

Humanities Research Centre Annual Report

2011/2012



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WARWICK

In the course of the academic year, the Centre organised and supported a variety of conferences, lectures, seminars, and other events:

Inventive Inscription: The Organisation of Epigraphic Knowledge in the Nineteenth

Parish Studies Today - 10th Parish Research Symposium

Unplanned Wildernesses: Narrating the British Slum 1844 – 1951

Spaces of Work 1770 – 1830

The London Irish in the Long Eighteenth Century (1680-1830)

Beyond Experience :(Re) thinking Women, Violence and Trauma

Voicing the Community:
Questioning Gender and Race in French and Francophone Literature

British Society for the History of Science Postgraduate Conference

Politics and the Individual: French Experiences 1930-1950

On the Brink of Truth: The Work of Tomás Eloy Martínez

On 27 October 2011, Professor Marvin Carlson (CUNY) delivered the 20th **Donald Charlton Lecture** on 'Arabic Theatre: Oxymoron or Occidental Oversight?' He asked some fundamental questions about how Theatre Studies as a discipline developed, and where its blind spots lie.

Professor Carlson began by arguing that the early surveys of world theatre from the 1920s focussed on England, France, Germany and Italy. As time went by, other countries such as Russia and Spain were paid greater attention. Even non-European traditions such as those of Latin America or Japan (e.g., Kabuki) came under scholarly scrutiny and subsequently entered the handbooks of the discipline from the 1960s onwards. And yet, the Arabic theatrical culture remained nearly completely unstudied. In historical surveys, one would move from Ancient Egypt and Greece to Renaissance Europe. And allegedly the religion of Islam, opposed to pictorial representations, stifled any possible dramatic endeavours.

Moreover, Europeans and North American displayed a clear Eurocentric bias, even as they began to pay heed to Arabic theatre. Professor Carlson illustrated this with two examples. First, the best-known Arab playwright in the West is Tawfiq al-Ḥakīm (1898–1987), whose *The People of the Cave* (1933) propelled him to prominence in Europe. He also wrote a *King Oedipus* (1949) with a programmatic preface in which he argues to a marriage of Arabic and Greek literature. Second, the Arab author and director who currently has the greatest success on the Western stage is Sulaymān al-Bassām, a Kuwaiti with strong ties to the UK where he received a good part of his education. His *Richard III*, for example, was commissioned by the Royal Shakespeare Company for the Complete Works Festival, and was subsequently performed at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in New York. Again, the familiar theme (Shakespeare), adapted and directed by a UK-educated Arab, made the transition to the Western stage much smoother.

In conclusion, Professor Carlson persuasively argued that 'Arabic theatre' is by no way an oxymoron. Even in the Middle Ages, its shadow and puppet plays developed the sophistication that we also find in Aristophanes, as the example of Ibn Dāniyāl (1248–1310) shows. And in modern times, the Arab stage is extremely diverse and active. Professor

Carlson concluded by challenging his audience to continue to ask itself why the discipline of Theatre Studies has largely overlooked the contributions of the Arabs to the development of dramatic art.

Patrick Keiller was the **HRC Visiting Fellow** for 2011-12, currently a Visiting Research Fellow at the OU. He studied architecture at University College London and fine art in the Department of Environmental Media at the RCA. He is a director, writer, cinematographer and lecturer. His films include *London* (1994), *Robinson in Space* (1997), *The Dilapidated Dwelling* (2000) and *Robinson in Ruins* (2010).

During his week-long visit he gave a series of seminars and workshops to staff and students which included:

- **Film in Pedagogy** - a seminar to discuss how film and film-making can contribute to the undergraduate curriculum
- **The view from the train: linearity, narrative and cinema**
- **Film-making as research** - a discussion of research methods
- **Journeys to sites of scientific and historic interest** - an overview of three exploratory projects
- **The Great Malady: the problem of dwelling**
- **Robinson In Space** – film screening and discussion

The main event was a film screening of 'Robinson In Ruins' followed by Q&A in the Arts Centre Cinema, chaired by Jackie Labbe.

Sidelights on Shakespeare – Seminar Series

The HRC was pleased to continue to sponsor the new seminar series entitled Sidelights on Shakespeare. This seminar series embraced the plurality of Shakespeare(s), historical and contemporary, and offered unusual and thought-provoking perspectives from scholars working in a diverse range of faculties, disciplines and theoretical fields. Through sideways explorations of the ways in which aspects of Shakespeare are interpreted, packaged, enlisted and attacked, the series illuminated what it is that continues to make Shakespeare so broadly important. Speakers included Professor Thomas Docherty (English and Comparative Literary Studies), speaking on '**Celtic Shakespeare**' and Dr Raphael Lyne from Cambridge University who spoke about '**The Shakespearean Grasp: Hands and Brains in the Theatre**'. Both lectures demonstrated the breadth of subjects Sidelights on Shakespeare wants to discuss, from culture and economics to science and performance.

Next year the series plans to continue to pull together other divergent interests from engaging speakers, including Dr Erin Sullivan and Professor Ewan Fernie from The Shakespeare Institute, University of Birmingham.

For further information: <http://go.warwick.ac.uk/shakespeare>

Arts Faculty Seminar Series

Once again the HRC was able to sponsor the Arts Faculty Seminar Series enabling postgraduate students from the Faculty of Arts to meet every few weeks for research seminars. The aim of the seminar series was to broaden awareness of the doctoral work taking place within the faculty; the events also created a relaxed forum for young researchers to practice presenting their work. The seminars provided an opportunity for all students to offer valuable feedback on this work, strengthening their critical tools and expanding their inter-disciplinary experiences, and fostering a great sense of community.

The HRC continues to **support interdisciplinary arts and humanities research** in a variety of ways.

Newsletter

The 9th issue of the HRC Newsletter was published. The Newsletter showcases research being carried out by the arts and humanities community at Warwick as well as advertising forthcoming HRC events. It is mailed out to the arts and humanities departments of every major UK HEI as well as other arts organisations and many overseas institutions.

Doctoral Fellowships

This year the Centre was able to sponsor three (internal) Doctoral Fellowships. The Fellows contribute to the life of the HRC by organising a one-day postgraduate interdisciplinary conference and are given financial support for their PHD dissertation research. The fellowships were awarded to:

Emily Andrew (History)

What is old age? New Perspectives from the humanities

Jonathan Durham (French)

Theatre at the Crossroads of Language and Genre

Chris Maughan and George Tfoouli (English)

Planetary Cancer: Growth, Economy and Culture in an Era of Climate Catastrophe

HRC/Warwick Series in the Humanities: Pickering and Chatto Publishers: the new publishing agreement with Pickering and Chatto, the Warwick Series in the Humanities, now has its first contracted monograph. *Classicism and Romanticism in Italian Literature: Leopardi's Discourse on Romantic Poetry* by Fabio Camilletti (Italian) will be published in early 2013 http://www.pickeringchatto.com/monographs/classicism_and_romanticism_in_italian_literature.

Two other proposals have been accepted:

Rome, Postmodern Narratives of a Cityscape; Dom Holdaway and Filippo Trentin (Dept of Italian)

Representing Women's Health 1780-1914; Fran Scott, Kate Scarth and Ji Chung (Dept of English)

The **HRC Postgraduate Scholars programme** continues to flourish. A smaller group this year took on a very large topic: the meaning of the Humanities and Humanities research across subjects. After sharing their work over the first two terms, the Scholars pulled together an oral history project that included an installation in the Arts Centre. Next year's group is in the process of forming and once again its members will undertake the challenge of interdisciplinary work.

The **HRC Staff Fellows** programme began this year with 6 participants. Devised for the benefit of probationary staff as well as new postdocs in the Faculty (and including relevant Philosophy probationers), this program allows colleagues to meet regularly to share work,

discuss their academic duties and development, give peer feedback on research, and work towards a group project of some sort to present to the Faculty.

The 11/12 Fellows met on two separate occasions, and identified the collaboration of research interests as a priority as members of the HRC. In the first meeting short presentations of research interests led to a brainstorming session about possible thematic crossovers in these fields, and in plans for an event/events that could publicise work of the HRC. It was concluded that the interests revolved around the theme of narrative and history in the wide sense.

In the second meeting Michael Harrigan, Jessica Wardhaugh, Paul Botley, Fabio Camilletti, Benjamin Bâcle, Stephen Purcell, Will Eaves agreed to set up a workshop entitled 'How History Travels: the Translation of Experience and Narrative' on 9th May. A series of 20 minute presentations were followed by a Round Table on the subject. Several fellows commented on their wish to make both presentations and the Round Table a focus for exploration of methodological reflections and crossovers between departments, and between specialists with widely differing interests. It is intended that the Round Table will enable a coalescing of discussions around fields of research that could enable a conference of much greater impact.

Future Events

We are pleased to announce that Prof. Cary Wolfe, Bruce and Elizabeth Dunlevie Professor of English at Rice University, has been invited to deliver the **21st Donald Charlton Lecture**. We look forward to welcoming him to campus in 2012-13.

The HRC **Visiting Fellow** for 2012-13 will be Roberto Tejada, Endowed Professor of Art History at Meadows School of the Arts, Southern Methodist University. Roberto Tejada is the author of many books that include, most recently, *National Camera: Photography and Mexico's Image Environment* (University of Minnesota Press, 2009), and *Celia Alvarez Muñoz* (UCLA/CSRC; University of Minnesota Press, 2009). He has served also as co-curator on the exhibitions "Manuel Álvarez Bravo: Optical Parables" at the J. Paul Getty Museum (2001), and "Luis Gisbert: Loud Image," at the Hood Museum of Dartmouth College (2004). His research has earned awards from the Creative Capital | Warhol Foundation (2009) and from the National Endowment for the Arts (2007).

Forthcoming **Conferences** including the Doctoral Fellowship winners:

What is old age? New Perspectives from the humanities

Theatre at the Crossroads of Language and Genre

Planetary Cancer: Growth, Economy and Culture in an Era of Climate Catastrophe

Shared Visions II

Contested Words: Analysing the Early Modern English Corpus

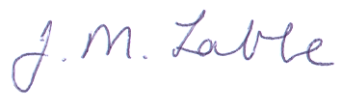
Beckett and Brain Science

Edward Bond – One-day Symposium

Concluding Remarks

Despite continued cuts to public funding, humanities research at Warwick continues to grow and attracts increasing amounts of research funding and public attention. The work undertaken by scholars at our university demonstrates, to colleagues at Warwick outside our disciplines and to the wider academic and general public that arts and humanities research not only maintains its relevance, but that it sets the agenda of our modern world. The HRC would like to express its appreciation for the continued support, both financial and academic, of the University of Warwick.

Finally, as Director I would like to note the continuing exemplary service of the HRC Secretary, Sue Dibben, to whose administrative skill and dedication to the aims and ideals of the HRC and the rest of the Arts Faculty are deeply indebted.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "J. M. Labbe". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Professor Jackie Labbe, July 2012.