

# Conference on Creative Writing and Identity



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*A NAWE conference in association with the Writing Centre, Middlesex University  
Saturday 22 November 2003, White Hart Lane, Tottenham, London N17 8HR*

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## Programme

**09.15**            **Coffee & registration**

**09.45**            **Welcome & introduction by Maggie Butt**

**10.00**            **Workshops (90 minutes)**

### **1 Liz Cashdan: The Self and Other in Travel-Writing: Poetry and Prose**

This is a workshop which will encourage participants to try out some travel-writing techniques by writing in the voice, not of the traveller, but of someone encountered by the traveller, avoiding stereotypes by getting into someone else's shoes/eyes. The workshop will include some discussion of identity/ethical/ecological issues as well as the craft of writing.

### **2 Sue Ashby: Here I am....**

A writing workshop using creative strategies to explore our feelings and memories, access ourselves at different stages of development and celebrate our complex identity.

### **3 Keith Bennett: Putting the 'I' in Id**

If wearing a mask can liberate the wearer, what might it do for the writer? This workshop will encourage the participants to put on a literary mask and generate some new work through a series of exercises which are demanding but good fun.

### **4 Leah Thorn: The Art of Dis/appearing: spoken word poetry and the exploration of Jewish Diaspora identity**

This workshop will explore the use of spoken-word poetry as testimony, as exploration of multi-layered identity and as an act of 'coming to voice'. Issues to be addressed include racial and cultural differences; post-Holocaust identity; gender; class; Israel and Palestine; and the need for awareness when working with Jewish and with 'mixed' groups.

**11.30**            **Coffee**

**12.00**            **either Seminar on Professional Development**

### **Anne Caldwell & Philippa Johnston: Investing in Yourself as a Writer**

This seminar will focus on how to plan your own writing life and professional development. It will look at identifying your skills gaps, how you learn best, and where to look for support with your own development as a writer in the educational field.

#### **or Papers/discussions**

### **1a Alan Bissett: Narrative Voice and the Construction of Identity**

This paper will discuss how identity – whether ethnic, national, age- or class-related – is constructed by writers who utilize the dialect or idiom of specific social groups in their narrative voice. It will ask how important a prose voice which deviates from Standard English is in this respect, and examining subsequent issues for the teaching of Creative Writing.

## **2a Sara Boyes: Making Metaphors**

When we write about identity it can sometimes leave us feeling exposed or speaking to an audience of the 'already converted'. In this talk, Sara Boyes will look at the role of the unconscious, dreams and research in her own poetry. She will show how it is possible to explore identity and to create a common ground between writer and audience by focusing on making metaphors.

## **3a Mark Robinson: Poacher, Gamekeeper, Gatekeeper, Writer**

I am a writer. I am also part of the Senior Management Team at Arts Council England, North East. How does my identity change as I carry out many roles - champion, challenger, dreamer, planner, strategist, - and, yes, pro-forma-filling, box-ticking bureaucrat? How does this affect my writing, and in what ways am I still a writer?

*followed by*

## **1b Keith Bennett: Writing Without identity?**

What do Beowulf, Eskimo Nell and The Cuckoo Song all have in Common? Who were Samuel Langhorne Clemens, Mary Ann Evans, Charles Lutwidge Dodgson? Classical literature has come from anon to nom-de-plume. Now, with the explosion of the web, could it be that collaboration is the way ahead?

## **2b Margaret Clarke & Elizabeth Maldonado: Creative Writing across Languages**

(a project in the School of Languages and Area Studies, University of Portsmouth)

This presentation will describe the aims and outcomes of a creative writing competition designed for final year modern foreign language students who were invited to submit imaginative pieces in a language which was not their native tongue. A sample of the winning entries will be presented, together with an analysis, based on student and staff feedback, of the role which creative writing activities can play in a modern foreign language department.

## **3b Graeme Harper: The 'Ayes' Have It: Identity? Identities? The Role of the Creative Writer**

This talk will consider the role of the creative writer in the community, education and public setting in developing links between the 'individual' and the 'group' (i.e.: the person and the society or culture) and will argue for the role of the writer as conduit to developing a creative, but also collaborative, society.

**13.00**            **Lunch**

**14.00**            **Workshops (60 minutes)**

## **1 Sarah Wardle: Lyric Memory and Identity: Writing, Recollection and Closure**

An exploration of the role of memory in poetry, how recollection challenges or confirms self-identity, how writers shape and adapt truth, making sense of past experience, bringing closure to poems and events, and how readers draw comfort and lessons for themselves. Bring a favourite poem and one of your own.

## **2 Joan Michelson: History/Poetry/Politics/Ourselves**

The session will focus on selected poems and address issues around voice and audience, writer and reader, personal and public, autobiographical and political, the individual and the communal, the divided self, witnessing, representing. In short, who is speaking? to whom? for whom?

## **3 Tim Wright: Using Online Identity and Character Creation for Storytelling and Audience Interaction**

In the last few years, it's become possible to play with identity online in increasingly sophisticated ways. This has tremendous implications for the way we tell stories and how we 'play' with each other. This presentation will give practical examples of how both adults and children take advantage of online environments for imaginative role-play – and how writers can use the creation of digital interactive characters to reach and stimulate new audiences.

## **4 Norah Hill: Healing and Creativity**

This workshop will explore the relationship between healing and creativity, drawing on Norah Hill's work with disabled people and her recent role as Middlebrough's Poet Laureate.

**15.00**            **Papers/discussions**

## **1 Graham Mort: Crossing Borders**

'The post-colonial world is one in which destructive cultural encounter is changing to an acceptance of difference on

equal terms.' (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back*, Routledge, 1989.) Crossing Borders is a pan-African distance-learning scheme based at Lancaster University. This paper will delineate the scheme, focusing on notions of identity in a cross-cultural distance learning relationship. It will anticipate opportunities for enhanced cultural understanding and mutual literary development, whilst exploring the dangers inherent in such an undertaking.

## **2 Shaun Levin: Here and There: Exploring Immigration and Your Own Backyard**

Based on a joint residency with the photographer, Anita McKenzie, at Wickford Junior School as part of the Essex Intercultural Project, this presentation will focus on the creative writing and image-making exercises undertaken with Year 4 pupils to explore memory, immigration, identity and journeys.

## **3 Lawrence Long: Identity, Translation, Imagination**

How is our identity translated when we write imaginatively? How is our identity translated when we live in another country? Why are 'true stories' so valued? How do folk songs and local history projects define us - and is it healthy?

## **4 Mario Petrucci: Making Voices: Identity, Poeclectics and the Contemporary Poet**

This presentation focuses on the vitality, diversification and complexity of voice exhibited among British poets. It will examine specific aspects of literary output and its funding to demonstrate their engagement with profound contemporary issues of personal-creative identity. Illustrations include site-specific/performance work and winner of the Essex Best Fiction Award.

**15.45**            **Tea/coffee**

**16.15**            **NAWE AGM**

**16.45**            **Readings**

**17.30**            **Drinks**

## **Creative and Professional Development: Consultation Sessions**

Throughout the day, by prior arrangement, writers at the conference will have the opportunity to have a one-to-one consultation session with Libby Anson, an experienced adviser specialising in creative and professional development.

## **Biographical Notes**

**Libby Anson** is an experienced and inspirational development needs specialist. She works primarily as a coach and consultant, helping people to manage their own creative and professional development. Her approach focuses on the individual rather than the discipline.

**Sue Ashby** runs therapeutic writing workshops in a primary care residential drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre.

**Keith Bennett** is a poet, performer and playwright. He gained an MPhil in Creative Writing at Glamorgan University, and is currently a mentor for NAWE. His second collection of poetry is due out later this year from Dionysia Press, Edinburgh.

**Alan Bissett** is a lecturer in Creative Writing at the University of Leeds, as well as a writer of a novel, *Boyracers*, and editor of the anthology *Damage Land: New Scottish Gothic Fiction* (both Polygon, 2001). He is currently working on a second novel.

**Sara Boyes** teaches poetry on the Certificate in Creative Writing at Birkbeck. She has produced two collections of poetry and has edited an anthology - all published by Stride. Recent work appears in *In the Company of Poets*, an anthology from Hearing Eye.

**Anne Caldwell** is a poet, published by Virago, who specialises in the professional development of writers, working with the National Association of Writers in Education (NAWE), the National Association for Literature Development (NALD) and Lapidus.

**Liz Cashdan** has published travel poetry and teaches travel writing at Sheffield University Institute of Life-Long Learning.

**Margaret Anne Clarke** graduated from the University of Liverpool with a PhD in Brazilian Literature. She has held several academic posts, including a position as Visiting Lecturer in Comparative Literature at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. She is presently responsible for the Portuguese section at the School of Languages at the University of Portsmouth.

**Graeme Harper** (aka Brooke Biaz) is Director of the UK Centre for Creative Writing Research through Practice and the Centre for Creative and Performing Arts (UWB). Co-editor of *New Writing: the International Journal for the Practice and Theory of Creative Writing* (MLM), his latest work of fiction is *Dancing on the Moon* (Eclipse, 2003). Recently published, for Drafts: *Creative Writing at University: Key Pointers* (ISSN: 1471-7069).

**Norah Hill** has received awards from Northern Arts (1997) and the Society of Authors (1998). She has published short stories and poems including the collection *Over the Border* (Mudfog 1998).

**Philippa Johnston** is Co-ordinator of literature training. As a freelance consultant, she has undertaken a number of literature-related research projects and she was Creative Arts Officer at the Scottish Arts Council for three years.

**Shaun Levin** is a South African writer living in London. He has taught creative writing at Morley College and South Thames College, and has run workshops in venues ranging from a restaurant and a cemetery, to London Zoo and the National Gallery. His novella, *Seven Sweet Things*, was published in 2003.

**Lawrence Long** was formerly Research Fellow, Department of Politics, University of Strathclyde. A frequently published poet and freelance poetry workshop leader, Lawrence chaired West Sussex Writers' Club 1997-2000, Horsham Folk Club 1998-2002 and founded Village Voices and Verses in 2001. He has performed his own Edinburgh Fringe Festival show, been an international conference speaker and extensively involved in translation.

**Elizabeth Maldonado** is a University Tutor at the University of Portsmouth, teaching Spanish at undergraduate level. She also teaches Italian GCSE at Further Education level. In 2002 she set up the prize for Creative Writing in a Foreign Language as a vehicle for both learning and creative expression. Her first degree is in architecture and in 1985 she gained an Master's degree in Urban Development planning from University College, London.

**Joan Michelson**, for many years responsible for Creative Writing at the University of Wolverhampton, is currently teaching at Birkbeck College, London. Her chapbook of poems, *Letting in the Light*, was the 2002 competition winner published by PoeticMatrix Press, USA. A story, "Birthing" is forthcoming in an anthology published by Loki Books, London.

**Graham Mort** is a former freelance writer and founding chairperson of NAWE. He now directs postgraduate studies in creative writing at Lancaster University and leads Crossing Borders. His latest collection of poems, *Circular Breathing*, is a PBS recommendation. A new book, *A Night On The Lash*, will appear from Seren in 2004.

**Mario Petrucci** is an ecologist and physicist, educator and war poet. Twice winner of the London Writers competition and recipient of an Arts Council of England Writer's Award, he is an Arvon tutor, a Poetry Book Society selector and a founder member of the experimental performance and voice-training group ShadoWork. His poem 'Heavy Water' is winner of this year's Daily Telegraph/Arvon International Poetry prize (Enitharmon, 2004).

**Mark Robinson** is Director of Arts & Development at Arts Council England, North East, having previously been Head of Film, Media and Literature. He is also a widely published poet and critic. Most recent books include *Half A Mind* (Flambard) and *Words Out Loud*, a book of essays on the poetry reading (edited, Stride). He was formerly Programme Director, Arts & Humanities for the Centre for Lifelong Learning, University of Durham.

**Leah Thorn** has led workshops for the National Maritime Museum, Tate Britain, Tate Modern, the Holocaust Survivors' Centre (Yad Vashem, Israel), Centre Dar Al-Nadwa (Palestine) and the Jewish Association for the Mentally Ill. She is currently undertaking an MA in Creative Writing and Personal Development at the University of Sussex.

**Tim Wright** has recently been appointed Digital Writer in Residence as part of the Writers for the Future programme run by trAce, the worldwide online writing centre. Tim has a solid reputation for his innovative and inspirational work on both the online interactive drama *Online Caroline* and more recently in the development of *Planet Jemma*, a new media project combining education and entertainment to make science more interesting to teenage girls.

**Sarah Wardle** is the author of *Fields Away* (Bloodaxe, 2003), shortlisted for the Forward Prize for Best First Collection. She has published poems and reviews in several magazines, anthologies and the national press. She teaches poetry and creative writing at Middlesex and Kent universities.