



***INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE***

***Virginia Woolf and the Writing of History***

**8-10 November 2018 (to be confirmed)**

**University of Rouen ERIAC (<http://eriac.univ-rouen.fr>)**

**Dr. Anne Besnault-Levita, Dr. Marie Laniel, Dr. Anne-Marie  
Smith-Di Biasio HDR**

With the collaboration of the University of Picardie - Jules Verne  
<https://www.u-picardie.fr/unites-de-recherche/corpus/presentation/>  
And the Société d'Études Woolfiennes  
<http://etudes-woolfiennes.org>

**Confirmed keynote speakers:**

Prof. Anna Snaith (King's College, London)  
Dr. Seamus O'Malley (Yeshiva University, New York)

**Proposal submission deadline: January 30th, 2018**

**Call for papers**

***Virginia Woolf and the Writing of History***

We propose to examine Virginia Woolf's relationship to history by reflecting on her reading and writing of history,<sup>1</sup> be that the history of her own time, of the past, women's history or literary history. This will involve analysing how the literary and historicity are interlinked not only in her novels, but also in the essays, letters and journals. This in turn might lead us to consider the question of anteriority and tradition, engaging both the po-ethical and political dimensions of a Woolfian writing of history and of pre-history, such as that which informs her late essay "Anon," but is also present throughout her writing in the attention it accords to a cultural unconscious, subtending the present of language like a sometimes conscious, sometimes not yet conscious memory of the past.<sup>2</sup> We might also be led to see Woolfian historiography from the perspective of materialist revisionism, a feminist rewriting of the past, or an infinite working through the library of her father, Leslie Stephen. Other possible perspectives would be to consider her work as that of an archivist writing against the

archives of patriarchy in search of her own *arkhe*,<sup>3</sup> or examining how she reinvents the historiographical, biographical and literary traditions. Woolf's engagement in the history of Modernity might in turn be considered from a Benjaminian perspective, as a form of historiographical reconfiguration anticipating post-modern philosophy.

The question of Woolf's hermeneutics of history might lead us to define the different forms of her engagement in women's history, in the history of class, of her queering of history, her heterodoxy. We can also read her writing as a form of archeology delving into the written and non-written traces of history, attentive to the emergence of spectres and forms of survival or *survivance*<sup>4</sup> but also as a response to what Woolf herself called, in *Three Guineas*, "history in the raw." Thus addressing how Woolf arrests the *kairos* of historical moment, her own inscription of two world wars as if in negative, might lead us furthermore to consider her writing as a form of resistance, nonetheless steeped in the Real of history, the present and the body.

We invite papers which address these questions among others from a variety of theoretical, literary and cultural approaches.

### **Possible topics may include:**

- Virginia Woolf as a reader and interpreter of history
- Virginia Woolf as an apprentice historian
- Virginia Woolf's revisionist historiography
- Virginia Woolf's counter literary histories
- Virginia Woolf's complex relations to past and present historiographical traditions
- Virginia Woolf, Historicism and New Historicism
- Virginia Woolf, historicity and the new biography
- Virginia Woolf's feminist take on history and literary history
- Virginia Woolf, history and its "effect upon mind and body" (*Three Guineas*)
- Virginia Woolf's writing of history and pre-history
- Memory, the immemorial, oral tradition
- History, historiography and chronotopes in Virginia Woolf's works (libraries, museums, monuments...)
- Archeology, material artifacts and the archive

### **Submission**

Paper proposals (a 300-word abstract with a title plus a separate biographical statement) should be sent by January 30th 2018 to Anne Besnault-Levita ([annebenobloy@gmail.com](mailto:annebenobloy@gmail.com)) Anne-Marie Smith-Di Biasio ([amdibiasio@neuf.fr](mailto:amdibiasio@neuf.fr)) and Marie Laniel ([marie.laniel@gmail.com](mailto:marie.laniel@gmail.com))

### **Organising Committee**

**Anne Besnault-Levita, University of Rouen, [annebenobloy@gmail.com](mailto:annebenobloy@gmail.com)** Dr Anne Besnault-Levita is Senior Lecturer at the University of Rouen. She is also the Vice-president of the French Virginia Woolf Society. She is the author of *Katherine Mansfield: La Voix du Moment* (Paris: Messène, 1997), and co-editor of *Construire le sujet. Textes réunis et édités par Anne Besnault-Levita, Natalie Depraz et Rolf Wintermeyer* (Limoges : Lambert Lucas, 2014) and *The Journal of the Short Story in English* 64 (Spring 2015), *Part One: The Modernist Short Story* (Mathijs Duyck, Michael Basseler, Anne Besnault-Levita, Christine Reynier and Bart Van Den Bossche, eds.). She has written several articles on Katherine Mansfield, Virginia Woolf, feminist criticism, the modernist short story and modernist criticism.

**Anne-Marie Di Biasio, Institut Catholique de Paris, [amdibiasio@neuf.fr](mailto:amdibiasio@neuf.fr)**  
Dr Anne-Marie Smith-Di Biasio (HDR) teaches Modernist literature and Translation Studies at the Catholic University of Paris and the Centre Européen de Traduction Littéraire. Her research explores the interface between Modernism and Modernity, Literature and Psychoanalysis, especially in the context of European Modernisms. At present she is finishing a book: *Le Palimpseste mémoriel*, based on the subject of her 2013 *habilitation* research synthesis. President of the French Virginia Woolf Society, she is the author of *Virginia Woolf, la hantise de l'écriture*, éditions Indigo & Côté-femmes 2010, and co-editor with Claire Davison, of *Trans-Woolf. Thinking Across Borders*, forthcoming Morlacchi Press, 2017; *Contemporary Woolf/Woolf contemporaine*, Presses universitaires de la Méditerranée, 2014 and with Catherine Bernard and Claire Davison of *Crossing into otherness – Outlanding Woolf*, in *Etudes britanniques contemporaines*, n° 48, 2015. In 1998 she published *Julia Kristeva; Speaking the Unspeakable* in the Pluto Press series Modern European Thinkers. The author of several recent articles on intertextual memory and film semiotics, she has also written entries for the dictionary of psychoanalysis, *Imprécis de Psychanalyse*, serialised in *CarnetPSY 2017-2019*, a collaborative work by the Séminaire Babylone, Arts Littérature, Psychanalyse.

**Marie Laniel, University of Picardie, [marie.laniel@gmail.com](mailto:marie.laniel@gmail.com)** Dr Marie Laniel is Senior Lecturer at the University of Picardie – Jules Verne (France). She is the secretary of the French Virginia Woolf Society. Her research focuses on Victorian subtexts in the works of Virginia Woolf. She is currently preparing a book on this topic to be published by Presses Universitaires de Rennes. She is the author of several articles on Virginia Woolf and Thomas Carlyle ('Revisiting a Great Man's House: Virginia Woolf's Carlylean Pilgrimages'), Alfred Tennyson ('"The name escapes me": Virginia Woolf's Dislocation of Patrilineal Memory in *A Room of One's Own*'), John Ruskin ('"Reading the Two Things at the Same Time": Victorian Modernism in *To the Lighthouse*'), Matthew Arnold ('Virginia Woolf, lectrice de Matthew Arnold: la fortune littéraire du "scholar-gipsy" dans les essais et la fiction') and Leslie Stephen ('Généalogies de l'essai: de Leslie Stephen à Virginia Woolf'). She is a member of the editorial board of *L'Atelier* and the editor of *Polyèmes*, a journal of intertextual and intermedial studies (<https://polyemes.revues.org>).

### Advisory Committee

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<sup>1</sup> 'The War from the Street' (1919), *Essays III (1919-1924)*, 3-4.

<sup>2</sup> 'Anon' (1940), *Essays VI (1933-1941)*, 580-607.

<sup>3</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Mal d'Archive*, Paris : Galilée, 1995.

<sup>4</sup> Georges Didi-Huberman, *L'Image survivante*, Paris : Minuit, 2002. 'Abbeys and Cathedrals' (1932), *Essays V (1929-1932)*, 301-306.