

Rewriting War and Peace in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries: Contemporary British and American Literature

The research group “Rewriting War: The Paradigms of Contemporary War Fiction in English” is pleased to announce its first conference, “Rewriting War and Peace in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries: Contemporary British and American Literature”, to be held at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona from Thursday 02 April to Friday 03 April 2020.

The major wars and conflicts of recent times (the two world wars, the Holocaust, the Spanish Civil war, the Vietnam War, the Korean War, the Falkland Islands War, the Iran-Iraq War, the Gulf War, among others) have affected the lives and writings of second-and third-generation witnesses in contexts widely separated from the wars themselves. The conference aims to explore whether contemporary literature can effectively establish adequate representational spaces for approaching and reconsidering these past wars. Bearing in mind the need to approach the experience of war with extreme caution to avoid either the anxiety involved in the representation of conflict or the comforting reassurance of relying on “grand (war) narratives,” our conference will critically reconsider both the issue of “authenticity” in the use of historical sources and the need to access and interpret the past from contemporary settings.

We aim to shed light on the ethical dimensions of war writing and on the possibilities of closure, resolution or consolation in contemporary British and American literature, and to assess whether literature can be of use in the politics of peace-making and conflict resolution, contributing to the formation of fairer, more egalitarian societies.

The keynote lectures will be given by:

- Professor Jay Winter (Yale University): “Silences of the Great War: All the things we cannot hear”
- Professor Kate McLoughlin (Oxford University): “Mesopotamia: Writing the Wars in Iraq?”
- The novelist Rachel Seiffert: “Why do we write about war?”

We invite scholars of all career stages and representing various academic disciplines, including literary studies, theatre studies, film studies, memory studies, peace studies, gender studies, postcolonial studies, and other.

Three forms of presentation are encouraged: 20-minute conference papers, 60-minute roundtables consisting of 3-4 speakers (for which we will post instructions on our website) and 5-minute *pecha kucha*—lightning talks—for postgraduate participants to highlight their research.

Topics will be grouped around two main areas: (a) post-memory and (b) aesthetic articulations of war. The first is defined by attempts to recapture the immediacy of traumatic events that are not personally experienced but, instead, are socially apprehended through imaginative creativity; and the second severs links from the event’s participants or witnesses, though often imagining proxy figures to transmit authentication.

Suggested topics include but are not restricted to:

- The Narration of War: Representational anxieties. Grey Areas: Authentic vs. fake narratives; literature vs history. From Modern to Postmodern Wars. The Narrative Quality of Historical Facts: Historiographic metafiction.
- Gender and War: Destabilization of gender relations by war. Gender Opposition to War. Gender and the Impact of War. Gender Inequalities.
- The Aftermath of War: Demobilisation and social integration. Memory, Memorialization and Reconciliation. The Healing Power of Nostalgia. Post-traumatic Testimonies of Conflict.
- Representation of “Home” in the Aftermath of War. Haunted Spaces and Places. Gendered Spaces: Tension between domestic sphere and public arena.
- Post-memory: “Familial” and “affiliative” aspects. Official vs. Unofficial “War-After Writings.” Post-memory and Representational Anxieties.
- New Definitions of War and Peace. Conflict Transformation: If warfare is an extension of politics, is politics then an extension of warfare? Have civil liberties in peacetime been reduced as if we were at war?

Conference paper, roundtable and *pecha kucha* proposals should be no longer than 300 words in length and be accompanied by a short bio-note. Contributions will be peer evaluated, according to the significance of the topic, the importance of the contribution, and originality. Selected full manuscripts will appear in the conference proceedings to be published by the research group after the event.

Please submit proposals, indicating type of presentation, to rewritingwar2020@gmail.com by Sunday 01 September 2019.

Although the working language of the conference is English, we welcome discussion of issues outside the English-speaking world.