

The Centre for Studies in Violence, Memory, and Trauma
Department of English, Delhi University

Invites you to a talk

Trauma, portals and the idea of post-home
The new weird refugee experience

by
Katharine Cox

Time: Tuesday, 5th February, 2019 at 3.00 pm.
Venue: Room 60, Faculty of Arts, Delhi University.

New weird fiction is a genre of typically socialist-informed fantasy born out of trauma. Drawing on China Miéville's theorisation of the genre, this paper argues that new weird writers self-consciously challenge the racial politics of earlier weird writers in order to explore contemporary issues. In particular, this paper explores how the use of the portal in Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* (2017) constitutes an exploration of the spatial politics of refugee experience. I position this literary example alongside the visual 'portals' of the art project *Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* developed by contemporary artist Bryan McCormack (2016), performer Henry Bell and Sheffield Hallam University students (2018). Through a focus on the idea of the portal, the paper argues that these representations challenge our understanding of *heimlich* and *unheimlich* and by extension refugees' ability to dwell. Instead these examples propose a different experience of space, which I term 'post-home'.

Katharine Cox is Principal Lecturer in English and Head of English at Sheffield Hallam University (UK). Her research is concerned with ideas of space, identity and the 'textual architecture' of contemporary literature, and has included writing on sf, film, children's literature and detective fiction. Her recent essay on 'Postmodern Literary Labyrinths: Spaces of Horror Reimagined' is published in *The Palgrave Handbook to Horror Literature* (2018), edited by Dr Kevin Corstorphine and Dr Laura R. Kremmel. She has recently completed a co-edited volume for Manchester University Press with Dr Kate Watson, entitled *Tattoos in Crime and Detective Narratives: Marking and Remarking*, forthcoming June 2019, which includes her essay on China Miéville's curation of the new weird ('The tattoo wakes: Sentient ink, curatorship and writing the new weird in China Miéville's *Kraken: An anatomy*.') and a co-authored chapter with Caroline Jones on the development of the tattoo in the Lemony Snicket series of children's books ('"Since the schism": Reading the tattoo in Lemony Snicket's *A series of unfortunate events*.'). Katharine's current focus is a monograph on literary labyrinths after modernism.

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