

**Laura Richards in Israel:**  
*The Annual Conference of the European Study Group  
of Nineteenth Century American Literature*  
14-15/04/2024

**Day I: Sunday, April 14th**

**10:30-10:50 IL/ 09:30-09:50 EUR**  
**Welcome & Opening**

**Prof. Shimon Amar**, President, Oranim College, Israel  
**Dr. Janina Kahn-Horwitz**, Vice-Rector, International Engagement, Oranim International, Israel  
**Dr. Etti Gordon Ginzburg**, Department of English Language and Literature, Oranim  
College, Israel

**10:50-12:20 IL / 09:50-11:20 EUR**  
**Session 1: Poetics and Psychology**

**Chair:** Janina Kahn-Horwitz

Jennifer Lewin, University of Haifa, Israel: **Dreaming and Sleeping in the Children's  
Poetry of Laura Richards**

Yifah Hadar, Independent Scholar, Israel: **Veiling and Unveiling the Trauma of Incest in  
Laura Richards' Poem "My Japanese Fan"**

Verena Laschinger, University of Erfurt, Germany: **"I knew a dog once—": Laura  
Richards' Literary Animals and the Poetics of Animacy**

**12:20-12:40 IL / 11:20-11:40 EUR:** Coffee break

**12:40-14:10 IL / 11:40-13:10 EUR**  
**Session 2: Home and Away**

**Chair:** Michaela Keck

David Kahn, Oranim College, Israel: **"Folks Are So Queer, I'm Really Better at Home:"  
Domestic Alterity in Laura E. Richards' Non-Sense Poems**

Janina Kahn-Horwitz, Oranim College, Israel: **Orthographic Knowledge Facilitating the  
Reading of *Tirra Lirra* Rhymes**

Anita Konrad, University College of Teacher Education Tyrol, Austria: **"A Sugary heart, a  
raspberry tart and everything else that is sweet." Exploring the Sweet, Conflicted, and  
Absent Foods in Laura E. Richards Writings**

**14:10-15:10 IL / 13:10-13:10 EUR:** Lunch break

**15:10-16:40 IL/ 14:10-16:40 EUR**  
**Session 3: Laura Richards Goes to School**

**Chair:** Verena Laschinger

Ralph Poole, Salzburg University, Austria: **“those terrible songs”:** Laura Richards’ Ditties and the Education of Boys

Michaela Keck, Oldenburg University, Germany: **Nonsense, Gender, and Genre:** Laura Richards’s “The Lovely Maid of Timbuctoo,” “Belinda Blonde,” and Margaret Atwood’s *The Penelopiad*

Adiv Robinov, Oranim College, Israel: **American Nationalism in the Poetry of Laura Richards**

**Day II:** Monday, April 15th

**13:00-15:00 IL/ 12:00-14:00 EUR**  
**Session 1: *Captain January***

**Chair:** Jennifer Lewin

Stephanie Durrans, Université Bordeaux Montaigne, France: **From *Captain January* (1891) to *Snow White, or the House in the Woods* (1900)**

Josephine Sharoni, Independent Scholar, Israel: **A Cow named Imogen: *Captain January* and Shakespeare**

Cécile Roudeau, Université Paris Cité, France: **“Don’t say that name, Daddy!” Queer Polysemy and Duplicitous Letters in Laura Richards’ *Captain January***

Aušra Paulauskienė, LCC International University in Klaipėda, Lithuania: **The Regionalism of *Captain January***

**15:00-15:30 IL/ 14:00-14:30 EUR:** Coffee break

**15:30—17:45 IL / 14:30-16:45 EUR**  
**Translating Richards**

**Chair:** Stephanie Durrans, Université Bordeaux Montaigne, France

Etti Gordon Ginzburg, Oranim College, Israel: **Richards and the Canon:** Translation as a Practice of Recovery

**Roundtable: Best Practices in Translation**

**Commentator:** Rina Ben Shahr, Oranim College, Israel

Eran Shasha Evron ,author, Israel: **On Translating “My Japanese Fan” by Laura Richards to Hebrew**

Anna Maria Czernow & Aleksandra Wiczorkiewicz, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland: **Translating “Eletelephony” and “My Japanese Fan” by Richards to Polish**

Muna Abu Baker, Dar Laila Publishing: **On Translating “Eletelephony” and “My Japanese Fan” by Richards to Arabic**

Barak Avirbach, Oranim College, Israel: **On Translating “Eletelephony” and “My Japanese Fan” by Laura Richards to Hebrew**

Claudia Paci, translator, Italy: **Translating “Eletelephony” and “My Japanese Fan” by Richards to Italian**

**17:45-18:00 IL/ 16:45-17:00 EUR**

**Announcing the upcoming Zagreb Conference, November 2024**

**Conclusion & Goodbyes**

## Abstracts and contributors

Muna Abu Baker:

### Eletelephony

كان يا ما كان فيل  
حاول استخدام التليفيل –  
كلًا! كلًا! أعني كان هناك فيلوفون  
حاول استخدام التليفون –  
(أنا العزيزة! لست متأكدة حتى هذا الوقت  
أنني فهمت الأمور بالضبط).

كيف حصل ذلك لا يهم  
فقد علق خرطومه في التليخرطوم؛  
كلما حاول أكثر تخليصه ليتحرّر،  
كلما رنت أعلى أضرار التليزرر–  
(أخشى أن التحلّي عن هذه القصيدة أفضل  
عن التليفوب والتليفيل)

### My Japanese Fan

#### مروحتي اليابانية

عندي صديق، صديق صغير  
يعيش فوق مروحة؛  
ربّما كان امرأة،  
ربّما كانت رجلاً.

ملابسه، إنّها مُغايرة جدًّا،  
مُغايرة جدًّا، في الحقيقة،  
أسميه أحيانًا "فتاة بهيّة"،  
أو "شابّ دمتّ" في أحيان أخرى.

شعرها مُمشّط ومُصَفّف وناعم،  
فوق وجهه الوسيم.  
نظرته ودّيّة للغاية؛  
سلوكها رحيم.  
في كلّ صباح، عندما أستيقظ،  
وفي كلّ مساء أيضًا،  
ترحب بي بابتسامته لطيفة،  
وتحيّة "شو الأخبار؟" ودودة.

هي تتساءل لماذا أسئلقي على السرير؛  
يعتقد أنّ خطّتي الذكيّة  
هي أن آتي لأعيش معها  
فوق مروحة ورقية.  
ولكن هذا، للأسف! لا يمكن أبدًا أن يكون  
ولذلك، لا يمكنني أبدًا  
أن أعرف إذا كان امرأة

**Muna Abu Baker** is a publisher, translator, and literary editor. She has worked in cultural journalism and was the chief editor of a culture magazine. Additionally, she has worked in fundraising and public relations for art and culture institutions. Muna Specializes in culture management and has taken part in organizing and producing fine art exhibitions. Also, she has been on the steering committee of Qalandia biennale for several editions. In 2018, Muna established *Dar Laila Publishing* and translation, an independent publishing house.

**Barak Avirbach:**

**Eletelephony**

Once there was an elephant,  
Who tried to use the telephant –  
No! no! I mean an elephone  
Who tried to use the telephone –  
(Dear me! I am not certain quite  
That even now I've got it right.)

Howe'er it was, he got his trunk  
Entangled in the telephunk;  
The more he tried to get it free,  
The louder buzzed the telephee –  
(I fear I'd better drop the song  
Of elephop and telephong!)  
(TL 31)

**פילפלאפון**

היה היה מזמן פילון  
שניסה להתקשר בפילפון –  
לא! לא! אני מתכוון בפלאפיל  
שניסה להתקשר בפלאפון –  
(אוי לי! איני יודע בביטחון  
שאף הפעם אני אומר זאת נכון).

בכל מקרה, הצליח את הדקו  
לסבך בפילפוננו;  
ככל שניסה אותו לשחרר,  
זמזום הפלאפיל הלך והצטמרר –  
(אולי עדיף לנטוש את השיר  
על פילפוש ופלאפיל!)

### My Japanese Fan

I have a friend, a little friend  
Who lives upon a fan;  
Perhaps he is a woman,  
Perhaps she is a man.

His clothes they are so very queer,  
So *very* queer, in sooth,  
I sometimes call him "lovely maid,"  
And sometimes "gentle youth."

Her hair is combed up straight and smooth  
Above his pretty face.  
His looks are full of friendliness;  
Her attitude of grace.  
And every morning when I wake,  
And every evening too,  
She greets me with his pleasant smile,  
And friendly "How-d'ye-do?"

She wonders why I lie in bed;  
He thinks my wisest plan  
Would be to come and live with her  
Upon a paper fan.  
But that, alas! can never be;  
And so I never can  
Know whether he's a woman,  
Or whether she's a man.

(IMN 175-177)

### המניפה היפנית שלי

אני בידידות עם מיני-אישיות  
החיה על גבי מניפה;  
ייתכן שהיא איש,  
ייתכן שהוא אישה.

בגדיו כל כך לא מוגדרים,  
כל כך לא מוגדרים, נשבע,  
לעיתים אני קורא לו "עלם אצילי",  
ולעיתים "עלמה חביבה".

שיערה מסורק ישר וחלק  
על פני פניו היפים.  
מבטיו מלאים ידידותיות;  
והתנהגותה – חניניות.  
ומדי בוקר כשאני מתעורר,  
וגם בערבים,  
היא מקבלת אותי בחיוכו הנעים,  
ובברכת "מה העניינים?"

היא תוהה מדוע אני שוכב במיטתי;  
הוא חושב שהתוכנית הכי חכמה שאפשר  
היא שאבוא לשכון איתה יחדיו  
על גבי מניפה של נייר.  
אך זאת, לעולם לא יוכל לקרות, איזה ביש!  
ולכן לעולם לא אוכל  
לגלות אם הוא אישה,  
או אם היא איש.

**Barak Avirbach** is a lecturer in the B.A. program of the Hebrew language and the M.Ed. program of Second Language Acquisition in Oranim College, and in the B.Ed. program of the Hebrew language in Tel-Hai College. His main field of research is medieval Hebrew and Arabic philology. In addition, he studies songs and poems, as well as Hebrew translations from a linguistic perspective.

**Rina Ben Shahr:**

### המניפה היפנית שלי

קרוב ללפי  
על גבי מניפה  
יש לי חבר קטן  
אולי הוא חברה יפה.

בגדיו כה מוזרים

כה מוזרים, יש להודות,  
לעיתים אקרא לו "ילדה חמודה"  
ולעיתים "עלם חמודות".

שערה רך וחלק  
מעל פניו היפים  
מבטו שופע ידידות  
נימוסיה מלטפים.

בכל פֶקֶר עם השכמה  
ובכל ערב גם כן  
היא מברכת אותי בחיוכו העָרֵב  
ושואל בידידות "מה נשמע?"

היא תוהה למה אני במיטה,  
הוא חושב שמוטב שאגור איתה  
על מניפת נָר.   
אבל אויה! זה לא יכול לקרות,  
יש להדגיש,  
כך שלעולם לא אדע  
אם הוא אישה  
או אם היא איש.

#### פיליטלפוניה

הִיָּה הָיָה אֵי-פֶעַם פִּיל  
שניסה לדבר בטלפיל  
לא לא! זה היה פיליפון  
שניסה לדבר בטלפון  
(נדמה לי אֶקָל  
שיצא לי מבולבל).

כך קרה שהפילון  
חֶדְקוּ הסתבך בְּחֶדְקוֹן  
ניסה הפיל להשתחרר  
הֶחְדְקוֹן זמזם יותר  
(אולי אפסיק את זה השיר  
על טלֶפְסִיק וטלשיר).

**Prof. Rina Ben-Shahar** is a linguist from The University of Haifa and Oranim Academic College of Education, Israel. She studies language in its social and cultural contexts. Main fields of research: Literary translation; Stylistics; Style and language of Israeli prose fiction and theater; Literary dialogue language; Spoken Hebrew. She is chief editor (with Prof. Nitsa Ben-Ari) of the academic research series *Ha-ivrit safa chaya* (Hebrew as a Living Language), published by Hakibbutz Hameuchad publishing company and The Porter Institute for Poetics and Semiotics at Tel Aviv University. Writer of school readers on language, comprehension, writing and communication. Writer of children and youth literature.

**Anna Maria Czernow, PhD**, is a researcher at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań (within the Children’s Literature & Culture Research Team at the Faculty of Polish and Classical Philology). She received her doctorate on Mikhail Bakhtin’s carnivalesque theory in children’s literature from Warsaw University in Poland. Her academic interests include the history and theory of children’s literature and translation studies. She has authored over 20 articles and book chapters, the last in English: *Mary Poppins, Mr. Inkblot, and Pippi Longstocking as Three Embodiments of the Fool Figure*. In *Filoteknos* vol. 9/2019. She has edited, among others, the English translation of Janusz Korczak’s works entitled *How to Love a Child and Other Selected Works*. London–Chicago: VM, 2018. 2015–2023, she was President of IBBY Poland. In addition, she is a literary translator, translating children’s and YA literature, popular literature, and essays, primarily from Swedish.

**Aleksandra Wiczorkiewicz, PhD**, is an assistant professor at the Faculty of Polish and Classical Philology and a researcher in the Children’s Literature & Culture Research Team at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland. She received her doctorate on the Polish translation reception of works by George MacDonald, J.M. Barrie and Cicely Mary Barker. Her academic interests include English children’s literature of the Golden Age, Polish juvenile writings, and children’s literature translation studies. She has authored two monograph books and numerous academic articles and book chapters; she is also a literary and academic translator and a member of the Polish Literary Translators Association; she translated, among others, J.M. Barrie’s *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* (*Piotruś Pan w Ogrodach Kensingtonskich*, Poznań, Media Rodzina 2018).

Stéphanie Durrans:

**Laura E. Richards’ Twice-told Tales: From *Captain January* (1891) to *Snow White, or the House in the Woods* (1900)**

I would like to use a comparative analysis of these two novellas, published almost a decade apart, as the starting-point of a discussion on what I regard as a gaping hole in both narratives—a whole history of pain, suffering, and violence which the early story manages to contain within the safe precincts of a sentimental narrative but which eventually erupts and shatters the less conventional surface of the later tale. After examining how Richards challenges fairy tale conventions in her retelling of “Snow White,” I will offer two different readings of this highly disturbing novella: one based on a metatextual interpretation leading us to consider the world of nonsense as a source of rejuvenation for the artist seeking to express her frustrations with the real world; and one suggesting that *Snow White, or the House in the Woods* can be read as possibly the first attempt at queercropping the original tale.

**Stéphanie Durrans** is Professor of American Literature at the Université Bordeaux Montaigne, France. She is the author of *The Influence of French Culture on Willa Cather: Intertextual References and Resonances* (2007) and of *Willa Cather’s My Ántonia: A Winter’s Journey* (2016). She has published widely on nineteenth- and twentieth-century women writers, with a special focus on questions of intertextuality and transatlantic literary relationships.

Yifah Hadar:

**Veiling and Unveiling the Trauma of Incest in Laura Richards’ Poem “My Japanese Fan”**



Lacan teaches that the prohibition on incest is the sine qua non of speech. How does incest then manifest in literary texts that portray incest? In other words, can incest have a rhetorical formation as such? No longer able to shelter under the paternal metaphor, suppressed incestuous relations require a different mode of representation found in catachresis, a form of speech that “abuses” the next word for the proper (Peacham).

A Lacanian analysis of Laura Richards’ metaphorical poem “Japanese Fan” (1890) shows her recourse to catachresis in order to confront the narrative’s destructive consequences, thus rendering the poetic expression of incest on both the thematic and rhetorical levels. Catachresis as monster, in light of Derrida’s teachings (Derrida), is congruent with 19<sup>th</sup> century portrayal of queer as monstrosity. Catachresis as it is manifest in Richards’ poem then, can be seen as a mechanism of macrostructure, a dominant (Jacobson)n as veil. Stripping the metaphor of its fundamentals, Richards signals at a collapse of boundaries by unveiling sex (the fan as a highly erotic object) and the failure of said fan to operate as screen to mask both sexes, thus offering a glimpse at the abyss of the Real as formulated by Lacan.

**Dr. Yifah Hadar** has a Ph.D. in English Literature and psychoanalysis (psychorhetoric) from the Tel Aviv university. She is a member of the RUE – European Universities Network whose objective is to create a network of teachers and researchers who share an interest in psychoanalysis as a discipline. She works as a book translator and researcher.

David Kahn:

**“Folks Are So Queer, I’m Really Better at Home:” Domestic Alterity in Laura E. Richards’ Non-Sense Poems**

Non-sense has been characterized as a double bind or paradox, being simultaneously both free and constrained, providing the reader with formal regularity but also with semantic incoherence (Lecerle). Different authors’ non-sense works may vary in the degree and extent to which they indulge or test this doublebind. Laura E Richards is interesting in this context because (while her thematic slate is broad) several of her non-sense poems focus thematically on this doublebind, and the theme is also evident in her novel, *Captain January*. This paper focuses on Richards’ poem “Why I No Longer Travel,” which engages with a non-sensical world of otherness and concludes by retreating from that world to domestic safety. In particular, the poem establishes a concept of queerness that marks the point of confrontation between sense and non-sense, between meaning and chaos; and adopts a position of domestic alterity. Several of Richards’ other poems (as well as *Captain January*) also make use of queerness as the limit behind which one can safely engage with what is other, or foreign, or non-sensical, taking a position of domestic alterity.

**David Kahn**, D.Phil (Oxon), is a graduate of Wits University, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Oxford University where he focused on early modern poetry and translation studies (particularly verse translations of the Hebrew Bible). David works as an academic editor, content writer, and teacher in the English Language and Literature faculty of Oranim College. David is also a seasoned corporate financial adviser having worked as a senior investment banker for the last 30 years. David’s academic and commercial interests have converged in his current focus on the literary intersections with business and future narratives.

Janina Kahn-Horwitz:

### **Orthographic Knowledge Facilitating the Reading of *Tirra Lirra Rhymes***

Novel English phonemes represented by foreign orthography create challenges for first language Hebrew and Arabic speaking children in Israel. Policy makers have compiled lists of corpus-based frequent lexical items to provide novice learners with language that will assist them to understand, communicate, read, and write at a CEFR A1, A2, and B1 level.

To facilitate combined teaching of meaning, reading, and spelling, 3956 frequent words have been orthographically mapped into closed syllables with short vowel sounds, open syllables with long vowel sounds, split digraphs, vowel teams, vowel-r syllables, consonant-le syllables, and multisyllabic words with unaccented vowels. The frequency of short vowels in closed syllables supports research (Shankweiler & Fowler, 2004) and makes this orthographic convention a first choice regarding EFL literacy instruction.

An orthographic analysis of *Some Families of my Acquaintance* from Laura Richards' *Tirra Lirra Rhymes Old and New* found most syllable types to be closed syllables with short vowel sounds (35%). Vowel teams comprised 19% of syllable types. Open syllables with long vowel sounds comprised 12% of syllables, vowel-r syllables comprised 10% of syllables, split digraphs, and consonant le comprised 3% of syllable types each, and seven additional orthographic/morphological units made up the final 16% of syllables. This rhyme could be presented as an authentic and playful literature piece for practicing orthographic conventions.

**Janina Kahn-Horwitz** is a senior lecturer at Oranim College. She is incoming vice-rector for international outreach at Oranim International. She teaches in the undergraduate English Language and Literature Department as well as the graduate M.Ed. Language Learning program. Her research interests include individual differences in language learning, English as a foreign language reading and spelling development, the cross-linguistic impact of first language and literacy on English, and teacher knowledge of English linguistic components. She has a B.A. from the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa, and an M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of Haifa.

Michaela Keck:

### **Nonsense, Gender, and Genre: Laura Richards' "The Lovely Maid of Timbuctoo," "Belinda Blonde," and Margaret Atwood's *The Penelopiad***

What connects the almost forgotten nineteenth-century American author Laura E. Richards and the acclaimed Canadian writer Margaret Atwood is their shared passion for nonsense. While Richards' nonsense poetry has received increasing scholarly attention during the last decade (Gürsel 2016; Gordon Ginzberg 2017; 2018; 2019), Atwood's use of nonsense has remained surprisingly underexplored. An exception is Glenys Stowe (1988), who observed that in *The Edible Woman* nonsense functions as social commentary, questioning the absurdity of what is considered "the norm" in everyday life. Indeed, some of Atwood's twenty-first-century protagonists continue to challenge "the norm" of the worlds they inhabit by creating their own nonsense rhymes that take up and mock the official educational scripts of, for instance, the dystopian society of Gilead. According to Jean-Jacques Lecercle (1994), "the dialectics of subversion and support" (72) is characteristic of nonsense as a literary genre with its revolutionary as well as conservative powers. By applying this genre-specific dialectics to my examination of the nonsense in Richards and Atwood's writings, I seek to

establish a meaningful dialogue between the two regarding the mis/education of young girls. While embedding their nonsense into the relevant historical contexts, I examine the ways in which it challenges as well as reinforces a gendered education of young girls. What values are put forth in, for example, Richards's "The Maid of Timbuctoo," "To the Little Girl Who Wiggles," "Belinda Blonde," and "Wouldn't," and Atwood's *The Penelopiad* and *The Testaments*? What subversive and/or normative role does Atwood's use of nonsense play in the education of the young maids and girls of her novels? And what social commentary does it provide? These are the central questions that this contribution seeks to answer.

**Michaela Keck** is a senior lecturer at the University of Oldenburg in Germany. She received her doctorate degree in American Studies at Goethe University in Frankfurt. Her research foci include nineteenth-century American literature and culture at the intersections between literature, visual culture, gender, the reception of myth, and the environment. Further research interests include captivity narratives and African American literature and culture. She is the author of *Walking in the Wilderness* (2006) and *Deliberately Out of Bounds* (2017). Her research articles about North American women writers range from Louisa May Alcott to Margaret Atwood (see also <https://uol.de/en/michaela-keck?type=0> ).

Anita Konrad:

**“A sugary heart and a raspberry tart / And everything else that is sweet”:**

**Exploring the Sweet, Conflicted, and Absent Foods in Laura E. Richards' Writings**

This talk will examine the complex representations of food and food-related acts in two of Richards' major works: *In My Nursery* (1890), and *When I Was Your Age* (1893), her memoir for children. It argues that Richards' attention to certain food aspects and exclusion of others contributes to a contradictory narrative that refers not only to her profile as a children's writer, but also to personal-biographical and wider socio-cultural aspects.

By drawing on literary models such as *Mother Goose* nursery rhymes and nonsense verses, Richards positioned herself as a children's writer within artistic and cultural traditions in which food and food acts are frequently characterized by violence and death. Contrary to the at times drastic food-related imagery in her poems, her children's autobiography, *When I Was Your Age*, presents food memories that seem to be void of conflict, let alone violence. Instead, Richards portrays food as a feature of a positive, idyllic childhood and cultivated upbringing. Recent research has shown, however, that Richards' portrayal of her childhood and her parents differs significantly from the actual family constellations, which were at times very conflicted. With this awareness, allusions to food in this text will be re-read.

Finally, in *When I Was Your Age*, Richards almost exclusively depicts the foodways of the British-European upper class. She describes at length the garden and fruit at Green Peace but makes no mention of the pre-colonial produce native to the Americas, which was verifiably also grown there. In other texts, absurd and violent representations of foodways are strikingly more often attributed to non-European, non-American or non-human cultures and protagonists. These omissions raise questions both regarding the intended readership and the pedagogical and educational approaches employed in these texts.

**Anita Konrad** (Mag.) studied Comparative Literature and German Studies at the *Leopold Franzens University of Innsbruck*, Austria. Since 2013 she has been a lecturer and planning staff member at the *Pädagogische Hochschule Tirol*. She is currently a doctoral candidate and fellow of the doctoral program "Dynamics of Inequality and Difference in the Age of Globalization" in the research area "Cultural Encounters - Cultural Conflicts" at the *Leopold Franzens University of Innsbruck*. Research interests: Children's and youth literature, literature and migration, migration, food studies and social history of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. Contact: [anita.konrad@ph-tirol.ac.at](mailto:anita.konrad@ph-tirol.ac.at); Personal site: <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Anita-Konrad>

Verena Laschinger:

### **“I knew a dog once—”: Laura Richards’ Literary Animals and the Poetics of Animacy**

Lacking both her daughter’s zoological zeal and her husband’s hunting ardor, Laura E. Richards had but a mild, aesthetic interest in animals. In her autobiography *Stepping Westward* (1931), she recalls that no tear was shed over the “neat row of plump little brown bodies” displayed “in the front entry” – regular turnout of her male relatives’ bird hunting sprees – as “the little, pretty, harmless things were delicious eating” (234). The passage features the same cruel wit of Richards’ early children’s poems, which more often than not treat animals – predators or prey – as foodstuff. Pondering her younger self’s callousness, the octogenarian appears matured and mellowed: “Thinking of them [the birds] now, I feel a retrospective pang; I do not remember feeling any at the time” (234). Even her husband, she writes, has undergone a change of sentiment about nonhuman life: “Forty years, I should say, have passed since he felt either desire or willingness to kill any living thing” (235). Animals and animal stories were not only an integral part of the Richards family’s daily life: “The talk in the evening, round the glowing fire, would match the day; talk of birds, dogs, game [...] At length a deep, calm voice speaks: ‘I knew a dog once—’” (234). Stomping, crawling, buzzing, and waddling through her works, animals are also Richards’ main narrative fare. Especially during the poet’s “‘juvenile’ stage of writing”, beginning with *Four Feet, Two Feet, No Feet* (1885), an early venture into natural history, and in many of her children’s rhymes, animal characters serve to morally instruct the young. Firmly upholding the human-animal divide, Richards cages them in exoticism, satirical anthropomorphism, anthropocentric conservatism, and speciesism. However, her best-known poem “Eletelephony” (1932) stands out, pronouncing pleasure in the confusion of boundaries between animal, machine, and human. Interconnecting them in a dynamic entanglement, “Eletelephony” seems to momentarily cancel established “animacy hierarchies” (Silverstein; Chen). In my talk, I am going to elaborate on the interplay of meaning and grammar in “Eletelephony”, specifically on how punctuation, the ensemble of graphic elements, and their typographical (re-)arrangement on the page support (or hinder) such outrageous thinking.

**Verena Laschinger** currently teaches at the University of Erfurt. From 2005 to 2010, she was Assistant Professor of American Literature and Culture at Fatih University, Istanbul, Turkey. She received her doctorate degree in American literature, American culture and social psychology at Ludwig Maximilians University in Munich, Germany. Her research interests include American urban literature and photography.

Jennifer Lewin:

### **Dreaming and Sleeping in the Children’s Poetry of Laura Richards**



E talvolta “gentil giovane”.

I capelli di lei son pettinati all’insù lisci e lucenti  
Sulla di lui bella faccia.  
Gli sguardi di lui sono pieni di cordialità;  
L’atteggiamento di lei di grazia.  
E ogni mattina quando mi sveglio,  
E ogni sera anche,  
Lei mi accoglie con il bel sorriso di lui,  
E gentile “Come stai?”

Lei si chiede perché sempre dormirei;  
Lui pensa che il mio saggio programma  
Sia andare a vivere con lei  
Su un ventaglio di carta.  
Ma questo, ahimè! non sarà mai;  
E quindi mai potrò  
Sapere se lui è una lei,  
Oppure se lei è un lui.

**Claudia Paci** is an independent Italian translator, proofreader, transcriber, post-editor and quality manager. She is also the mother of two children.

Aušra Paulauskienė:

### **The Regionalism of *Captain January***

Laura E. Richards’ idealization of the quaintness of rural New England can be explained by her nostalgia for pre-industrial nineteenth-century America. Her choice of an elderly, male and “cracked” caregiver in *Captain January* reminds of Mary E. Wilkins Freeman’s elderly New England types. Nicholas Gunn from “A Solitary” comes to mind. Freeman based her characters on people she observed in Randolph, Massachusetts, where she lived and wrote from 1883 to 1902, while Richards on those she got to know when she moved to Gardiner, Maine. There is a reference to Randolph in Richards’ *Stepping Westward*, but it is a different Randolph, across the river, that was named after Randolph, Massachusetts. The distance between the two towns in the two neighboring states is 170 miles. Both towns were of a similar size, and both experienced cultural and economic isolation at the turn of the century. While Freeman expresses ambiguous feelings about the culture she captures through her quaint characters, Richards is more nostalgic and sentimental about the disappearing generation of New Englanders. By exploring Richards’ local color novels, *Narcissa, or the Road to Rome* and *In Verona* (1894), *Geoffrey Strong* (1901) and *Mrs. Tree* (1902), and *The Wooing of Calvin Parks* (1908), I will attempt to find a place for *Captain January* in her gallery of eccentric New Englanders and possibly draw parallels with select characters in Freeman’s early fiction.

**Aušra Paulauskienė** received her Doctorate degree in English from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 2003. In 2007, her book *Lost and Found: The Discovery of Lithuania in American Fiction* was published by Rodopi Publishers. New approaches to 19<sup>th</sup>-century women’s literature have been among her research interests. Her article on Willa Cather’s *My Ántonia* was included in the collection *In the Country of Lost Borders: New Critical Essays on My Ántonia* by

Presses Universitaires De Paris Nanterre (2017), while her chapter on Mary. E. Wilkins Freeman was published in *New Perspectives on Mary E. Wilkins Freeman: Reading with and against the Grain* by Edinburgh University Press (2023). She currently holds the position of a Professor at LCC International University in Klaipėda, Lithuania.

Ralph Poole:

**“[T]hose terrible songs”: Laura Richards’ Ditties and the Education of Boys**

Songs – singing and composing – were a staple in Laura Richards’ life. She was taught songs by her mother, and she taught them to her own children, who found them “terrible” at times, however. I want to pursue the educational and entertaining ideal of teaching songs to children, particularly boys, and speculate about Richards’ pedagogical intentions to enhance gendered notions of behavior and identity through her compositions. My readerly quest – and hope – will be to show that her songs, especially those gathered in her collection *The Hottentott and Other Ditties* (1939), also offer non-hegemonic and more gender-fluid potential for envisioning boyhood.

**Ralph Poole** is an American-German researcher who teaches as Professor of American Studies at the University of Salzburg, Austria. Originally a trained literary and musicologist scholar, he has moved into the fields of gender and cultural studies. He taught at the University of Munich, Germany, at Fatih University in Istanbul, Turkey, and was a research scholar at CUNY’s Center for Advanced Studies in Theater Arts in Manhattan. His book publications include a monograph on eating disorders in the work of Margaret Atwood, a study on performing bodies in the Avant-Garde theater tradition, a book on satirical and autoethnographical “cannibal” texts, a collection of essays on “dangerous masculinities”, and another collection on “queer Turkey”. Having wrapped up a project funded by the Austrian Science Fund on “Gender and Comedy in the Age of the American Revolution”, he is currently researching the Austrian *Heimatfilm* from a trans-European and genderqueer perspective. His research interests include gender and queer studies, popular culture, and transnational American studies.

Adiv Robinov:

**American Nationalism in the Poetry of Laura Richards**

The complexities of children’s literature can often go unexamined due to the supposedly tame and pedagogical nature of this genre; Nonsense verses in particular may appear silly and whimsical. Occasionally, however, unexpected images and topics that modern sensibilities might consider unsuitable for children sometimes appear. In some of Richards’ poems topics such as death, sacrifice, and violence, often appear in conjunction with American national symbols, values, and history. This was not accidental. Through these poems, Richards believed she could imbue the nation’s youth with what she terms “the perennial beacons of common sense, duty, courage, and all the bright lights of heroic example” (qtd. in Alexander 7). Accordingly, these poems enable us a glimpse both into Richards’ national identity as well as to how she viewed her role advocating for it among her readers, young and old. These ideas are closely connected to the way Americans viewed themselves as a nation during Richards’ lifetime (1850-1943).

The present talk will examine Richards' expressions of American nationalism using select pieces from *In My Nursery* (1890), *The Piccolo* (1906), as well as poems from *To Arms! Songs of The Great War* (1917), her collection of patriotic poems for adult readers.

**Adiv Robinov** is an English teacher in the Israeli education system. Adiv completed a BA in English language and literature at Oranim College in 2023.

Cécile Roudeau:

**“Don’t say that name, Daddy!” Queer Polysemy and Duplicitous Letters in Laura Richards’ *Captain January***

“A sentence is but a chev’ril glove to a good wit. How quickly the wrong side may be turned outward!” Feste’s witty apothegm in *Twelfth Night* fits Laura Richards’ tale *Captain January* (1891) like a glove. On the surface, the story recounts the life of young Star, the double of Miranda, another *Twelfth Night* character of “Willum” Shakespeare, rescued from a shipwreck by Captain January, a Prospero-like figure who takes care of her like the father he is not. In *Captain January*, however, surfaces are duplicitous. Turned outward, words and sentences reveal dark undertones, the “tar” that inhabits the star, the not so innocent games between Daddy and his girl. An anamorphosis of sorts, the tale invites us to read its surface as a “treacherousest” mirror, multiplying chiasmuses and paronomasia. Hence, the New England children’s story has a queer side to it, and the game of “play s’ppose” that we readers are invited to enjoy alongside the many-named little maid leads us to tempestuous waters that unsettle the not-so-firm grounds of authorship, gender, and genre. The repeated injunction to the captain, and perhaps the tale itself, “Compose yourself, January,” eventually turns the tale outside in, and lands readers on the terra firma of a conventional ending. Even if it is a “fursrate” closure, the tale’s final sentence may well be, in fact, duplicitous.

**Cécile Roudeau** is Professor of US Literature at Université Paris Cité. Her work focuses on the articulation between literature and politics in the long nineteenth-century. Her research has appeared in *ESQ*, *ALH*, *Leviathan*, *William James Studies*, *Revue Française d’Études Américaines*, *European Journal of American Studies*, and she has chapters in *Crossings in Nineteenth-Century American Culture* (with EUP), *American Literature in Transition: The Long Nineteenth Century* (with Cambridge UP) and *The Oxford Handbook on Herman Melville* (with Oxford UP). Her first book with Sorbonne UP (2012) focused on New England regionalism as a political attempt to resist extant epistemic categories in the US turn to empire. She is now at work on a book provisionally titled “Beyond Stateless Literature: Practices of Democratic Power in Nineteenth-Century US Literature.” With Thomas Constantinesco, she is convener of A19, the workshop on 19<sup>th</sup> century US literature co-funded by LARCA (Université Paris Cité) and VALE (Sorbonne Université).

Josephine Sharoni:

**A Cow named Imogen: *Captain January* and Shakespeare**

Richards’ children’s novel, *Captain January* is strewn with allusions to and quotations from Shakespeare, and that aside from the obvious parallels with *The Tempest* and the blunt statement that three books required for the girl’s education would be the Bible, Shakespeare and a dictionary. It turns out, moreover, that Shakespeare played a particular role in the lives of women in the USA between approximately 1880 and 1940. According to the literary critic Katherine Scheil over 700 Shakespeare clubs were founded by women across the country including areas such as Montana and South Dakota,



far from any cultural metropolis. While there were women's clubs with unrelated concerns and mixed clubs dedicated to Shakespeare, according to Scheil Shakespeare played a prominent role for women of all social classes. While some motivations are apparent from participants' testimony such as the intellectual cachet of Shakespeare enhancing the standing of women, the opportunity for the personal enrichment of lives otherwise spent in household drudgery and a means of transposing Eastern metropolitan culture to rural and small town America, it still leaves open the question of what Shakespeare plays meant to the women qua women studying them (and according to records much of the studying was serious to the point of being on a level with a college course) and why it was specifically Shakespeare's art that became and remained the motivation for these clubs in that other authors or indeed the Bible (the other book in Captain January) might have served more or less the above noted purposes. It is my contention that while we may have even have the essay titles and topics for debates used by clubs (for instance "That Lady Macbeth's ambition was an outgrowth from her loyalty and love for her husband rather than from an inherent wickedness in herself"), there is much that was never recorded because perhaps never consciously articulated or left under wraps for other reasons and that these missing significances may be mined through the careful consideration of the literary use of Shakespeare's work by women writers such as Richards, an aspect which Scheil's book does not cover.

**Josephine Sharoni** is an independent scholar and the author of *Lacan and Fantasy Fiction* published by Brill in 2017. She has a Ph.D. from the University of Kent, UK.

**Eran Shasha Evron:**

**מניפה, יפנית יפה**

החבר שלי, הקטן שלי  
 חי על מניפה;  
 אולי היא גבר,  
 אולי הוא אשה.

לבוש שונה כל כך,  
 משנה כל כך, ברור,  
 לפעמים אני קוראת לו "עלמה המודה",  
 ולפעמים "נער גמול".

שיערה אסוף, הדוק ורך  
 גולש על פניו היפים.  
 מבטיו טובים אלי;  
 גישתה מנעמים.  
 ובכל בקר בקומי,  
 ובכל ערב גם,  
 היא מביטה אלי בחיוכה הטוב,  
 ושואלת "מה שלומכם?"

היא תודה למה אני עדין במטה;

הוא חושב שאהיה הכי מאושר  
אם אבוא לקיזת אמה  
על מניפת ניר.  
אוי לעזאזל! זה בלתי אפשרי;  
אוי לא אדע  
אם היא גבר  
או אם אשה.

**Eran Shasha Evron** is a Hebrew writer and teacher of creative writing. He was born in Moshav Herut in central Israel, which was founded in 1930 by his ancestors. Due to his German, British and Iraqi family, he has lived part of his life abroad, among different languages. Eran spends his time between Israel and Europe, teaching creative writing and facilitating creative processes in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and München. His creative path includes performance art and writing projects between languages and cultures. His first novel *Lehashiv Chai Avud* (Retrieving Lost Life) is forthcoming with Persimmon Publishing house in 2024.

