



Weird Modernisms

VIRTUAL SCHEDULE

BAMS/MSA '26
1-4 July 2026
Loughborough University, UK

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Welcome to the BAMS/MSA Joint Conference in Loughborough! We're pleased to host you on Teams for these virtual sessions. You can find further information about the in-person programme [here](#). Thank you for taking part in this online programme, which enriches our exploration of the works and study of Modernism as strange, queer, uncanny, occult, and above all, *weird*.

Across two virtual rooms, you will find panels, roundtables and workshops drawn from across MSA's four special interest groups and the weird theme. Below, you will find all the information you need to access these sessions, guidance, the schedule, and more information about the invited speakers.

Online participants are also welcome to join the keynote sessions as webinars. Our featured speakers each take on a different medium to highlight the weird from different perspectives, including creative practice, visual art, and literary texts. Our opening speaker – Dr Nisha Ramayya – is a poet who will share how archival research informs her practice-based research. On Friday, our second speaker – Dr Catriona McAra – takes an art historical perspective on surrealism and second sight in the works of Dorothea Tanning. We close Saturday with our final speaker – Dr Alison Spertling – whose work on literary modernism and weird, queer ecologies will unsettle the assumed distinctions between the Old Weird and the New, bringing modernism's weirdness into our present moment.

We hope you enjoy the papers, share ideas, and find weird and wonderful connections in this dedicated virtual space!

Note from MSA Ombuds

A note from MSA's Ombuds, Sarah Wasserman

Email: slwasserman@gmail.com

I am delighted to serve for a second year as MSA's inaugural Ombuds. Although I will not be attending this year's international conference in person, I am available to meet upon request via phone or zoom—before, during, and after the conference. Please just send me an email to request a meeting and I will reply within 24 hours to schedule with you.

Conference attendees who would like to speak with someone in person may contact MSA Second Vice-President Robert Higney (rhigney@ccny.cuny.edu), who will be in Loughborough.

I'm glad to use this opportunity to tell you a bit about myself and about the role of the Ombuds. I was associate professor of English at the University of Delaware until August 2024, when I moved to Dartmouth College as the assistant dean for faculty affairs in the Arts and Sciences. In this role, I serve as an impartial resource for the more than 600 faculty (tenure-track and teaching) in Arts and Sciences. I support faculty in a range of areas, including mentoring and conflict resolution. Drawing on my experience as a faculty member and my training in coaching and communication, I offer faculty a safe space to address their concerns and I act as an advocate, bringing systemic issues to the attention of senior leadership. I am committed to creating an inclusive and equitable climate for all scholars, and grateful to serve the MSA and its members in this capacity.

An Ombuds (also referred to as Ombudsman and Ombudsperson) is a resource available to every MSA member and everyone attending the annual conference. Ombuds listen and help identify concerns, navigate issues, illuminate pathways, problem solve, and address conflict. We help untangle the often-complicated terrain of decision-making toward satisfactory resolution for any matter that impacts your experience within a professional community.

Ombuds work is tailored toward each visitor's unique experience to help problem solve and manage conflict with dignity, fairness, and equity.

Meeting with the Ombuds office is always voluntary and visitors are encouraged to read the International Ombuds Association (IOA) [Standards of Practice & Ethical Principles](#). An Ombuds is independent, impartial, informal, and confidential. In other words, I operate as an off-the-record, non-judgmental resource for everyone.

One more word about confidentiality: I am firmly committed to maintaining the confidentiality of everyone who requests services and will not disclose your identity or any part of your communication with anyone. Meeting with the Ombuds does not prompt any further action (unless the Ombuds determines that an imminent threat of serious harm exists). The Ombuds' confidentiality cannot be "waived" by anyone, including the MSA executive board.

Please don't hesitate to reach out via email during the conference. You may wish to schedule a meeting with me for many reasons, including:

- talking through a problem, issue, concern, or conflict
- don't know where to go or what to do
- to prepare for a difficult conversation
- difficult interpersonal relationship
- believe a procedure or policy is unfair or being applied unfairly
- issues of bias or inequity
- career progression & transition
- difficulty managing an interpersonal relationship
- need help prioritizing options
- not feeling seen or heard
- an ethical dilemma
- are struggling to see a situation clearly

An Ombuds can help by:

- Listening
- Clarifying policies & procedures
- Exploring & testing options
- Providing communication coaching
- Acting as a neutral sounding board
- Gathering information
- Advocating for fair processes
- Facilitating conversations between parties
- Providing a safe & non-judgmental space
- Making referrals to helpful resources

Virtual Conference: Guidance and Instructions

Guidance for Online Participation

The Teams meetings for virtual panels and roundtables are set up without a lobby such that you can access the meeting straight from the link.

- Please ensure that your microphone is muted and your camera switched off when joining sessions to minimise disruption.
- You may turn on your microphone to ask questions at the invitation of the Chair, or use the chat function if preferred.
- If you are a presenter, you should be able to share your slides without requesting extra permission.

If you are presenting in an online panel and wish to check that you're able to share your screen/slides before the start of the conference, the meetings should be set up to allow you to do so, but please do let us know if you have any problems joining/starting the meetings in advance. Any questions or issues relating to accessing or using the Teams rooms should be directed to bamsmsa26@gmail.com. This email will be monitored by the BAMS/MSA team during the conference.

A member of the conference team in Loughborough will monitor the online sessions to assist with issues that might arise. This volunteer will announce themselves in the chat and can be tagged to draw attention to queries.

Who is welcome to access the virtual conference

All registered delegates (in-person and virtual) are welcome to join sessions of the virtual conference. In-person delegates who feel like taking a break from face-to-face sessions and/or who have booked a one- or two-day ticket but would like to participate online before or after joining us in Loughborough are very welcome to access these online sessions.

Code of Conduct and Anti-Harassment Policy

*Adopted for the MSA-BAMS joint conference,
July 1-4, 2026*

MSA and BAMS call upon members to support these values of ethical conduct, mutual respect, inclusion, and nondiscrimination in judgment and in action, in order for the organizations to fulfill their missions and promote our values of free inquiry, collaboration, openness, access, and equity. We expect that all of our members have the same opportunity to reap the full benefits of belonging, and members are expected to participate in the work of the organization with integrity and the highest standards of professionalism.

The MSA and BAMS Executive Committees expect all members to abide by this Code of Conduct at any events, even those not sponsored by the organizations.

The Anti-Harassment Policy applies to formal participation in MSA programming and communities, including, but not limited to:

- Attendees of MSA-sponsored events, including attendees to the Conference and other formal bodies; any event sponsored by the MSA, and any communications or behavior occurring at said sponsored event.
- Examples include attendees at the Conference (a panel, a seminar, a roundtable); also, any other proceeding, event, or program directly sponsored by MSA, such as a formal mentoring workshop, Book Prize committee, or digital programming; note that this list is illustrative, not exhaustive.
- In terms of the scope of the MSA Anti-Harassment Policy, the organizations retain the right to exclude behavior at other conferences or colloquia sponsored by other institutions, such as at a college or university; events sponsored by another professional organization; etc.
- However, note that these non-MSA-based infractions can still be reported to MSA.

The MSA Code of Conduct applies to all professional behaviors conducted by its members, whether at sponsored events or elsewhere; whereas the Anti-Harassment Policy is more restricted in scope. However, this restricted scope ensures MSA has jurisdiction for formally investigating reported complaints about violating the Policy, and legitimately enforcing documented violations of said policy.

In particular, faithfully abiding by the Code of Conduct means that MSA members attending the Annual Conference or any other event or proceeding, as well as members who attend events or functions at other institutions, should not:

- Exploit or discriminate against others on grounds such as race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, religion, or other group identity.
- Be sexually inappropriate in language or gestures of unwarranted intimacy or unwelcome advances, nor harass anyone they come into professional contact with, including students, colleagues, exhibitors, and staff members
- Use language that is prejudicial or gratuitously derogatory with regard to citation, analysis, commentary, discussion, or visual communication (such as screenshots or other projections), including racist, transphobic, homophobic, ableist, sexist, and other slurs. It is the responsibility of each member to abide by best practices in adopting inclusive language, such as [“Writing About Slavery/Teaching About Slavery: This Might Help”](#) and the Modern Language Association’s [“Principles of Inclusive Language.”](#)
- Make prejudicial or arbitrary judgments (e.g., in evaluating conference proposals or research/travel grant applications) that might unfairly affect the academic freedom or professional development of anyone with whom they work.
- Fail to disclose conflicts of interest (personal, professional, and commercial) as they relate to MSA programming and competitions.
- Practice deceit or fraud on the academic community or the public, including plagiarizing the work of others in written or spoken discourse.

Code of Conduct and Anti-Harassment Policy

Reporting Violations

- If you believe there has been a violation of the Anti-Harassment Policy or the Code of Conduct at this MSA-BAMS conference, whether in-person or in a virtual session, delegates are encouraged to contact the following:
- The Designated MSA Board Member at the Loughborough conference, MSA 2nd VP Robert Higney (rhigney@ccny.cuny.edu);
- The Designated BAMS Board Member at the Loughborough conference, BAMS Chair Claire Drewery (c.drewery@shu.ac.uk).
- Alternatively, if you are a member of the MSA Contingent Faculty or Graduate Student Caucuses, you may contact your MSA Representative: Contingent Faculty Representative Nissa Ren Cannon (ncannon@stanford.edu) or Graduate Student Representative Jess Masters (jessica.masters@sydney.edu.au). Jess will not be in person at the conference, but invites you to reach out to her with any concerns.
- The MSA Ombuds, Sarah Wasserman (slwasserman@gmail.com)
- This reporting process will remain confidential.

Accessibility

The MSA is committed to ensuring that all conference registrants will be able to participate in conference events. We ask that all conference attendees give thought to questions of access and work with the conference organizers to create an event that is welcoming to the entire community of participants. Please review our Accessible Presentation Guide, which provides several strategies for compliance with our accessibility policy.

Copies of Papers and Presentations

All attendees must share a digital copy of their paper before the start of their session. We aim to make this process as simple as possible, so instructions for uploading your work to a shared conference folder, and for accessing all presentations contained in that folder, are provided here. Digital copies are not intended for any use other than to expand accessibility during the conference and will be deleted after the conference.

- **Slide Accessibility:** If you plan to display slides or any visual images during your presentation, please describe anything on the screen for visually impaired and blind audience members.
- **Chairs:** Ensure that any questions posted by the audience are repeated aloud (either by the responder or by yourself).

Content Warnings

Relatedly, if you plan to discuss or display images of material that might be considered troubling or harmful, we ask you to provide a content warning at the beginning of your talk, to alert attendees to the presence of sensitive material. This policy is not intended to regulate the content of presentations, but simply to help audience members prioritize their well-being.

Modernism & Environment Stream

Papers in this stream explore the ecological dimensions of weird modernism. From the material ephemerality cultivated by pulp fiction to more-than-human, spectral environments, weird modernism brings out the enmeshment of human, ecological and cosmic spaces.

Modernism and Pedagogy Stream

Panels and roundtables in the Modernism and Pedagogy SIG discuss the weird sides of teaching modernism through approach, philosophy and content. Whether through demonstrations or examples, participants in this stream explore teaching modernism in weird spaces, the weirdness of teaching modernism in the modern university and modernism's own weird ideas about pedagogy. Participants, as well, reflect on the more general aspects of pedagogy and modernism, and the relationship between modernist pedagogy and scholarship, addressing the lived conditions of our teaching labour, with institutional pressures and constraints demanding creativity and weirdness in our pedagogical practices.

Modernism and Film Stream

Many modernist artists and theorists, as well as scholars of modernism today, have thought with and through film. Panels and roundtables in the Modernism and Film stream take up that history: to consider how cinema has shaped and been shaped by art and politics in the modernist period and to think methodologically about what the fields of modernist studies and film/media studies might teach each other. In keeping with this year's conference theme, we have worked to consider the ways in which the "weird" informs film productions, film cultures, and the very activity of cinematic thought.

Intersectional Feminist and Queer Praxis Stream

Queer studies has long challenged frameworks of heteronormativity and chrononormativity, emphasising alternative modes of living, dying, desiring, and experiencing time (MacCormack, 2025; Freeman, 2010; McRuer, 2006; Edelman, 2004). Within this context, the weird emerges not as a marker of identity but as a deliberate aesthetic and political strategy. This extends beyond a queer lived experience to also encompass queering Modernism itself through, for example, queer readings of canonical texts.

Virtual Schedule

Wednesday, July 1

10:30am–12:00pm British Summer Time [BST] / 5:30–7:00 am US Eastern time [EDT]

V.1 (TR1): Roundtable: Hermeticism and the Modernist Weird: Literary Form and Community

Chair: Reiko Kawamoto (Hitotsubashi University)

Julius Greve (University of Oldenburg)
Richard Marklew (Independent Scholar)
James Mellor (Freie Universität Berlin)
Dorothea Trotter (Florida Atlantic University)
Florian Zappe (Independent Scholar)

V.2 (TR2): Roundtable: form, media, environment

Chair: Aaron Jaffe (Florida State University)

Aleksandr Prigozhin (Södertörn University)
Antoine Traisnel (Oxford University)
Adrienne Ghaly (University of Virginia)
Elisha Cohn (Cornell University)
Kyler Schubkegel (University of Notre Dame)

KEYNOTE 1

11.45–13.00 BST (6:45–8:00 am EDT)

Nisha Ramayya (Queen Mary, University of London)
Streaming

13.00–13.45: Break

13:45– 15:45 BST (8:45–10:45 am EDT)

V.3 (TR1): Modernism and Cinema

Chair: Julius Greve (University of Oldenburg)

Reiko Kawamoto (Hitotsubashi University)
"Fearful Asymmetry: The 'Killer POV' in The Sacred Fount and *The Good Soldier*"

Sasha McDowell (University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign)
"Imagination and En-sensing: Reading Modernist Film Scenarios"

V.4 (TR2): Intersectional Feminism and Queer Praxis

Chair: Elizabeth Sheehan (The Ohio State University)

Grace Figueroa (Virginia Commonwealth University)
"Smoke and Mirrors: On the Cigarette as a Signifier of the Third Sex in Modern German Visual Culture"

Bora Kang (Binghamton University)
"Slightly Out of Tune: Affective Drift and Weird Modernism in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*"

Annie Paige (Tulsa Community College)
"Camp and Capital: Social Femininity in Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*"

Samantha Lepak (Loyola University, Chicago)
"Making Strange: H.D.'s Fragmentary Myth Making and Defamiliarization"

16:00–17:30 BST (11:00 am–12:30 pm EDT)

V.5 (TR1): Unsettling Environments

Chair: Annie Paige (Tulsa Community College)

Rupeng Chen (University of Edinburgh),
"All the Strife and Unrest of Our Distracted Times': Fossil-Fuel Modernity and Literary Weird Derangement in Virginia Woolf's 'Two Parsons' (1932)"

Emilka Jansen (Vanderbilt University)
"Attending to Fracture: Ecological Worldmaking from Eliot to Perez"

Yu-Cheng Cheng (National Cheng Kung University)
"Orbital Modernism: Posthumanity, Chronopolitics, and Kinocene in Virginia Woolf's *Between the Acts*"

Subhasis Pal (Banaras Hindu University)
"Blighted Terrains: Slow Death and the Politics of Uninhabitability in H. P. Lovecraft's 'The Colour out of Space'"

Wednesday, July 1

**V.6 (TR2): Feminist and Queer Modernisms:
Publishing Outside the Canon**

Chair: Erica Delsandro (Bucknell University)

Jean Mills (John Jay College of Criminal Justice)

“Material Concerns of Publishing Non-canonical
Feminist / Queer Authors”

Stephanye Hunter (University Press of Florida)

“Publishing Outside the Canon: A Press's
Perspective”

Sarah Cornish (University of Northern Colorado)

“Feminist Work is Slow Work (but does it have to
be?)”

Elizabeth Sheehan (The Ohio State University)

“Periodical Studies and Its Challenges to Canonicity
and Recovery”

Thursday, July 2

9:00–10:30 BST (4:00–5:30 EDT)

V.7 (TR1): IFQP: New Voices in Queer and Feminist Modernisms

Chair: Kate Schnur (CUNY, Queens College)

Allison Nick, Northeastern University
Eden Rea-Hedrick, Yale University
Jess McCartha, University of South Carolina
Karen Leick, University of Illinois at Chicago
Eleonora Guidi, University of Bologna

V.8 (TR2): Outer Sounds and Inner Voices

Chair: Hester L. Furey (Georgia State University)

AC Wang (University of Cambridge)
“Listening with Laura Willows”

Rebecca Bradburn (University of Oxford)
“Droning on: Virginia Woolf’s Weird Buzz”

Amirali Ansari (University of Montréal)
“Literary Innerscapes: Leonora Carrington’s Introspective Odyssey in *The Hearing Trumpet* and *The Stone Door*”

Russell Smith (Australian National University)
“‘With nought a wired from the wordless either’: the luminiferous aether, spiritualism and wireless thought transference in *Finnegans Wake*”

10:45–12:15 BST (5:45–7:15 am EDT)

V.9 (TR1): Roundtable: Weird Kinship: Legacies of Anti-Social Collectives

Chair: Hannah Roche (University of York)

Elizabeth Blake (Clark University)
Todd G. Nordgren (Wellesley College)
Kate Schnur (CUNY, Queens College)
Anwita Ghosh (Georgia Institute of Technology)
Teagan Bradway (SUNY Cortland)

V.10 (TR2): Weird Affects

Chair: Richard Marklew (Independent Scholar)

Xiaohan Ma (Tsinghua University)
“The Weird Acousmètre: Disembodied Voices in *Mrs Dalloway*”

Jana Giles (University of Louisiana at Monroe)
“The Illusion of Weird Emotions in Joseph Conrad’s *The Shadow-Line: A Confession*”

12.15–13.30 BST (07:15–08:30am EDT) Break

14:45–16:15 BST (9:45–11:15 am EDT)

V.11 (TR1): Documenting Violent Experience

Chair: Leila Michelle Vaziri (University of Konstanz)

Jack Bradford (University of Virginia)
“Claude McKay’s Chitlin Circuit, or, The Bowels of Modernism”

William Haydon (Fordham University)
“William Faulkner’s Neorealist Modernism in *Light in August*”

Robert Dale Parker (University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign)
“Photographing Homelessness in the Great Depression: Dorothea Lange vs. Edward Steichen”

Grainne Condon (Independent Scholar)
“‘Through our desolation, thoughts stir’: Reading the ‘Weird’ In H.D.’s *Trilogy*”

V.12 (TR2): When Humans are On the Menu: Cannibalism and Modernism

Chair: Jack Ayres (Texas A&M University - San Antonio)

Elysia Balavage (Slippery Rock University)
“Human Flesh, Consumption and Transformation: A Cultural Critique”

Zan Cammack (Utah Valley University)
“Cannibal Calculus and Irish Modernism”

Ann Tso (Kwantlen Polytechnic University)
“Hoarding in the Hong Kong Apartment”

**16:30–18:00 BST (11:30 am – 1:00 pm
EDT)**

V.13 (TR1): Intersubjectivity

Chair: Elysia Balavage (Slippery Rock University)

Zooey Ziller (University of Cambridge)
“Affective Estrangement in Proust and Duras”

Savina Stevanato (Roma Tre University)
“‘Ghosts which are living within ourselves’: Woolf’s
variations on the weird”

Olivia Goldring (University of California, Berkeley)
“Voice Without ‘I’: Indexical Rupture and Weird
Embodiment in Beckett’s ‘Not I’”

Martha Eads (Eastern Mennonite University)
“Woolf in the Wild: Retirees and Residential University
Students Read *Mrs Dalloway* Together”

V.14 (TR2): Troubling Generic Boundaries

Chair: Debra Rae Cohen (University of South Carolina)

James Gifford (Fairleigh Dickinson University)
“Modernist Fantasy and Weird Modernism:
Hermeneutics and Allusion Among Modernist Poetics,
English Post-Surrealism, Fantasy as Genre, and the
Early New Weird”

Jack Ayres (Texas A&M University - San Antonio)
“Comics and Modernism: Weird or Eerie?”

Richard Barlow (University of St Andrews), “Weird
Joyce”

Lethe Mei (Independent Scholar)
“Yearning for the 19th Century: Gothic in *The Master
and Margarita*”

Friday, July 3

9:00–10:30 BST (4:00–5:30 am EDT)

V.15 (TR1): **Weird Waugh**

Chair: Beci Carver (University of Exeter)

Naomi Milthorpe (University of Tasmania)
“Waugh Horse”

Lewis Macleod (Trent University)
“Mr Samgrass Found Himself Talking to No One”

KEYNOTE 2

10.45–12.00 BST (06:45–08:00 EDT)

Catriona McAra (Aberdeen University)
Streaming

12:15–13:30 BST (7:15–8:30 EDT)

V.16 (TR1): **Multilingual Modernisms: Romance, Tilism, and other Strangers in Literatures of Modernity**

Chair: Douglas Mao (Johns Hopkins University)

Abhipsa Chakraborty (Berry College)
“Print, Pleasure, and Tilism in the Modern Hindi Novel
Chandrakanta”

Shaj Mathew (Hunter College, CUNY)
“The Dialectic of Cosmopolitan Time”

Debojyoti Dan (Naba Ballygunge Mahavidyalaya) and
Rittika Basu (Narayana School)
“Virginia Woolf’s Cartographies of Modernity:
Movement, Thresholds and the Weird Topographies”

V.17 (TR2): **Roundtable: Genre/Gender Bending in Speculative World Literature**

Chair: Angela Acosta (University of South Carolina)

Dharma Seda Gonzalez (New York University)
Diana Proenza (University of Maryland, College Park)
Megan Faragher (Wright State University)
Aina Singh (Banaras Hindu University)

13:30–15:00 BST (8:30–10:00 am EDT)

V.18 (TR1): **Weird and Weirder Women**

Chair: Anwita Ghosh (Georgia Institute of Technology)

Beyza Aslıhan Güngör (Boğaziçi University)
“Reclaiming Weirdness Through Revisionary
Mythmaking in H.D.’s ‘Circe’”

Jenna Marco (University of South Carolina)
“Modernist Adaptations of Mediumship in Hope
Mirrlees’s *Paris: A Poem*”

Annaliese Hoehling (Elmira College)
“The ‘Surplus Woman’ and Weird Feminine Authority in
Agatha Christie’s Golden Age Detective Fiction”

Leila Vaziri (University of Konstanz)
“Infinite Cosmic Spaces in Weird Stories: Pregnancy
and Birth in Modernist Science Fiction”

V.19 (TR2): **Roundtable: “Slouching Towards”: Modernist Journeys and Strangeness**

Chair:

Jessica Kim (Georgia Institute of Technology)
Minjung Ha (Texas A&M University)
Benjamin Bengtson (University of British Columbia)
Eric VanLieshout (Independent Scholar)
Dipanjan Maitra (Louisiana Tech University)

15:15–16:45 BST (10:15–11:45 am EDT)

Friday, July 3

V.20 (TR1): Weird Worlds/Reimagining Indigeneity

Chair: William Haydon (Fordham University)

Andrew Ntapalis (Harvard University)

“Modernist Masks: Drama, Ritual, and Alterity in Greek Metanational Modernism”

Mary Burke (University of Connecticut)

“The Curse of Culloden in Faulkner’s oeuvre”

Juan Meneses (University of North Carolina, Charlotte)

“Borges’s Weird Worldly Library”

Prithu Halder (Indian Institute of Technology Tirupati),

“Discovering Ice: Museums, Defamiliarized Objects and Magic Realism’s Vernacular Prehistories”

V.21 (TR2): Give What You Can, Take What You Need: Creating Modernist Mutual Aid (WORKSHOP)

Co-Leader: Nissa Ren Cannon (Stanford University)

Co-Leader: Catherine Hollis (Independent Scholar)

Saturday, July 4

KEYNOTE 3

11.15–12.30 BST (6:15–7:30 am EDT)

Alison Sperling (Florida State University)

Streaming

13:30–15:00 BST (8:30–10:00am EDT)

V.22 (TR1): Roundtable: Global Colourful Modernisms

Chair: Farah Nada (University of Exeter)

Swati Joshi (Independent Scholar)

David Pattie (University of Birmingham)

Charles Clements (Tufts University)

Lottie Whalen (Independent Scholar)

V.23 (TR2): Roundtable: Weirding Spaces, and the Horizon of Global Asian Modernisms

Chair: Jinyi Chu (Yale University)

Tianyi Shou (University of Michigan)

Banseok Heo (Cornell University)

Sabrina Lee (Calvin University)

Sihan Wang (Northwestern University)

Mengqi (Mercy) An (Colorado College)

Wednesday 1 July: 11.45–13.00
**Dr Nisha Ramayya (Queen Mary,
University of London)**
Location: Space 1, Holywell Park



Title:
Jellyfish Entanglements

Abstract:
A speculative paper through the cavernous network that extends beneath the Institute of Anti-Colonial Desire. We encounter figures well-known to Modernist scholars, including H.D., Freud, Rabindranath Tagore, and some unorthodox counterparts, in a sequence of real/imaginary correspondences and weird collisions with goddess worshippers, teary new mothers, and contemporary Palestinian poet Batool Abu Akleen. Each encounter is posited as a question or problem that forms part of a spiralling inquiry into the nature of reality, the reality of safety, the deviations of grief, and how we might approach the world newly or otherwise, via jellyfish entanglements.

Biography:

Nisha Ramayya works across poetry, criticism, and collaborative performance, and teaches creative writing. She is the author of two poetry collections, *States of the Body Produced by Love* (Ignota 2019; reissued by Spiral House Editions in 2025) and *Fantasia* (Granta, 2024), as well as the co-authored pamphlets *Threads* and *Siblings*, among other publications. She is Senior Lecturer in Creative Writing at Queen Mary, University of London.

Friday 3 July: 10.45–12.00

Dr Catriona McAra (University of Aberdeen)

Location: Space 1, Holywell Park



Title:

Modernism, my psychic grandmother: Dorothea Tanning and the Second Sight

Abstract:

This illustrated paper explores surrealism as a mode of prophecy. The “second sight” is a principle which has been investigated extensively by scholars across Victorian art and literature but remarkably less so for twentieth century modernism. This is odd given that there are in fact several instances of it, especially across the uncanny marvellous or déjà vu of the surrealist movement, as seen for instance in André Breton’s Arcane 17 (1945). Whether we are believers or not, the second sight is a major literary and artistic theme that runs through and informs significant bodies of modernist practice. I seek to test the second sight as a methodological device, one that challenges teleology and may equip us to better understand and predict the important role of feminist-surrealist historiographies. To do this, I draw on the “parallel words and pictures” and intermedial “thin places” of the American surrealist Dorothea Tanning (1910-2012).

In her weird, gothic-western novella, *Chasm: A Weekend* (1949; 1977; 2004), we meet a great-grandmother and a little girl with a specific destiny and family tree. This child covets a memory box, full of found objects and eyeballs, as one example of a surrealist legacy. The secretive nature of this novella echoes across Tanning’s soft sculptural oeuvre and visual narratives. *Chasm* serves as a Pandora’s box or mnemonic, unlocking the critical category of the feminist marvellous as an active form of clairvoyance.

Biography:

Dr Catriona McAra writes on the marvellous in contemporary art. She is a lecturer in Art History at the University of Aberdeen where she also an honorary curatorial fellow. Prior to Aberdeen, Cat worked in the senior management of University Collections at St Andrews and Leeds College of Art. Cat is drawn to alternative culture and feminist-surrealism having published several books on Dorothea Tanning and Leonora Carrington, and contemporary artists Tessa Farmer, Ilana Halperin and Kate MccGwire. Previous articles explored the embodied storytelling of Samantha Sweeting and Kate Bernheimer. Cat’s research has taken her to Arizona, Mexico, and Iceland. She is currently finishing her third monograph with Edinburgh University Press on Scottish women artists. Cat’s recent articles include one on the textile art of Sam Ainsley for the *International Journal of Surrealism* and ‘Ghosts in the Text: Alison Watt and the Literary Marvellous’ for the *Scottish Society for Art History* (both 2025).

Saturday 4 July: 11.15–12.30

Dr Alison Sperling (Florida State University)

Location: Space 1, Holywell Park



Title:

Weird Modernism: Ecologies of Literary Form

Abstract:

The focused study of the literary and theoretical dimensions of weird fiction as “the background noise to modernism” (Jaffe) has, since the 1920s and reinvigorated by speculative realism and the nonhuman turn (Grusin) in the 2010s, been interested in its formal qualities that both produce and are produced by epistemic and ontological gaps, absences, and lack. This talk will draw on a wealth of current weird and eco-weird scholarship, and will follow recent work refocusing our attention on queer forms/formalism and “negative” aesthetics (Brinkema, Fawaz, Tremblay and Swarbrick, Bradley) as well as ugly feelings (Ngai, Love), to attend to the weird’s broader affective and aesthetic negativity and its inability to resolve neither itself nor the literary work into relationality and resolution. What are the queer and ecological stakes of weird modes of refusal, blockage, and unworlding? Focusing on forms of modernist weird/queer embodiment intimately tied up with environment, the talk hopes to demonstrate the weirdness of modernist US literary production that extends into the contemporary New Weird/New Qweird moment (Luckhurst, MacCormack, Sheldon et al),

thus disrupting the too-easy political “break” often described between the Old Weird and the New, and expanding weird modernism’s reach into current and urgent view.

Biography:

Alison Sperling is an Assistant Professor of English at Florida State University and an artistic researcher in Berlin, Germany, where she has also held recent positions as a Visiting Fellow at the ICI Institute for Cultural Inquiry Berlin and a Junior Faculty Fellow in American Studies and Future Studies at Technical University Dresden. Her publications have appeared or are forthcoming in *Ecozon@*, *Rhizomes*, *Paradoxa*, *Girlhood Studies*, *Extrapolation*, *Cultural Politics* and elsewhere, and in numerous edited collections on science fiction, queer theory, and the environmental humanities. She is editor of an issue of *Paradoxa: World Literary Genres* on “Climate Fictions,” co-editor of “Weird Temporalities” (*Studies in the Fantastic*), “Anthropocene Sublimes” (*Ecozon@: European Journal of Literature and the Environment*) and forthcoming issues on “Weird Geographies” (*Cultural Politics*) and “Science Fiction, Ecology, and Contemporary Art” (*Extrapolation*). She is also serving as co-editor of *Science Fiction Film and Television*. She is currently at work on her first monograph, *Weird Modernism*.

