

16.04.2026

6pm-9pm

Devon House
Room 136

Who appears on stage?
Whose stories get told?

REPRESENTATION DRAMA FESTIVAL

Please join us for an evening of creative and
academic responses to the theme of
Representation.

With plenty of food and drink provided.

Northeastern University London _____

*A collaboration between Dr. Peter Maber and Literature Society,
sponsored by the Northeastern University Humanities Centre.*

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**REPRESENTATION
DRAMA FESTIVAL**

PANEL 1

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A short welcome from co-host **Lily Sims**.

Stephen Foster, 'Hard Times Come Again No More'
Sung by **Jennifer Gardiner**, with **Peter Maber**, piano

'Nina Simone's Feelings'
Orlando Reade

This talk is about Nina Simone's cover of Morris Albert's hit song 'Feelings', at the Montreux Jazz Festival in Switzerland in 1976. I'll describe how her performance deconstructs the excessively sentimental original and then puts it back together in triumphant style. I'll use Bertolt Brecht's 'alienation technique' to describe Simone's singular approach to performance—at once disturbing and triumphant.

Lara Parmiani, Founder and Director of LegalAliens Theatre Company, in conversation with **Peter Maber**.

'Bottom the Silkweaver'
Daniel Swift

The character of Bottom in Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream* is a beloved comedic figure, and something of a joke. He is also a slightly coded character, who belongs to—or emerges from—the immigrant communities who lived in London in the 1580s and 1590s. Specifically, Bottom speaks French and is a weaver, we are told in the play; as such, he would be immediately recognisable to Shakespeare's first audiences as a Walloon immigrant from northern France or the Netherlands, and part of a generation of mostly silk weavers who settled in north-east London following anti-Protestant violence on northern France and the Netherlands in the 1570s. Recognising him as an immigrant changes our sense of the play, and how Shakespeare represents immigrants and marginalised communities on stage.

Anon, 'A Caveat for Cut-Purses'
Sung by **Jennifer Gardiner** with **Peter Maber**, lute

'*Othello* on the Romantic Stage'
Flora Lisica

Charles Lamb and a number of his contemporaries believed that tragic plays should be read and not seen in the theatre. This was because they believed that reading awakens imaginative sympathy, while the physicality of the theatrical medium impedes this, and theatrical representation inevitably distorts the import of a play. *Othello* was a key example of this for Lamb: Othello's part was typically played by white actors in blackface in the period, and Lamb found that being reminded of Othello's race in the theatre impeded his capacity for sympathetic engagement. Reading Lamb's reflections on his own racial prejudice in the context of Romantic theatrical renderings of *Othello*, this paper explores how ideas of sympathy are negotiated through both theatrical and readerly (mis)representations.

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PANEL 2

Interlocutor: Dr. Claire Griffiths

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'The Woman on the Bus: (Mis)representing the Gulf Malayali Experience'

Neetha Rajasena Kurup

Most stories about the Gulf migrant experience, be it in Malayalam cinema or in English-language fiction, centre on men. The woman who also lived and worked in the Gulf is either absent, dying, or reduced to a single line. This presentation uses two contemporary Malayalam films set in Dubai alongside a reading from an original novel-in-progress to explore what is lost when she is left out: the sensory, the transgressive, the ordinary.

'(Mis)representation of a female Victorian London gang leader: fact v fiction'

Emma Woodhouse

This paper will compare the portrayal of Mary Carr in series one of the Disney Plus series *A Thousand Blows* to the historical record, defining her crimes and engaging with how *A Thousand Blows* has amalgamated her name with the actions of a later, 1920s, gang leader named Alice Diamond. The paper will explore how this misrepresentation redesigns Carr's legend, aligning its content with greater congruence to other hit gang-related shows such as *Peaky Blinders*. Finally, the constructed narrative of her life inherent in *A Thousand Blows* will be compared to the fictionalities Carr perpetrated in her own lifetime, leading us to question whether misrepresentation was Carr's own intended narrative.

'I am a woman'

Azalia Suhaimi

'I am a woman' is a poem that examines the misrepresentation of women and the pressure to conform to societal expectations.

'The Nowhere Place'

Siva Sithraputhran

This is an excerpt from my novel in progress 'The Nowhere Place', set in the industrialising Malaysia of the 80s.

Kanmani, or Mini as she later calls herself, seeks agency to represent herself the way she wants to. She runs into many hurdles, there's family and there are the enforcers of her new found Christian faith to contend with.

'Agnes' and 'Dartus'

Alison Thompson

From a novella-in-flash based on the life of a woman who was sent to Broadmoor Lunatic Asylum in 1904 after drowning a child, following the death of her newborn baby while suffering a mental illness which today would be diagnosed as post natal depression. The novella tells her tale backwards, so it opens with this piece, and then slowly reveals more about her story through each subsequent flash.

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PANEL 3

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'Representation and misrepresentation in Vauxhall Gardens'

Charlotte Grant

During and following Jonathan Tyers's (1702 – 1 July 1767) leadership, Vauxhall Gardens became a highlight of London's cultural scene from the early 1740s through to the mid Nineteenth Century. Tyers cleaned up Vauxhall's problematic reputation as place of prostitution and illegality, but the hint of illegitimacy and danger remained along with the Gardens' continued embracing of artifice and performance. This paper will focus on three individuals – a visitor: Ignatius Sancho (c.1729-1780), a performer: William Henry Lane (c. 1825–1852) and fictional character: Fanny Burney's Evelina (1778) – who became themselves the subject of (mis)representation.

'Palestine'

Catherine Brown

In this presentation I consider certain examples of the silencing of Palestinian and pro-Palestinian voices in the UK arts scene—and in political life more broadly—over the past few years. I include some brief analysis of the discourse used to silence—and awareness of the nature of my own performance.

'And for the Defence... Representing the Poplar Rates Rebellion in 2026'

Sam Kemp

This presentation reviews questions of representation surrounding the recent Poplar Rates Rebellion walking tour I hosted as part of the recent Modern Cockney Festival. Using feedback from participants, I aim to raise some concerns around storytelling, statistics, bias, and media surrounding this developing project.

'The "Unshaped Use" of Ophelia's Song'

Jennifer Gardiner

Is Ophelia purely mad? Is her singing mere aesthetic jargon? Have representations of Ophelia been fair? As commented upon by a Gentleman within the script itself, Ophelia's singing is, indeed, 'unshaped': seemingly incoherent madness. Yet, the Gentleman also points out that it's 'unshaped use doth move the hearer's to collection'. Composer, Elizabeth Maconchy, rewrites Ophelia's 'mad singing' into a coherent lament ('Ophelia's Song', 1926) that extracts the shape of Ophelia's singing to, as in the script, move hearers to collection. My presentation and live performance of 'Ophelia's Song' thus explores the misrepresentations of Ophelia's singing, alongside interpretations more understanding of Ophelia's mental state, all of which depend upon the 'unshaped use' and magic of fluid, articulated, live singing.

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PANEL 4

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'East London Laughing Stock'

Lily Sims

Does everyone have a regional identity? A short theatrical piece which interrogates what it might mean to call yourself an East Londoner, in the contexts of life in the Greater London suburbs.

'The New Patriot'

Ben Samek

An exploration of American identity abroad, attempting to balance ideas of national pride versus criticism.

'You Remind Me of Your Mother'

Fenrir Saitta

Familial relationships can be complex, loaded with expectations, facades, and a veritable mish-mash of reality and fantasy. When someone you care about displays one persona to the world and another to you, it can leave you questioning everything. This is particularly true when those around you continuously draw comparisons between yourself and them, pushing you to be more like them, to reflect each and every one of the traits that individual displays to the world, and never to you. My goal with this piece was to explore dissonance, in which you're seeing one person, and the world gets to see another, while expecting you to match a person that, ultimately, does not exist. This poem is called, 'You Remind Me of Your Mother'.

'Calabash, Glasgow: A Conversation of Two Voices'

Emmanuel Ekere Thompson

The piece is a scored dialogue for two ungendered voices, set in the corridor of a fictional literary festival in Glasgow. Drawing on students' bricolage produced in the Literature and Decolonisation course taught by Dr. Peter Maber, the piece weaves languages from Conrad, Kipling and a colonial administrative document into a present-day argument about cultural visibility, self-exploitation, and what it means to represent a community that is still burning. The reading is part of a larger project for Rethinking Representation and Misrepresentation through Drama.

End.