

Different Pasts, Foreign Countries: Remembering and recreating lost worlds in fiction, media and history

*Level 3, Australian Hearing Hub
16 University Avenue
Macquarie University*

8.45-9am: Registration

9am-10.45am: Welcome and Session 1: The Spectacular Past.

Chair: Prof. Louise D’Arcens

“Dressing Like a Church: The Pre-Modern and the Catholic Imagination” – *Clare Monagle and Tess Watterson*

“*The Scarlet Empress: History as Farce*” – *James Philips*

“A story-telling experiment at the State Library of NSW” – *Elise Edmonds*

“Incomprehensible in its extremity: counter-perspectives and hegemonic narratives of aerial bombing in Berlin’s heritage and tourism sites” – *Eloise Florence*

10.45-11am: Morning tea

11-12pm: Keynote presentation: “Double-Helix History: Memory and the genetic historical imagination” - *Prof. Jerome De Groot*

Chair: A/Prof. Hsu-Ming Teo

12-1.30: Session 2: Tattoos, Tudors and Travel

Chair: Prof. Sharon Ruston

“Tattooed Celts, and Painted People – Modern Representations of Ancient Britons” – *Erica Steiner*

“Antipodean Tudors: Recreations of lost Tudor worlds by Australian novelists” – *Kelly Gardiner and Catherine Padmore*

“The Lost World of the Tudor Court: Time travelling with Anne Boleyn” – *Stephanie Russo*

“Representing impact of conflicts in picture books: Using the concept “pastness” through creative written word and illustrations” – *Heather Sharp*

1.30-2pm: Lunch

2-3.30: Session 3: Problem Pasts

Chair: Dr Stephanie Russo

“Palimpsests of the ‘lonely island’: Chronotopes of wartime Shanghai in the western literary imagination” – *Hsu-Ming Teo*

“Haunting and Veiled Staging: Chang-rae Lee’s *A Gesture Life*” – *Matthew Hooton*

“The rupture was the story: Diasporic (be)longing and return in Saidiya Hartman’s *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route*” – *Maya Milatovic*

“Forgery as Fake History: Constantine Simonides and his history of Egypt - *Malcolm Choat & Rachel Yuen-Collingridge*

3.30-3.45: Afternoon tea

3.45-4.30: Session 4 – (Re)Creating the Past in Documentary Film

Chair: Dr Jane Hanley

Karen Pearlman and Tom Murray screen their respective documentaries, *Woman With An Editing Bench* (2016) and *The Skin of Others: When Douglas Grant Met Henry Lawson* (2018), before discussing how they as filmmakers created their past worlds.

4.30-6pm: Session 5: Screening Past Worlds

Chair: Prof. Jerome de Groot

“Guillermo del Toro’s Twentieth Century Horrors and Fantasies” – *Jane Hanley*

“*Spirits’ Homecoming* and the cinematic representation of Korean Comfort Women” – *Niall McMahon*

“Parody and Cinematic Representations of the Holocaust” – *Maria Chatzidimou*

“Engaging with the Past: How TV programs create a sense of history” – *Kate Warner*

6.30pm: optional symposium dinner at Khao Pla Thai restaurant, Macquarie Centre

ABSTRACTS

KEYNOTE PRESENTATION:

“DOUBLE-HELIX HISTORY: MEMORY AND THE GENETIC HISTORICAL IMAGINATION”

Prof. Jerome De Groot (Manchester)

'he's alive, he's a person now, he's not just bones' (*The First Brit: Cheddar Man*, Channel 4, September 2017)

Societies remember in multiple ways, and in various modes. One way that the past is considered to live in the present is through genetics. Our DNA is simultaneously evidence of historical development and living witness to the contemporary. It is therefore temporally dual. This paper suggests that one way of representing the past that has been hitherto underanalysed is what Jackie Pearson has termed the 'genetic imagination'. How is the past represented to us through DNA and genetics? How is it made to 'live' in the present, and in which ways can we understand genetics as 'evidence' of the past or even a way of 'narrating' the past. How is the past told and textualised through genetics? What kind of stories does DNA investigation enable us to tell, and how might we understand them? Is DNA an entirely new mode of appreciating and accessing the past, and might we theorise this if so? What are the ethical, narrative, theoretical and aesthetic implications of such a shift?

This talk considers the ways in which discourses of genetics are increasingly impacting upon the ways in which contemporary societies remember, narrate, and represent the past. In particular I am interested in the influence of new studies of ancient DNA and the challenges these are making upon definitions of humanness. I am also going to speak on the new ways that individual DNA sequencing offers participants in the contemporary world a new insight into their own family history. I will be looking at various texts, from adverts to film, to consider how what Nadia Abu El-Haj calls the 'genetic historical imagination' is developing.

SESSION 1: THE SPECTACULAR PAST

“Dressing Like a Church: The Pre-Modern and the Catholic Imagination” – *Clare Monagle and Tess Watterson (Macquarie University)*

Recently, the Metropolitan Museum of New York opened its annual fashion exhibition. This year, the exhibition was titled “Heavenly Bodies: Fashion and the Catholic Imagination”, and was launched with the extravagant annual Met Gala party. Both the exhibition and the party have received a great deal of media attention, much of it focusing on the idea of “Catholic Imagination”.

This paper will ask about the temporality embedded in the concept of ‘Catholic Imagination’ as articulated by the exhibition itself, as well as its Fashionista interpreters at the gala. We will suggest that the ideas of medieval religion, in particular, enabled by the focus on the Catholic enables an exploration of liminality and excess, one that meshes surprisingly well with the celebrity culture of late modernity.

In medieval religious ritual life the medium was the message. That is, sacred objects themselves bore access to divinity. Elaborate vestments, threaded with gold, were not just symbols of religious authority, but were locations for haptic spiritual communication, they touched the viewer.

"Heavenly Bodies" exhibits these vestments alongside clothes by designers such as Versace, Dolce and Gabbana and Jean Paul Gaultier. The exhibition makes the argument that we can understand luxury culture, the fetish for the object, through a longer history of sacred materialities. In so doing,

the exhibition challenges us to think about the ways the medieval catholic past infuses our present, in our desires for transformative goods, as well as in our desire to canonise the wearers of these gowns.

“The Scarlet Empress: History as Farce” – James Phillips (UNSW)

“*The Scarlet Empress* (1934) redeploys costume drama as farce and as a critique of despotism. The paper analyses how Marlene Dietrich does not so much play the role of Catherine the Great as replace the historical figure with her own Hollywood star persona. The power structures of despotism and the lawlessness of the sovereign are thereby parodied: promiscuity becomes Dietrich’s Catherine’s bond with her subjects and the studio-enhanced beauty of her appearance is substituted for the separateness of the royal person. With its spectacular yet rickety film sets, *The Scarlet Empress* is not an apologist’s chocolate-box rendition of European monarchical government, but conveys its émigré makers’ sense of its pomposity. Rather than exposing what lies behind the spectacle of power, the film considers what becomes of power when it is nothing but spectacle and appearance.”

“A story-telling experiment at the State Library of NSW” – Elise Edmonds (State Library of NSW)

At the State Library, we have been exploring new methodologies for engaging exhibition visitors with historical content from our collection. This presentation will outline the approach and development of a new exhibition planned for the Library which aims to create a personal, emotional connection to past inhabitants of our city. Via soundscapes and narrative story-telling, delivered via personal headsets, the experience aims to create an atmospheric and impactful story-world that supports the physical and digital display of collection items.

The audio experience replaces curatorial text or labels – instead, a script has been written, comprising multiple voices of narrator and individuals from the past who will guide the visitor through the experience. The collection items act as evidence and illustration for the narrative that is woven by the audio.

Recent feedback from a prototype test phase revealed that people responded very positively to being taken on a journey, immersed in an atmospheric soundscape where voices from the archives emerge from the pages, re-creating a lost world of 19th century Sydney.

“Incomprehensible in its extremity: counter-perspectives and hegemonic narratives of aerial bombing in Berlin’s heritage and tourism sites” – Eloise Florence (RMIT University)

In the hegemonic cultural memory of the second world war, the effects of Allied aerial bombing on Berlin has traditionally only been considered “from above”. In historical narratives in popular English-language media, mostly through aerial imagery, these narratives persist, and the war-damaged city is typically remembered and represented as either an abstracted target, or the site of a natural but inevitable disaster. In places of memorial, museum and heritage, however, this conceptualisation collides with the material traces of the bombings that are embedded within the urban fabric of Berlin, as well as the “grounded” subjectivity of the visitor, who encounters the ruin of the city largely through physical and sensory contact with tourism and heritage sites. Through considering place as a layering of both the imaginative and the material (Soja, de Certeau), this paper looks at contemporary tourist practice and aerial imagery at two popular tourism sites in Berlin as media through which the contemporary visitor can reconstruct Berlin in ruins. An analysis of the Topography of Terror and Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church presents an opportunity to investigate the complex, colliding and often contradictory processes of (re)constructing a city’s destructive past, and ask: how can we imagine a ruined city?

SESSION 2: TATTOOS, TUDORS AND TRAVEL

“Tattooed Celts, and Painted People – Modern Representations of Ancient Britons” – Erica Steiner (University of Sydney)

Modern representations of the ancient inhabitants of the British Isles tend to centre on the stereotype of a wild, half-naked or fur-clad Celt, who either wears blue face paint in battle or has extensive tattoos, is in tune with nature, and lives in a society where women supposedly have greater equality than in other contemporary societies. Movies, and television series – both fictional narratives, and supposedly more scholarly historical documentaries – exploit this stereotype without examination. Recent examples include films such as *Centurion*, *King Arthur*, and the Netflix show *Britannia*. Yet this stereotype is not just a recent one – it can be found in popular culture from the twenty-first to the sixteenth centuries, and this in turn is based on the stereotypes of the ancient Briton in the late antique and early medieval sources.

This paper will examine the realities behind the stereotype, and will discuss how modern popular culture alters how we perceive the past through the use of both textual and archaeological material with a focus on the physical appearance of these people as it is reported in the ancient sources and contrasted with modern recreations and reconstructions.

“Antipodean Tudors: Recreations of lost Tudor worlds by Australian novelists” – Kelly Gardiner and Catherine Padmore (La Trobe University)

Novelists have long been drawn to recreating the Tudor world. Their fictions, in tandem with other modes of representation, contribute to an imagined and pervasive sense of this past milieu, known as ‘Tudorism’ (String and Bull 2012). This global phenomenon, along with genre expectations of the historical novel, can influence contemporary writers’ approaches to their Tudor world-building. We analyse how these elements function in recent Tudor novels written by Australian authors. These are read alongside interviews and other paratexts to determine how the region’s novelists conceptualise and articulate their relationship to a past that is distant, both in time and geographically. Key questions include: What compels Australian authors to recreate this particular past world in fiction? What problems arise in so doing? What models are cited as influences for their world-building? What ‘adjustments of the genre’ (Meyer 2014: 51) are made by the writers? What links are forged between the fictionalised Tudor past and the material Australian present? Is this relationship characterised by a sense of ‘double othering’ (de Groot 2009: 94), or do perceived similarities bring remote worlds into closer proximity?

“The Lost World of the Tudor Court: Time travelling with Anne Boleyn” – Stephanie Russo (Macquarie University)

Henry VIII’s second and most infamous wife, Anne Boleyn, has recently become the rather unlikely heroine of science fiction novels, many involving time travel narratives. These novels construct Anne as a proto-feminist heroine, but one who requires “saving” from her historical fate: science fiction allows novelists, for instance, to imaginatively “save” her from her fate by extracting her from events prior to her execution in May 1536. In this paper, I will focus particularly on Sarah Morris’s two-part time travel novel, *La Temps Viendra* (2012-14), in which a modern woman (whose name is, of course, Anne) visiting Hever Castle, the Boleyn family home, as an attendee at an Anne Boleyn fan conference, time travels into Anne’s life. This novel demonstrates a profound and problematic nostalgia for the lost world of the Tudor court; the Tudor court, despite its violence, becomes a time of beauty, class and dignity, as opposed to the corruption and noise of contemporary life. Further, *La Temps Viendra* constructs a view of history as endlessly cyclical, with the life of the modern Anne increasingly taking on the shape of the historical Anne Boleyn. The novel thus reflects twenty-first century engagements with Anne Boleyn as an avatar of proto-feminism, and constructs history as a lost world that can only be revisited, even reclaimed, by the devoted historical “fan”.

“Representing impact of conflicts in picture books: Using the concept “pastness” through creative written word and illustrations” – Heather Sharp (Newcastle)

Picture books can be used to tell complex histories in age-appropriate ways, usually with children and their parents or teachers as the intended audience. The lead up to and during the centenary of

World War I (WWI) saw a proliferation of picture books published that sought to tell various aspects of history. In the main, they:

- Cover the conflict from an “at the time” perspective, that is, they are set during WWI; or
- Are set in Australia and look at remembrance events, or they cover a family’s history; or
- Cover an historical figure, individual soldier, nurse, or animal.

The purpose of the *Remembering for Peace* picture book (authored by the presenter) that this proposed presentation addresses is to show the construction of a historical world through a fictionalised illustrated book, as it exists in the current day. That is, how a traumatic historical event, WWI, still impacts the people and the surrounding landscape 100 years post the end of the conflict. Set in France and Belgium, the story shows a family of four from Australia holidaying in the region who come across, in quite incidental ways, the history of the region and its people; including the long standing devastating impacts the war carries to this day.

SESSION 3: PROBLEM PASTS

“Palimpsests of the ‘lonely island’: Chronotopes of wartime Shanghai in the western literary imagination” – Hsu-Ming Teo (Macquarie University)

Shanghai was the largest city in China during the early twentieth century. By 1935 its population had reached 3.6 million, of which approximately 1.6 million lived in the foreign settlements alongside 60,000 foreigners. After the start of the Second Sino-Japanese War, the population in the International Settlement exploded to 4.5 million. The immensity and cultural complexity of Shanghai during the modernist era is perhaps ungraspable, yet the Anglophone world has a specific, romanticized notion of modernist Shanghai that is specifically refracted through the lens of the Second Sino-Japanese War and the Japanese occupation of the International Settlement after December 1941. This essay focuses specifically on how chronotopes of wartime Shanghai are created in four English-language historical novels: J.G. Ballard’s *Empire the Sun* (1984), Kazuo Ishiguro’s *When We Were Orphans* (2000), Brian Castro’s *Shanghai Dancing* (2003) and Ian Buruma’s *The China Lover* (2008). It argues that each of these novels creates idealistic and nostalgic versions of a Shanghai reduced to an International Settlement largely erased of its Chinese population. It uses the idea of the palimpsest to consider how each new textual representation of Shanghai bears the traces of previous textual histories, and how, collectively, chronotopes of glamorous, decadent, modernist Shanghai are created in these novels. It reflects on what crucial aspects of Shanghainese modernism might be omitted through the erasure of Chinese popular culture, and concludes with a question about whether modernist Shanghai in the Western literary imagination is an aporetic chronotope paralleling its status as the stranded, ‘lonely island’ during the war.

“Haunting and Veiled Staging: Chang-rae Lee’s *A Gesture Life*” – Matthew Hooton (University of Adelaide)

This paper examines novelist Chang-rae Lee’s *A Gesture Life*, a narrative that exemplifies the unsettling power of writing at the intersection of historical trauma and haunting, in which Lee’s protagonist adopts a Korean orphan, we suspect, to atone for his actions as a medic in the Japanese military during the occupation of the Korean peninsula. Lee’s *veiled* version of trauma and haunting, which he presents as emerging from the gaps within history and narrative, acts as a staging, or reinvention, of a past world that is not unlike the staging of communal memory and history seen in Korean shamanic performance. In what ways does the structure of the novel depict experiential aspects of the historical trauma suffered by both Korean “Comfort Women” and their oppressors? How does Lee stage historical haunting, how does he use language to replicate and embody history in his characters, and how does he position his readers to bear witness to his reimagining of a silenced past?

“The rupture was the story: Diasporic (be)longing and return in Saidiya Hartman’s *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route*” – Maya Milatovic (Australian National University)

*For me, history was not only the past: it was the past and it was also the present.
(Jamaica Kincaid, *The Autobiography of My Mother*)*

Saidiya Hartman’s autobiographical work *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route* (2007) details Hartman’s visit to Ghana and its slave routes in her search for ancestral connections fragmented by histories of slavery, colonisation and dispossession. Conceptualising the journey as a return to a lost homeland, Hartman details her process of coming to terms with the realisation that ‘there were remains but no stories’ (*Lose Your Mother* 116). However, her inability to re-connect with lost ancestors and form a coherent narrative does not signal resignation or passivity, but leads to new understandings of individual and collective histories. Finding gaps and silences where ancestral narratives should be, Hartman tellingly states: ‘The rupture was the story’ (42, emphasis mine). This paper analyses the role of ‘ruptures’ in framing the subjectivities of African Americans returning to ancestral homelands of Ghana. Specifically, the paper suggests that Hartman’s representations of longing and belonging (or rather, longing to belong) challenge romanticised assumptions on reconnecting with lost homelands and histories. In particular, Hartman’s exploration of slave routes tourism in Ghana opens new discursive terrains for considering the effects of historical oppression or what Kenneth Warren aptly terms as ‘the presentness of the past’ (85). This paper demonstrates how Hartman’s process of ‘losing her mother’ gradually transforms from a deeply intimate and idealised longing to reconnect into a nuanced and highly politicised critique of the tourism industry, globalisation and exploitation. In summary, Hartman’s notion of ‘ruptures’ provides a nuanced ideological framework for an artistic representation of slavery’s trauma beyond Eurocentric models – while pointing to the ongoing effects of slavery, colonisation and the West’s complicity.

“Forgery as Fake History: Constantine Simonides and his history of Egypt - Malcolm Choat & Rachel Yuen-Collingridge (Macquarie University)

Remembering is a creative act which reconstructs the past in order to facilitate current goals and beliefs. The writing of history is no different in its interpretation, selection and even generation of sources. In this paper, we focus on the ultimate creative act in the production of history, the invention of new sources for the ancient world. Alternative artefacts blend the known with unknown in order to smuggle new ideas into old territory. The patchwork of elements speaks to the way that medium, expertise, and tradition are invoked to signal authority and authenticity in both discipline specific and public environments. The figure of the forger embodies these different cultures of knowledge that are often found in conflict. The forged artefact is a kind of attempted reconciliation between the ‘high church’ of institutionalised facts and lay aspiration.

Either by virtue of their anonymity or by virtue of a kind of retrospective showmanship, the identities and motivations of forgers are often obscured or reduced to Machiavellian greed. In select cases, however, enough is known to see the forger in their role as a key agent in the development of the disciplines studying the ancient world over the past 500 years, and a creative manipulator of the past to promote specific ideas. In this paper we concentrate on one prolific mid-19th century forger, Constantine Simonides, and his production of a group of fake papyrus manuscripts (now in the World Museum, Liverpool) in which he set forth the oldest fragments of Christian Scripture, undiscovered treatises on Greek history and geography, and a set of seven letters allegedly written by the second-century CE grammarian Hermippus of Beirut. We will focus on the last group, which not only represent a rare case of forged documents on papyrus (in contrast to the vast majority of ancient textual forgeries which are of narrative literary texts), but validate and support his own beliefs of history, scripts, and language of ancient Egypt. Just as Simonides’ Greek historical and geographical texts sought to position the forebears of the newly independent Greece centrally in world history, the letters of Hermippus – supported by other Simonidean forgeries – witness an attempt by Simonides to create a different past, a new world out of a fetishised vision of ancient Egypt in which the parameters (including the order of the Pharaohs and especially the way

hieroglyphs should be deciphered) were set by him. These forgeries constitute part of a battle over the memory, significance, and rediscovery of ancient Egypt as emblem for the narrative of modern Egypt in the nineteenth century.

SESSION 5: SCREENING PAST WORLDS

“Guillermo del Toro’s Twentieth Century Horrors and Fantasies” – Jane Hanley (Macquarie University)

The films of Guillermo del Toro constitute a speculative reinvention of much of the twentieth century. His oeuvre takes us from the century's dawn in neo-Gothic pastiche *Crimson Peak*, by way of post-war traumas in *Pan's Labyrinth* and the ensuing mid-century anxieties of *The Shape of Water*, through to *Hellboy*, which looks back on the century's worst tendencies. These and other works also cross time, with ghosts, demons, vampires, sprites that arise from the mysteries of the past and are its witnesses. His films live with the past and with the dead, challenging the boundaries between times, between life and death, as well as the human boundaries--between nations, between the self and the monstrous other--we build and defend out of fear. The transnational and transtemporal scope of many, if not all his films, suggests the ways the past becomes shared and the dead continue haunt the present. As a successful and acclaimed filmmaker, his works also intersect with recent international trends in popular historical world-building, giving opportunities to explore the ways histories travel, reimagined in transnational popular culture. This paper will examine how del Toro's stylised and intertextually-mediated imagined pasts commingle with the fantastic to reconceive historical experience.

“Spirits’ Homecoming and the cinematic representation of Korean Comfort Women” – Niall McMahon (Curtin University)

During World War II over 400,000 women from Korea, China, and the Philippines, collectively known as ‘Comfort Women’, were abducted into sexual slavery by the Japanese Military. To this day, the Japanese Government continues to deny the occurrence of this practice while Comfort Women survivors demand official recognition of their ordeal. The 2015 South Korean film *Spirits’ Homecoming* is one of only few films that depict the experience of these women during the war. Using characteristics of the Second Korean New Wave cinematic movement, namely irony, spectacle and violence, the film does not condemn the Japanese, but instead constructs a sorrowful, mournful depiction of this historical event. Within this precise depiction the act of sexual and bodily violence is not the film’s primary focus, but rather the physical and psychological aftermath of these acts upon the health of the women, both during and after the war. This paper endeavours to both analyse the representation of this historical event, focusing upon how the comfort women are framed to become the film’s main object of spectacle, but also aims to explore how the cinematic recreation of this historical event can assist in the survivor’s quest for official recognition from the Japanese Government.

“Parody and Cinematic Representations of the Holocaust” – Maria Chatzidimou (University of Hamburg)

Taking the contemporary debates over postmodernism and history as a starting point, my paper aims to explore the possibilities of providing an alternative narrative of the past for Holocaust victims, using the cinematic screen as a canvas and parody as a tool. It explores the rigidity of the past, reinforced by a discourse of historical accuracy and authenticity, which limits many depictions of Jewish characters to that of victimhood. I examine parody both as a challenging response to denial narratives, functioning as an empowering representation and as a negotiation of the inability of a direct depiction of the Holocaust, or even a “direct response” to it, an idea deriving from R. Eaglestone’s book *The Holocaust and the Postmodern*. I deal with Holocaust Parody as an alternative representation of the past that deserves a special place in memory, as part of a wishful thinking or imagination of the victims. The setting point of my analysis is Alan Johnson’s 1982 remake of Ernst Lubitsch’s *To Be or Not to Be* (1942) and I continue with Radu Mihaileanu’s *Train*

de Vie (1998) and Roberto Benigni's *La Vita e Bella* (1997) to finally examine Quentin Tarantino's *Inglourious Basterds* (2009). From Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of parody to Linda Hutcheon's "historiographic metafiction", I examine the repercussions of parody as political tool, in order not only to deal with the notions of history, cultural identity and the past but, at the same time, to underline the necessity of alternative cinematic narratives as the only locus for a critique of the past, safer from a commodification of trauma.

**"Engaging with the Past: How TV programs create a sense of history" – Kate Warner
(University of Queensland)**

The past can be engaged with in ways that are not the formal study of history. I will examine how television programs dramatize engagement with the past. These engagements can be seen through landscape, setting or a sense of place; through archived objects created in the past; and through memories or the continued effects of the past in the present.

I will examine *Whitechapel* (ITV) – which creates a sense of the past through engagement with the landscape and popular history. Similarly *Glitch* (ABC) engages with landscape, history, how the past effects the present and how empathy and metaphor can be tools of historical examination. I will look at the archive genre where objects from the past continue to exist in the present. An example is *Shooting the Past* (BBC) wherein a photographic archive bridges the present and the past. Less obvious examples of the genre include American adventure programs such as *Warehouse 13* (SyFy) and *The Librarians* (TNT) where objects created in past affect the present. I will also discuss cold case dramas – where television detectives attempt to solve problems from the past because memory and past events effect the present.