



GENDER, DIVERSITY & INTERSECTIONALITY RESEARCH CENTRE

**This Thursday: Join our next RHEA Research Seminar
with Hannah Van Hove!**

"'Belonging nowhere'?: British experimental women writers and the politics of marginalisation "

Thursday 10th October, 12:30-14:00 - Pleinlaan 5, PL5.5.61.



Writing in 1989, Christine Brooke-Rose stated that '[p]erhaps one of the safest ways of dismissing a woman experimental writer is to stick a label on her, if possible that of a male group that is getting or (better still) used to get all the attention'. Rather than 'fluttering around a canon', she suggested that 'the best way' for any writer 'is to slip through all the labels, including that of "woman writer"'. She cautioned, however, that the price is 'to

belong nowhere', noting that 'this is, on the whole, what happens to experimental writers of all sexes and origins, but more particularly to women experimental writers'.

Indeed, this has been the fate of British authors Brooke Rose (1923-2012), Anna Kavan (1901-1968), Brigid Brophy (1929-1995), Eva Figes (1932-2012) and Ann Quin (1936-1973) whose works largely fell into obscurity in the latter part of the twentieth century. This paper aims to explore the reasons for the

critical neglect of these authors in the British literary canon, paying close attention to the politics at play in the exclusion of experimental women's literature from accounts of British fiction. It follows Ellen Friedman's suggestion that works which undermine a society's values might be thought of as 'anticanonical' and seeks to engage with the question: as anticanonical works of fiction, how does this literature subvert established ways of looking at the world and at society? By closing with a comparative consideration of two case studies - Anna Kavan's *Ice* (1967) and Ann Quin's *Passages* (1969) - this paper conducts a preliminary investigation into this question, exploring how and to what end both novels overturn conventional realist narratives in order to portray a more complex psychological reality.

Hannah Van Hove is post-doctoral researcher at CLIC (Centre for Literary and Intermedial Crossings, VUB).



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