



UCD CLINTON INSTITUTE

**CFP: Alternative Realities: New Challenges for  
American Literature in the Era of Trump**

**Friday 13 – Saturday 14 December 2019**

**Clinton Institute for American Studies, University College Dublin**

Watching the televised debates between then-presidential candidates John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon in 1959, and reflecting on the growth of televisual media and the gradual transformation of politics into spectacle, Philip Roth observed that “the American writer” was now challenged “to understand, and then describe, and then make credible much of the American reality,” at a time when the actuality was “constantly outdoing our talents”. After the election of Donald Trump in 2016 it feels like, once again, reality is outpacing fiction, with the Trump presidency inaugurating a new stage in the process of aestheticization in which politics and entertainment converge as never before. This paradigm shift—which is not exclusive to the US, but that is especially acute given Trump’s celebrity status and his leadership style—has been sharpened by the disruptive impact of new and social media in the public sphere, bringing to the fore concomitant concerns about the derealization of political and cultural discourses. In a context where the relationship between fact and fiction has been deeply destabilized, writers are challenged to make sense of this new “American reality” that is troubling core assumptions about the purpose and value of literature.

This conference seeks to bring together scholars in literary studies and adjacent fields to consider literary responses to the new American realities.

We are delighted to confirm as Keynote Speakers:

**Aleksandar Hemon**

Novelist and short-story writer, author of *Nowhere Man* and *The Lazarus Project*  
Professor of Creative Writing at Princeton University

**Karen E. Bender**

novelist and short-story writer, author of *Refund*, *The New Order*, *Like Normal People*  
Distinguished Visiting Professor of Creative Writing at Hollins University

**Chris Beckett**

novelist and short-story writer, author of *America City* and *Dark Eden*  
Arthur C. Clark Award winner 2013

**Topics** may include (but are not confined to):

- Narrative strategies and innovations in the literary representation of American reality
- Intersections between fiction and non-fiction
- Fictional subversions of the “real”
- The valence of realism in contemporary American literature
- Literary criticism in the age of “Fake News”
- Politics of representation, dissent, and resistance
- Genre and gender in contemporary American fiction
- Diasporic, minority, immigrant, and Native American literatures

- Right-wing/conservative American literature
- The resurgence of American protest poetry
- The currency of dystopian and counterfactual literature
- The role of irony, satire and parody in the era of Trump
- The demands of writing the contemporary
- Reading publics and the role of fiction
- Shifting economies in the publishing industry
- The currency of prior literature for making sense of the present

Please submit the paper title, an abstract of 300 words, a short bio and contact details to [dolores.resano@ucd.ie](mailto:dolores.resano@ucd.ie) and [catherine.carey@ucd.ie](mailto:catherine.carey@ucd.ie) . We also welcome applications for full panels of 3-4 papers. We will soon update information on [www.ucdclinton.ie/](http://www.ucdclinton.ie/), but don't hesitate to contact us with any questions you may have.

The deadline for paper and panel proposals is **1st September 2019**. (Note – we will make decisions on paper/panel submissions on a rolling basis to help facilitate participant's planning for conference attendance).