

## Grief. Language. Art.

University of Liverpool, 8-10 July 2014

For my rough sorrows; cease, be dumb and mute,  
Give up your feet and running to mine eyes,  
And keep your measures for some lover's lute,  
Whose grief allows him music and a rhyme;  
George Herbert (1593-1633)

He was a burned man and I was a nurse and I could have nursed him. Do you understand the sadness of geography?  
I could have saved him or at least been with him till the end. I know a lot about burning.

*The English Patient* (1992)

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### Confirmed Speakers:

Dr David Bolt (Centre for Culture and Disability Studies, Liverpool Hope University)

Professor Clara Mucci (Università degli Studi G. d'Annunzio Chieti-Pescara)

Dr Julie-Marie Strange (History at the University of Manchester)

Today in many societies, grief is considered to be an acceptable emotion. Thanks to developments in many fields, especially in psychology and psychotherapy, there has been a gradual progress in our understanding of the deepest human emotions such as grief. Manifestations of grief, however, are still often discouraged. On the one hand, two specific areas, continuing to impinge on the 'suitability' of grief in expression, are 'gender' and 'geography'. On the other, grief is sometimes associated with the state of one's emotional or physical health, and often studied in line with concepts such as sorrow, pain, melancholy, and most important of all loss and mourning. Grief is directly addressed by psychologists for occasions of complicated, unresolved, and acute trauma, an emotional state that remains in/consistently prolonged beyond our social and cultural norms. Grief in private and public spheres is another topic addressed in humanities and social sciences. According to Judith Butler (2004), "many people think that grief is privatizing, that it returns us to a solitary situation", but "it exposes the constitutive sociality of the self, a basis for thinking a political community of a complex order."

Reading the historical context of human emotions in expression, how do we see authors' diverse language(s) of grief? How did poets versify grief when they were not quite allowed to break through public norms of emotional and behavioural desirability? How have multilingual writers shaped our understanding of emotions such as grief? Reflect on authors such as Felicia Hemans (1793-1835) and John George Eugène Jolas (1894-1952); how did they communicate synonymous concepts with grief? How can we see relevant emotions through geographies and gender-specific symbolism perfected by painters and sculptors? How do verbal and visual manifestations of grief communicate gender politics and erotic imagery? Discuss literary, linguistic, aesthetic, and theological strategies and rituals that get us through mourning and grieving in the creative process? How do concepts such as 'guilt' and 'shame' correspond with or translate into grief? Discuss 'separation distress' in literature and fine arts. How have writers, philosophers, painters, poets, sculptors, historians, and architects engaged with grief throughout centuries? And what is relevant/reliable today?

We seek papers and panel proposals that address these and other questions, reading through varieties of expressive modes and emotional behaviours, focusing on grief, language, and art. The conference is open to contributions from humanities, social, health, and life sciences.

### Abstract Submission

Send us your abstracts (max. 250 words) by 15 April 2014 to [painpara@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:painpara@liverpool.ac.uk)

### Wasfie Mhabak Memorial Grant

- 4 full bursaries including accommodation for PhD candidates in English Literature and history.
  - 4 attendance bursaries for PhD candidates in literary studies, philosophy, and psychology.
- Scholars wishing to apply for these grants are advised to send their abstracts and CVs by 1 February 2014. You should also attach a research statement (max. 500 words), clearly stating how your research relates to the conference topic and themes.