

Association for Welsh Writing in English Annual Conference 2010

Canons and canon-building: framing the literatures of Wales

March 26-28, 2010 at Gregynog Hall

Description

Do we need a canon of Welsh writing in English? What might be at stake in the choices made during the establishment of such a canon? The business, meanings and politics of post-devolution canon-formation will be the focus of the **twenty-second annual conference of the Association for Welsh Writing in English at Gregynog Hall in Powys, Wales, UK from March 26-28, 1010**. This conference will examine the question of canonicity and its complex connections with issues of nationality, gender, class, race and sexuality in a Welsh context. The establishment of Welsh writing in English as an area of serious literary critical study, itself barely a generation old, has coincided with the recovery of other bodies of neglected writing by marginalised writers. Such recovery work, however, has involved the radical questioning of literary value judgements and the recognition of the social, economic, political and cultural influences which make any canon a fabricated construct. Now just over a decade after Welsh devolution, the republication of out-of-print texts can still be seen as a political necessity in making available a literary heritage which has been neglected and forgotten and which contributes to a sense of national identity. Such republication offers exciting possibilities to literary criticism. But who should be included and on what grounds? What are the risks and tensions involved in the enterprise of canon-building and how might we negotiate them?

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS:

Professor Dai Smith, Swansea University

Professor Smith is the Raymond Williams Chair in Cultural History at Swansea University and Series Editor of the Welsh Assembly Government's important *Library of Wales* initiative, publishing classic works written in English from or about Wales. His most recent book, the critically-acclaimed *Raymond Williams: A Warrior's Tale* (2008), was a major authorized biography of Wales' most influential twentieth-century intellectual figure. It was selected as biography of the year by Archbishop Rowan Williams, was *The Guardian* Book of the Week in May 2008 and was on the 2009 Wales Book of the Year Long List. He was Professor in the History of Wales at Cardiff University from 1985 to 1992 and Editor to BBC Radio Wales and Head of Programmes (English language) at BBC Wales from 1992 to 2001 when he was appointed Pro-Vice-Chancellor at the University of Glamorgan. Amongst his numerous publications are path

breaking histories of the South Wales miners, *The Fed* (1980), with Dr Hywel Francis MP, and of the social significance of rugby in *Wales, Fields of Praise* (1986), with Professor Gareth Williams. He has written widely on literature and society – *Aneurin Bevan and The World of South Wales* (1993) and *Wales: A Question for History* (1988) – books in which artificial discipline boundaries are deliberately broken down. For television he has presented and scripted a number of award-winning documentaries and, as a broadcaster, sought to deepen popular appreciation of Welsh culture and history.

Professor Berthold Schoene, Manchester Metropolitan University

Professor Schoene is Director of the English Research Institute at Manchester Metropolitan University. His research interests include post-war and contemporary British fiction, particularly twentieth and twenty-first century Scottish literature, gender theory & masculinity studies, literary cosmopolitics and post-devolution nationalism. His most recent book, *The Cosmopolitan Novel* (2009), argues for the existence of an emerging subgenre of the novel in contemporary British fiction which looks to the global community rather than the nation state and represents a new cosmopolitanism that responds to global socioeconomic formations. He edited *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature* (2007) and is currently working in *The Edinburgh Companion to Irvine Welsh* (2010) and preparing a collection of critical essays on *Scottish Writing in the 21st Century*. His other work on Scottish literature includes *The Making of Orkadia: Narrative Identity in the Prose Work of George Mackay Brown* (1995), which reads the cultural and literary history of the Orkney Islands as a ‘microcosmic’ case study for Scottish literature and culture as a whole, as well as numerous articles. Other publications include *Writing Men: Literary Masculinities from Frankenstein to the New Man* (2000), a co-edited special issue of *Men and Masculinities* on “Literary Masculinities” (2002) and a co-edited collection of critical essays, *Posting the Male: Masculinities in Post-War and Contemporary British Writing* (2003), and *Mary Shelley. Frankenstein. A Reader’s Guide to Essential Criticism* (2000).

Readings

Poetry readings by **Deryn Rees-Jones** (Author of *The Memory Tray*, 1994; *Signs Round a Dead Body*, 1998; *Quiver*, 2004; and *Falls and Finds*, 2008; editor of *Modern Women Poets*, 2005, and *Consorting with Angels: Essays on Modern Women Poets*, 2005; and co-editor of *Contemporary Women’s Poetry*, 2000) and **Zoë Skoulding** (Editor of *Poetry Wales*, and author of *The Mirror Trade*, 2004; *Remains of a Future City*, 2008; and *From Here*, 2008).

Conference Organisers: Dr Alice Entwistle and Dr Diana Wallace, HaSS, University of Glamorgan, Pontypridd, CF37 1DL dwallace@glam.ac.uk aentwist@glam.ac.uk
Dr Jeni Williams, School of Creative Arts and Humanities, Trinity University College, Carmarthen, SA31 3EP j.m.williams@trinity-cm.ac.uk.

THE ASSOCIATION FOR WELSH WRITING IN ENGLISH AT GREGYNOG

The idea for the conference arose after the founding of the Association of Welsh Writing in English (*AWWE*) some 20 years ago. Well before the current concern with identity became fashionable, *AWWE* was encouraging the study of Welsh writing in English in schools and colleges, arranging for the re-printing of texts which had gone out of print, and promoting awareness of the English-language literature of Wales.

There have been stimulating meetings in the friendly ambiance of Gregynog Hall for the past two decades. One of the unique features of the *AWWE* conferences is that, in addition to the more usual scholarly activity, there is a chance to meet and hear major novelists and poets. The conference themes vary from year to year ensuring that discussion is always fresh and interesting. Recent conferences, for example, considered life writing in Wales (2007), margins and peripheries in Welsh writing in English (2008), and Welsh writing in comparative contexts (2009).

