of a diverse body of works of literary criticism, encompassing all periods from the 16th century to the present, Professor Docherty has turned his attention in recent years to the role of the university and its practitioners. He has suggested that: 'Universities now proudly boast about the quality of 'the student experience' (or SE). However, the ideas and practices that govern the SE are there for one major reason: to try to preclude the possibility of students and teachers actually having any real experiences at all in the field of learning and teaching. SE is about establishing limitations and controls on the intellectual work and play that should govern learning and teaching. It is a myth, and one that should be abandoned.' This provocative topic will be of relevance to students and staff both within the arts and humanities and beyond.

**Thursday 9 Dec, 5pm**  
Speaker: Janice Galloway

Abstract: Since the publication of *The Trick is to Keep Breathing*, in 1989, Janice Galloway has been acknowledged as one of the major talents of the Scottish literary scene. Since then, the novels *Foreign Parts* and *Clara* have helped to cement her reputation as a leading novelist, while her memoirs, playwriting, prose-poetry and short stories have demonstrated considerable abilities beyond the novel form. Her visit to St Andrews will represent a valuable opportunity to hear first-hand the author’s perspectives on the writing process.