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**Desire, Excess, and Twentieth- to Twenty-First Century Women’s Writing**

**Desire, Excess, and 20th-21st Century Women’s Writing**

**A *Hecate* and *Contemporary Women’s Writing Association* Conference**

**hosted by**

**The University of Queensland**

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**KEYNOTE SPEAKERS**

**Unveiling Desire: South Asian Feminist Revisionist Texts on Women’s Excessive and Forbidden Desires**

Devaleena Das

University of Wisconsin-Madison

*Unveiling Desire: Fallen Women in Literature, Culture and Films of East* is my forthcoming edited volume to be published by Rutgers University Press in the summer of 2017. I will be speaking on the South Asian and Middle Eastern feminist rewriting in twentieth and twenty- first century women’s literature featuring a revisionist methodology in representing female characters who are “fallen” because they transgress social, religious and moral boundaries by expressing various forms of desires, excess of desires and forbidden desires in the fiction, media, and material actualities of the Eastern part of the world. Second, as my anthology challenges, I aim to remedy the ethnocentric myopia and the enduring perception that theoretical discourses, in this case, particularly feminist theories are fundamentally Western. My intention is not to play the voyeur, prick desire and penetrate what has been apotheosized as “Oriental” but I will present nuanced, critical analyses that acknowledge imbalances of power and resources created by current and historical imperialism whose central focus is in-depth examination of the local contingencies that shape the contexts surrounding misunderstood and ignored women in fiction and “real life” from different parts of the Eastern world.

**Devaleena Das** is a Lecturer in Gender and Women’s Studies and a Research Fellow at the Institute for Research in the Humanities, University of Wisconsin-Madison. Prior to joining UW-Madison, Das was an Assistant Professor of English at Jesus and Mary College, University of Delhi. She has received several prestigious fellowships including Endowment Foreign Travel Fellowship for her research to work at University of Queensland, Brisbane. As a transnational feminist, she has been invited to deliver lectures on global feminism at Harvard University, UW-Madison (South Asian Studies Department) and University of California, Berkeley. Currently, she is working on corporeal feminist theory in her monograph *Feminists on Theseus's Ship: Fragmented Body, (Ir)replaceable Parts and a Revisionist Journey*. She has published peer-reviewed articles on transnational feminism in leading international journals and has published books on twentieth-century women’s writing.

**Desire as Excess: Patriarchal Control and Resistance in South Asian (Indian) Women’s Writing**

Sanjukta Dasgupta

Calcutta University

In the early twentieth century Madhurilata, daughter of the first Asian Nobel Laureate of literature Rabindranath Tagore wrote several short stories which interrogated the punishment meted out by society if a woman asserted herself as a desiring subject. Madhurilata’s aunt Swarnakumari Devi, Tagore’s elder sister, was a creative writer too. Though she belonged to one of the most affluent families in Bengal in the early twentieth century, she had to persist in her struggle to find recognition. From the colonial period to the seventy years after India’s political independence from British governance, Bengali women writers have pushed against the boundaries and borders of sexual politics in their writing. They have emerged as writers who have interrogated, deconstructed and destabilized stereotypes by proving that the role of a desiring subject may be in excess of the traditional trap, but is not about any extreme position that defies reason, though it may defy conservative practices.

**Sanjukta Dasgupta**, Professor and Former Head, Department of English and Former Dean, Faculty of Arts, Calcutta University, teaches English literature, American literature and New Literatures in English. Recipient of Fulbright, Charles Wallace, Australia India Fellowship and several other national and international grants and awards among others she served as Chairperson of the Commonwealth Writers Prize. She is a poet, critic and translator and her articles, poems, short stories and translations have been published in journals of distinction in India and abroad. Her published books are *The Novels of Huxley and Hemingway: A Study in Two Planes of Reality, Responses: Selected Essays*, *Snapshots* ( poetry), *Dilemma* (poetry), *First Language* ((poetry), *More Light* (poetry) *Her Stories* (translations), *Manimahesh* (translation), *The Indian Family in Transition* (coedited SAGE), *Media, Gender and Popular Culture in India: Tracking Change and Continuity* (co-authored, SAGE, 2011). *Tagore: At Home in the World* (coedited, SAGE 2012), *Abuse and other Short Stories* (short stories in English 2013), *Radical Rabindranath Nation, Family and Gender in Tagore’s Fiction and Films* (co-authored, Orient Blackswan 2013), *SWADES Translations of Tagore’s Patriotic Songs* (Visva Bharati Publications, 2013), *Towards Tagore*, edited with introduction (Visva Bharati Publications, 2015), *Anthology of Bengali Short Stories* (edited and translated with Introduction, Sahitya Akademi 2016). *Claiming Space for Australian Women’s Writing* (edited with Devaleena Das) is forthcoming from Pan Macmillan.

**Excess of Affect: In Translation**

Sneja Gunew

University of British Columba

There can be nothing more excessive than affect—sensation before it has been contained by being named as emotion. Affect overwhelms us with sensation so that we corral/articulate it as a specific emotion in panic-stricken response. Along the way we know that emotions are gendered in their performance and performativity. Anger for men has always had different meanings than for women (see the recent US elections). Underpinning this process is the question of translation—not just from sensation to named emotion but an awareness that we are often doing this within an assumed monolingual (Anglophone?) and shared Eurocentric context. Arising out of a long-term project that looks at the ways in which affect theory is largely dependent on European concepts, my paper examines the recent Man-Booker winner Han Kang’s *The Vegetarian* (2007) to ask questions concerning the translatability of affect. To what degree, for example, do we need to take into account other taxonomies of affect informed by other languages and cultures as, for example, the Sanskrit aesthetic framework of rasa/bhava? (https://emotionsblog.history.qmul.ac.uk/2016/07/decolonising-theories-of-the-emotions/). Is it useful, for example, to invoke the Korean concept of ‘han’ as an interpretive lens for considering Kang’s text or does this land us inevitably in cultural essentialism? As we open up our concepts to the world, translation will be an unavoidable foundational factor.

**Sneja Gunew** has taught in England, Australia and Canada. She has published widely on multicultural, postcolonial and feminist critical theory and is Professor Emerita of English and Women’s and Gender Studies at the University of British Columbia, Canada. She was Director of the Centre for Research in Women’s and Gender Studies (2002-7) and North American editor of *Feminist Theory* (Sage) 2006-10. She was Associate Principal of the College for Interdisciplinary Studies, UBC, 2008-11. She has edited and co-edited four anthologies of Australian women’s and multicultural writings: *Feminist Knowledge: Critique and Construct* and *A Reader in Feminist Knowledge*(Routledge 1990-91). In Australia, she compiled (with others) *A Bibliography of Australian Multicultural Writers* (the first such compilation in Australia) and co-edited *Striking Chords: Multicultural Literary Interpretations* (1992), the first collection of critical essay to deal with ethnic minority writings in the Australian context. She set up the first library collection of ethnic minority writings in Australia. Continuing her focus on cultural difference, Gunew edited (with Anna Yeatman) *Feminism and the Politics of Difference* (1993) and (with Fazal Rizvi) *Arts for a Multicultural Australia: Issues and Strategies* (1994). Her books include *Framing Marginality: Multicultural Literary Studies* (1994) and *Haunted Nations: The Colonial Dimensions of Multiculturalisms* (Routledge 2004*)*. Based in Canada since 1993, her current work is on comparative multiculturalisms and diasporic literatures and their intersections with national and global cultural formations. Her latest book is titled: *Post-Multicultural Writers as Neo-Cosmopolitan Mediators*: http://www.anthempress.com/post-multicultural-writers-as-neo-cosmopolitan-mediators

**Workshop: Multilingual Excesses in a National Cultural Frame**

Sneja Gunew

University of British Columbia

In my past work I raised questions concerning whose margins (*Framing Marginality*) or whose colonialism (*Haunted Nations*) and in the case of this conference: whose excess? In my new book *Post-Multicultural Writers as Neo-Cosmopolitan Mediators* I make a case for neo-cosmopolitanism as being informed and strengthened by other languages—beyond a monolingual and monocultural national frame. How might these other languages and cultural traditions transform the transnationalism currently invoked by Australian letters? What does it mean to leave the certainties of Anglophone monoculturalism to embrace the many languages and cultures that have always been part of Australian culture? While we begin to glimpse this in relation to Indigeneity, the prevailing practice in compilations of national literature has been to include a tiny number of (interchangeable) non Anglo-Celtic writers. But what would it mean to really grapple with the implicit challenges in neo-cosmopolitanism, to change conceptual frameworks and rules of engagement and meaning making?

*Readings to be provided to participants upon confirmation of attendance.*

**WISE: A Story of Booms, Crashes and Unquenchable Excess in the 80s**

Jeanine Leane

University of Melbourne

*WISE* is a piece of gritty, urban realism that relives the booms crashes and excesses of the 1980s – the decade that changed Australia forever. Told from a third-person perspective it details the life of a young Aboriginal woman, Honey, living in the National Capital in the lead up to the bicentenary of the 1788 Invasion. It is set against the backdrop of Canberra in its halcyon days before the Self-Government of 1989: and, when the rest of Australia knew it as the Sex and Drugs Capital. Paralleling the highs and lows of the turbulent decade in the big political picture are the personal experiences – booms and crashes of Honey as she emerges as a young adult and part of a growing Aboriginal urban middle class in a city of excess and liberal laws poised on the brink of change.

This presentation will raise issues for future directions in Aboriginal women’s writing in the twenty-first century. *WISE* revolves around a totally urban Aboriginal experience where Aboriginal identity and philosophy are enacted on a daily basis away from land and Country and always in the midst of settler society; and the protagonist, Honey, is well educated, moves with ease between the Aboriginal and settler worlds; and, is well placed for a professional career that the previous generation who raised her could never have had. *WISE* explores the personal and sexual politics of an Aboriginal woman and the multiple, contradictory, excessive selves of Honey in a decade fuelled by negative capitalist desire.

**Jeanine Leane** is a Wiradjuri writer, teacher and academic from southwest New South Wales. After a longer teaching career, she completed a doctorate in Australian literature and Aboriginal representation and a postdoctoral fellowship at the Australian Centre for Indigenous History at the Australian National University. She is the recipient of an Australian Research Council grant for her project, “The David Unaipon Award: Shaping the literary and history of Aboriginal Writing in Australia” that examines the growth and impact of Aboriginal writing on Australian literary culture since 1988. Her first Volume of poetry, *Dark Secrets After Dreaming: A.D. 1887-1961* (2010, Presspress) won the Scanlon Prize for Indigenous Poetry, 2010 and her first collection of stories, *Purple Threads,* won the David Unaipon Award for an unpublished Indigenous writer in 2010. Her poetry has been published in *Hecate: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Women’s Liberation, The Journal for the Association European Studies of Australia* and *The Australian Book Review.* Jeanine has published widely in the area of Aboriginal literature. She teaches Creative Writing and Aboriginal Literature at the University of Melbourne. Her second volume of poetry will be published in 2017.

**Feminist Orientalism in Marjane Satrapi’s *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood***

Colette Morrow with Response by Devaleena Das

Purdue University and University of Wisconsin-Madison

Most US scholarship on Marjane Satrapi’s *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood* argues that it is a coming-of-age story about Marji, an Iranian girl growing up in Iran during the Islamic Revolution and the Iran-Iraq War. Marji is depicted as a precocious child, and she is strongly appealing to US audiences. In fact, the book, which is a black-and-white graphic novel, is often used to teach against Islamophobia and is included on reading lists in many secondary education institutions.

*Persepolis* was published after 9-11 after President George W. Bush infamously included Iran on the “Axis of Evil” because of the country’s alleged support for terrorist groups and suspicions that its nuclear power program was camouflaging an attempt to develop nuclear weaponry. Satrapi often stated that her goal in writing *Persepolis* was to “humanise” Iran and Iranians for Western audiences, suggesting that the book offers an implicit argument against attacking Iran, which the US government twice contemplated during Bush’s administration.

In these politically charged contexts, *Persepolis* achieves Satrapi’s oft-stated goal of “humanising” Iran, but only by foregrounding Marji’s passage into adulthood in a series of vignettes that use feminist Orientalist stereotypes to demonise Muslims, a strategy that US audiences, including feminist scholars, generally fail to recognise. Countering conventional wisdom in US scholarship on the book, the essay speculates that *Persepolis* may foster rather than counter Islamophobia. It also concludes that rather than *entering* adulthood Marji fails to develop a mature sense of self because she never learns to negotiate the gap between her family’s “avant garde” (her words) values and new codes of behaviour imposed after the 1977 Iranian Revolution. Unable to acquire a consciousness that tolerates ambiguity, which, according to Gloria Anzaldúa, facilitates such uncomfortable border crossings, Marji repeatedly puts herself in danger by rebelling against the new hegemony in Iran. To protect her from herself, Marji’s parents send her to Austria to finish secondary school.

**Colette Morrow** is an Associate Professor of English at Purdue University Northwest, and was also Director of Women’s Studies from 1994-2004. She has taught in many universities including as a Senior Fulbright Scholar in Islamabad, Dhaka and Belarus, and she was President of the National Women’s Studies Association 2003-2004, and also President-Elect 2002-3 and Member Governing Council 2002-2005 and 2006-2008. She has delivered more than a hundred papers at national and international conferences, including more than 30 Plenary/Invited Addresses. She has been widely published in American and international journals and book collections since 1992, especially in the fields of literature and women’s and gender studies; recent book publications include Series Editor, *Feminist Formations* Retrospective Book Series 2006-2012 (Johns Hopkins UP); *Getting In Is Not Enough: Women in the Global Workplace*, 2012. Edited Anthology with Terri Frederick (Johns Hopkins UP); and forthcoming 2017, *Unveiling Apocalyptic Desire: Fallen Women in Literature, Culture and Film of the East.* Edited with Devaleena Das (Rutgers UP).

**Feminist Fables, or the Art of the Fabulous**.

Susan Sheridan

Flinders University

Two recent Australian novels, Alexis Wright’s *The Swan Book* (2013) and Charlotte Wood’s *The Natural Way of Things* (2015), employ fable to tell powerful contemporary stories. In both novels the issues explored are so violent and threatening to life itself that fable rather than realist narrative becomes the best vehicle for staging them.

Inversions or other rewritings of traditional tales have proved to be a powerful tool in the hands of earlier feminist writers like Angela Carter, Margaret Atwood and Suniti Namjoshi. In many Atwood novels, fairy tales or fabulist narrative structures underlie her projections into possible futures. In Carter’s *The Bloody Chamber* (1979)and other short stories, like “Master,” and in Namjoshi’s *Feminist Fables* (1981) and *The Conversations of Cow* (1985), fable is used not as a didactic form, but as a story whose shape can suggest new possibilities: fable as the art of the fabulous, the magical, the transformative.

These feminist fables often involve human-animal metamorphoses, as do the two novels considered here. In each one, a kind of metamorphosis takes place, when a female protagonist identifies with creatures of the natural world. In *The Natural Way of Things*, it is a self-protective guise, a process of “becoming-animal” for survival’s sake, whereas in *The Swan Book* this identification draws on Indigenous spiritual beliefs involving human custodianship of the natural world, and connects the swan woman with myths and legends from many cultures.

**Susan Sheridan** is Professor Emerita in the School of Humanities and Creative Arts at Flinders University in Adelaide, and a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities. She is currently a member of the Miles Franklin Literary Award judges’ panel. Her latest book is *The Fiction of Thea Astley* (Cambria NY 2016); earlier books include *Christina Stead* (1988), *Along the Faultlines: Sex, Race and Nation in Australian Women’s Writing 1880s to 1930s* (1995), *Who Was That Woman? The Australian Women’s Weekly in the Postwar Years* (2002) and *Nine Lives: Postwar women writers making their mark* (2011); as editor, *Grafts: Feminist Cultural Criticism* (1988), *Debutante Nation: Feminism Contests the 1890s* (1993) with Sue Rowley and Susan Magarey, and *Thea Astley’s Fictional Worlds* (2006) with Paul Genoni*.* She was foundation Reviews Editor of *Australian Feminist Studies* (1985-2005).

**Desire, Disgust, and Dead Women: Angela Carter Re-Writing Women’s Fatal Scripts**

Gina Wisker

University of Brighton

You think you are possessing me –

But I’ve got my teeth in you. (Angela Carter, “Unicorn,” 1966)

Angela Carter’s writing is crucial to the rebirth of Gothic horror in the late twentieth century, and an impetus to read, or re-read, myth, fairy tale, and the work of Edgar Allan Poe and H.P. Lovecraft, each significant, acknowledged influences. Carter’s work deconstructs the consistently replayed, cautionary narrative of myth and fairy-tale in which (mainly young) women are first represented as objects of a prurient idolatry, then sacrificed to reinstate the purity and balance which their constructed presence apparently disturbed. When she turns on her horror influences, she continues this exposé of the representation of women as objects of desire and disgust, springing as it does from ontological insecurity and deep-seated confusions concerning sex and power. Carter’s work draws us into the rich confusions of the language, the psychology, the physical entrapments and artifices, the constraining myths, which both Poe and Lovecraft play out through their representations of women, and which her work reenacts to explode and rewrite. As a late-twentieth-century feminist, Carter critiques, parodies and exposes the underlying sexual terrors, the desire and disgust fuelling representations of women as variously dead or deadly. Reading early work, “The Snow Child” (1979) and the poem “Unicorn” (1966), we move on to rereading a range of her work including “The Loves of Lady Purple” and *Nights at the Circus* (1984), showing it is possible and essential to tell other stories, revising and rewriting constraining narratives. Imaginatively restirring the potion of myth, fairy-tale and horror, Carter’s women reject the roles of victims, puppets, pawns, of deadly sexual predators or hags, defining and seizing their own sexuality and agency, having the last laugh.

**Gina Wisker** is Professor of Higher Education and Contemporary Literature, and Head of the Centre for Learning and Teaching at the University of Brighton, after working for many years at Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge, where she was Divisional Head of Women’s Studies, Principal Lecturer in English, and Director of Teaching and Learning Development. Her principal teaching, supervision and research interests are contemporary women’s writing, Gothic, horror and postcolonial writing. She has published: *Margaret Atwood, an Introduction to Critical Views of Her Fiction (*2012) Key Concepts in Postcolonial Writing (2007), Horror *Fiction* (2005) Postcolonial and African American Women’s Writing (2000). *Contemporary Women’s Gothic Fiction* will appear in 2017. Gina has written numerous articles and book chapters on women’s vampire fictions, Daphne du Maurier, Angela Carter, Margaret Atwood, HP Lovecraft, Toni Morrison, Nalo Hopkinson, Virginia Woolf, Katherine Mansfield. Other interests are postgraduate study and supervision: The Postgraduate Research Handbook (2001, 2008); The Good Supervisor (2005, 2012); *Getting Published* (2015). Gina also writes short fiction and poetry. She edits *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, online literary dark fantasy journal *Dissections* and poetry magazine *Spokes*. Gina is currently Chair of the Contemporary Women’s Writing Association, on the Katherine Mansfield society committee, and the FEMSPEC board. She is a Higher Education Academy Principal Fellow and a National Teaching Fellow.

**ABSTRACTS**

**Dislocation, Feminine Writing, and Nomadic Experience**

Hasti Abbasi

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The condition of exile may correspondingly relate to experiences that are not explicitly defined as the imposed exclusion from one’s home. Instead, exile may refer to intellectual and internal displacement within the borders of one’s country. This is the case in Sharhnush Parsipur’s *Women Without Men* (1989/2011)*,* in which home is represented as a source of negativity, and a place of imprisonment, silence, and monotony as opposed to the ideal notion of home as a place for love, discussion, and a source of positivity. By choosing to write in an oppressive situation where writers are denied freedom of speech and literary expression, Parsipur chooses an existence in exile. This paper suggests that a writer’s identity is constructed and continually reconstructed, rewritten, and reinterpreted through discourse and creativity.

Moreover, drawing on feminist theoretician, Rosi Braidotti’s conceptual analysis of nomadic subjects, this paper puts forward the claim that a nomadic experience for Parsipur and her characters can be interpreted as the attempt to go beyond the emotional and cultural sense of dislocation. Tropes of dislocation recur throughout Parsipur’s multi-voice narrative that challenge gender relations, the denial of women’s voice, and the traditional concept of female virginity as a symbol of virtue. Therefore, Parsipur’s women decide to resist settling into socially coded modes of thought and behaviour in their attempt to cross the boundaries, rather than experiencing a recurrent sense of exile. This work can also be usefully read in reference to the Algerian/French feminist writer and philosopher Hélène Cixous’s *l*'écriture féminine proposed in *The Laugh of Medusa* as a model that follows feminine jouissance and the language of the body in pursuit of a nomadic experience of being.

**Hasti Abbasi** holds a BA and an MA in English Literature. She is a sessional academic and a PhD scholar of literary studies and creative writing at Griffith University.

**“She Inspires Violence. She Turns Decent Men into Animals”: Sex, Violence and Victimhood in *Taming the Beast* and *An Isolated Incident* by Emily Maguire**

Rosslyn Almond

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\*\* This paper will discuss sexual and intimate partner violence. \*\*

Emily Maguire’s novels *Taming the Beast* (2004) and *An Isolated Incident* (2016) address issues of sex and violence, specifically the problematic links drawn between “excessive” sexual desire and violence. While taking very different views – *An Isolated Incident* explores the effect of the rape and murder of a local women in a small town, while *Taming the Beast* addresses unequal, harmful power dynamics within a sexual relationship that bring into question ideas about consent and coercion – both novels critically discuss themes of culpability and victimhood based on restrictive stereotypes about women and sex. The novels are works of fiction, but their subject matter feels all too familiar: the clichés, assumptions and expectations that Maguire explores are reflected in substantial conservative and mainstream discourse surrounding sexual violence perpetrated by men against women. Through a close feminist reading of Maguire’s novels, this paper will discuss the concept of violence as “punishment” for excess and question why the accusation of victims “asking for it” remains such a dangerously pervasive response to sexual violence. Moreover, while offering a clear position against sexual violence, discussions of victimhood in the novels are less straightforward. I argue that, through their complex and manifold representations of victimhood, the novels emphasise an important point: despite anger and abhorrence towards violent acts, an ethical feminist stance on victimhood must be nuanced and consider the subject’s interpretation of violence.

**Rosslyn Almond** is an early-career literature academic from Melbourne. Her research interests lie in representations of gender and sexuality in contemporary Australian fiction. She teaches at ACU in Melbourne and also works as an editor.

***With Animal*: Exceeding the “Absent Referent” through Posthuman Maternity?**

Clare Archer-Lean

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Patriarchal literary representations position women as exceeding the “normative rational” existence: leaking, uncontrollable, and unfixed. Woman as other finds its foundations in a historical imagining that conflates female monstrous bodies and animal bodies, the siren call, the mermaid, the gorgon. American writers Carol Guess and Kelly Magee hyberbolise this conflation and excess in order to critique it in their recent collaborative short story collection *With Animal* (2015). Guess and Magee use posthuman speculative and magic realist conventions to thread twenty-seven brief stories each featuring non-human progeny born to human mothers or occasionally non-human mothers bearing human children; sometimes they are narrated from the child’s perspective, sometimes the mother’s. These darkly comic, magical realist vignettes stand as allegory for the complex and multiplex nature of female desire and sensuality (in both the maternal and sexual realms). But this paper will also examine how far the works exceed some of the critiqued limitations of anthropomorphism and, in so doing, attempt a breach of the human/non-human divide and expose the imbrication of androcentrism and anthropocentrism. This paper will read *With Animal* through Carol J Adams’ *Sexual Politics of Meat*. It will examine how far the short story collection operates as an imaginative articulation and refusal of the “absent referent.” The “absent referent” refers to the systemic discursive silence implicit in meat consumption: the actual fragmentation, objectification and violence behind the actuality is untraceable in the act of consumption (Adams 1990). In imagining animal subjects with intense intimate human connection—maternal and reproductive—the animal subject or animal mother refutes objectification and silence. And the thematic choice of maternity also enables critical focus on Adams identification of links between female and animal objectification. *With Animal* has potential to exceed the limits of the “anthroparchy” that Adams and other critics have defined (Adams 1990 and Cudworth 2011).

**Clare Archer-Lean** is discipline leader of English Literature at the University of the Sunshine Coast. Clare’s research focuses on the ways in which literary and cultural representations of animals inform human perceptions of their own identities and their place in the natural environment. She also fascinated by how literature might imagine animal agency beyond purely anthropocentric concerns. She has chapter, monograph and literary articles on animals in literature particularly in Indigenous story telling. She is also experienced in transdisciplinary approaches and is lead investigator on a $27 000 competitive state funded (DSITIA, Qld) project on communication, values and dingoes on Fraser Island, 2015-2017.

**The Potential for Excess in the Toxic Nature of Gendered Power in the Production of Cinema**

Debra Beattie

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In light of the current discourse surrounding the anal rape scene in Bernardo Bertolucci’s classic film, *Last Tango in Paris* (1972) it is timely to revisit the writings of British feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey who first provided a framework for thinking about the “male gaze.” It was the year after the release of the film that Mulvey first presented her analysis in a paper to the French department at the University of Wisconsin. There is no record of whether she had seen *Last Tango* but her views are strikingly apt in discussing the film. Mulvey observed then that the alternative cinema of the sixties was providing a space for a cinema to be born that was radical in both a political and an aesthetic sense, and we now know, radical as much with a liberationist as a fascist ethic. The feminist film theorist draws on psychoanalytic theory as appropriate for her theorising and suggests it could also act as a “political weapon, demonstrating the way the unconscious of patriarchal society has structured film form” (833).

Mulvey’s article discusses the interweaving of the erotic pleasure in film viewing: “And the central place in that viewing of the image of woman” (835). “At first glance the cinema would seem remote from the undercover world of the surreptitious observation of an unknowing and unwilling victim” (834). The latest revelations regarding *Last Tango in Paris* however are an exception to that understanding, and beg the question of what other unwilling female victims there are, yet to be revealed, in the cinematic production practice of narcissistic film directors. The voyeurism of the “male gaze” has associations, Mulvey argues, with sadism, and sadism fits neatly within narrative. It demands a backstory, depends on making something happen, forces a change in another person, a battle of will and strength, victory/defeat, all in a linear time, with a beginning and end.

There is a bitter irony that, just as academia in 1973 was discussing these important understandings, the alternative cinema world was celebrating what has been revealed as one of the most sadistic scenes ever filmed – being as it was with an unwilling victim. Eighteen-year-old Maria Schneider was approached in 1971 to star opposite the already legendary Marlon Brando (then 42 years old) in a film directed by Bertolucci, one of the luminaries of European cinema. Schneider was interviewed many times after the film’s release, and repeatedly made the claim that she had felt raped in the scene, humiliated by both Brando and Bertolucci’s treatment of her afterwards. There were in fact criminal proceedings brought against Bertolucci and he was given a four month custodial sentence, wholly suspended. It is timely for this paper to revisit the writings of Laura Mulvey and to review the current state of play in cinema and the reception by audiences of the potential toxicity of the “male gaze.”

**Debra Beattie** is an Australian filmmaker who has acquitted millions of dollars in public funding over the past thirty years producing films with a diverse group of communities in her region, including Indigenous, Indonesian and Melanesian. She is a published cinema scholar and currently supervises higher degree research and productions at the Griffith Film School. Since 2006, she has also engaged in the delivery of documentary online, and in public spaces, such as galleries and museums. Most recently she has published screenplays on historical moments in Australian history. Currently she is drafting a feature film bio-pic on the life and times of Australian sculptor Daphne Mayo.

**Daughter Writing Mother Writing History Writing Woman: Speaking in the Excess of Birth through Death.**

Kelly Beck

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What is exceeded when women write about their own mothers? How is the notion of history recast when the daughter tells the story of her mother? In bringing forth a singular literary/philosophical/historical account of her mother, does the daughter provide her mother with an origin that exceeds the patriarchal ordering of family genealogy? Or can it be said that in committing the mother to writing, the mother is always a history, but never a future? This paper will consider these questions through a reading of Simone de Beauvoir’s *A Very Easy Death* (1964) with Kate Grenville’s *One Life: My Mother’s Story* (2015). Beauvoir gives an account of her mother’s life through the phenomenological lens of her experience of her mother’s dying. Grenville uses the fragments of her mother’s autobiographical writing which she discovers some time after her mother’s death, and pieces them together to give an account of her mother’s life to the time of Grenville’s own birth. Between these markers of birth and death family life is made; however, the mark of the fullness, richness and complexity of the life of woman is often unsaid. The writings of Beauvoir and Grenfell, in this respect, each offer a means to expand the cultural imaginary to consider the woman that exceeds the relationship between the daughter and her mother.

**Kelly Beck** is an MPhil candidate in the School of Historical and Philosophical Inquiry at The University of Queensland. Her thesis examines Simone de Beauvoir’s philosophical and literary representations of female embodiment in *The Second Sex* and *When Things of the Spirit Come First*.

**In Excess of Shakespeare? Jeanette Winterson’s *The Gap of Time* (2015) and Margaret Atwood’s *Hag-Seed* (2016)**

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In the afterlives of Shakespeare in contemporary culture, there has been a noticeable feminist turn in adaptations across a range of media. This encompasses a radical rethinking of major roles with female leads on stage and screen, for example Glenda Jackson as Lear at the Old Vic in London, 2016, a female Cymbeline (Gillian Bevan) in the 2016 RSC production, Charlotte Rampling as the Lear figure in Fred Schepisi’s *The Eye of the Storm* (2011), and Helen Mirren as Prospera in Julie Taymor’s *Tempest* (2010). These developments address a range of gaps and absences that have long been identified by feminist criticism on Shakespeare. A related movement is happening in contemporary fiction through women writers entering into dialogues with the Shakespearean canon. This paper will explore two recent publications in the Hogarth Shakespeare series: Jeanette Winterson’s *The Gap of Time* (2015), a retelling of *The Winter’s Tale,* and Margaret Atwood’s *Hag-Seed* (2016), a reimagining of *The Tempest*. Winterson reimagines and queers the desire at the core of the tragedy in *The Winter’s Tale* though the construction of a complex love-triangle between Leo (Leontes), MiMi (Hermione) and Xeno (Polixenes), while also bringing to the hypotext explorations of surveillance and virtual reality. Atwood’s metafictional novel probes the desire for revenge as Felix Phillips, the Prospero figure, plans the staging of a version of *The Tempest* in a prison while the ghost of his deceased daughter Miranda features as a disembodied presence that haunts the production. Both Winterson and Atwood thus bring new dimensions to the hypotexts, inviting new readings and reconfigurations of Shakespeare.

**Victoria Bladen** teaches in literary studies, adaptation and poetics at The University of Queensland. She has published four Shakespearean text guides in the Insight Publications (Melbourne) series: *Measure for Measure* (2015), *Henry IV Part 1* (2012), *Julius Caesar* (2011), and *Romeo and Juliet* (2010); and co-edited a special issue of the *Australian Literary Studies* journal on *Afterlives of Pastoral* (2015)*,* a volume on *Supernatural and Secular Power in Early Modern England* (Ashgate 2015), and *Shakespeare on Screen: Macbeth* (Presses Universitaires de Rouen et du Havre, 2013). Victoria has published articles in several volumes of the *Shakespeare on Screen* series, including *Shakespeare on Screen:* *Othello* (Cambridge University Press 2015), and is on the editorial board for the *Shakespeare on Screen in Francophonia* project in France (http://www.shakscreen.org/). Other publications include articles on tree and garden imagery in early modern poetry, Jane Austen, and the pastoral genre.

**“Drunk Mums”: Contemporary Gothic Memoirs of Transgressive Alcohol Consumption**

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A significant number of popular auto/biographical book-length memoirs that focus on problem drinking and/or the recovery from alcoholism are currently in circulation, as well as a smaller number that enthusiastically celebrate the consumption of alcohol. While a number of male wine makers’ and journalists’ memoirs fit into the second category, contemporary texts written by women tend to chronicle how alcohol either amplifies or causes personal, family and professional issues, and is a component of multiple addictions and/or mental illnesses. This is amplified when it comes to memoirs of alcohol consumption by, or about, mothers. This presentation profiles twenty-first-century examples of these memoirs, suggesting that these are being written as a form of Gothic literature, incorporating distinctly Gothic tropes such as trauma, madness, abjection, degradation, the monstrous feminine, otherness, death, and the past affecting the present. Surveying twenty-first-century popular alcoholic memoirs by, and about, mothers, and investigating their themes, tropes and prominent metaphors, also assists in exploring how the feminine in memoir is repeatedly associated with obsessive transgressive excess. This contributes to emerging scholarship on this type of popular memoir, which despite being a prolific form of contemporary writing by women, has not been explored in detail.

**Donna Lee Brien** is Professor of Creative Industries at Central Queensland University, Australia. Co-founding convenor of the Australasian Food Studies Network, Donna is a member of the Steering Committee of the International Auto/Biography Association Asia-Pacific, and the Editorial Advisory Boards of *Aeternum: The Journal of Contemporary Gothic Studies, TEXT: Journal of Writing and Writing Courses, Australasian Journal of Popular Culture,* and *Locale: the Australasian-Pacific Journal of Regional Food Studies*. Past President of the Australasian Association of Writing Programs, Donna has been writing about food writing and its significance since 2006, and has also edited a number of food studies themed special issues of peer-reviewed journals.

**Reading the Stella: Feminist Currents in the Shortlist**

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During 2016, I chaired the reading group, *Contemporary Australian Novels by Women*, which mostly attracted female academics and writers eager to discuss new work by women from the 2016 Stella Prize shortlist—Peggy Frew’s *Hope Farm*; Charlotte Wood’s *The Natural Way of Things*; Fiona Wright’s *Small Acts of Disappearance*; Mireille Juchau’s *The World Without Us*; Elizabeth Harrower’s *A Few Days in the Country*; Tegan Bennett Daylight’s *Six Bedrooms*—plus the additional two novels by women shortlisted for the Miles Franklin—Lucy Treloar's *Salt Creek* and Myfawny Jones’s *Leap*. As part of our group’s critique, I was interested in identifying commonalities (or “faultlines”), supporting a connection between the eight texts as related to contemporary feminist discourse within the academy and more mainstream attention for the intractability of misogyny in Australian society as expounded by Anne Summers (*The Misogyny Factor*) and Clementine Ford (*Fight Like A Girl*). This paper presents some of the major feminist themes and motifs recurrent across the selected works, in support of an argument for a return to fiction as a potent vehicle for feminist conscious-raising and social change. For example, echoing Barbara Baynton’s “The Chosen Vessel” in setting and theme, Charlotte Wood’s *The Natural Way of Things* surely qualifies as dissident fiction. Wood is angry, excessively perhaps, and it shows. Why, in 2016, are we still in this place? In her collection of stories, *A Few Days in the Country*, Elizabeth Harrower also rages, however restrainedly, against the limitation and containment of women by men. Tracing lines of dissent emergent in our reading, the paper posits a rise in overtly polemical feminist writing not seen since the “golden age” of the 1970s and ’80s.

**Belinda Burns** is an Honorary Research Fellow at The University of Queensland, where she teaches in Creative Writing and Literary Studies. Her first novel, *The Dark Part of Me*, was published by HarperCollins and Grove Atlantic. Her current research focuses on twenty-first-century Australian women’s writing, predominantly fictional narratives set in domestic spaces.

**A Lady Bred Gently: A Study of Women’s Propriety as Portrayed in Historical Fictions of Electronic Media**

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Literature has spilled over from the pages of printed books to electronic media now. One holds a thousand books in the palm of his/her hands at will, and also there is a surge of writers writing online fiction. “Chick-lit” or “women’s literature” being one of the most popular genres, a considerable fraction of this umbrella genre overlaps with the category of historical fiction (or historical romance). It is with this genre that my paper critically engages. One finds interesting outcomes when, living in what debatably is a post-feminist age where the authors are empowered with a greater sense of agency, the online authors of today, among whom women constitute a greater percentage, look back at the “ladies” from the past from their modern perspectives. Can their heroines behave in the same manner as those in the time of the Brontë sisters or Austen? Of course not. The perspectives have greatly changed through the various movements affecting literature and society in the meantime. This paper aims to trace the effects of the changing face of women’s propriety in the representation of women in book-lovers’ social media sites, and thereby establish the differences in societal control over female behavioural patterns as reflected by the authors of the twenty-first century. To that purpose, the paper includes some of the most popular authors of historical romance appearing on the “hot lists” of applications like Wattpad and Radish Fiction.

**Ananya Chatterjee** completed her Masters in English at The University of Calcutta in 2016 and her undergraduate degree from the same university (Vidyasagar College for Women) in 2014. She has presented several papers in various national and international Conferences. Her interest lies in gender and literature.

***But if I sing, I sing from her*: A Close Reading of Maternal Subjectivity in Sharon Olds’s “Mother”**

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In a body of work much concerned with the mother and mothering, Sharon Olds has reserved the singular title “Mother” (*The Wellspring*, 2002) for a poem that sets out a clear and striking formulation of a dynamic and generative maternal subjectivity best understood as both shifting and reciprocal. In this paper I offer a close reading of “Mother” that examines this radical reformulation of self and other, drawing on Bracha L. Ettinger’s theory of transsubjectivty (based on the *in utero* encounter between mother and child) and Luce Irigaray’s later work on the maternal genealogy and the mother-daughter relationship (particularly as it is articulated in *Sexes and Genealogies*). I will look at the way in which Olds builds an internal vernacular for the maternal, articulating the largely occluded relation between mother and daughter and establishing a genealogy in the feminine. I will then show the way that she presents these as necessary conditions of maternal subjectivity, before focusing on the unique formulation of subjectivity in the poem’s final lines. Here, the maternal is shown to be a site for a subjectivity between women, not as a “dark continent,” but as also and necessarily possessed of subjectivity herself.

**Jacqueline Chlanda** is a PhD candidate in the School of Communication and Arts at The University of Queensland. She has worked in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art and Australian Art departments at the National Gallery of Australia. She has tutored in Art History at UQ and at Griffith University’s Queensland College of Art, and has most recently lectured a course at QCA called “Art, Gender, Sexuality and the Body.” She is from Alice Springs.

**Keeping Up with Public Discourse: A Sartrean Reading of “Obscene” and Othered Bodies**

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In this paper I seek to consider and adapt Sartre’s existential notion of *Being-for-Others* in relation to the “obscene” bodies of famous women such as the Kardashians. In an era where news is entertainment and entertainment is news, popular discourses around the bodies of celebrity women serve to further political agendas that subjugate and marginalise women, particularly *Othered* women that don’t fit the mould of normative white femininity. It is thus important that we continue to critically consider these popular discourses around women in the public eye. My intention is to offer such a critique, particularly with reference to subversions and transgressions of dichotomies of the sacred and the profane and of civility and vulgarity. I shall also consider the limits of “knowing” the other via projections of media, and the ways in which these projections are constructed, cultivated and self-aware. The level to which constructions of self are cultivated via different media influence their authenticity and this is a particularly curious consideration with regard to the Kardashians, whose presence permeates multiple forms of media. Of course, there are limits to projections of self, and the limits in themselves prevent perfect knowledge of the authentic subject. Nonetheless, readings of and reactions to the Kardashians and other celebrities reveal a great deal about popular discourse around women’s bodies, and it is in this spirit that this paper shall be presented.

**Elese B. Dowden** is a PhD candidate and researcher at The University of Queensland for an ARC project on ethical restoration after oppressive violence. Her main research project is entitled *Reconciling the Impossible: Forgiveness and Grief in Contemporary Rwanda, New Zealand and Australia*, and her research interests include postcolonial studies, gender, political philosophy, trust, existential phenomenology and the philosophy of memory and trauma.

**Excess and Desire in Parodic Feminist Literature: Margaret Atwood’s *Penelopiad* and Danielle Wood’s *Rosie Little’s Cautionary Tales for Girls*.**

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Parody is reflexive and has a target. It is understood to be humorous because of the comic effect of the incongruity of the parodied text and the parody. Mockery or ridicule can be present co-existing with parody's renewal of its target or targets; however, there is also an estrangement of the original text. Humorous feminist literature that features parody creates the comic dislocation of familiar stories passed down to us from ancient and not so ancient times and by juxtaposing them with surprising and comic communication signals a decoded double text. Margaret Rose and Richard Chambers expose parody as not only a criticism of earlier works but also as a way to refunction less self-reflexive fiction, to educate readers to the possibilities and limitations of fiction, and to create something new from the destruction of the old. In her retelling of Penelope’s story in the Odysseus myth (2005), Margaret Atwood injects passion and determination in the almost voiceless characters of Penelope and the twelve slain maids. Excess and desire drive the clever Penelope in this rewriting of an epic text bringing the past closer to the present. In Danielle Wood’s *Rosie Little’s Cautionary Tales for Girls* (2006) fairy tales and “good advice” are her target texts. Rosie Little enters the forest of adolescence like countless fairy tale girl characters before her and discovers that all the “good advice” in the world is not enough to cope with the “wolves” awaiting her. Wood draws attention to the power of fairy tales as artefacts that determine girls’ desire and questions the universality and objectivity of these master narratives.

**Claire Duffy** is a PhD candidate at Deakin University, Geelong. She is interested in the transformative power of humour in feminist literature. She views writing as a powerful tool for voicing that which is not obvious, and that which is not easy—a catalyst for transformation. *Hecate*, *Swamp*, *Verandah*, *AntiTHESIS*, *In Stead*, *Intellectual Refuge* (US), and *Gold Dust* (UK) have published her short stories. Claire has worked as a literary editor, taught undergraduates, been an artist driver for the Falls Festival, a display home host and is the mother of two young men of whom she is very proud.

**The Violent Pacifist:**

**Ethics, Disorder and Excess in Sarah Waters’s *The Paying Guests***

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Sarah Waters’s most recent novel, *The Paying Guests* (2014), deals with the aftermath of the First World War and with the tumultuous social changes and cultural trauma that followed in its wake. However, its gradual slippage from the excesses of global warfare to the shabbiness and smallness of domestic crime marks a broader observation about the failure of both the war and the law to deliver justice. In a morally confused environment the novel explores the turn from a desire for global and retributive justice, to a domestic making-do and mending within the social, moral and financial ruins of post-war England. In this diminished sphere, security of the self and the protection from consequences (personal peace) takes precedence over the security of the collective and the deliverance of justice (public peace).

In this paper we consider Frances and Lilian’s relationship in terms of a conflict between order and disorder, moderation and excess. Lilian and Lenard’s excessive desires spill out of the bounds of their marriage, made under duress during the war. Lilian’s excesses of character – her clothes, hair and makeup, her home décor, as well as her behaviours – while initially attractive to Frances, exceed her expectations, and perhaps even her desires, resulting in yet another mess for her to clean up. Frances’s determination to keep excess under control, to tidy not only dust and household disorder but the criminal blood and mess of abortion and murder, stand in stark contrast to her ethical position against the violence and disorder of war. The mess and disorder of Frances and Lilian’s collusion, as well as their romantic affair, moreover, remain invisible to the law, which can only see the expected order of their class-bound relationship. By the novel’s end, we ask, is Frances’s desire for Lilian herself, or simply for order to be restored, for the mess to be cleared? “Being good” and “doing good”, Waters’s novel shows, are no longer as synonymous as they might once have appeared.

**Jessica Gildersleeve** is Senior Lecturer in English Literature at the University of Southern Queensland. She is the author of *Elizabeth Bowen and the Writing of Trauma: The Ethics of Survival* (Brill/Rodopi 2014), as well as essays on other twentieth-century women writers, including Rosamond Lehmann, Jean Rhys, Agatha Christie, and Pat Barker. Her forthcoming works in 2017 include *Christos Tsiolkas: The Utopian Vision* (Cambria), *Don’t Look Now* (Auteur), *Elizabeth Bowen: Theory and Thought* (ed., with Patricia Juliana Smith), and *Memory and the Wars on Terror: Australian and British Perspectives* (ed., with Richard Gehrmann; Palgrave Macmillan).

**Nike Sulway** is Senior Lecturer in Creative Writing at the University of Southern Queensland. She is the author of *The Bone Flute*, *The True Green of Hope*, *What The Sky Knows, Rupetta*, and *Dying In The First Person*, as well as essays on twentieth-century queer writers James Tiptree, Jr (Alice Sheldon) and Lyn Palmer. She is currently working on a series of essays on queerness, contemporary writing and publishing practices and fairy tales.

**“Grosser Habits of the Human Body”: Excessive Shame in Ottessa Moshfegh’s *Eileen***

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Reviews of Ottessa Moshfegh’s novel, *Eileen* (2015; winner of the PEN/Hemingway award and shortlisted for the 2016 Man Booker prize), have mostly focused on the title character’s unpleasantness. Eileen is consumed by a repulsion of everything about herself (especially her body) and all that surrounds her. As Lydia Kiesling has pointed out, Eileen is “in love with her own awfulness.” Looking at “shame” as a particularly gendered affect, my paper will argue for a productive relationship between shame and subjectivity. My argument will begin with an analysis of Eileen’s embodied shame as one that stems from a history of abuse and a gendered perception of her female body as defective, followed by highlighting how excess shame is utilised by Eileen as a lens for the world and her understanding of herself. Shame becomes Eileen’s way of coping with the world and she fully embraces it. I want to then, finally, examine the connection between the first person narration and shame: confession as a means of dissipating it. Drawing from affect, trauma, and narrative theory, my paper will consider Moshfegh’s representation of excessive shame as a productive form of subjectivity.

**Hellai Gul** is a contributing editor at *Text of Her Own* and a postgraduate student at Western Sydney University. She has just completed a Masters thesis on affective atmospheres in Virginia Woolf’s fiction. Her PhD dissertation will focus on affect in modernist and contemporary literature.

**Schoolgirl Excesses: A Tsunami of Teenage Trauma in Ruth Ozeki’s *A Tale for the Time Being***

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Ruth Ozeki’s 2013 fictional memoir *A Tale for the Time Being* presents the reader with a seamless literary dialogue between two women: Japanese-American author Ruth, and Tokyo schoolgirl Nao, whose alternating narratives give the impression of the two conversing across space and time. It utilises and combines the revelatory nature of an epistolary narrative frame, with the mystery of a found narrative. Ozeki’s fictional schoolgirl narrative is brimming with physical, psychological, social, sexual and electronic trauma at the hands of almost everyone with whom she comes into contact. Deciding to commit suicide, Nao inadvertently starts a journal which records her experiences in the weeks leading up to her death. Rather than representing personal traumas, the majority of Nao’s traumas are what I refer to as “societal traumas of the Japanese schoolgirl.” While careful not to pass judgement on Nao herself, the novel draws upon a variety of stereotypes, oft-cited media reports, and pop-culture representations of the iconic Japanese schoolgirl figure. This narrative conjures up negative imagery surrounding the schoolgirl figure, which in Japan has historically been seen as a dangerous opposition to a patriarchal norm. This tsunami of trauma inflicted on one character, further indoctrinates the figure of the passive (Japanese) woman, while subtly reinforcing the patriarchal assumptions that these girls and their “deviant” behaviours stem from a selfish, consumer-driven and fractured Japanese society.

**Rebecca Hausler** is a recent graduate from The University of Queensland, achieving first-class honours in her Bachelor of Arts, majoring in English Literature and Asian Studies. Her research interests include Japanese popular culture, literature and film, and gender studies. She will be commencing a PhD at The University of Queensland in 2017, with a focus on the way in which contemporary Australian female authors have represented fictional accounts of experiences within Japanese internment camps.

**“I Find New Things I’d Forgotten I Needed”: Consumption, Domesticity and Home Renovation in Contemporary Poetry**

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Domestic space, in contemporary home improvement culture, is always a site of desire and of excess. It is the space where the aspirational narratives of consumption and self-improvement produced by contemporary renovation television programs become heavily embedded and are then re-enacted in social, cultural and personal imaginaries of self and home. Home improvement as presented on programs like *House Rules* and *The Block* performs the function of educating viewers in “proper” modes of personal development, home decor and normative family structures and gender roles. By fixing the house, these programs suggest to viewers, the inhabitant becomes a better person, better parent, better consumer (in the sense that their purchases reflect particular middle-class tastes and styles). In this paper, I explore how representations of renovation in contemporary Australian poetry challenge the mythologies of comfort, security, heteronormativity and unity embedded in the aspirational and materialist images constructed by television renovation narratives. I explore alternative representations of house renovation – which I view as both a physical and psychological experience – in a selection of poems by Michelle Cahill, Emma Lew, Jennifer Harrison, Lisa Gorton and others, and show how these representations contest, interrogate and reimagine the highly stylised renovation experiences presented in televised narratives. These poets represent spaces and acts of renovation as temporal and physical sites of instability, nostalgia and unrest that encapsulate both the destroyed house of the past and the unknown house of the future. I examine how their poems explore “the written and imaginary negotiation between architectural interiors and fearful spaces” (Deckers 2010, 121), and show how acts of renovation in poetry produce spaces that are “homely and unhomely at the same time, riven with feelings of belonging and attachment, alienation and detachment” (Blunt and Dowling 2006, 100).

**Ella Jeffery** is a PhD candidate and sessional academic in Creative Writing and Literary Studies at Queensland University of Technology. She holds a BFA with Honours (First Class) in Creative and Professional Writing from QUT and her poetry and fiction have appeared in *Best Australian Poems 2013, Westerly, Tincture, Cordite* and elsewhere. Her practice-led thesis, consisting of an exegesis and a full-length collection of poetry, examines the poetics of incompletion and renovation in contemporary Australian literature and home improvement culture. Her research interests include spatial theory, contemporary domesticity, Australian literature, home improvement culture and acts of renovation.

**A Feminist Revolt from Within: Angela Carter’s Excessiveness in *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman***

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Angela Carter’s *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* (1972) is representative of postmodern fantastic fictions. While the protagonist Desiderio is a male, the narrative is essentially feminist. Carter’s bold depiction of the sexuality of female characters in male-dominant worlds incurred much controversy, as her excessive eroticisation of female was against the feminist ethos of her time. Even now, such unorthodox and detailed pornographical descriptions are still unsettling. The paper argues that Carter’s feminism is a postmodern approach, which deconstructs the process of signification yet can never escape its double coding. Penetrating to the heart of the contempt for women that distorts our culture and entering the realm of true obscenity, the author uses pornography as a critique of asymmetrical gender relation. Nevertheless, as Linda Hutcheon avers, while postmodern tactics foreground the politics of the representation of the body through parody and counter-expectation, such feminist rebellion remains within patriarchal hegemony. Specifically, the saturation of the notion of excess is reflected in three aspects. First, there is a large number of female characters in the novel. In every alternative world Desiderio encounters a female and projects his sexual fantasy on her. Second, the narrative is imbued with minute portrayals of atrocious rape scenes, including blatant illustrations of sex organs. Moreover, on the level of discourse, Carter delivers a stylistic heteroglossia—a combination of gothic, carnivalesque and fairy-tale. All of these contribute to the sense of plethora and act as potential counterforce deconstructing male power.

**Mengni Kang** is a second-year PhD student from English Division, Nanyang Technological University. Her research focuses on narrative studies and postmodern fictions and her thesis will evaluate unnatural narratology in accounting for postmodern fictions. She is also interested in cultural studies, especially the interaction of pop culture and capitalism.

**“In this Whole Story, *that’s* the Shocking Detail?” Maternal Excess and Extended Breastfeeding in Emma Donoghue’s *Room***

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The reaction of secondary characters to the central mother figure in *Room* depicts extended breastfeeding as an excess of maternal attachment. Emma Donoghue’s 2010 novel caused much heated online discussion about breastfeeding and its appropriateness in the context of a narrative about captivity, sexual slavery and the unexpected joy of mothering. This paper provides a close analysis of the novel to discuss the role of maternal practice and maternal thinking in decision making about mothering strategies, and in particular breastfeeding which ultimately works as a deliberate strategy to encourage Ma’s son Jack to make an escape from their captive state. What is represented by others as an excessive mother-son attachment to the detriment of their individual selves and the growth of a young boy actually works to support Jack through his escape and into the real world beyond the confines of the tiny reinforced garden shed he and his mother were held in. The use of extended breastfeeding in the novel is analysed within the framework of Sara Ruddick’s theory of maternal thinking to argue that, for the mother in this novel who is only referred to as “Ma,” this was not at all a case of excessive attachment but, rather, the only reasonable choice in the face of captivity and violence. Her mothering practice however, is seen by others operating within a neo-liberal framework as unnatural and disruptive to her son’s natural development in the world outside and it is when these two contrasting views of embodied mothering practice collide that Ma is vilified and misunderstood for her decisions.

**Barbara Mattar** is a PhD Candidate at the Australian Catholic University (Melbourne). Her thesis explores the varied representations of pregnancy, birth and breastfeeding in novels and short stories published in the last forty years.

**Tainted Love: The Disastrous Ends of Desire in Patricia Cornwell’s *Red Mist***

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Throughout Patricia Cornwell’s acclaimed *Scarpetta* series, food is Kay Scarpetta’s source of comfort. The kitchen is a place of safety, and cooking is Scarpetta’s way of expressing her love to her family and friends. Her food is always good and there is always enough to share. In the series’ nineteenth novel, *Red Mist*, however, this love and safety become tainted by and intertwined with danger. A relationship borne of illicit desire resulted in the existence of two psychopathic women who act – and in particular kill – in excess. One of these two women kills using food as her weapon. Thus, *Red Mist* is a point in Scarpetta’s story wherein comfort becomes fear, and where this rupturing of characters’ lives is a direct consequence of desire existing where it did not belong. The act of desiring leads to multiple deadly and disastrous ends for the characters of this novel, and this ultimately demonstrates Cornwell’s exploration of yet another branch of the excesses of evil.

**Elise Payne** is a PhD Candidate in English Literature at the University of Wollongong, Australia. Her doctoral research is a character-focused study of Patricia Cornwell’s *Scarpetta* series, focused on a reading of supporting characters as narrative contaminants. Outside of her thesis work, Elise has an upcoming publication on supporting characters in the *Harry Potter* series, and she is interested in the intersection of character studies, popular fiction, and fan engagement with popular texts more broadly.

**Dimensionalising the Female Self: Comedic Memoir as Feminist Rhetoric**

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This paper offers a discussion of a desire for empowering and multi-faceted representations of women as represented in comedic memoir. It considers the ways in which female comedic memoir combines the feminist possibilities of both comedy and memoir to open a unique space for feminist representations of identity. Such representations often include “failures of femininity,” a term coined by Helen M. Buss (2002, 65) and drawing from the work of Judith Butler (2007, 145) to refer to unattainable gender ideals dictated by patriarchal tradition. This paper examines how female comedic memoirists juxtapose their failures of femininity alongside their personal successes in an aggregate feminist act. Contemporary comedic memoirists Tina Fey, Mindy Kaling, and Amy Schumer are analysed to provide contextual evidence. I contend that the synergistic intersection of female comedy and memoir opens a space for intimate and disruptive representations of women. Further, I suggest that the juxtaposition of failures of femininity and personal success ameliorates some of the potential pitfalls of depicting failures of femininity alone. It dimensionalises women, creating constructions that depict women failing to live up to unattainable ideals and thereby pointing out the fallacy of those ideals. It depicts women as more than just these failures, or moments of resistance.

**Katharine Pollock** recently completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Honours) (Creative and Professional Writing) at QUT, receiving first-class honours and a University Medal. She has had creative work published in *Kill Your Darlings*, *Funny Ha Ha*, *Novel Collective*, and *Lip Magazine*, and has contributed reviews to *Lip Magazine* and *The Music*. This paper is based upon the findings of her Honours project, in which she examined female comedic memoir in an integrated creative and exegetical thesis. She plans to continue researching femaleness and feminism on her return to postgraduate study.

**Out of Control: Excess, Desire and Agency in Female Drug Writing**

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This paper examines excess and desire via a postmodern feminist reading of the drug writing of twentieth-century writers Emily Hahn (1950) and Anna Kavan (1975). The undesirability of the “excess” of drug use (particularly for women) in social terms is inverted in female drug writing. The uncontainability presented by the literary drug trope allows and celebrates the multitudinous “excessive selves” (McWeeny, 2012) of female subjectivity represented in female drug writing. It is the excessiveness of the female drug-using body—its hyperbolic state, its extremities, the way in which it leaks beyond and exceeds the limits of “proper body” and social order that makes it so dangerous—or, in Kristeva’s terms, abject. Grosz’s (1994: 192) interpretation of Kristeva’s abject body is of one that challenges “the conditions under which the clean and proper body, the obedient, law-abiding, social body, emerges.” The examples of female drug writing examined within this paper affirm the subversive power of agency and unique selfhood, refusing the claims of containment, not necessarily of the drug but the drug writing. The drug trope as it is used in female drug literature *anticipates* (as in Emily Hahn’s memoir “The Big Smoke”) and *exemplifies* (as in Anna Kavan’s *Julia and the Bazooka and Other Stories*) the postmodern subject and the empowerment that comes with this conception of the female subject as ever-changing, heterogeneous and becoming. The corporeal “leakiness” (Shildrick & Price 1998: 9-10) of the body in the female drug writing examined here is one that leaks out and *transforms*: a leaking body which, in Grosz’s (1994: 81) terms, is “malleable and continually changing, always potentially open to new meanings and investments.” The unconstrained notions of the body—epitomised by the permeability of the drugged body in female drug writing—see it as “out of control,” “over the top” and beyond the discursive policing of institutional and symbolic structures.

**Nycole Prowse** has a PhD in Literature focusing on literary representations of gender, addiction and drug use. Her broader research base and publications includes historical approaches to feminist discourse and philosophy as well as postmodern feminist concerns of culture and difference. Her postdoctoral research resides around the notion of creative health creating communities and examines creative and artistic solutions to social, cultural and environmental community concerns. Nycole has over 22 years’ experience in teaching at tertiary level and in the creation and production of creative and literary projects and festivals in urban and rural communities in Australia, the US, Japan, the UK and the Middle East.

**Undoing Motherhood: Portrayals of Excess and the Maternal in Women’s Post-Militant Lives**

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Addressing the representations of women revolutionaries in Leftist inspired violent political activism in the 1960s, Amanda Third argues that the woman militant “represents the system's excess, and thus signifies as a site of instability and potential subversion” (216). I engage with two contemporary fictionalised representations of American women activists of the 1960s in Dana Spiotta’s *Eat the Document* (2006) and Russel Bank’s *The Darling* (2005). I explore the two women protagonists’ embodiment of the maternal as a means of negotiating the ambiguities of women’s post-militant lives: as constitutive of the processes of “reinvention” in their post-activist subjectivities, motherhood channels their resistance to “connect,” and their despair at their inability to be “fully known” to others. While feminists tend to celebrate the maternal, the shifting embodied self of the mother that exemplifies fluidity and transgresses boundaries and separateness, feminist scholars have also pointed out that the potential to transcend boundaries might not always and necessarily be empowering for women. In *Mass Hysteria: Medicine, Culture and Mother’s Bodies,* Rebecca Kukla warns that, “to assume that the protection of boundaries and privacy is a protection of radical independence and exclusion is to assume that the self that seeks boundaries and privacy is a self that will find integrity and self-definition through the abandonment of intimate relationships” (231). I explore the role of “radical motherhood” (as termed by Aliki Varvogli) as it is redeployed in the portrayals of the two women activists, in which their embodiment of the maternal does not normalise them. The maternal instead becomes a site that is in excess of normative motherhood. In other words, in both these novels the women embody motherhood in ways that draw from, and complicate, the tensions between a feminine self that seeks and a self that transcends such boundaries.

**Shamara Ransirini** teaches literature in the University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Sri Lanka and is currently a PhD candidate and a sessional teacher at The University of Queensland. Her thesis explores literary representations of the embodiment of women militants involved in anti-state nationalist and Leftist struggles in Sri Lanka, Ireland and beyond. She has studied previously in Miranda House College, University of Delhi and the University of Malaya, Malaysia. Her essays on literary portrayals of gendered embodiment in militancy have been published in *Hecate* and *Outskirts*.

**A Theorem of Pleasure Granted and Denied: Ali Smith’s *The Accidental***

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Various critics have noted parallels between Ali Smith’s *The Accidental* (2005) and Pier Paolo Pasolini’s 1968 film *Teorema* (Theorem); indeed, Smith herself has acknowledged as much. Pasolini presents a scenario in which The Stranger (Terence Stamp, to whom Smith alludes at the beginning of the novel) mysteriously appears in the home of an affluent Italian industrialist and engages in erotic encounters with each member of the household: father, mother, son, daughter, and maid. Each individual is changed by the erotic awaken he provides, whether for better or worse. Amber, Smith’s protagonist, arrives in a similar manner. But while Pasolini leaves open the suggestion that The Stranger is possibly an agent of divine intervention, Amber might be nothing more than an extremely clever thief who offers each member of the family a lesson by means of erotic pleasure, either given or withheld. The husband, the children’s stepfather, is the sort of smug and loutish English professor too many female students have encountered, one whose main academic pursuit is sexual harassment. The mother is a writer who exploits the histories of ordinary people who have suffered atrocious deaths by providing fictional endings in which they lived on after the fatal events. To these Amber metes out retribution by denying the husband sexual pleasure and forcing the wife to confront her own sexuality and emptiness. At the same time, she provides *jouissance* for the alienated teenage son and pubescent daughter, alleviating the horrors of their domestic life. While Smith’s novel, like Pasolini’s film, skewers the mores of the bourgeoisie, this paper will also analyse the ways in which the protagonist’s interactions challenge our notions of gender and sexuality, of justice and injustice, and the structures of social power.

**Patricia Juliana Smith** is Associate Professor of English at Hofstra University in New York. She is the author of *Lesbian Panic: Homoeroticism in Modern British Women’s Fictions* and is currently at work on *Britannia Waives the Rules: The Permissive Society in 1960s British Literature and Culture*. She is also the editor/co-editor of various collections of essays, most recently *Elizabeth Bowen: Theory and Thought* (forthcoming), co-edited with Jessica Gildersleeve.

**The “Proper” and the Ladylike in Australian True Crime Narratives**

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Routinely described as distasteful, voyeuristic, morally dubious, formulaic and trashy, the true crime genre nonetheless represents a complex, multi-disciplinary construct. Balancing the therapeutic motivations of trauma narratives, criminological concepts of social control and the role of media in securing the public’s “right to know” – all presented as an engaging narrative – the genre sits at a crossroads of purpose generating ethical dilemmas for authors, publishers and readers alike. Despite their status as “entertainment,” true crime narratives have the potential to act as an avenue of social advocacy, raising awareness of broader social issues, or as a means of reinforcing existing power structures through commentary on issues such as race, class and gender. This paper focuses on representations of women in twenty-first-century Australian true crime narratives, primarily centred on a dissection of Geesche Jacobsen’s *Abandoned: The Sad Death of Dianne Brimble* (2010). Jacobsen’s account of Brimble’s drug-related death aboard a P&O cruise ship in 2002 highlights the behavioural standards to which women are held and the role of the justice process in maintaining these. The capacity of the true crime narrative to either perpetuate these scripts or to act as an agent of change places considerable responsibilities upon authors in their representation of women and gender issues. This research argues that consideration of trauma and postmodern criminological theories can bolster existing journalistic codes of practice to guide authors in preparing ethical true crime texts.

**Josie Thomas** holds degrees in Criminology and Behavioural Science, and is undertaking a Master of Arts in Editing and Publishing at the University of Southern Queensland. She has 10 years’ experience in government, primarily in the field of death and injury prevention research and policy. Her research interests lie in true crime and Australian publishing and extend to areas of public health.

**Representation of Suppressed Desire and Excessive Hunger in Maria Chaudhuri’s *Beloved Strangers***

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Maria Chaudhuri’s *Beloved Strangers* (2014) is a daughter’s memoir of her formative period of life in a strangely adorable family. It is presented as the argumentative reasoning of the narrator Maria with herself where she recalls the feeling of an excessive hunger in the moments of faith, art and love in herself. She relates that this feeling recurs at significant moments of her life and paradoxically saves and crushes her life force. The essay engages with Maria’s feeling of excessive hunger and investigates why Maria feels like this and what impact it has on her subjectivity. To look for the answer of the investigation, this paper takes into account the theme of shame and fear and the depiction of evasive family bonding in the memoir. In this way this paper contends that Maria’s excessive feeling of hunger at the moments of faith, art and love is the frustrated but spontaneous outcome of her suppressed desire in a homely home and world. It works as a corrosive force that reminds her of her incapability, puts a stop to all her endeavours and gives her peace in thinking that she is incompetent. Hence we see that Maria eventually submits to her ingrained childhood subjectivity and returns where she belongs, in Dhaka, leaving behind her dream of being a self-exiled woman in the USA.

**Salma Umme** is currently completing her PhD on “Bangladeshi Novels in English” at the School of Languages and Cultures, The University of Queensland, Australia. She has been teaching English at Department of English Language and Literature, International Islamic University Chittagong, Bangladesh, for eight years. She has published in the international journals *Transnational Literature* and *Asiatic* and some other Bangladeshi journals.

**Beyond Ourselves: Edges and Excess in *The Outrun***

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Amy Liptrot’s memoir *The Outrun* (2016) opens with a dramatic scene: her mother holds the newly born Amy in her lap at an airport, while her father, in the grips of a psychotic episode, is airlifted to hospital. The setting is Orkney, a group of islands off the coast of Scotland. These two elements — mental illness and nature — are subsequently braided together in a story of edges and excess. In a search for highs modelled on her father’s mania, the young adult Liptrot pushes herself to the edges of her body and mind. In London she loses control of her drinking habit and falls apart. To salvage herself, she retreats to Orkney. In another step in her rehabilitation, she moves even further, to the outer reaches of the islands, where she swims in the freezing sea and searches for birds and stars at night. This paper explores what is natural and/or unnatural in a desire for sustenance beyond the self. Drawing on the work of environmental humanities scholars such as Val Plumwood and Deborah Bird Rose, it argues that excess is not so much a mode of immoderation, as a craving for the dissolution of boundaries between human and non-human.

**Jessica White** is the author of *A Curious Intimacy* and *Entitlement*. Her short stories, essays and poems have appeared widely in Australian literary journals and she has won awards, funding and residencies. She is currently a DECRA postdoctoral fellow at The University of Queensland, where she is writing an ecobiography of nineteenth-century botanist Georgiana Molloy.

**Desire and the Body: Women’s Writing in BDSM blogs**

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This paper explores the use of online blogs as a platform for women’s writing in the twenty-first century. As a contemporary form of the diary genre, blogs offer writers both public and private ways of expressing experiences, fantasies and desires. The potentials of self-publishing, anonymised authorship and connection to online communities are especially important for women wanting to express non-normative desire. This paper will take as its focus of inquiry the blogs of women who practice or fantasise about BDSM (bondage, discipline, dominance, submission, sadism, masochism). In particular, it will explore the blogs of women who identify with, practice and/or fantasise about taking the submissive role as part of their BDSM. Through a content analysis of women’s blogs this paper will investigate the following questions: What are the possible reasons for writing a submissive blog, and what do the experiences of this form of writing offer women? Are there any common desires, themes, or concerns shared by the female bloggers both sexually and more generally? Being situated within a broader project on BDSM and embodiment, this paper will also investigate how female bloggers who writing about BDSM and submission, use, experience and describe their bodies in relation to their desire and sexual practice.

**Jacqui Williams** is a first-year PhD candidate at Monash University, in the Faculty of Arts, Social and Political Sciences Program. Her PhD thesis project will investigate concepts of embodiment and embodied knowledge in BDSM sexuality, specifically submissive and masochist practice. Jacqui completed her Bachelor of Arts in Communication (Honours) at University of Technology, Sydney (UTS) in 2014, graduating with first-class honours and a University Medal. Her research interests include sexuality, the body, the senses, embodiment, Foucault, qualitative research methods, and popular culture.

**Performing “Chinese Woman” in Aotearoa New Zealand**

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For a prolonged period, in keeping with their marginalisation and exclusion, settler Chinese women were seen but not heard in mainstream New Zealand. It was not until the 1990s that these women, inspired and emboldened by the new influx of Chinese and other Asian immigrants, began to reflect upon and publicly articulate and validate their unique identities. In this paper I examine the work of four settler Chinese New Zealand women writers, who talk back to the hegemonic mainstream narratives that have long defined – and confined – them in accord with an enduring Orientalist prototype, which characterises them as quiet, submissive, filial, family- and tradition-bound, and at the same time, exotic, sexually available, and dangerous. In distinct genres: novel, stage play, memoir and novel for younger readers, these writers appropriate the Oriental femininity attributed to them by performing and flaunting the prototype “Chinese woman.” Through narrative strategies that challenge, subvert and therefore “exceed” the hegemonic discourses that subordinate them, the stories these women tell converge to produce critical *speaking* subject positions.

**Grace Yee** completed her PhD thesis on settler Chinese women’s storytelling in New Zealand in 2016 at the University of Melbourne, where she taught in the School of Creative Writing. Her research interests include Chinese and other ethnic minority women’s storytelling in the “Gold Mountain” Pacific Rim sites of the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand; colonialism; feminist epistemologies; and bricolage methodologies. Her poetry and fiction have appeared in a number of publications, including *Southerly, Island, Eureka Street, The Sleepers Almanac, Heat* and *Meanjin.*

**Mother’s Time in Qurratul-Ain Haider’s *Changing Hues of Garden***

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Julia Kristeva writes in *Women’s Time*:*“‘*Father’s time, mother’s species’ as Joyce put it.” If father is time and mother is species, if father is change and history and mother is mere repetition, then what happens to those who are born and raised in the absence of father? Are their lives a mere repetition or is there a hope for a future, a possibility of becoming a part of history for them? If father’s time is linear and there is only circularity in mother’s time, do these people fall outside the domain of linear time and leave this world without becoming a part of any history?  Keeping these questions in mind I am going to explore Qurratul-Ain Haider’s novel *Gardish-e Rang-e Chaman (Change of Seasons).*

Qurratul-Ain Haider has written extensively and on various issues. Her novels are usually focused on some specific social situations or a historic event yet there is an undercurrent of existential issues running across all her novels and Gardish-e Rang-e Chaman is no exception. It is the story of women of respectable social status, displaced by their situations, turned into courtesan and their attempt to break this circle. As their story unveils we also come across the issues of migration, cultural clash between East and West, the crumbling feudal system of India, and the loss of old customs and values. However taking all these themes is not within the scope of this paper and I try to discuss the relationship that the central characters have with each other and how the question of history and genealogy affects their mutual bond and their ideas about their own identity.

**Sameema Zahra** is pursuing a PhD in philosophy in the School of Historical and Philosophical Inquiry at The University of Queensland. Her research project questions the role violence plays in the lived experience of individuals and how its presence and absence from their experience affects their subjectivity. She has completed her Masters and MPhil in philosophy from India. Her research interests include Existentialism and Phenomenology, Feminism, ideas of social and political justice especially with an understanding and respect for diversity and differences. She also has a very keen interest in literature, Urdu and English, and how philosophy is expressed best in works of poetry and fiction.