Jonathan Baines
Hertford College Oxford

Philo-parenthesists: Paul Muldoon and William Empson

Dale Peck brusquely dismisses much contemporary fiction as reading 'like a footnote that doesn't know when to stop'. My paper applies this slogan to contemporary poetry but, as it were, reverses the polarity of Peck's condemnation by sketching the appeal of the footnote as a model for the modern lyric, and by reading the anxiety about 'when to stop' as one of contemporary poetry's most distinctive boons. My principal focus will be the work of Paul Muldoon, whose
poetry, with weird aplomb, is wont to make room for a gloss of the word 'boreen':

a diminutive form of the Gaelic bothar, 'a road',
from bo, 'a cow', and thar
meaning, in this case, something like 'athwart'

I examine the appeal of annotation as a vital lyric mode, positing the existence of a broken line connecting Muldoon with that most abundantly annotated poet and annotator, William Empson. The line that runs between the two is not so much one of influence, as of affinity. In very different ways, both writers are, to borrow Coleridge's self-description, 'philo-parenthesists': they are enamoured of digression. In their prose writings as well as their poetry, this predilection is a source of generous comedy and an exploration of the complex pathos bound up with the ongoing information explosions of our age. As Empson remarked in his note to his Poems (1935): 'there is no longer a reasonably small field which may be taken as general knowledge'. This sense of loss disrupts a settled hierarchy between text and footnote and points both towards the interpretative feasts of Empson's prose and the qualified despair of his poetry. Muldoon's poems at their best succeed in turning to their own advantage the knowledge that there might be no stopping footnotes.

Tudor Balinisteanu
PhD Student, Faculty of Arts
University of Glasgow

Ingénue or Harlot? Explorations of Literary Constructions of the Persephone Figure in Eavan Boland's "The Pomegranate" and Liz Lochhead's "Lucy's Diary"

In this paper I will examine versions of Persephone's story to see how its constitutive elements have been corroborated, on the one hand, to create, and on the other, to challenge, a social myth. I begin by exploring a number of elements in the story as rendered in Classical Greek culture that have been used to reconstitute an ancient myth in modern times. The ancient myth of Kore/Persephone serves to define the identity of woman (as pre-sexual girl, wife and mother), and the ritual of erotic encounters that differentiates the roles of men and women, in terms of abduction and temptation.

Eavan Boland's poem "The Pomegranate" effects a separation between the realms of masculinity and femininity: if femininity has been narrated as abduction and temptation this has been done by men; women fulfil the social rituals to which the

narration subjects them; but the loss is men's, for the nature of the enchantment of women's sexual awakening remains incomprehensible to them.

In her poem "Lucy's Diary" Liz Lochhead draws on the myth of Dracula to contextualize the sexual connotations of rituals of abduction, enchantment and temptation that underlie Persephone's story, with those of a modern myth. Here, however, the roles envisioned as socially legitimate in ritual are challenged. The young woman becomes an abductress herself but, unlike Stoker's sanitized abductress, whose harlotry was punished to recuperate the ingénue, Lucy reclaims the position of both ingénue and harlot and thus engenders understandings of women that are not reducible to polarised idealizations.

Dr. Mark Berninger
Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz

Germany as a Theme and Metaphor in Tony Harrison's Under the Clock

A German thread runs through a number of the poems in Tony Harrison's latest collection. Harrison confronts the legacy of Nazi Germany (e.g. in "Queueing for Charon", "A Question of Sentences", and "Eggshells") and combines this with a view on the tradition of German poetry in "The Grilling" and "über al", his translation of one of Walther von der Vogelweide's poems. Being the political writer he is, Harrison transforms partly biographical and partly imagined elements into a poetical discussion of politics. He conjures up the shock of the Holocaust: "[…] I'd only seen / Belsen on newsreels but the sight / I saw at eight on that big screen / fell on me like a blight. / It clouded all my childish fun." ("Queueing for Charon). But Harrison transcends his "old Hun-hatred" (ibid.) and also considers British guilt, e.g. in the bombing of Würzburg. References to German poets like von der Vogelweide and Goethe evoke the question of the poet's role in a world marked by destruction. These aspects blend with the other poems of the collection, which also deal with war, loss, and politics. Within the collection, Germany functions as a metaphor for the ways in which a poet can engage with war crimes and mass murder, a poetical argument which seems central to Harrison's work at the moment.

In my paper I will analyse these recent poems and will show how they contribute to a multi-facetted image of contemporary politics, history, and the function of poetry. In this, Harrison's skill of drawing from various sources and his pan-European imagination will be highlighted. This underlines that he continues to write from the position of a political witness who transforms his observations intocomplex images, nagging questions, and intensive language.

Dr Vicki Bertram
Dept of English
Manchester Metropolitan University

'I' is not me: the gender politics of selfhood in contemporary poetry

Contemporary poets who make frequent use of the first person 'I' in their poems are careful to emphasise the distance between these personae and their 'real' selves.

Eavan Boland insists on this distinction; Sujata Bhatt has made a similar inference, commenting, ‘I wish in my daily life I could be as confident as the voice in my poems’. Jackie Kay’s latest collection substitutes a cast of her head for a photograph, to draw attention to the idea that all representations are constructed; and the collection’s title, Life Mask, implies a layer of fabrication that qualifies the highly personal tone and the book’s subject matter: relationship breakdown.

It is no coincidence that my examples are all women poets. It would seem that women are more at ease with the first person than their male contemporaries and, concomitantly, many of them seem to find the assumption of an apparently objective, depersonalised voice either more difficult to adopt, or less appealing. However, the correctives cited above, and other women poets’ deliberate avoidance of the first person lyric ‘I’, are testament to contemporary poets’ awareness of the problems that accompany this ostensibly subjective poetic persona. ‘I’ tends to diminish authority. ‘I’ is often equated with the (usually derogatory) label ‘confessional writing’. ‘I’ exposes. But what are the strengths of ‘I’?

In my presentation I want to consider these matters in relation to the question of audience. Apprentice poets are familiar with advice about the importance of ‘finding one’s voice’; less attention is given to the matter of finding one’s audience. *Who am I writing to? Whose presence am I conscious of? Who do I wish to be listening?* are vital, but overlooked questions. How do the answers affect poets’ choice of personae? And, crucially, how is the way we listen affected by gender dynamics?

Zoë Brigley
Warwick Postgraduate Fellow / Part Time Tutor
The University of Warwick

’So This Becomes You’: Deployment of the Clone Poem in Deryn Rees-Jones' ‘Quiver’

This paper explores Deryn Rees-Jones' use of the clone-poem in her novel-in-verse, *Quiver*. Using Estelle Irizarry's definition, I explore the history of the clone-poem and I show how the technique of 'cloning' is different to parody and pastiche. I briefly explore Irizarry's examples of Federico García Lorca's and the Nicuraguan poet, Ernesto Cardenal and I explore the new terms that were invented to describe their strategies: such as 'téchnica de sustituciones alucinantes' (the technique of hallucinatingsubstitutions) and 'arte de injerto' (the art of graft).

The British poet, Rees-Jones, has adopted similar methods to the Spanish-language poets discussed. Focussing on her essay, 'Nothing That is Not There and Nothing That Is', I explore her demand for there to be an echo of voices in poetry. I examine Rees-Jones reference to her poem, 'Song for Winter', in which she tries to capture the rhythms of Rilke's first ode, in order to comment about the poet's fragmented selfhood.

Quiver is the culmination of Rees-Jones' poetics as it privileges the clone-trope. The first example to be examined is 'A Dream' which clones S.T. Coleridge's 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner'. I discuss how Rees-Jones' protagonist is haunted by the clone just as the Mariner is preoccupied by the albatross. Using R.L. Brett's interpretation of

the mariner as poet and albatross as inspiration, I examine how in cloning this poem, Rees-Jones signals that such doubling can be a means to find inspiration.

I also discuss 'Clone' which assimilates Paul Muldoon's 'As'. Rees-Jones corrupts Muldoon's riddling original and its specific references to history, linguistics, Scotland and macho culture. Rees-Jones retains the riddling tone but transplants the references with the image of the clone. Consequently, 'Clone' becomes a declaration of the spirit of her collection and her postmodern poetics

Rachel Buxton
Oxford Brookes University

Refrains and registers in Paul Muldoon's 'Moy Sand and Gravel'

Much of Muldoon's poetry is structured by repetition and return. This is especially the case with those poems, such as 'Yarrow' and 'Incantata', which write of loss. Repetition and return remain organizing principles in Muldoon's most recent collection, *Moy Sand and Gravel*, but the volume also marks something of a departure in its particular reliance on refrain and near-refrain. 'An Old Pit Pony', 'The Loaf', and 'Homesickness' best typify this tendency, but 'At the Sign of the Black Horse, September 1999' also reveals the shift in approach. Much like Muldoon's other large-scale, collection-concluding poems it employs repeated rhyme-schemes, but it differs in that its reprises, which include snatches both of other Muldoon poems and of the work of other poets, seem so much more blatant.

'At the Sign of the Black Horse' also raises awkward issues of style and tone. It is disconcerting in its defiant clash of registers, and its moments of seeming flippancy force the reader to ask questions about propriety and decorum - especially when those moments coincide with the poem's engagement with occasions of historical outrage. Other poems in the collection - such as 'The Loaf', which elegises those Irish navvies who built the canal between Delaware and Raritan but sustains a somewhat unnerving nursery-rhyme-like refrain - raise related concerns.

In this paper I propose to explore the relationship between refrain and register in Moy Sand and Gravel. I will suggest that the relationship can be illuminated by reading Muldoon through Louis MacNeice - specifically through MacNeice's parable poems, which arguably provide a context within which to situate both Muldoon's use of refrain and his poetry's instabilities of tone.

Prof Brian Caraher
'Away and See' the Line, A Way to Sense the Line:
Rupturing Lines of Communication in Contemporary Anglophone Poetry

Lurking beneath the pseudonymn 'Andrew Belis,' Samuel Beckett published in *The Bookman* for August 1934 a strident and contentious defense of the poetry and poetic practice of "Recent Irish Poetry," by which 'Belis' meant poets such as Thomas MacGreevy as well as the unnamed Beckett. Having learnt, indeed been inculcated with, such poetic forms as the sonnet and prosodic techniques such as metre and rhyme, recent Irish poets, according to Belis/Beckett felt driven to design 'ruptures in

the lines of communication.' Such testy challenges to poetic orthodoxy and calls to modernise the idiom of verse are themselves periodic and recurrent, at least since the 1790s. One lyric generation's bellowing or belligerent 'Belis' becomes a subsequent generation's 'lost leader' or even inculcated burden. However, Beckett's brief on behalf of a once modernist intervention still makes a crucial point about the dynamics and pragmatics of the lyric line in contemporary Anglophone poetry. Contemporary poets work against as much as with the tenor of the line and the expectations of recurrent modern poetic forms. To rupture learned lines of lyric communication is to renew the line, to learn to see and sense the line and its perceptual and cognitive capabilities once again.

This proposed paper will draw attention to the recurrent poetic problematic that Beckett's 1934 review/manifesto sets but juxtapose it with the seventh chapter, "Rhythm and Rhyme," of Louis MacNeice's 1938 study *Modern Poetry: A Personal Essay.* There are broad issues of agreement, yet MacNeice's failure to sense the playful, disobedient rupturing of the pentameter line in the opening phrase of Milton's *Paradise Lost* ('Of Man's First Disobedience and the Fruit') inadvertently makes Beckett's point: new poets rupture the lines of communication in order to renew or to refashion the line. Milton once willfully sinned against the pentameter line, but a later generation can't hear or sense the original sin and its lyric fruit. We are circumscribed within what Richard Wilbur in *Mayflies* (2004) calls 'our stiff geometries,' our formal metrics and learnt measures of the line that leave us tone-deaf 'in trackless woods.'

I plan to look at three contemporary poets and poems in order to bear out the implications of the point about the modern and contemporary poetic line presented above. Carol Ann Duffy's "Away and See" from her 1993 collection *Mean Time* offers a contemporary touchstone for what Belis/Beckett praises in "Recent Irish Poetry" and MacNeice can't sense in the opening line of *Paradise Lost*. Duffy's *carpe diem* poem about transgressive love and 'new fruits' syncopates the Anglophone or English alexandrine line, but in so doing produces a metapoetic lyric ('. . . the flight/ of syllables, wingspan stretching a noun . . ') which dances about the the metronomic 'mean time' of the standard sequence of quatrains. Richard Murphy's "Wellington Testimonial" – one of fifty, well-crafted Shakespearean sonnets which make up the capstone sequence of his *Collected Poems* (2000) – strives 'to maintain a clean laconic style' and certainly does so by marshalling fourteen perfectly-stressed lines of iambic pentameter: 'I've kept my feet, but lost my nosey flair.' Is Murphy's 'clean laconic style' the measure of the contemporary Irish and British poetic line, or is the loss of 'nosey flair' not just a gesture toward the changed historical fortunes of parades that pass the Wellington obelisk in Dublin's Phoenix Park? What would be the fruit of disobedience if one were to rupture 'the lines of communication' in and for the Shakespearean sonnet and capture a 'nosey flair' for Robert Duncan's 'exploded' sonnets and sequence of twenty-five sonnet-like meditations on 'The Structure of Rime' spread across his finest three volumes of work, *The Opening of the Field* (1960), *Roots and Branches* (1964), *Bending the Bow* (1968)? I wish to explore this question as a contemporary recurrence of the problematic that Beckett/Belis and MacNeice in the 1930s can be glimpsed posing for an earlier generation of poets. Carol Ann Duffy's "Away and See" will play the hero(ine) of the paper, negotiating form, line, disobedience and brilliant fruit in a manner that Murphy's well-sculpted monuments in contemporary lyric stone never rise toward but that Duncan's

relentlessly abstract and abstracted 'sonnets' would evoke but never find or sense the felt measure. Sinning fruitfully against the received or inherited line, I will argue, is the measure of the contemporary Anglophone line of poetry.

Dr. Brendan Corcoran
Indiana State University

Scoring Heaney's Undermusic: Grief and Meter

"Audenesque," Heaney's elegy for the Russian poet Joseph Brodsky responds to the death of a poet and friend and presents a coda that lyrically delineates the terms of Heaney's peculiarly elegiac poetics. Like Auden's elegy for W. B. Yeats, this poem ultimately speaks to the question of what the lyric and in particular the elegy does. This
paper begins by considering the remarkable couplet, "Trochee, trochee, falling: thus/Grief and metre order us," which exposes the personal and poetic concerns structuring Heaney's lyric response to not only this particular death but death as an equally abstract and literal force.

Grief, as the condition of loss marked by human suffering, and metre,as a synecdoche for the endeavors of poetry and even language in general to articulate human experience, constitute, for Heaney, two axes orienting us in the world. Strangely, grief and metre both serve as ordering principles in the human response to loss across time. However, in looking at this non-consolatory response to Brodsky's death in light of Heaney's other elegies for poets, this paper addresses not only the dubious position of consolation in the modern elegy but the suggestion that such elegies do something more than mourn or memorialize. "Audenesque" is a paradigmatic example of how the elegy for a poet, by nesting one poet or poetry in another through a complex chain of reference—in this case extending through Yeats, Auden, Eliot, Brodsky, and Heaney—questions not only the relation of poetry to its living source in the person (who must die) but the relation of poetry to death. How is the status of the living poet's work distinguished from that of a dead poet? And what happens when a succession of "dead" voices speak through the living about one of their own? I consider how the elegy for another poet ultimately privileges the question not only of what the elegy transmits but what kind of transmission the elegy itself figures.

Claire Crowther
Kingston University

The 'Resurrected Line' in contemporary grandmother poems

The grandmother poem, written by a grandchild, is a little box, a coffin, set and justified – until it is broken open to establish a dialogue between two people who, typically, do not or hardly know each other yet are interdependent for identity and even existence. This enthralling and puzzling idea expresses itself with formal means, a major one of which is the line. I shall contrast the widespread grandmother poem written by the bereaved with those written by professional poets, the former a moving

way to complete a relationship, the latter a means to demonstrate the life of the living rather than the dead

I shall show how, in the contemporary grandmother poem written by such poets as Michele Roberts, Jorie Graham, Eavan Boland, E.A. Markham, the overall pattern of lines, ebbing and flowing the poem along the semantic line, creates a complexity equal to the relationship between grandchild and grandmother, one person translating into the other. I shall describe the many ways in which the single line works within such a poem to suggest what has been broken in time, the life of the older woman, to enact repair by the younger poet and to 'place', rather than replace, the grandmother in present time.

To give one simple example: the line, if by nature wounded, is capable of active regeneration which is an approach to optimism explored in the grandmother poem. The elements of the word 'grandmother' contain the future just as a first line is needed to begin the rest of the poem. Though she dies, just as the line dies at every ending, she is reborn in time over and over again, as is each line. The new poet often 'becomes' a lengthened last line, romantically investing in the timelessness of a complete poem, and last lines of grandmother poems frequently declare the apotheosis of matriarch and artwork alike. Where the poet falters at triumphalism, the last line also falls short.

Although many contemporary grandmother poems echo past eras in song-like short lines that nostalgically hold a repetitive simple syntax, each notch of words suggesting deepening 'cuts' of memory' – overall, line length and internal break are deployed in stunning variety. Even a metrically ancient line, in a tombstone-like block of medium-length lines, can be flexed to show pain and rebirth as the young poet borrows 'back the bones' in a healing song. I shall show that, where a poet such as Jorie Graham tosses the reader an ambitious exploding line, this ancient sub-genre, allied to elegy and autobiography, is resurrected brilliantly, like its main character, into contemporary life.

Abi Curtis
University of Sussex, Brighton.

Conversations with a Machine: Re-thinking the Relationship Between Poetry and Critical Discourse.

Poetry is difficult to talk or write about critically. Scholarly discussions of poetry tend to obscurity and abstraction, or else a dismantling in which the power of the poem is reduced to a pile of images, verbs, rhymes and metrical arrangements.

I aim to discuss poetry through the metaphor of the machine. This motif is used repeatedly in explorations of poetry and I intend to explore the possible convergences between them. The idea of the machine is something deliberately pieced together, a structure of components which may take years to create, but whose effects are deployed quickly and unpredictably. More than the sum of its parts, the poem is like a trap set for the reader to walk into and set off at an unknown moment in the future. By which point, the poet has steered clear. It is not the poet’s voice that comes to us, not

a speaker with a position, but the voice of the automaton which he has created and set for us to trigger. This mechanical 'being' is my subject.

Focussing on two contemporary poets, Alice Oswald and Robin Robertson and their innovative uses of form and musicality. Taking in responses to poetry including those of Paul Valéry, Cynthia Chase, Nicholas Abraham and Sigmund Freud, I will discuss how these arise from and are created through poetry, as opposed to demonstrating a critical authority. Perhaps the only way to 'get at' the poem is suggested by these examples: to eat the cake, or to laugh with the joke may be the best keys to 'understanding' them. In other words, not to try and assimilate the poem to our understanding, but to allow it to assimilate us. I will discuss the possibilities of relating to a poem suggested by responses which go beyond critical mastery and illustrate the effects of engaging with a poem on its own terms.

Dr Joan Dargan
Department of Modern Languages and Literatures
St. Lawrence University

The Poetic Line in Paula Meehan's 'Six Sycamores'

In her recent work Six Sycamores (Belfast: Crowquill, 2004), Paula Meehan has created a sequence of poems alternating two poetic forms, two poetic lines. Commemorating the opening of a building at St. Stephen's Green, Dublin, and inspired by a provision that original owners of buildings on the square plant and tend sycamores, Meehan considers the interplay of habitat and life. She writes formally in sonnets to evoke the characteristics of specific buildings, works of matter and labor, manual and esthetic; on the facing pages, the poetic voice varies, speaking colloquially and in various personae, including the schoolgirl, a laborer, a beggar; lines are short, not rhymed. Meehan uses the line to reflect both heightened occasion and unscripted reality, the ceremony inaugurating a building on the one hand and the passersby from all walks of life and with their own preoccupations on the other. The sonnet suggesting high culture and the durability of art has as its counterweight the short Zen-like vignette drawn from vital passing moments. The symbol of the tree allows Meehan to accord equal dignity to works of art and intellect and to each individual response to the fullness of life. In this way, she makes of her commissioned work a fitting celebration of the new building: the solid, traditional, yet newly-minted line of the sonnet implicates the scale and aspiration of architecture; the short line following the pattern of living speech, of breathing, offsets the grand work as a reminder of its context in an urban setting, visible to all—or invisible, incidental, to those absorbed in their own lives. In Meehan's hands, architecture becomes "liminal"—a democratic threshold into space where sonnet and ordinary speech are compatible, where the line of Hopkins and the immediate response to daily life are in dialogue and bound together

Alexandra Davies
University of Hull

Poetry and Dyslexia: The Flawed Muse?

In 1978, Crichley and Crichley speculated whether'… verse is an easier medium for one who is lame in …self-expression…'. They systematically assess the qualities that make poetry less demanding than the rigours of prose and therefore suitable for dyslexics. Poets can avoid difficult spelling and syntax and the words chosen can 'be relatively vague, but allusive, evocative, stimulating, metaphorical'. This paper investigates the relationship between dyslexia and some poets' facility with language. It will argue that a dyslexic mode of thinking is an advantage in poetry because of fresh imaginative perspectives that dyslexics can bring to the form.
A 2003 workshop at the University of Bath entitled 'Poetry/ Language/ Dyslexia' used ' the works of dyslexic poets…'and facilitated writing by dyslexic participants. Mo Kiziewicz, the course convener, believes that there are dyslexic rhythms, identifying W.S. Graham's 'Nightfishing' as characteristic. I would add Dylan Thomas to the list and argue that a dyslexic diagnosis would answer many of the features that have puzzled critics. Moynihan notes Thomas's wilful 'syntactical congestion'. A reviewer of Graham's poems, commenting on the opening of 'Nightfishing': 'Very gently struck/ The quarter night bell', noted that '…the whole tension …focuses on the verb…' Living poets are speaking out about being dyslexic. Benjamin Zephaniah had been 'playing with words' since he was five and gave his first performance at eleven despite not discovering his dyslexia until adulthood.
I believe that there is still an implicit assumption among non-dyslexics that because dyslexia is associated with varying degrees of difficulty with written language that individuals who display facility with language cannot be "really" dyslexic. West points out that W.B. Yeats was 'dyslexic, even in the most restricted sense of the term' but notes 'extreme incredulity' when this is suggested. (300)

Irene De Angelis
University of Turin

'The Labyrinth to Which I Hadn't Got the Key': Ciaran Carson's view of Japan.

'Illegible writings on the wall', 'crowds swarming beneath the acid rain', 'the snows of Fujiama turning to slush': these are some of the images which Japan begets in Ciaran Carson's *The Twelfth of Never* (1999). His sonnets in alexandrines are half dreams, half hallucinations of 'yin and yang, politics and crack cocaine.' As he stated in Mitzuko Ohno's interview 'Basho, Zen and More' (2002), his 1998 journey to Tokyo was a fundamental experience. This paper will examine the Japanese 'influences' on Ciaran Carson, which he derived from Japanese art and haiku poetry.

In an atmosphere partly inspired by Hokusai's prints, partly by *Blade Runner*, Japan is represented as an immense, mysterious labyrinth, in which Hibernia 'beckons' to the poet. As some of his Irish contemporaries, Carson seems to go Eastward to find the Self. In Sinéad Morrissey's terms, 'fishing on the Sea of Japan ' he was 'burdened with presents from being away.' I will argue that Japan has enriched Carson with 'clarity, movement and sense of humour', the qualities which make Hokusai's prints so unique.

Aaron Deveson
University of East Anglia

David Constantine and the Poetry of Presence

The poetry of David Constantine is an exceptional instance of what Michael Donaghy calls 'writing on the side of humanity'. In a short credo, 'Common and Peculiar', written for the Bloodaxe publication, Strong Words, Constantine writes, 'The conditions of modern life are taking us further and further out of community and reality … actually into insensateness. Poetry is a way of countering that.' Seamus Heaney's notion of 'redress' (and behind it Adorno's claims for the autonomous lyric) radiates from Constantine's work, in paratext and poem alike. The poetic language he puts in the service of this imagined counter-culture, 'neither too far away from nor too close to common speech', is unashamedly Romantic, the 'decided otherness' of its syntax emerging not least out of Constantine's relationship as a translator with the enlivening, utopian poems of Hölderlin.

In the urgent, Hölderlinian 'strophe-leaps' and subtle eco-poetics of 'Watching for Dolphins' the imaginative truth of a conditionally realised communal epiphany survives the irony of the narration as well as the disillusionment of its ending. Evaluating 'poetry's success or failure in its own terms' is here a matter of being receptive to how lineation, syntax and diction combine in such a way that, to quote the Hölderlin scholar Charlie Louth, 'a reading must continually revise the positions it adopts as it progresses', coherence only recoverable in the act of entering again into the 'indivisible present' it generates.

But if readers have an essential role in realising the 'sensuous presence' of individual poems, they also have a pleasurable responsibility for the interaction of poem on poem. Drawing on and in some ways extending the work of Neil Fraistat and others, my paper proposes that we see the heterogeneous form of the poetry volume as a dwelling space in which we literally learn to live better.

Dr Jonathan Ellis
Sheffield University

'Thunder Over the Humber': From Philip Larkin to Caitríona O'Reilly

The main purpose of this paper is to look at the nature of poetic influence over the last half century through a close scrutiny of two poets, one English, one Irish, both of whom made their poetic 'homes' elsewhere from the regions or countries of their birth. After all, poetic lines are not just the arrangement of lines on the page but also the artistic, poetic and political links that bind one poet to another.

I am interested in how poets line up from one generation to the next and how this manifests itself in lines in a poem. In my opinion, contemporary poets are haunted by the previous generation's colonisation of different British and Irish spaces into distinct imaginative countries and regions. A poem is termed Heaneyesque or Larkinesque not just because of its style but also its location. It belongs somewhere, even if that somewhere is a nowhere like Coventry, as in Philip Larkin's famous last

line to ‘I Remember, I Remember’. Contemporary lines of poetry thus do battle not only with the influences of earlier poets but also the places these poets have already memorialised.

In order to investigate these questions in a little more detail, my paper will focus on the contemporary Irish poet, Caitríona O’Reilly, and her poems about the city of Hull and the landscape around it. I want to look in particular at the poetic shadow of Larkin that still hangs over the Humber for poets like O’Reilly that attempt to make new poetic lines there. How much are Hull and its surroundings not just a place Larkin lived in but also a poetic territory he now owns? When contemporary poets like O’Reilly begin to write there, do they line up in imitation of Larkin nowadays or in open dissent? And what happens when an Irish woman poet writes after a poet often praised and ridiculed for
his defence of a certain type of English masculinity? A short paper cannot obviously answer all these questions, though it can I hope raise several live issues for contemporary poets and readers.

Dr Stephen Enniss
Emory University, Atlanta

Line and Circle: the Exigency of Form in the Poetry of Derek Mahon

Derek Mahon liked to quote Conor Cruise O’Brien’s remark that the Irish poet is “one who is involved in the Irish situation . . . and usually mauled by it.” Such was certainly Mahon’s own experience. He received the first copies of Night-Crossing, his first major collection and a Poetry Book Society Choice, in September 1968. Within days stones began to fly in Ireland’s long sectarian conflict.

The escalation of violence in the north brought about in Mahon a deep sense of estrangement and dislocation. Though often taken to task as a poet who avoided the contemporary crisis in his work, the manuscript record of his writing in the months and years immediately after the outbreak of violence reveals the degree to which the writing desk became a disputed ground of struggle with the unfolding crisis.

In fragmentary, unfinished, and uncollected poems of the period, and in the accomplished long poem Beyond Howth Head, Mahon works towards a formal response to the contemporary crisis. The surviving drafts from the Derek Mahon archive at Emory University reveal the poet wrestling with line, repetition, and cyclical movement, working out in such patterning a formal response to the historical crisis. This movement, which has its origins in the historical moment, becomes a familiar feature of Mahon’s mature poetry. Repeatedly the movement of his work is towards a restoration that is realized only provisionally in the formal achievement of his poems.

Dr Carrie Etter
Bath Spa University

What Line? The Place of Prose in Contemporary British Poetry

Once relegated to the margins, the prose poem has been enjoying more interest in Britain in recent years, with increasingly frequent appearances in literary magazines and new poetry collections. Inspired by its use in the States and France, contemporary British poets have been been finding that prose can prove a useful alternative to the line. This paper will look at prose poems by such poets as Michael Donaghy, David Harsent, and Peter Redgrove to investigate the form's unique appeal and capacity for expression. In particular, I find, the prose poem's method of "circling" an idea, in contrast to the often consecutive development in lineation, allows a poem to be more speculative, whimsical, lulling, and, at times, phantasmagorical.

Dr Helen Farish
Sheffield Hallam University

'Faking it up with the truth': The complexities of the apparently autobiographical 'I'

In this presentation I'd like to consider the complexities of the apparently autobiographical voice in contemporary poetry and to do so partly through a reading of my own poem, 'Resurrection.'

Anne Sexton's description of her poetic method as 'faking it up with the truth' attempts to explain the relationship between poet and poem, a frustrated insistence perhaps that the 'truth' of a given experience is not inertly transferred to a poem. Because her poetic project concerned itself with narrowing the distance between poet and poem, she suffered from an inadequate critical response, the apparently autobiographical 'I' licensing a lazy critique which failed to save her work from simplification.

Unfortunately, it is still frequently the case today that poets whose work is read autobiographically are assumed to be less ambitious for the form and less rigorous in their craft. When the distance between poet and poem is harder to collapse, closer scrutiny is given to the actual crafting of a poem and it is often considered to be implicitly a worthier enterprise. Robert Potts' dismissal of 8 out of 10 poets short-listed for the 2005 T S Eliot prize on the grounds that the 'larger world' does not penetrate their work is one obvious instance of such judgements.

Clearly, I would argue that the construction of a poetic 'I' which offers itself as less fictional, which seeks overtly to engage the self's experience in such a way that it will *look like* truth, is an equally rigorous and demanding test of the limits of poetry as that which lengthens the distance between poet and poem.

I'd like to think through these issues by discussing my own poem, 'Resurrection,' a poem which seems to offer an unproblematic and sincere first person speaker. Through an analysis of the text, I address the following questions: How does the 'I' in the poem relate to the 'I' behind it? What does the poem occlude/exclude and why? And if something is inevitably lost in the process of writing, how does that inform what is reshaped to look like the truth?

Dr Leontia Flynn
Queen's University Belfast

'Reading Medbh McGuckian'

How do we read Medbh McGuckian's poetry? The question has been asked of this most elusive of poets since the beginning of her career. 'If Medbh McGuckian is as good as she seems to be', Michael Allen wrote in an essay considering her first three collections, 'we must be able to explicate her gnomic tendency, prove that she is not writing nonsense verses or being wilfully obscure'. Yet McGuckian's poetry – initially defended, tentatively, as operating a feminine anti-logic – has only become more difficult.

Recently, however, proof against McGuckian's obscurity has been offered in a surprisingly concrete form. Her work, it turns out, is composed in a 'montage effect' from a variety of different sources. Shane Murphy, searching through material such as Osip Mandelstam's Collected Essays and studies of Marina Tsvetaeva from which McGuckian 'quotes', finds McGuckian's poems of the 1990s to be secreted biographies and hidden dialogues with these writers. Understanding her sources, then, can provide a key to the mysteries of McGuckian work.

Is this really the solution? Medbh McGuckian is a poet who has consistently resisted any easy interpretation of her poetry. In fact the revelation of her 'intertextuality', while calling into question simplistic ideas about her womanly poetic (her language now seems less a veil over personal truths, or the result of mystical access to a feminine unconscious, than just stolen) still refuses to offer any answers. In this paper I will briefly sketch how pursuing 'paraphraseable meanings' between the lines of McGuckian's work finds them, more than ever, escaping us. This project is clearly one which blurs the line between the poet as purveyor of linguistic sense, and the (academic) reader's assessment of the poem's success or failure on its own terms. Ultimately, however, McGuckian's cat and mouse game merely leads us back to an intuitive experience of the poems themselves.

Dr Hugh Haughton,
University of York

Derek Mahon's Harbour Lights and the 'visible lines of tidal flow'

I have just finished drafting a book on Derek Mahon for OUP, and would welcome a chance to talk about his latest collection, Harbour Lights, which I think is one of the most significant books of Irish poetry of recent times. I want to discuss the book in terms of the relation of his new poetry to the 'long voyage' represented by his career, and, in
commenting on its self-questioning moves between closed and open forms, to reflect on its relation to the larger map of Irish poetry now by way of discussion of questions of lyric and modernity, metropolis and margin, rubbish and value. I will argue that Mahon is invested in a poetics of adaptation in many senses, and use his Homeric 'Calypso,' to gauge his relationship to Irish predecessors such as Yeats, Joyce and Kavanagh and his
contemporaries Seamus Heaney, Eilean Ni Chuilleanain and Michael Longley by way of their classical translation and adaptation.

Dr Peter Howarth
University of Nottingham

The Eco-politics of Alice Oswald's 'Dart; or, why this poem is not by Ted Hughes

This paper will look at the ecopoetics of Alice Oswald's popular 2002 poem, Dart. By contrasting some of the poem's sources and analogues in Wordsworth, Muriel Ruykeyser and Ted Hughes, I will suggest that Dart is a thoroughly environmentally-sensitive poem whose multiple voices and complex aesthetics challenge certain basic ecopoetical ideas, 1) that environmentally-minded literature ought to be about representing nature as faithfully as possible,
2) that the organicity of artwork or the unconscious of the artist which allows them to do this is analogous to a natural system.
Both of these, I think, are less about nature than a negative relation to human society; by contrast, the social focus of Dart, its fragmented form and interest in documentary and memory make this wonderful poem also suggest a much better kind of green politics.

Luke Kennard
University of Exeter

The Prose Poem – "An Avant Garde Impulse"?

This paper considers the position of the prose poem in contemporary British and Irish verse, taking a broad critical survey of the field. Material ranges from Stephen Fredman's radicalising argument that the prose poem is the logical conclusion of free-verse: "contentious, overwrought" and "at war with decorum"; to Nikki Santilli's historical genealogy of the form, starting with Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Charles Baudelaire.

In the introduction to her feature on British prose poetry in Sentence, America's foremost journal of the prose poem, Santilli argues that the prose poem has been a primarily "avant garde impulse" – and her selection of British writers confirms this theory, being predominantly of the experimental school. This fails to acknowledge the consistent use of the form by so-called 'mainstream' poets such as Seamus Heaney, Geoffrey Hill, Robert Crawford and Don Paterson.

I argue that there is a tendency within the self-proclaimed avant-garde to appropriate writers from disparate backgounds (from David Jones and Gertrude Stein to Roy Fisher and Lee Harwood) into a narrative of undeserved neglect and artistic integrity. Seeing the prose poem as a nexus for these debates, this paper seeks to explore the ideology of cultural relevance and the politics of self-importance in a literary climate that is both diffuse and highly competitive.

The paper concludes by assessing the role of the internet in contemporary poetry – and how this has affected notions of poetic identity such as'traditional' and 'experimental'. Websites and weblogs are flourishing as arbiters of taste as well as means of distributing work. Has this led to a new age of critical dialogue and self-reflection – or a baffling array of dissonant voices, vying for attention, often leading to the loudest and most obnoxious voice standing out?

Sheree Mack
University of Newcastle

Patience Agbabi - Crossing Borders :Words on the Page and Words on the Stage

I'm going to start with a little story, if you don't mind. In preparation for this paper, I misplaced my copy of Patience Agbabi's second collection Transformatrix. Instead of buying it again, I tried Newcastle City library. As luck would have it they had a copy and it was available, stored under the adult fiction shelves. I thought this was a mistake in the catalogue, so I checked the poetry section. It wasn't there. I asked a librarian and she took me straight to the adult fiction section.
"Is it hard back?" she said.
I said, "No, it's a paper back of poetry", stressing the poetry bit.
"Paperbacks are on the carousels."
And rightly so, there on the fiction carousels was Transformatrix.

I tell you this story not to highlight the lack of knowledge we have up in Newcastle towards black literature, especially the ability to not make the distinction between fiction and poetry. No, I tell you this to illustrate my argument that Patience Agbabi's writings are prime examples of 'border writing'. Following Avtar Brah, border writing is questioning the canon, through a reconfiguring and decentring of the English language.

"Because I'm rapping it up in a real tight squeeze
I don't cross my I's I don't dot my t's
Shakespeare Milton Pope and Dryden
Wordsworth Eliot Great Tradition
all you poets I don't give a fuck
coz you're dead I am PA an I am RAPPIN IT UP"

(Rappin it up, RAW)[1]
<https://owa.ncl.ac.uk/exchange/a4702701/Drafts/RE:%20Conference%20Details%20-%20draft.EML/1_text.htm#_ftn1>

Borders are political constructs, usually arbitrary dividing lines that are social, political, cultural and psychic. These territories are patrolled against those that are constructed as outsiders, aliens, the 'Other'.[2]
<https://owa.ncl.ac.uk/exchange/a4702701/Drafts/RE:%20Conference%20Details%20-%20draft.EML/1_text.htm#_ftn2>

Patience Agbabi, born of Nigerian parents, raised by white middle class foster parents in Mid Wales, has said that her unusual upbringing has advantages for her writing and has given her the ability to move between cultures. "I've a strong interest in borders and boundaries. I've long been fascinated with the point at which one thing transforms or translates into another and this has informed my
writing in both form and content."[3]
<https://owa.ncl.ac.uk/exchange/a4702701/Drafts/RE:%20Conference%20Details%20-%20draft.EML/1_text.htm#_ftn3>

Through her writing and voice, I argue that Patience Agbabi is changing the face of contemporary British poetry; through her improvisation with language and form, Agbabi crosses boundaries and heals the cracks between page and stage.

Prof David Malcolm
University of Gdansk

de passage on Malvern Road: Michael Hofmann's Lines of Absence

This paper discusses two poems by Michael Hofmann from Approximately Nowhere (1999). An analysis of "de passage" demonstrates that this thirteen-line poem possesses a complex and contradictory composition. There is no obvious patterning in terms of syllables per line, nor of main stresses per line. Metrical patterns are local and limited to individual lines. The poem is unrhymed, but individual lines show local phonological patterning. Language is similarly discordant. Syntactic patterning is deep and pervasive within the text. However, foreign words jostle with English, and informal lexis with formal. There is substantial semantic ambiguity and, indeed, discordance at various points of the text. A poem about exile demonstrates a facility inEnglish word play. Thus, the poem becomes a complex meditation on belonging and non-belonging.

The longer poem "Malvern Road" is also a contradictory and ambiguous poem about presence and absence. It seems to be disordered. Line length is very variable, as is the number of main stresses per line. The whole poem is made up of one long, syntactically very loose sentence, the components of which are linked with "ands." However, beneath the text's surface a traditionally poetic language and type of organization appear: the poem is divided into regular six-line stanzas, and the predominant informal and prosaic lexis is disrupted by a more exotic and figurative vocabulary. The poem reveals itself as a complex examination of loss. The speaker's guilt and desolation lie beneath the tawdry objects he lists; the text's order interweaves with its disorder. These poems are typical of Hofmann's work in which, as Michael O'Neill puts it, his "abstemious craft" plays with surfaces and depths, and motifs of transience and belonging, presence and absence.

John McAuliffe
University of Manchester

Deferring to rhyme? Paul Muldoon's recent poems

Paul Muldoon's poetry is often discussed in terms of its elaborate rhyme schemes: Clair Wills and others have noticed and discussed the recent books use of an 'exploded sestina' form and his standard use, across 4 books, of about fifty rhyme sounds. However, Muldoon uses rhyme so loosely as to defy its usual effect which is, to quote (as Muldoon does) the Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetic Terms: 'One associates rhyme with
symmetries and closures'.

One way in which Muldoon uses rhyme with unusual effect is obviously in the

distance between the rhymes; another has been his ostentatious use of a variable line so that a line will land on the appropriate end-rhyme. The net effect of this, I argue, is that Muldoon's poems constantly call attention to their own artificiality and to the arbitrariness of their
maker.

These, and other features of Muldoon's line, are discussed by John Kerrigan in 'Paul Muldoon's Transits: Muddling through after Madoc', where he also writes about muddle in Muldoon, noting how his lines incorporate habitual self-corrections and self-interruptions, particularly in Hay.

I'd like to take Wills' and Kerrigan's ideas as a starting point for a look at how (and why) Muldoon interrupts or elongates his lines with misspellings, nonsense, Latin tags, phrases from the Irish, repetition and babytalk, increasingly as a sort of dialogue with, or argument against, his poems overarching forms.

I'll look in particular at Moy Sand and Gravel and the poem, 'The Loaf'.

Michael McKimm
University of Warwick

'all the wild flowers of the Burren': from historicism to ecocriticism in the poetry of Michael Longley.

The field of ecocriticism has become increasingly prominent in recent years, yet is still firmly placed within a traditional English and North American canon. This paper, concentrating on the recent poetry of Northern Irish writer Michael Longley, will assess both the advantages and disadvantages of an ecocritical discourse on Northern Irish poetry with the aim of encouraging new approaches to the analysis of Northern Irish writing in general. The paper will interrogate the established trends in criticism such as Revisionism and postcolonial theory. These trends have, since the onset of the Troubles, been tightly bound up with the issue of 'identity' and thus been unable to see the poetry beyond the oppositional politics of Northern Ireland.

It is neither my intention to dismiss such issues as irrelevant, nor todeny their place within contemporary debate, but rather to offer an alternative reading of Longley's poetry through a two-pronged ecocritical dialogue: emphasising, firstly, the Heideggerian principle of 'dwelling', and thus the importance of humanity's relationship with nature
(eco-poetics); and, secondly, the current ethical questions of our age concerning environment and our treatment of nature (eco-politics).

Through close textual analysis of specific poems ('The Ice Cream Man', 'At Poll Salach', 'Burren Prayer') this paper will chart the development of Longley's poetry over the past twenty years from his re-emergence in the 1990s, when he addressed the political situation through a blurring of the line between nature and political poetry, before finally tackling real ecological concerns. The final question raised will be whether, through the dangers of a nostalgia for a more primitive Ireland, Longley's

poetry hinges on what could be called ‘eco-nationalism’, and is thus similarly disadvantageous as previous critical analyses due to its entanglement in ‘identity’.

Dr Nigel McLoughlin
University of Gloucestershire

Stress Weight

There are many ways of describing rhythm in poetry, all of them to some extent artificial and none of them giving the absolutely true picture of what is happening. What follows is another such; it is one poets’ way of hearing how language interacts in the tradition and the dialect out of which that poet works. At best, it describes a different way of hearing the rhythm; at worst it is the nearest this poet can get to describing how he hears language interact. In the paper that follows I intend to present and explain the interaction of words across the poetic line in a number of examples chosen from the work of poets with a Hiberno-English or Irish Language background and attempt to find reasons for those interactions in terms of their linguistic heritage. The paper will discuss how the line functions within this system as both the basic musical unit and the base unit of sense in a poem, exploring how tensions between the two can be exploited. Starting from two basic premises: that poetry is an aural art; and that part of the idea behind the art form is to reflect and imitate in an artful way the natural modulations of speech, the paper investigates one way of describing metrics which avoids rendering metre in a mechanical fashion but recognises the complexity of the living breathing language.

Denise O’Brien,
IRCHSS Scholar,
Trinity College, Dublin

To mention Yeats, of course, is to recognise that the recuperation of MacNeice in contemporary Northern Irish poetry is in part a strategy for coping with that authority and scope, as MacNeice himself had to cope with it.

The preoccupation of Northern Irish poets (Seamus Heaney, Derek Mahon and Michael Longley) with the role of Louis MacNeice as predecessor in a line of contemporary poetry is evinced in a proliferation of prose articles concerning the elder poet. It is witnessed in the choice of MacNeice’s poems included by Mahon in the Sphere Book of Modern Poetry and in MacNeice’s appearance in poems such as Muldoon’s “7 Middagh Street” and Mahon’s “In Carrowdore Churchyard”. MacNeice’s influence is made manifest too in his intrusions in the form of intertextual echoes in the works of these contemporary poets.

Louis MacNeice had keenly felt this concern with a line of influence also. Much of his prose as well as a full-length study had indulged in a lengthy engagement with the influence of W.B. Yeats, and this did much to determine his own political and poetic stances. MacNeice’s absorption and transformation of Yeats’s work can be seen to radically the alter the interpretation of MacNeice’s own poetry.

In this paper I propose to examine a line of contemporary poetry in which MacNeice can be thought of as a mediating figure in the relationship between these contemporary poets and W.B. Yeats. MacNeice in his poetry had questioned any

simplistic Irish, English or Anglo-Irish canons. The poet’s development can be read in terms of the influence of the elder Irish Anglo-Irish poet as much as in terms of that by his own generation of poets. MacNeice in his dialogue with Yeats regarding poetry and action had provided a means for these poets also to engage with these pressures. Perhaps most importantly, as suggested by Heaney, MacNeice had provided a belief, as evinced through his engagement with Yeats, in the poetic imagination as a positive mode of action.

Yeats’s poetry, in other words, gives credence to the idea that courage is some good; it shows how the wilful and unabashed activity of poetry itself is a manifestation of ‘joy’ and a redressal, in so far as it fortifies the spirit against assaults from outside and temptations from within – temptations such as the one contained in Larkin’s attractively defeatist proposition that ‘Death is no different whined at than withstood’.

Prof Michael Parker
University of Central Lancashire

In the Name of the Father: Patrilineality in Northern Irish Poetry

This paper will examine the representation of fathers in a range of Northern Irish poems since the late 1980s, and the way in which these texts embrace the intensely personal domains of individual, family and cultural identity, and yet at the same time touch historical, political and aesthetic chords and concerns. That the experience of living through the Troubles intensified solidarity between the generations, as well as within communities, is clearly reflected in the work of many Northern Irish poets. As other forms of authority collapse, the father becomes a crucially still, defining point in the articulation of personal and artistic identity.

Through close readings of a small number of texts, including Ciaran Carson's 'Ambition' (from Belfast Confetti, 1989) and Medbh McGuckian's 'Porcelain Bells' and 'The Albert Chain' (from Captain Lavender, 1994), the paper will illustrate history's inscription in the lives of fathers and lines of sons/ daughters. The paper will conclude examining the much more critical perspectives on the father and father-figures in the poems of Nick Laird, one of a new emerging generation of poets.

Dr John Redmond
University of Liverpool

"Bruised Like a Forceps Baby": The Influence of Sylvia Plath on Seamus Heaney.

Most scholars have overlooked, or neglected, Sylvia Plath's influence on Seamus Heaney. Many of the canonical studies of Heaney's poetry (Neil Corcoran, Helen Vendler, Bernard O'Donoghue, John Wilson Foster) make passing references (often,

in a surprised tone) to her influence on individual poems, but none attempt to make the case that Plath's influence on Heaney is extensive or attempt to weave a larger critical narrative around the issue. This paper sets out the case for Plath as a powerful, even dominant, influence on Heaney, especially in the period when he wrote some of his best-known poems, that is, in the period defined by the two collections *Wintering Out* and *North*. The paper will suggest that Plath's example was useful for Heaney in rendering extreme psychological states, including states-of-mind associated with violence, and in setting those renditions within, and against, the boundaries of a claustrophobic secondary world. Drawing on some extended examples of Plath's influence (in poems like 'Exposure' and 'Funeral Rites') the paper will also suggest that such influence is associated with patterns of repression in Heaney's poetry — repression, for example, of the 'will to power' — and will suggest some of the consequences for how we read gender-relations in his work Surveying examples of Heaney's critical reception, the paper goes on to argue that academics have overlooked Plath's influence because it would serve none of the governing critical narratives in this area.

Dr Deryn Rees-Jones

'Not a ghost at all' : the apparitional in the poetry of Carol Ann Duffy and Colette Bryce

Dr Andrew Michael Roberts
University of Dundee

The Suspicion of Writing

This paper will explore a line of thought running from modernism through to contemporary poetry: the ethical suspicion of the power of the aesthetic. This takes the form of a reflexive criticism of art within the art work, reflecting an anxiety about the ways in which writing might feed off life in a destructive or ethically dubious manner. Such anxiety is a concern of major works of modernist literature such as Mann's Doctor
Faustus, Ibsen's When We Dead Awaken and Yeats's poetry, but re-emerges in the work of a number of contemporary poets. It may involve a rebuke of the lyric impulse in the face of violence or suffering, as in Denise Riley's 'Laibach Lyrik' and Geoffrey Hill's 'September Song'; a rejection of the consolations of the aesthetic ('There is no beauty out of loss; can't do it' * Riley, 'A Misremembered Lyric'); a disgust at the 'poetry business' (Hill's 'Annunciations'); Roy Fisher's mistrust of the poem 'in its hour of success' in 'It is Writing'; the problematic relations of the 'real' and an ethics of writing in Fisher's 'For Realism' or Eavan Boland's 'Outside History'. This concern often focuses on the risks attendant upon completion, closure and the impositions of form. The issues are ethical, but also political because of the way in which art risks the appropriation of suffering and the falsification of historical experience. While one response is that of atonement through form, another is that of resistance to completion or closure.

Dr Fiona Sampson,
Editor, Poetry Review

Between the Lines: The contemporary British poet-critics

Johnson and Coleridge, Arnold and Eliot, are sometimes identified as the first respondents in a line of British poet-critics. But what *is* a poet-critic? Does he (or, perhaps more rarely, she) differ from the poet who also reviews, or teaches literature? To put it another way, is there something which runs through the *poetry* practice of such figures which is peculiarly linked to their critical work; and if so what – apart from the obvious matter of allegiance to certain schools of writing – might that be? Do poet-critics even occupy any common practical ground?

In this paper, I will look at three examples of the subtle correspondences between the poetry and critical practices – which I suggest include editorial as well as textual interventions – of contemporary poet-critics. John Kinsella (at *Salt* and *Stand* and as essayist), Sean O'Brien (*The Deregulated Muse*, *The Fire Box*) and Ruth Padel (*52 Ways of Looking at a Poem*) share little substantive overlap of poetics or critical practice. I will argue that what links them under the rubric of poet-critic is an *awareness, sustained through their own poetry,* of their critical project. More than conventional reflexive awareness of poetic intention, or internalisation of some version of the contemporary critical climate, this awareness is, if not prior to, at least simultaneous with, the poem.

In other words, and despite contemporary Ideal-isation of the agenda-less poem – which, like Erica Jong's "zipless fuck", may be seen as "uncompromised" by investment – critical practice forms a necessary context for the poet-critic's creative work: one through which it can be read and which it can be read back to. The paper argues that, since no poem is agenda-free, such a dialectic, far from compromising or "academising" these poets, represents an enabling synthesis of "large" ideas, such as those about the character or nature of poetry, which can enlarge their writing practice.

Dr John Sears
Manchester Metropolitan University

"Slowly Edging Forward": Linearity and Teleology in George Szirtes's Hungarian Sonnet Sequences.

George Szirtes's collection *Portrait of My Father in an English Landscape* (1998) concludes with three Hungarian sonnet sequences, 'The Looking Glass Dictionary', 'Travel Book' and the final poem, which gives the collection its title. The Hungarian sonnet sequence, in which, strictly speaking, the last line of the first sonnet provides the first line of the next, and so on until the fifteenth sonnet, which is comprised of all fourteen preceding concluding lines, offers a complex formal patterning in which ideological questions of continuity and disruption, connection and disjunction, and progression and regression, can be worked out through a tracing of the relations between linearity and teleology. The linear sequence of sonnets, which seems to drive towards its ending, actually relies upon multiple refoldings and repetitions for its progression. Endings, in Eliotesque style, become beginnings, creating an interlinked pattern of lines where, in Szirtes's applications of the form (with which, he states, he has "taken some minor liberties"), "Desire and loss" ('The Looking Glass

Dictionary') are constructed and explored in order to develop his characteristic 'collage-analyses' of history.

Taking its cue from Derridean interpretations of the interrelations between *arché* and *telos* and from Deleuzian speculations on linearity and connectivity, this paper will read Szirtes's sonnet sequences as expressions of the poet's critical comprehension of contemporary historical consciousness. The world constructed by this process is represented, in 'Travel Book', as "a dangerous romance, slowly edging forward / in the shadows". Szirtes's identity, as an 'English' poet born in Hungary, and his concern (expressed in 'Translating Zsuzsa Rakovsky') with the "ghosts of form" offered by poetry, will provide contexts for considering the significance of the dialectic of history and memory played out in the meanings constructed in the problematically 'linear' structures and multiple endings, the "pregnant lines" ('Travel Book') of these Hungarian sonnet sequences.

Dr Tony Sharpe
Lancaster University

The aim of promoting 'dialogue between poets, critics and the academy' perhaps underestimates actual overlap between them; yet frequently-shared institutional affiliations may mask continuing grounds for differentiation. This inaugural conference offers opportunity to enquire into the proper uses of poetry and of criticism.

In Puritan New England, a conversion narrative gained you admission to the congregation of the Saved. Transactions between criticism and poetry have occasionally embodied ostentatious sanctity or judgements about literary salvation, but necessarily involve the conversion of one form of words into another. This way of putting it suggests at best pointlessness, at worst the obscuring of 'the figure of the youth as virile poet' (Stevens) by the critical 'eunuch's shadow' (Steiner): should free-ranging cowboyhood be corralled within farmers' terminology of fences?

Such a masculinist contrast was offered by Yeats ('The Scholars'); more recently U.A. Fanthorpe dramatised the discursive chasm yawning between critical theory and the defenceless poem. Yet (as Auden pointed out) Yeats dissimulates the truth, and Fanthorpe's case might have been strengthened, had Rupert Brooke's sonnet given less ground for scepticism. Referring to these and others, I want to consider how poetry has envisaged its relation to the academy; what has generated distrust, and what defence of criticism might be offered – particularly in the light of Michael Donaghy's comments about 'the primacy of linguistic sense' and 'the fact that poems are written by people, (…) at the sophisticated limit of their comprehensible speech'. Thinking also about ways in which poets have written about poetry (in prose), I want to keep in mind questions concerning the institutionalisation of poetry and criticism, as well as touching on the 'economy' of poetry in our era: in which, one might tentatively suggest, there is a more evident shortage of readers than writers.

Tupa Snyder
Exeter University

The Metonymic Eye in the Lines of Lee Harwood and John Burnside

My paper will present two aspects of the line of contemporary poetry that etaphorically recreate tension between language and experience. I will talk about Lee Harwood's fragmented poetry in which the fragments echo each other as a literary device to bring a figurative voice into being, making meaning based as much on what is written as what disappears down the lines. I argue that Harwood's images reflect the paradox of belonging - here, but already away - recording the evolution of a metaphorical, lyric 'I', which makes the real metonymical I visible. Harwood's fragmented poetry constantly struggles to reveal the relationship between what is visible of a subject – a social construct of the self – and the invisible real self, which nevertheless is present. I will try to llustrate how Harwood's line engages with the difference between language nd experience, trying through metaphorical superimposition to enact the rocess of perception.

The second aspect of the contemporary line I will like to explore is the radition of meaning-making through the circular / strophe-based lines of magism and Objectivism, leading to the exploded form of some of John urnside's poetry that conceive 'a radical illumination of the real world and a revelation of the living self…visible in its true substance.' Burnside's fascination with borderlines contagious between two beings is represented in his lines that evoke a journeying between outer and inner ('true') worlds. The journey back to the quotidian is made with hindsight of the otherworld where the self is invisible, but without which the 'self' cannot be revealed. The invisible otherworld in Burnside's line – the vacancy of his being - is represented in words like 'nothing' or
'nowhere' instead of the gaps or dashes of Harwood's fragmented line.

Jennifer Sykes
Hertford College Oxford

Poetry as Architecture: Paul Muldoon and the Line as a Structural Unit

In the world of contemporary poetry, Paul Muldoon is clearly one of the most significant formal innovators. At a time of great poetic freedom, he has placed many restraints on himself, through complicated rhyme-schemes and predetermined stanzaic forms. Although all poets must be aware of the line as a structural unit, Muldoon takes this self-consciousness to fresh extremes, for instance in the long poems in his last three collections, which all employ variations on the same ninety rhyme-words.
Of course, Muldoon's tendency towards formal experimentation is evident
From very early works, such as his 1977 sonnet-sequence 'Armageddon, Armageddon'. However, there is a clear shift in his work from the 1990s onwards, when he makes increasingly frequent use of the sestina-form, and becomes increasingly attracted to larger structures. In this context it is very fruitful to consider the crossovers between his collections of poetry and his work in other genres, especially his verse play _Six Honest Serving Men_, and his opera libretti for 'Shining Brow', 'Vera of Las Vegas' and 'Bandanna', which all make extraordinary use of line-breaks.

Therefore my paper will focus on Muldoon's later works, exploring some of his approaches to the line as a structural unit through a series of close-readings.I intend to question whether these approaches really work for him, and also how successfully they may be emulated by other poets. Ultimately I wish to defend his idiosyncrasy, whilst arguing that it should be constantly questioned. As Joseph Brodsky has noted, in a poem 'surrounded by the enormity of white margins' on a page, words become 'simply overloaded, especially those at the beginning and at the end of the line'. In my paper I aim to illustrate how Muldoon uses complex and idiosyncratic poetic structures to explore the complexity of language, whilst simultaneously celebrating and deconstructing notions of the traditional 'well-made poem'.

Dr Meg Tyler
Boston University

Walking the Line with Rhyme in Seamus Heaney's Recent Sonnets

Frost claimed that "making little poems [like the sonnet] encourages a man to see that there is a shapeliness in the world. A poem is an arrest of disorder." In Heaney's sonnets, this arrest of disorder appears in sound patterns and echoes, in assonance, consonance and pararhyme. Increasingly in his poetry, Seamus Heaney hasturned to the taut echo chamber and dimensions of the sonnet. Predictably, Heaney engages certain sonnet conventions – the iambic pentameter line, Shakespearean and Italian rhyme schemes. At the same time he forges a variety of sound patterns that subtly turn against the conventional. For example, "Polish Sleepers" (published in the New Yorker in January 2005) contains end words mostly held together by slant or assonant rhymes. The end words of the first four lines follow an abca rhyming pattern, quietly and imperfectly echoing a Petrarchan scheme (abba).

In addition, on the level of the individual line in his sonnets, a variety of (sonic) poetic traditions converge. For example, in the sestet of the 2005 version of "Polish Sleepers" (which was later considerably revised for publication in the 2006 District and Circle), Heaney writes

Like the breathing, bleeding bad in Dante's wood,

The alliteration ("breathing, bleeding bad") recalls the bifurcated line of Anglo-Saxon poetry; the reference to "Dante's wood" invokes the labyrinthine verse of the Italian epic, its formal obediences (the sound patterning of terza rima shares with the sonnet the need for return). In my paper I will explore how Heaney uses rhyme as an ordering principle in recent sonnets (2000 to the present). By linking through rhyme semantically different words and combining rhyme schemes from originally Italian and English traditions, Heaney creates concord from discord and unties from fracture. Sound patterns in his poetry have evolved over the years – from fricatives and curt but sturdy monosyllables (as in "the frond-lipped brine-stung glut" "of privilege") to a less constrictive use of end-word rhyming, expanding the kinds of echoes that qualify as rhyme. Two questions that I will address in my paper are: What kinds of rhyming pairs does Heaney make in recent sonnets and what are the implications of such rhyming choices?

Prof Malvern van Wyk Smith
Rhodes University SA

Notes from an "inner émigré": Reflections on Teaching the Poetry of Seamus Heaney in the Struggle Years in South Africa

"What is my apology for poetry?" Seamus Heaney has famously asked ("Glanmore Sonnets IX"). Two of his answers come in "Punishment" – "I am the artful voyeur" and in "Exposure" – "I am neither internee nor informer; An inner emigré". In trying to expand on these and other responses imbedded both implicitly and explicitly in Heaney's verse, I shall draw on the experiences and insights deriving from teaching Heaney's work in a South African university over some 30 years. Heaney's constant concern to reconcile "beauty and atrocity" ("The Grauballe Man") and "violence and epiphany" ("North"), and his reiterated conviction that in dreadful times "we pine for ceremony" ("Funeral Rites") not only for succour but for the actual imaginative resilience to negotiate answers, found particular resonances for me in the context of teaching poetry to South African students in the decades of institutional violence unleashed by the *apartheid* state against its own people, and of the violent measures adopted in turn by the victims of racial discrimination to confront both the repressive state and a predominantly unsympathetic white community. Heaney's belief that "poetry is a symbolic resolution of conflicts insoluble in experience" (TLS, 22 Dec. 1989: 1412), enacted in many of his poems of the 1970s and 80s, proved to be both a personal source of hope and ethical strategy for me confronting students' expectations that poetry should be "relevant" to the agonies of those years, as well as a powerful and assuring directive in the broader quest to assess the value and function of poetry in the modern age. My paper will explore these issues in general terms, but will also look at key poems in some detail, at times juxtaposing Heaney's verse with more militant South African attempts of the same period.

Tony Williams
Sheffield Hallam University

The branch-line is under the axe: the railway's pastoral leverage

Railways have always had romantic associations. Some of it is nostalgia for the Age of Steam, yet some of it is, and has been, a kind of contemporary nostalgia which locates in the railway a persistence of some value rare or lost or invisible in the wider world. Auden's 'Night Mail' is a famous example. This paper is not a history of the railway in poetry since Auden but an account of its role in contemporary views of the 'post-industrial landscape / He celebrated often' (Donald Davie, 'Cheshire').
The railway's geographical extension, the technological and industrial associations of its operations, and the social history of its construction, operation and use, all give the railway tremendous scope as a metonym for the landscape and a metaphor for the society it serves. In particular, its dual role as historical survival and civic infrastructure make it ideallysuited to pastoral, particularly pastoral elegy. Poets as diverse as Louis MacNeice, Philip Larkin, Roy Fisher, Martin Bell, Seamus Heaney, Michael Hofmann and Paul Farley have used images of the railway in more or less

nostalgic, more or less complex ways. Peter Didsbury and Sean O'Brien have used the railway as a powerful symbol in a wider aesthetic of marginal or unseen places. The romantic associations of the railways should not be seen as a sentimental trap to be avoided, but as a catalyst for thinking imaginatively and with feeling about our civil, and not so civil, society.

James Womack
University of Reyjkavic

Unicorns among the cedars: Muldoon's reactions to Auden and Rilke

The line of contemporary poetry, it sometimes seems, can be drawn through any set of points, starting from anywhere, connecting entirely disparate figures. However, it is increasingly common that the line begins to bedrawn from outside the mainland United Kingdom. Contemporary poets arebecoming more aware of the variety of poetry written in languages other than English, whether by editing anthologies (e.g. Jamie McKendrick's Faber Book of 20th-Century Italian Poetry), by making translations (e.g.Ruth Fainlight's versions for Carcanet's An Anthology of Contemporary Russian Women Poets), or by using foreign poetry as a springboard fortheir own work (e.g. Don Paterson's investigation of Antonio Machado in The Eyes).

One of the most intriguing examplars of this increasing interest in foreign poetry is the Irish poet Paul Muldoon. As well as working as a translator (most notably of Nuala NÎ Dhomhnaill), he incorporates translations into his own autonomous volumes of poetry. Hay, for example,contains a number of translations from a variety of languages.However, as one might expect from a poet as conscious of literary lineage as Muldoon, his translations are not word-for-word renditions of their originals. Theories about translation tend to divide translations into two categories: domesticating or foreignising. Muldoon's versions offer a third category: translation as commentary on the original, an attempt to write an original poem which opens out the implications of the foreign-language poem, and acknowledges the way in which previous poets have also been influenced by it.

This paper will illustrate Muldoon's approach by tracing the lines of influence that converge in two of Muldoon's Rilke versions from Hay: 'The Unicorn' and 'Black Cat'. It will show the ways in which Muldoon uses these translations to pick up on themes he himself raises in 'The Unicorn Defends Himself' from Quoof and 'The Panther' from Madoc, and the ways in which these themes are refracted in W.H. Auden's New Year Letter and sonnet-sequence 'The Quest'.

Alex Wylie
Queen's University, Belfast

'Beyond Words'?: Geoffrey Hill, Difficulty and Silence

Geoffrey Hill's critical and poetic work is underpinned by the principle of resistance, or 'going against the grain'. His recent work has been a subversion of T.S. Eliot's later approach to readership and voicing, and a continuation of the ethical problems of

poetic authority. In his essay ‘Dividing Legacies’ of 1996, Hill introduced the terms ‘pitch’ and tone’ to illustrate what he admires and deplores in Eliot’s poetic trajectory. Tone is a matter of public address, whereas pitch is seen as intrinsic, endemic to the processes of language, a recognition of which implicates the poetic subjectivity which deals in the density of that medium. Hill’s engagements with the subject of style, which is an inevitable tussle with the problems of ‘difficulty’ and ‘cult of personality’, raise questions for the progress of contemporary poetry. For whom does Hill write? Is this an elitist poetry?

In *The Triumph of Love* (1998) Hill reverses the process of Eliot’s “decline into tone”, instead satirising both Eliot’s later approach and the role of public poet. The epigraphs Hill uses are fascinatingly, playfully suggestive on his attitude to the problem of the poet’s cultural authority, or otherwise, in the modern world. He also does this by making *The Triumph* “a reply to *Four Quartets*”, as Peter McDonald has suggested, and by placing emphasis on the hermeneutical and psychological processes involved in writing and reading in his dramatisation of utterance. In fact *The Triumph* – as well as his next book, *Speech! Speech!* – can be seen as subversive adaptations of Eliot’s definitions of poetic voicing in 1953’s ‘The Three Voices of Poetry’.

A point of departure between Hill and Eliot is their philosophical approach to the interplay between utterance and silence, and their models of language based upon their perceptions of the nature of this relationship. Hill’s sceptical, ironic imagination is, I will contend, to be seen alongside an approach to language which differs from Eliot’s in telling ways. Hill’s resistant poetic and critical writings are often a stringent reassessment of Eliot, then; his later poetry, especially *The Triumph of Love*, an ironic and satirical engagement with the necessary publicity of what has become an increasingly solipsistic, anti-Eliotic voice.