

Thinking through Fiction: Introduction

Amy Sackville

School of English, University of Kent, Canterbury, UK

A.Sackville@kent.ac.uk

Thinking through Fiction: Introduction

The University of Kent mounted its first Creative Writing conference, *Thinking through Fiction*, in June 2016. Delegates were invited to consider how the conference's title could function in both—or in multiple—directions: how we might use fiction to express ideas; how we might express thought, and thinking, in fictional forms. The conference emphasised the importance of practice as research—writing as a process, and what the nature of that process might be—as well as considering the end product. The papers presented ranged across disciplines, taking in philosophy, art theory, and linguistics, and attending to extracts from creative practitioners' work alongside reflections upon that work.

The role of Creative Writing as a valid form of intellectual inquiry, within the academy and beyond, was brought to the fore, asking how fiction might serve as an avenue of research: starting out from the proposition that fiction can genuinely bring new knowledge, and new ways of thinking and knowing, into the world; and thinking about why that is important, and necessary.

Themes that recurred across the two days included: political agency and the politics of representation, including representations of the past; ekphrasis and forms of engagement with other artforms; the place of the reader in the text; and the vexed boundaries and binaries involved in terms such as 'truth', 'reality', 'realism', 'illusion', 'history', 'memory', 'authenticity', 'veracity', 'fact', 'fiction'. Common threads were pulled loose and woven together: an interest in 'hybrid' texts, in the ways in which creative and critical practices might intersect, overlap, and inform each other; how we understand and (fail to) articulate creative process(es); and a perhaps related attention to lacunae, gaps, fragments, and the spaces created by juxtaposition. This special section teases out some of those threads.

The following pieces grew out of papers presented at the conference—a selection from around 25 talks and presentations, condensed into short texts. This showcase aims to give a sense of the various practices and approaches offered, from fictive to ficto-critical to essayistic to poetic; a set of responses to an invitation to 'think through' creative practice.