

Emergence

Faculty of Humanities Postgraduate Research Journal

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Humanities Postgraduate Connection

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**'The Defining Moment'
Volume Two, Autumn 2010**

Edited by Chris Penfold & Diana Popescu

Preface

Welcome to the second edition of *Emergence*, the Faculty of Humanities postgraduate research journal. We present the papers as a postscript to the HPGC conference in March 2010, where postgraduate students from across the Faculty gathered to investigate significant theoretical breakthroughs within their chosen field of study.

The theme of the conference called for an active reflection upon those defining ‘moments’: historical events, a trend in philosophical thought, or more graspable ‘items’ of material – high and low culture that have gained momentum, and against which one could reconfigure other moments in a people’s culture, history or archaeology. Furthermore, it offered the possibility to re-think previous criteria of definition, with the aim to bring to the surface aspects that may have remained obscure or simply undeveloped. The papers of this collection adopt different interdisciplinary angles to scrutinise what the defining moment(s) could be. While some authors position their chosen subject of research under the magnifying lens, creating an elaborate construction of ‘the moment’, others adopt a bird’s eye viewpoint, placing ‘it’ within a wider temporal and spatial frame. All, however, deal with the challenges of redefinition which inevitably occur when one looks at the moment(s) in hindsight.

In the first paper, Roger Hansford’s ‘Defining the Multicultural Moment: A Performance of *The Rain Falls on the Leaves of the Banana Tree* in Context’, the author suggests that Lily Yuan’s performance of *The Rain Falls* represents a cultural fusion: Chinese and Western elements are combined by, first, the traditional aspects of culture conjured by the album title, *The Ancient Art Music of China*, and, second, the organological derivation of Yuan’s instrument, the *yangqin*, from Middle Eastern origins. The concept of cultural synthesis is carried into the second paper, Victoria Kearley’s ‘Redefining Zorro: Hispanicising the Swashbuckling Hero’. Using *The Mask of Zorro* (1998) as a case study, Kearley posits that the film’s attempt to democratise the figure of Zorro is undercut by its system of representation which, albeit with a marked irreverence of tone, Hispanicises Zorro by re-presenting age old stereotypes of Hispanic masculinity. In the third paper, ‘Talking about my Generation’ – *WonderYears* (2003) – An Israeli Manifesto in Berlin’, Diana Popescu also raises culture as the catalyst for a defining moment, this time within the historical reconciliation between Israel and Germany. Popescu argues that the interactions established between German and Israeli artists can be read as a cogent attempt to share the difficulties of coming to terms with an inherited trauma, and to ‘normalise’ relationships in the sense of challenging inherited fears by exposing not an open wound but one that is healing.

In the fourth paper, Jude Jones identifies her defining moment in the archaeology of sixteenth- to eighteenth-century English churches. Her paper, ‘Veiled Assent, Hidden Dissension: Moments of Definition, Redefinition and Transition in the English Parish Church 1500-1700’, questions to what extent the architecture of a series of medieval churches along the Hampshire and West Sussex border reflects the religious oscillation during this turbulent period. Moving on from Jones’s historical study, the fifth paper, Denise Greenfield’s ‘The Weight of Nationalism: The Female Body in a Transitioning American South and South Africa’, locates its defining moment within a gender discourse. Through a literary study, Greenfield highlights the ways in which, within these two politically charged regions, women’s bodies and sexuality are the sites of cultural capital, particularly when nationalist, religious and ethnic agendas are invoked in the process of social transformation. In the sixth paper, ‘Late for the Picturesque: English Music’s Resistance to Nature’s Clothing in Art’, Stephen Groves continues the theme of national identity. He applies musicology to question if (or how) a nascent awakening towards the English countryside, celebrated in the purple prose of the tourist guide and captured within the frames of landscape pictures and borders of landscaped gardens, registered with the eighteenth-century English composer. The seventh and final paper, Jaime Ashworth’s ‘After Auschwitz’, centres on the poignant theme of the Holocaust. Ashworth uses both a literary and logistical approach to interrogate the ethical grounds on which post-1945 discussions about Auschwitz can be formulated. The journal is concluded with a brief summary by the Chair of the plenary session at the conference, Dr Stephen Morton.

A sense of continuity is established in the recurring interest shown towards identity, the narration of memory, nationality and gender. Regardless of these thematic denominators, the ‘moments’ selected by the authors, as the object of their research, strike us as singular. Whereas Hansford recognises the *yangqin* as momentous in the definition of a positive Chinese multiculturalism, Groves introduces the ‘Picturesque’ as a style that reveals the British resistance to foreignness. Kearley’s preoccupation with visual constructions of Hispanic masculinity finds a counterpart in Greenfield’s literary explorations of political representations of the female body. References to art and the Holocaust are present in both Popescu’s and Ashworth’s paper, but the manner in which they are summoned to support an argument is quite different. Ashworth ponders upon the necessity of artistic expression to keep the memory of ‘Auschwitz’ from sliding into a symbol devoid of meaning, while Popescu examines an artistic moment, contemplating how memory and

identity are debated by young Israelis and Germans. Unlike the authors who have already identified a moment and anchored it within a spatial and temporal context, Jones seeks to capture several moments in the constitution of religious identity, simultaneously recognising their fluidity and changeability when placed within a specific period of history.

Although we are confident that the papers will provide a sense of closure for their authors, for their readers we hope that they offer something else: an understanding of innovative theoretical approaches, insight into new academic disciplines, opportunities for further debate, and, perhaps most importantly, an awareness as to the variety of research being undertaken by postgraduate students within the Faculty.

Chris Penfold & Diana Popescu
Co-Editors, *Emergence* 2010

Humanities Postgraduate Connection

The newly appointed Faculty of Humanities at the University of Southampton currently boasts a community of nearly 300 postgraduate students studying topics across the seven disciplines in both teaching and research courses. The Humanities Postgraduate Connection (HPGC) was created by a group of these students to provide a venue through which members of this thriving and diverse community can get connected – with one another, with current research trends, and with opportunities to disseminate their own research.

The HPGC is an inclusive, friendly, non-competitive organisation run by postgraduate students for postgraduate students and offers many ways in which the community can become involved throughout the year. Our series of bi-monthly peer-led training seminars cover a variety of subjects across the Humanities disciplines and offer both practical CV building skills as well as an environment conducive to stimulating debates on research and theory. The annual conference, held in March, provides a stage for emerging researchers to share their findings or works in progress, opening them up for academic debate within a welcoming environment. Regular social events create an opportunity for informal discussion amongst peers, which often stimulates new ideas and provides a much needed support network. This year our social events also include a variety of cultural celebrations, allowing our diverse student body the chance to share in each other's heritage.

In addition to attending, students can also become involved in the organisation of these events, which not only allows individuals to have their say, but also provides an excellent outlet through which students can gain valuable transferable skills. Becoming involved in the HPGC is entirely voluntary and can include as little or as much activity as desired in any or all of the events held throughout the year. To find out more about getting involved, or about any of the activities that the HPGC offer, including social events, conference organising or leading a training session, please do not hesitate to get in touch at hpgc@soton.ac.uk.

For more information, please visit the HPGC webpage:
<http://www.humanities.soton.ac.uk/default.asp?sec=177&sub=685&pag=1>

Christen Elaine Ericsson
HPGC Committee Member

Contents

Defining the Multicultural Moment: A Performance of *The Rain Falls on the Leaves of the Banana Tree* in Context
Roger Hansford

Redefining Zorro: Hispanicising the Swashbuckling Hero
Victoria Kearley

'Talking about my Generation' – *WonderYears* (2003) – An Israeli Manifesto in Berlin'
Diana Popescu

Veiled Assent, Hidden Dissension: Moments of Definition, Redefinition and Transition in the English Parish Church 1500-1700
Jude Jones

The Weight of Nationalism: The Female Body in a Transitioning American South and South Africa
Denise Greenfield

Late for the Picturesque: English Music's Resistance to Nature's Clothing in Art
Stephen Groves

After Auschwitz
Jaime Ashworth

Defining the Moment: A Response
Dr Stephen Morton