



## **“DIS/ORIENTATIONS AND DIS/ENTANGLEMENTS IN CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE AND CULTURE”**

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**(The Green Ray, Ampliación Campus de Teatinos)**

**University of Málaga (21-23 September 2022)**

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## KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

### Professor Alberto Lázaro Lafuente

(Universidad de Alcalá)

**“New Orientations in the British Fiction of the Spanish Civil War”**

#### Abstract:

In recent years, the Spanish Civil War has become a frequent setting and subject in British historical novels. Authors such as Tariq Goddard, Alan Rustage, C. J. Sansom, Victoria Hislop, Kate Lord Brown, Lydia Syson, David Ebsworth and Hannah Howe have turned to Spain and its 1930s civil war for inspiration to develop their interesting plots and characters. All these stories are narrated in a very realistic manner and seem to be committed to historical accuracy. At the same time, they provide a renewed perspective on this tragic conflict recreated, in the twenty-first century, by writers who did not experience the events personally but seem to approach that historical period as a form of “lived time”, to use Victoria Browne’s phrase from her book *Feminism, Time, and Nonlinear History* (2014). These novels also raise interesting questions about the relations between fact, fiction and the truth. Following Kate McLoughlin’s approach to war representation as put forward in her book *Authoring War* (2011), this lecture aims to explore the representation of the Spanish Civil War in some of these contemporary British historical novels.

#### Bionote:

Alberto Lázaro is Professor of English Literature at the University of Alcalá, Spain, where he has been teaching English literature since 1987. He has done extensive research on British fiction, devoting particular attention to censorship and translation. Over the last few years, he published *H. G. Wells en España* (2004), *Censorship across Borders* (2011, coedited with Catherine O’Leary) and edited the Spanish translation of Claude Cockburn’s *Reporter in Spain* (2012) and Peadar O’Donnell’s *Salud! An Irishman in Spain* (2019). He is also the author of many articles and essays on translations, censorship and the reception of British authors in Spain, among them the essays on Virginia Woolf, James Joyce and H. G. Wells in three volumes of “The Reception of British Authors in Europe” series, edited by Elinor Shaffer and published in London by Continuum.

## **Professor Patricia Pulham**

(University of Surrey, UK)

### **“Reorienting the Past: Anachronism as Affective Strategy in Contemporary Culture”**

#### Abstract:

In Laura Saxton’s 2020 article on the complexities surrounding historical fiction, ‘A true story: defining accuracy and authenticity in historical fiction’ (*Rethinking History*, 24:2), she argues that ‘Neither accuracy nor authenticity relate to the translation of absolute truth onto the page’. However, she contends that by ‘separating “authenticity” from “accuracy” as distinct but interrelated categories, we can consider how literary techniques and historical research each contribute to painting a plausible representation’. One might argue that the distinction between ‘authenticity’ and ‘accuracy’ has become increasingly problematised by contemporary experiments in film and TV culture, such as Sofia Coppola’s *Marie Antoinette* (2006), Shonda Rhimes production of Julia Quinn’s *Bridgerton* (2020), and Tony McNamara’s *The Great* (2020) whose first series carries the subtitle, ‘An Occasionally True Story’. While the candy-floss flavour of Coppola’s film was panned for historical inaccuracy when it debuted at the Cannes Film Festival, its anachronistic panache has served as a popular model for subsequent ‘anti-historical’ TV series that challenge questions of accuracy and authenticity. While *Bridgerton* and *The Great* are often considered enjoyable romps through history, their deliberate anachronisms belie their superficiality as light entertainment. This paper aims to explore the affective potential of such anachronisms to suggest that reorientations in historical fiction offer a powerful means through which to question contemporary culture and our responses to it.

#### Bionote:

Patricia Pulham is Professor of Victorian Literature and Head of the School of Literature and Languages at the University of Surrey. She is also currently President Elect of the British Association for Victorian Studies. She has published widely on a range of Victorian authors and neo-Victorian topics, and her latest monograph, *The Sculptural body in Victorian literature: Encrypted Sexualities*, was published in 2020 by Edinburgh University Press in their Critical Studies in Victorian Culture series.

## **Professor Jean-Michel Ganteau**

(Université Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3)

### **“What Matters: Attention as Orientation in Contemporary British Narrative”**

#### Abstract:

Attention both as a disposition/capacity and as a gesture is what allows for orientation(s). The attentional gesture can be voluntary, as when one decides to focus and orient one's attention, breaking from a general background consciousness. It can also be involuntary, as when our senses solicit us, so that we focus on something new that is instrumental in making us orient ourselves (temporally, spatially, emotionally and rationally) and possibly make decisions. What the literary text does is allow us to tear ourselves away from the tyrannical solicitations of the economy of attention based on a specific temporality relying on urgency, hyper-solicitation, alerts and on an electrification of the real that only allows us to have access to experience is a secondary, mediated way. It privileges an "ecology of attention » (Citton) based on the meeting of embodied and embedded characters enmeshed in plots that privilege relationality and get the reader to « attune » (Felski) him/herself to an altogether different rhythm that orients the way of focusing—and the content of the focus—so as to promote an ethical opening. More specifically, the fictional solicitation of attention allows for our paying attention to singularities, concerning ordinary characters and situations, so that the text develops the reader's capacities to decide on an individualist basis as to what matters, therefore privileging a particularist ethics turning its back on more deontic models of morality. By engaging us to pay attention, the literary text asks us to decide as to what matters, which determines our orientation(s). The presentation will rely on a corpus of contemporary narratives in English, mainly fictional, addressing, among others, issues relating to disability, and human/non-human entanglements, among others.

#### Bionote:

Jean-Michel Ganteau is Professor of Contemporary British Literature at the University Paul Valéry Montpellier 3 (France) and a member of the Academia Europaea. He is the editor of the journal *Études britanniques contemporaines*. He is the author of four monographs: *David Lodge: le choix de l'éloquence* (2001), *Peter Ackroyd et la musique du passé* (2008), *The Ethics and Aesthetics of Vulnerability in Contemporary British Literature* (2015) and *The Aesthetics and Ethics of Attention in Contemporary British Narrative* (forthcoming). He is also the editor, with Christine Reynier, of four volumes of essays: *Impersonality and Emotion in Twentieth-Century British Literature* (Publications Montpellier 3, 2005), *Impersonality and Emotion in Twentieth-Century British Arts* (Presses Universitaires de la Méditerranée, 2007), *Autonomy and Commitment in*

*Twentieth-Century British Literature* (PULM, 2010) and *Autonomy and Commitment in Twentieth-Century British Arts* (PULM, 2011). He has also co-edited, with Susana Onega, *The Ethical Component in Experimental British Fiction since the 1960s* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), *Ethics and Trauma in Contemporary Narrative in English* (Rodopi, 2011), *Trauma and Romance in Contemporary British Literature* (Routledge, 2012), *Contemporary Trauma Narratives: Liminality and the Ethics of Form* (Routledge, 2014), *Victimhood and Vulnerability in 21st Century Fiction* (Routledge, 2017) and *Transcending the Postmodern. The Singular Response of Literature to the Transmodern Paradigm* (Routledge, 2020). He has published extensively on contemporary British fiction, with a special interest in the ethics of affects trauma criticism and theory, and the ethics of vulnerability, in France and abroad (other European countries, the United States), as chapters in edited volumes or in such journals as *Miscelánea*, *Anglia*, *Symbolism*, *The Cambridge Quarterly*, and so on.

## **Dr Victoria Browne**

(Oxford Brookes University)

### **“Disorientation as Feminist Method”**

#### Abstract:

This talk will argue for an understanding of feminism as a project of disorientation that forces a break in normative temporal imaginaries, and opens up alternative ways of orienting ourselves in, with and through time. I will discuss this first in relation to the historiography of feminism itself, considering how recent efforts to map the complex contours and temporal dynamics of feminist histories have blasted open the linear 'wave' model of feminism that for so long has contained and suppressed the transformative power of feminist thought and action. I will then go on to discuss my current project on the feminist philosophy of pregnancy, in which I consider the phenomenon of miscarriage as a 'moment of disorientation' (Ahmed 2006): a disturbance that puts normative, linear, reproductive time 'out of joint' and compels us to rethink and disentangle pregnancy from the usual expectations of child-production and 'reproductive futurism' (Edelman 2004).

#### Bionote:

Victoria Browne is Senior Lecturer in Politics at Oxford Brookes University in the UK. Her books include *Feminism, Time, and Nonlinear History* (Palgrave, 2014), and *Vulnerability and the Politics of Care: Transdisciplinary Dialogues* (co-edited with Jason Danely and Doerthe Rosenow, Oxford University Press, 2021). Her new book *Pregnancy without Birth: A Feminist Philosophy of Miscarriage* has been supported by a Leverhulme Research Fellowship and is forthcoming with Bloomsbury in October 2022.

Victoria has published numerous articles on feminist philosophy, historiography and temporality, and is also a co-editor of the journal *Radical Philosophy*.

## **Professor Susana Onega**

(Universidad de Zaragoza)

## **Professor Ángeles de la Concha**

(UNED)

## **Professor Pilar Hidalgo**

(Universidad de Málaga)

**“The Contemporary English Novel: Disorientation and Entanglement” /**

**“Novela Inglesa Contemporánea: Desorientación y enredo”**

### Abstract (Round table):

Starting from the premise that literature evolves alongside cultural paradigms, we will offer some examples of the answers that fiction is currently giving to the challenge of representing a globalised world, shattered by social, cultural and political conflicts that provoke a profound effect of disorientation and entanglement.

We will firstly see Jon McGregor’s *If Nobody Speaks of Remarkable Things* (2002) and *Even the Dogs* (2008). While the first shows the commodification of the self and the need to recover the sense of community, the second invites us to descend to the hell of drug addiction, with Dante’s *Inferno* as intertext.

We will continue with Kamila Shamsie’s *Home Fire* (2017), which recreates Antigone’s myth in the London of Brexit, the Raqqa of ISIS, and Karachi; and with Ahmed Sadawi’s *Frankenstein in Baghdad* (2013), where Mary Shelley’s Creature is transferred to the post-truth capital of Iraq. Both novels have recourse to great myths to express the profound disorientation and intricately entangled personal, social and geopolitical current contexts.

We will end with Barbara Vine’s *King Solomon’s Carpet* (1991), a novel addressing the disorientation and void of characters without family, job or community, with the London underground as communal link; and with Ian McEwan’s *Machines Like Me* (2019), which offers a futurist vision of England in the nineteen-eighties based on the relationship between two human beings and an android.

## Resumen (Mesa redonda):

Partiendo de la premisa de que la literatura evoluciona según los paradigmas culturales, proponemos algunos ejemplos de las respuestas que está dando la novela al reto de representar un mundo globalizado agitado por conflictos sociales, culturales y políticos que ocasionan un profundo efecto de desorientación y enredo.

Primero veremos *If Nobody Speaks of Remarkable Things* (2002) y *Even the Dogs* (2008) de Jon McGregor. Mientras que la primera muestra la comodificación del yo y la necesidad de recuperar el sentido de comunidad, la segunda nos invita a un descenso al infierno de la droga con el *Inferno* de Dante como intertexto.

Continuaremos con *Home Fire* (2017) de Kamila Shamsie, que recrea el mito de Antígona en el Londres del Brexit, el Raqa del ISIS y Karachi; y *Frankenstein in Baghdad* (2013), de Ahmed Sadawi, que traspone al monstruo de Mary Shelley a la capital del Irak de la posverdad. Ambas recurren a grandes mitos para expresar la profunda desorientación provocada por los intrincados contextos personales, sociales y geopolíticos actuales.

Concluiremos con *King Solomon's Carpet* (1991) de Barbara Vine, que aborda la desorientación y vacío de personajes sin familia, trabajo y comunidad, con el metro de Londres como único nexo comunitario; y *Machines Like Me* (2019) de Ian McEwan, que ofrece una visión futurista de la Inglaterra de los años ochenta basada en la relación entre dos seres humanos y un androide.

## Bionotes:

**Susana Onega** is Emeritus Professor of English Literature at the Department of English and German Philology, and a member of the Employment, Digital Society and Sustainability Research Institute of Zaragoza University. She was Honorary Research Fellow at Birkbeck College (Univ. of London) in 1996. She is a coopted member of the *Academia Europaea* (AE) since 2008, and she was granted the Miguel Servet Award for Research Excellence by the Government of Aragón in 2021. She has been leader of various competitive research projects and teams and has written monographic studies, articles and/or book chapters on Peter Ackroyd, Julian Barnes, A. S. Byatt, J. M. Coetzee, Eva Figes, William Faulkner, Jon McGregor, Tom McCarthy, Anne Michaels, David Mitchell, Charles Palliser, Graham Swift, W. G. Sebald, Sarah Waters and Jeanette Winterson. She has also edited or co-edited books on narrative theory, ethics, trauma, victimhood, vulnerability, postmodernism and transmodernism.



**Ángeles de la Concha**, Professor of English Philology, is a specialist in contemporary English literature, literary theory and criticism, and feminist and gender studies, fields in which she has worked, particularly on ideology and narrative techniques, the social construction of subjectivity, novel and history, trauma and rewriting of canonical texts. Within these areas, she has supervised research projects and edited and coordinated volumes on culture and gender violence, and contemporary rewritings of Shakespeare's work. She has also published numerous articles on these topics and on English-language writers such as Mary Wollstonecraft, Virginia Woolf, Doris Lessing, Margaret Drabble, Antonia Byatt, Marina Warner, Angela Carter, Jane Smiley, Joyce Carol Oates, Maxine Hong Kingston, Anita Desai, Bharati Mukherjee, Jeanette Winterson, Jackie Kay, Alice Sebold, Pat Barker, Saul Bellow, Vikram Seth, Graham Swift, Caryl Phillips, Ian McEwan, Martin Amis, and others.

**Pilar Hidalgo** graduated with Honours from Madrid University and did postgraduate work at Edinburgh University and Georgetown University. She was Professor of English Literature at Málaga University for thirty two years. She is the author of *La ira y la palabra: teatro inglés actual* (1978), *La crisis del realismo en la novela inglesa contemporánea* (1987), *Tiempo de mujeres* (1995), *Paradigms Found: Feminist, Gay and New Historicist Readings of Shakespeare* (2001) ; co-author of *La literatura inglesa en los textos* (1981), *Historia crítica del teatro inglés* (1988) and *Historia crítica de la novela inglesa* (1998).

## ROUND TABLE

**Professor Rosario Arias**

University of Málaga, Spain

**Dr Laura Monrós-Gaspar**

University of Valencia, Spain

**Dr Marta Cerezo Moreno**

UNED, Spain

**(Dis)Orientations and Entanglements Project**

Abstract (Round table):

In this round table the speakers will discuss the research undertaken by the members of the Project Ref. FFI2017-86417-P. The chair will introduce the theoretical backdrop, which revolves around the concept of 'orientation', and its possible follow-up in the related notion of dis/entanglement. Rosario Arias will explain the inception of this idea, and the application in contemporary critical theory and literature. More specifically, she will deal with (neo-)Victorian literature and culture, and with the impact 'orientation' has had upon spatial studies and temporality, drawing on Sara Ahmed and Victoria Browne. Some outputs of the Project will be mentioned to illustrate the above-mentioned notions. Marta Cerezo will focus on the results of the Orientation Project in relation to one of its main objectives: the analysis of how the notion of 'orientation' is intrinsic in the approach to narratives dealing with illness and ageing. These results show that, read from a phenomenological perspective, these narratives speak about the ways the ill or ageing subject struggles to reach 'orientation', that is, according to Sara Ahmed, "to find [their] way in a world that acquires new shapes" (1). In this process, 'disorientation' and 'reorientation' take place during a new encounter with the world around, which implies new intersubjective relations and a new encounter with the self and the others. Laura Monrós will deal with the project "Metamorphosis: Titian 2012" was part of the cultural Olympics organized in Great Britain for the 2012 Olympic Games in London. On the occasion of the exhibition, the National Gallery gathered fourteen poets selected by a panel of experts to respond to Titian's works. She will explore a number of poems in the volume which widens the semiotic possibilities of the Metamorphosis Olympic project when scrutinized under the travelling concepts developed by Mieke Bal.

#### Bionotes:

**Rosario Arias** is Professor of English Literature at the University of Málaga (Spain). She has published a number of articles and book chapters on neo-Victorian fiction, haunting and spectrality, the trace, and on the work of contemporary writers. She has co-edited (with Patricia Pulham, University of Surrey) *Haunting and Spectrality in Neo-Victorian Fiction: Possessing the Past* (Palgrave, 2010), and she has also published *Science, Spiritualism and Technology* (Routledge, 2014). Her co-edited book, *Reading the Trace in Modern and Contemporary Fiction*, will be out in 2022 (Gylphi). Arias has been a member of the Executive Board of AEDEAN, and she is an active member of *Academia Europaea* since 2016. Rosario Arias is currently the President of "Victorian and Neo-Victorian Society in Spain (VINS)" and PI of a funded project on the notion of 'Orientation'.

**Marta Cerezo Moreno** is Lecturer of English Literature in the Foreign Languages and Literatures Department (UNED, Spain) where she teaches BA and MA level courses on Medieval and Renaissance Literature. Her main areas of research are the analysis of contemporary English narrative from the parameters of Age/Aging Studies and the work

of William Shakespeare. She has co-edited *Traces of Aging: Old Age and Memory in Contemporary Narrative* and has authored *Critical Approaches to Shakespeare (1623-2000): Shakespeare for All Time* and co-authored *Ejes de la literatura inglesa medieval y renacentista*.

**Laura Monrós-Gaspar** is Associate Professor in English at the Universitat de València. She is also Honorary Research Associate at the Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama (APGRD), University of Oxford and coordinator of the Research Group Literature, Arts and Performance (LAP) at the Universitat de València. She is Head of the Area of Theatre and Performing Arts at the UV (Aula d' arts escèniques UV) and her main research interest is the reception of classical mythology in nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature in Great Britain on which she has published extensively.

## **SPEAKERS IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER**

**Abdel-Rahman Téllez, Shadia**

(University of Oviedo, Spain)

**“The Demented Post-person: Ontological Disorientation in Alzheimer’s Disease Memoir *Somebody I Used to Know* (2018) by Wendy Mitchell”**

### Abstract:

Alzheimer’s disease (AD) precipitates the decline of cognition, autonomy, and the capacity of self-recognition, leading to what Daniel Davis (2004) calls an “ontological nullpoint”, that is, the end of full personhood. This idea suggests that AD implies the transition of patients from persons to “post-persons”, as postulated by the psychological approach to personal identity, which defines personhood as contingent on psychological continuity and biographical memory. This generalised notion of the demented patient as a post-person is not only ethically problematic, but also philosophically inconsistent, since, as the phenomenological approach to embodiment proves, selfhood depends on pre-reflective embodied self-familiarity, rather than on self-knowledge. In this sense, the term “post-person” tells more about how AD patients are socially and biologically regarded—i.e., as infrahuman entities—than about how this disease is actually experienced, as it reflects the stigma associated to AD, which is expressed in specific forms of clinical and social depersonalisation.

This paper analyses, from a phenomenological perspective, the experience of ontological disorientation of AD patients caused by neurological damage, as well as the influence of the dominant discourses about dementia through the analysis of Wendy Mitchell's *Somebody I Used to Know* (2018), an autobiographical account that narrates the experience of the early-onset of this condition. Mitchell presents a counter-narrative that demystifies AD as the "living death" and challenges the biomedical and socio-cultural assumptions about this illness. Trapped in an existential limbo, Mitchell narrates her experience of fear and uncertainty about the future and her embodied and spatial unfamiliarity in a memoir that exposes the essence of being human.

**Aktari-Segvi, Selen**

(Başkent University, Turkey)

**"Ethical Promise of Disorientation in Lucy Caldwell's *These Days*"**

Abstract:

Lucy Caldwell's *These Days* (2022) is set during the four days of Belfast Blitz in 1941 and depicts the destructive violence the city and its inhabitants are exposed to due to the bombing raids by the Germans. The novel mainly focuses on the shattered lives of the women of the Bell family due to the effects of war as well as their condition of being torn between their external and internal lives. By looking back into the past of Northern Ireland as a woman novelist, Caldwell rewrites the male-dominated history of Belfast Blitz from a female perspective, unites these women in their tragic experiences and makes their voices heard through the disruptive power of the affect of disorientation that pervades the novel. Engaged to be married a cold and reserved doctor, 21-year-old Audrey is not sure whether she has made the right decision. Her sister, 18-year-old Emma passionately falls in love with a courageous and confident woman 11 years older than her. Their mother Florence, who seems to be a happily married wife and mother, still grieves the loss of her first love. This study aims to explore these characters' perceptual connections to others and their apocalyptic environment by adopting Sara Ahmed's theories of disorientation as is discussed in *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (2006) to identify the ways how the affect of disorientation and dislocation disrupts the embodiment, claims an emotional investment and demands a cognitive response respectively for self-transformation and ethical confrontation.

**Appleton, Marni**

(University of East Anglia, UK)

## **“Affective Deadlock: Postfeminist Entanglements in Contemporary Women’s Anglophone Short Stories”**

### Abstract:

The postfeminist sensibility is adaptable. In recent years, it has shifted and changed in order to accommodate increasing austerity and precarity in the aftermath of the 2008 economic recession, as well as renewed feminist activism and increasingly visible misogyny. The celebratory, optimistic, ‘can-do’ feelings associated with the postfeminism of the late 1990s and early 2000s have undergone an affective shift, towards new feelings marked by ambivalence, precarity and uncertainty. Recent work has considered how these ‘affective dissonances’ and corrective feelings (such as confidence and resilience) work in popular media, television and film, but little work so far has investigated how this affective complexity works in literature. This paper proposes that the short story form is being utilised by women writers in an attempt to unpick the entanglement of contradictory and seemingly paradoxical ideas about women’s empowerment and equality that circulate in mainstream political, cultural and media contexts. By drawing on work by Lauren Berlant, Sara Ahmed and Sianne Ngai in order to read the affective texture of short stories by women writers such as Emma Cline, Abigail Ulman, May-Lan Tan and Kristen Roupenian, I contend that the formal features of the short story make it a particularly adept literary form through which to explore what I describe as the ‘affective deadlock’ created by the complex and conflicting affective performances demanded by postfeminism.

## **Babilas, Dorota**

(University of Warsaw, Poland)

### **“Lost (and Found) in Austen: Adapting *Sanditon* (2019)”**

### Abstract:

Jane Austen’s unfinished 1817 novel *Sanditon* has been a challenge for authors of adaptations, inspiring several works in various media. The 2019 ITV iteration expands on Austen’s plot, which could hardly cover the scope of the first of eight 1-hour episodes. The production seems entangled between the original literary text and the postmodern, Internet-influenced television - just as it is dis-oriented between a Regency costume and contemporary social issues it tackles. The creator and scriptwriter, Andrew Davies, reprises several of his recognizable tropes, such as a scene from 1995 *Pride and Prejudice* when the male lead is unexpectedly caught bathing by the heroine (in 2019 with added nudity). However, despite all the fan service, some of the aspects of

the romantic relationship between Charlotte Heywood and Sidney Parker seem much cruder than either Austen's fiction or earlier adaptations of it.

The proposed paper looks at *Sanditon* from a dual perspective: as a period drama, and as a take on the rom-com formula. The premiere of *Sanditon* coincided with the screening of Elizabeth Sankey's award-winning documentary *Romantic Comedy* (2019), which confronted the problematic aspects of the genre and the harmful stereotypes it perpetuates. With many of these problems observable in *Sanditon*'s first season, it is especially interesting to see which direction the upcoming Season 2 (opening in Spring 2022) will take.

**Baena, Rosalía**

(University of Navarra, Spain)

**“Disorientation and Recognition in Pain Memoirs: Lynne Greenberg’s *The Body Broken* (2009)”**

Abstract:

The experience of chronic pain is profoundly disorienting as well as widely misunderstood. Considered as a global pandemic, estimates suggest that 20% of adults suffer from pain globally and 10% are newly diagnosed with chronic pain each year (Goldberg and McGee). In spite of this prevalence, it is still perceived as a stigmatizing and isolating condition. This paper will analyze Lynne Greenberg's *The Body Broken* (2009), a “pain memoir” that deals with her process from disorientation to recognition, as she struggles to cope with chronic pain and its devastating effects. At age nineteen, Greenberg narrowly survived a devastating car crash, from which she successfully recovered. Twenty years later, a shattering pain in her neck returned in the most vicious way. Her pain has never gone away since. In a remarkable combination of intimate self-revelation and literary sensibility, Greenberg deploys a specific rhetoric of both personal and social recognition that help us correct the social and medical misapprehensions of what it is really like to live with pain.

Considering that pain may be inevitable but suffering is not, memoirists of pain offer valuable testimonies that elicit from the reader specific ethical and emotional responses. Ultimately, as Susannah B. Mintz has put it, “Becoming writers and readers of pain shaped in alternative forms allow us to witness pain in very different guises: as generative, for example, rather than overpowering; as the foundation of lyric and storytelling, the occasion for touch and intersubjective understanding” (9).

## **Bernabeu, Marta**

(University of Salamanca, Spain)

### **“Seeking the Goddess in Her Temple”: (Re-)Orienting Pain as a Form of Recognition in Charlotte Brontë’s *Villette* (1853)”**

#### Abstract:

Contemporary discussions on Charlotte Brontë’s *Villette* (1853) highlight the modernity of the novel’s intricate depiction of mental illness and its role in shaping the protagonist’s counter-hegemonic identity (cf. Bury, “The Isolating Effects of Female Madness in *Villette*”; Franklin, “Transforming Violence and Mental Pain in Charlotte Brontë’s *Villette*”). Lucy Snowe’s search for her alternate identity, which is symbolised by the mysterious figure of the nun, is arguably fuelled by her (re-)orientation to pain as an affective way of questioning and transgressing the social and cultural meanings that are attached to her body in terms of gender, class and sexuality. This (re-)orientation, which places the shattering qualities of pain in a positive light, could be taken as an existential awakening that makes Lucy want to “seek [...] the goddess in her temple . . . handl[e] the veil, and dar[e] the dread glance” (*Villette* 435). In her journey to do so, Lucy’s (re-)orientation towards pain allows her *vulnerable* and/or *eccentric body* (in Butler and De Laureti’s terms respectively) to “take [...] on a distinct shape” and become “amplified, heightened, [and] made newly visible” (Felski 25). Lucy’s coming to terms with the malleability of her body in her (re-)orientation towards pain thus amplifies the range of possibilities whereby readers find recognition, suggesting multiple pathways for the construction of counter-hegemonic selves. Therefore, this paper aims at showing the extent to which *Villette* might offer the grounds for a contemporary revaluation of mentally divergent states as a form of recognition and resistance whose tradition can be traced back, at least, to the nineteenth-century.

## **Borham-Puyal, Miriam**

(Universidad de Salamanca, Spain)

### **“Mother or Machine? *Frankenstein*’s Trace and Artificial Motherhood in *I am Mother*”**

#### Abstract:

In many contemporary literary or cinematic sci-fi narratives, the connection to an essential 19<sup>th</sup>-century text, Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus* (1818) reinforces a temporal assemblage between past and future, that is, how a past text imprints its traces in present artifactualities to address fears of the future,

emphasizing the engagement with past voices as a mechanism of change (Browne 2013, 12).

This paper will discuss the debt Netflix's film *I am Mother* (2019) has to Shelley's novel, yet also its re-orientation of the creator/creature dynamic, as a once-generated droid assumes the role of a female god-like figure, Mother, toward her lab-developed human children, whom she breeds artificially and educates according to a strict moral syllabus. In this sense, the film offers interesting approaches to the philosophical debates, as well as the *nature versus nurture* discussion, which informed *Frankenstein*, expressed through the droid's aim to shape better, more evolved humans at any cost. In addition, although not a cyborg, Mother's apparent maternal instinct brings her close to the idea of a female assemblage of the human and the technological, which, as Donna Haraway stated about cyborgs, will be seen to destabilize human "evolutionary, technological and biological narratives" (1991, 2), in this case by resetting the whole human race.

Moreover, this paper will address the notion of motherhood as *performative*, exploring the bond between Mother and Daughter, and the entanglement of their machine-human relationship, as well as how the idea of family is constructed around the recognition of an *us* versus *them* dichotomy, whether human-machine or human-human.

## **Bowers, Maggie Ann**

(University of Portsmouth, UK)

### **"Polytemporality and a new disenfranchised national narrative in Jez Butterworth's *Jerusalem*"**

#### Abstract:

The award-winning play *Jerusalem* by Jez Butterworth (2009) (rerun with its original cast in 2022) depicts the life of social outcast and Falstaff-like Johnny Byron and a group of hanger-on misfits who battle against attempts to regulate English rural lives by local council rulings and the development of housing estates. Set on St George's Day and the day of the Spring fayre in the fictional town of 'Flintock' in Somerset, this play pulls together the multiple myths of rural England from a plurality of eras: druids, giants, the green man, Robin Hood. Johnny Byron (a trickster and tall-tale teller) draws on the strength of the place of his ancestors and a seemingly magical power to resist the authorities that want to punish his unregulated rural life. Although the play is set in contemporary times, the characters frequently break into traditional songs during their revelries, reflecting an almost subconscious, deeply embedded sense of the connectedness of rural communities to the ancient histories of their location. This paper will reveal that the play, although in many ways a tragedy, reflects a desire to (re)create a situated, inclusive and rebellious new English national narrative that relies upon a



recognition of ancient myth. The paper will focus most particularly on the magical realist paradox of the situatedness of the narrative so embedded in a singular location yet loosened from its particular setting in time.

## **Braid, Barbara**

(University of Szczecin, Poland)

**“Re-orienting queer archives through fiction: *Ammonite* (2020) as post-authentic biofiction”**

### Abstract:

Biofiction, as a term with its specific theoretical framework separate from the concepts of a biographical novel or a biopic is a relatively novel concept. As it might be expected, the main bone of contention among the scholars is the role of fiction in biofiction, its self-reflexivity, and the resulting post-authenticity. This issue becomes particularly significant when paired with the neo-Victorian project of ventriloquising the silent subjects from the past, for instance the forgotten historical queer, as evidenced, for instance, by neo-Victorian biofictions on Anne Lister that bring to life the so-far hidden lesbian life encoded in Lister’s diary. Yet, some of the recent additions to literary and filmic biofictional texts represent a possibility to fill in the gaps in queer archive through fiction that has no interest in being “based on facts.” Francis Lee’s latest film, *Ammonite* (2020), in which the protagonist is named after a Victorian palaeontologist Mary Anning, is one such example: in spite of the fact that there is no evidence that Anning has ever experienced a lesbian relationship, this narrative imagines such a possibility and links it tightly to Anning’s marginalised position as a female scientist coming from working class. The proposed presentation examines the film as an example of biofiction that aims at re-orienting and reclaiming queer history through fiction rather than historical fact, thus offering a new understanding of queer authenticity in neo-Victorian biofiction.

## **Bryla, Martyna**

(University of Málaga, Spain)

**“Towards an Alternative Orientation: Countering (Brexit’s) Divisiveness in Agnieszka Dale’s Polish-British Stories”**

### Abstract:

In *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (2006), Sara Ahmed's employs the concept of *orientation* to explore, among others, racialisation of social spaces which "acquire the 'skin' of the bodies that inhabit them" (132). Ahmed uses the word "skin" as a metonymy for whiteness which, rather than being merely a bodily attribute, shapes and structures social spaces by defining what is and what is not the norm. In a broader perspective, the norm refers to *sameness*, whether racial, ethnic or national, which can make anyone that deviates from it feel "exposed, visible, and different" (Ahmed 133). As social spaces *orientate* (cohere) around a given sameness, that sameness becomes institutionalised, thus reinforcing social divisions or, in other words, solidifying attitudes into policies. In recent years, Brexit has emerged as an example of such institutionalised *orientating* device, consolidating the UK's orientation around narrowly defined *Britishness* and dictating and policing attitudes towards those who have been made to reconsider their status in the UK society as a result of the country's rupture with Europe. One such person is a Polish-British author Agnieszka Dale, whose Brexit-inspired short stories from her debut collection, *Fox Season and Other Short Stories* (2017), are the object of my inquiry in this paper. Since Dale never uses the term "Brexit," I read her stories not only in light of the connection between national identity and belonging, which Brexit has reinforced, but also as a thought-provoking commentary on divisive orientations as running counter to what for Dale is a given: human relationality and commonality of experience which go deeper than arbitrarily imposed socio-political boundaries.

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## **Chalupsky, Petr**

(Charles University, Czech Republic)

### **"Transgressive Spatiality and Multiple Temporality in Jim Crace's *Arcadia*"**

#### Abstract:

Jim Crace's novels can be characterised by two interlinked, idiosyncratic features: first, due to their author's remarkable spatial sensibility, there is a distinctive imaginative rendering of various landscapes and cityscapes, and second, there is a theme of communities in transition, that is, groups of people who find themselves on the threshold of a new – historical, social, economic, political – developmental phase. While the former has earned his fictitious milieus the "Craceland" label among critics, the latter has allowed him to explore the impacts of such transitional moments on selected

individuals in these communities. *Arcadia* (1992), his third novel, set in an unnamed present-day city, is an urban story with a strong pastoral undertone in which the actual places and spaces where its action occurs assume roles that by far transcend that of a mere setting. It also focuses on a transitional period which, once and for all, changes the layout and climate of the city's centre. It additionally evinces multidirectional temporality by making its determining spatial and architectural concepts metaphorically encompass within themselves, though by different means and to different ends, the present, the past and the future. By using primarily Eric Prieto's phenomenological geocritical approach, this paper will attempt to analyse how Crace's *Arcadia* renders the inherent spatio-temporal fluidity and volatility of our current globalised world within both individual and collective experience.

## **Chemmachery, Jaine**

(Sorbonne University, France)

### **“Poetics of (dis)orientation in Alexis Wright's *Carpentaria* (2006)”**

#### Abstract:

Alexis Wright's *Carpentaria* (2006), a novel which escapes easy categorisation while it visibilises Aboriginal voices and worldview, lends itself to a reflection about orientation. The work, being divided into 14 chapters – the last of which is entitled “coming back” – suggests a strong sense of geographical orientation as several characters in the novel are trying to find their way back home on the diegetic level. The final words of the novel which mention two characters walking « hand in hand out of town, down the road, Westside, to home » (499) do not just materialise orientation, but also multi-directionality.

Yet, the novel can also be associated with disorienting strategies, be it in the way it upsets chronology, abundantly resorts to inventive turns of phrase in English and to *waanyi* – an endangered Aboriginal language – blurs Eurocentric distinction between the human and the non-human, and more generally defies Western expectations about Aboriginal novel writing.

In this paper, I would like to examine how the novel's engagement with orientation and disorientation can be analysed from a phenomenological perspective, drawing on the works of Sara Ahmed, Rita Felski and Neetu Khanna. By confronting the work to the four uses of literature defined by Felski – recognition, knowledge, enchantment and shock – I will examine how studying such a novel compels us to question the ways in which Western readers have long been oriented to think about such literatures which are anchored in contexts other than Anglo-American ones. I will also conjure up

Khanna's "visceral concepts" (2020) to see how *Carpentaria* is likely to "disorient the national frame of the novel form" (22) by strongly engaging with senses and the body.

## **Coombs, Hanna**

(University of Portsmouth, UK)

### **"Re-orientations of Home on the Refugee Journey"**

#### Abstract:

During their journeys, refugees must continually reorientate themselves as they are repeatedly faced with new spaces, and new uses of familiar space. They must negotiate not only physical spaces, but also how they are used, who else they are inhabited by, and associations each individual may hold between a present space and those which they have previously experienced. Versions of 'home' spaces may be particularly problematic: what they knew as 'home' can no longer be considered welcoming and safe; typical domestic spaces may be inhabited in ways drastically different to how similar spaces were used at their origin or may be wholly unavailable; non-domestic spaces often must become the host space for 'home' activity despite holding little spatial resemblance.

Analysing autobiographical accounts of child refugees, the focus of this paper will lie in direct encounter and personal experience as understood by the refugees through their own perspectives. This paper will analyse the ways that spaces are repeatedly redefined and how refugees alter their understandings of space in order to adjust and cope with challenging circumstances, attempting to develop home-spaces and the associated senses of safety, comfort and privacy. In particular, it will analyse children's experiences during the journey from origin to safe destination, prior to official classification as refugees and without a stable home-space available, seeking to understand children's perspectives of domestic experience during refugee journeys.

## **De la Parra Fernández, Laura**

(Complutense University of Madrid, Spain)

### **"Re-Orienting Sexual Violence: Shame and Accountability in Claire Vaye Watkins's "Rondine Al Nido""**

#### Abstract:

“Rondine al Nido” is part of the Nevada-based first short story collection by Claire Vaye Watkins, *Battleborn* (2012). The narrator is a woman in her thirties who recounts her lover the experience of being sexually abused when she ran away at sixteen years old with a former friend to Las Vegas. Set in the backdrop of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the story lingers precisely in the moment when the two girls could have escaped from the hotel room of their abusers but decided not to. In this sense, the girls enact Rosalind Gill’s idea of the late 1990s and early 2000s postfeminist (2008), which emphasizes individual choice and self-regulation in the configuration of gender relations, thus leading to self-hypersexualization, self-exploitation and compliance with male standards of a pornified sexual experience (Nikunen 2007).

In this paper, I will deploy Victoria Browne’s concept of a “feminist polytemporality”, understood as “the intersection of different temporal layers and strands that combine in distinct ways to produce particular experiences and discursive formations of historical time” (2014: 31), in order to explore how the narrator of “Rondine al Nido” readdresses past traumatic events from a multi-temporal lens, which allows her to have her previously accepted version questioned by her current lover, and therefore to re-orient and reconsider her notion of accountability and shame. I will argue that understanding the act of telling as an ethical encounter with the Other—in this case, herself and her friend in the past—opens up the possibility of reimagining an alternative ending as well as alternative futures as a way to come to terms with sexual violence.

## **De Villiers, Nicholas**

(University of North Florida, USA)

**“Ask Any Buddy (Purchell, 2020): Queer Phenomenology, Sexual Disorientation, and Reparative Reading”**

### Abstract:

Elizabeth Purchell’s brilliant gay adult video collage *Ask Any Buddy* (2020) provides a fascinating model for a queer phenomenology of gender and sexual *orientation* and queer *disorientation*, including sexual disorientation, spatial disorientation, and temporal disorientation (along with their interrelation and inter-implication). As the website for the film explains, “The piece uses fragments from 126 theatrical feature films spanning the years 1968–86 to create a kaleidoscopic day in the life snapshot of urban gay culture in the era—or at least how it looked in the movies. From casual tearoom cruising to actual police raids, *Ask Any Buddy* uses rare footage shot at dozens of real bathhouses, bars, movie theaters, pride parades and legendary hotspots like New York’s West Side Piers to explore both the sex film genre’s unique blend of fantasy and reality and its role in

documenting a subculture that was just starting to come into visibility in the years immediately following the Stonewall Riots.” Purchell’s “remix” approach to this historical and visual archive has remarkably disorienting and reorienting effects on queer time and space/place (Jack Halberstam), both inviting and illustrating the value of queer “reparative reading” of pornography, spatial practices of cruising, and “camp” (as framed by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick) and demonstrating the productive potential of the concepts of “sexual disorientation” (Michael Moon) and queer dis/orientation (Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Objects, Orientations, Others*).

**Domenech, Cristina G.**

(Universidad de Málaga, Spain)

**“A History of One’s Own: The Challenge of a Lesbian Past in Neo-historical Fiction”**

Abstract:

The last four decades have seen the landscape of lesbian history altered once and again. The (re)discovery and publishing of historical testimonies, like the diaries of Anne Lister or the surviving documents and letters of Charity Bryant and Sylvia Drake, have transformed our understanding of love and desire between women in the past, while new academic approaches to queer history and gender challenge us to reconsider the realities of long-discussed issues like the dynamics of Victorian romantic friendships or that of ‘female husbands’ through history, concepts we still struggle to fully understand as part of a queer historical continuum.

Our relationship with historical fiction has also shifted substantially in the last decades after the flourishing of neo-Victorianism and other neo-historical narratives. Through exhaustive historical research, neo-historicism uses fiction to explore parts of the past that mainstream accounts of history usually ignore so we, as readers, can see history through the eyes of the proverbial Other. In framing and building historically accurate narratives populated by complex and diverse women who love and desire other women, authors of neo-historical fiction help readers re-orientate themselves to better understand and celebrate dimensions of a queer past that remains elusive to us. To address these ideas, I will briefly discuss how contemporary neo-historical narratives explore and reconfigure portrayals of lesbian desire in fiction.

## **Filipczak, Iwona**

(University of Zielona Góra, Poland)

**“The body that (un)makes us human in *Animal’s People* (2007) by Indra Sinha”**

### Abstract:

Indra Sinha’s *Animal’s People* (2007) is a fictional reworking of the Bhopal disaster in India. On the night of 2 December 1984, Union Carbide pesticide plant exploded and in effect poisonous gases killed and injured thousands of people. The narrator, nicknamed Animal, is an embodiment of this tragedy, as he has become disabled as a result of the environmental poisoning: with his spine injured he has to walk on his hands and feet.

The narrative foregrounds the deformed body of the protagonist and investigates the question how disability can be perceived as loss of humanness. The protagonist self-identifies himself as an animal, which has a dramatic effect for him, as in consequence he deprives himself of an opportunity for an intimate relationship with a female, creation of a family, and sexual fulfillment. Animal’s attitude is reflective of the ideology of ability, which questions the worth of the disabled body or even undermines its human status (McRuer, Mollow; Garland-Thomson).

I would like to argue that Sinha’s novel shows the instability of the ability/ disability binary opposition and I would like to discuss its entanglement with sexuality. *Animal’s People* invites the reader to rethink the concepts of health, vulnerability and humanness in the view of risks we are exposed to in the present times and in the future (Wallace).

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## **Flores-Quesada, Magdalena**

(Universidad de Málaga, Spain)

**“From Past to Future-Oriented Vulnerability: The Invisible Subject in Gail Honeyman’s *Eleanor Oliphant Is Completely Fine* (2017)”**

### Abstract:

The protagonist of Gail Honeyman's debut wonders: "I do exist, don't I? It often feels as if I'm not here, that I'm a figment of my own imagination" (5), and she is partly right because Eleanor Oliphant seems to have fallen outside of socially normal interactions. In the light of Guillaume Le Blanc's theory, Eleanor can be read as an outcast, a subject who has been excluded from society and become partly invisible, "we do not hear them, we do not want to see them anymore. They can only exist as ghosts" (Le Blanc 2011, 18 my translation). Marked by the traumas of her past, which resulted in a badly scarred face and a dysfunctional relationship with her mother, Eleanor lives a past-oriented life as an invisible, isolated, vulnerable subject. However, in this paper, I argue that it is precisely her condition of vulnerability that ultimately helps her alter this situation. I contend that vulnerability, as observed in this piece of fiction, is fundamentally relational, and as such, it is highly dependent on social responsibility and care. Reading Honeyman's novel in the light of Judith Butler's and Guillaume Le Blanc's theories of social vulnerability as well as Gilson's more encompassing view of vulnerability I argue that the subject can use vulnerability towards two transformative ends: First, to break and reorient the past-oriented temporal loop that traumatic experiences provoke, and instead, as Marianne Hirsch argues, creates "an open-ended temporality—that of the threshold of an alternate, reimagined reality" (80). Second, through an ambivalent vulnerability, the subject is capable of being "dispossessed", (Butler and Athanasiou 1), and address others in an ethical way. In this line, this paper demonstrates that this novel offers a valuable account of how mobilising vulnerability is a source towards self-development and ethical connection with others.

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**Gámez-Fernández, Cristina M.**

(University of Córdoba, Spain)

**"Ethical Demand and Recognition of the Other in Tabish Khair's *Night of Happiness* (2018)"**

### Abstract:



Tabish Khair opens *Night of Happiness* (2018) by making readers embody a character who finds and reads a handwritten manuscript in a five-star hotel room's cabinet. The story-within-a-story in such forgotten document discloses a first-person diegesis told by Hindu CEO Anil Mehrotra who unexpectedly discovers that Ahmed, his Muslim lieutenant and trusted right-hand man in his export-import company, suffers from a mental disability. This disquieting event—Anil's short, casual visit to Ahmed's house where he is invited to taste an empty plate of halwa prepared by Roshni, Ahmed's spectral wife—affects Anil to the point that he feels compelled to further inquire about the reasons of Ahmed's ontological re-invention of his wife. In line with Mitchel and Parsons (2013), Anil places himself at the crossroads of the suddenly estranged present, unknown past, and uncertainty about the future when he tries to gather the pieces of the past into a coherent account that can explain what triggered Ahmed's loss of orientation due to his perceptive flaw of reality. The aim of this proposal is to explore the Levinasian (1969) ethical demand placed on Anil upon his *re-cognition* of Ahmed, alongside Khair's ethical demand on his readers, whose act of reading (Felski 2008) embodies a special ethical enactment of their orientation (Ahmed 2006) to the story told and the epistemological limits of human understanding.

## **González Campos, Miguel Ángel**

(Universidad de Málaga, Spain)

### **“Reconstructing the Present from the Future: Multiple Temporality in *Cold Lazarus*”**

#### Abstract:

As has been widely emphasized in the academic discipline of Futures Studies, the future always appears as a dynamic force continuously reshaped by every generation. Every future is a contemporary future since the images of any imagined time to come embody the projections of the fears, hopes and anxieties of the community which produces them (Bell 1997, Wilson 2000, Szpunar & Szpunar 2016). Consequently, rather than a blank canvas, the future is always a hall of mirrors which displays a myriad of significant images of the present.

The aim of this paper is to discuss the meaningful connections and interactions of the different temporalities described in Denis Potter's TV series *Cold Lazarus* (1996) and Emily St. John Mandel's novel *Station Eleven* (2014) and their further implications. Set in the 24<sup>th</sup> century, *Cold Lazarus* depicts a society, which clearly parallels our present world, where a group of scientists attempt to reconstruct the cryogenically preserved past memories of a contemporary writer. *Station Eleven* portrays a

post-pandemic apocalyptic future where some survivors endeavour to recover and safeguard the remains of our present world in the so-called “Museum of Civilization”. Beyond all their differences, both works crucially engaged with issues of temporality and through continuous temporal shifts explore the mutual interaction between past, present and future which coexist in the narrative.

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### **Gutowska, Anna**

(University of Kielce, Poland)

**“This is how it should have happened: anti-historicity in recent costume drama (a case study of the television series *The Great* (2020-))”**

#### Abstract:

Contemporary visual and literary culture has seen a proliferation of quasi-biographical texts that blur the lines of fact and fiction, and often imply that by subverting or questioning the dominant portrayal of a given historical figure they offer a “true” version that had hitherto been suppressed. These hybrids of biography and pure conjecture, despite their essentially fictitious nature, make claims to authenticity, drawing in their audiences with suggestions that the sensationalised versions of the famous lives are the “authentic” ones.

In my paper I am going to analyse the recent television series *The Great* (season 1: 2020, season 2: 2022), created by Tony McNamara and starring Elle Fanning as the young Catherine the Great, empress of Russia, focusing on the interplay between the conventions of costume drama and the series’ presentist agenda, and positioning my case study within the broader discussion of dis/orientations towards the past in modern popular culture. In spite of its seemingly respectable historical subject, the series is a self-aware satire, replete with anachronisms. Its tongue-in-cheek attitude to historical facts is in fact proclaimed on the title card of each episode, which reads “The Great: an occasionally true story.”

In accordance with Christian Gutleben's observation that costume drama dwells on "fashionable wrongs," tailoring the past to what today's audiences want to watch (Gutleben 2001:11), the first season of the series focuses on Catherine's fight for power and position, where the setbacks she encounters are a representation of generalized misogyny and oppression of women in eighteenth-century Russia. Apart from sexism, another recurring motif is the class divide and the casual cruelty of the aristocrats against the palace servants and other working class characters such as soldiers.

The creators of *The Great* sidestep the issue of historical accuracy by avowing that the series is a political satire rather than historical drama, and that its setting in the past is incidental, but on the other hand, they present, in a heightened version, the wrongs of a specific historical moment, and thus their series becomes involved in the project of "contemporary witness-bearing to historical trauma and injustice, providing symbolic commemoration and restitution to history's victims and an important source of audience's edutainment" (Kohlke 2018:2).

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## **Haro Fernández, Rosa**

(Universidad de Málaga, Spain)

### **"Female Troubled Friendship in Ottessa Moshfegh's *Eileen*"**

#### Abstract:

Ottessa Moshfegh's first novel *Eileen* (2015) tells the story of a woman trapped between her alcoholic father and her job at a boys' prison who dreams of escaping to the big city. This paper aims to analyze the psychological nature of the protagonist's dark interior life, as well as her relationship with Rebecca Saint John, who the former befriends when the latter starts to work at the prison. To this end, I will use Jessica Benjamin's theory of intersubjectivity, which refers to the "psychic internalization and representation of interactions between self and objects" (Benjamin 28) and stems from D. W. Winnicott and Margaret Mahler's object relations psychoanalytic theory. With intersubjectivity, Benjamin reorients the conception of the mental process and takes it from a subject-object approach to a subject-subject one. For the analysis, I will put the emphasis on the concepts of recognition, which entails a process of identification with

the other, and destruction, a process which enables the self to go beyond said identification and perceive the other as a separate individual (Benjamin). The analysis of Eileen's psychological life, as well as her intriguing bond with her Rebecca will lead us to conclude that the aforementioned theories indeed provide us with an enlightening framework for disentangling the intricacies of both the protagonist's mind and her relationship with her colleague and friend.

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## Hueso-Vasallo, Manuel

(Universidad de Málaga, Spain)

**“Hopeful Disorientations and Washington Square: Finding New Ways of Living in Times of Crisis in Hanya Yanagihara’s *To Paradise* (2022)”**

### Abstract:

Traditionally, the idea of ‘disorientation’ has carried a negative connotation. Disorientation is usually lived as a state of not-belonging, of being unable to find a way in a given situation. In her now seminal *Queer Phenomenology* (2006), however, Sara Ahmed states that disorientation is not necessarily a negative experience. Despite its disruptiveness, Ahmed argues that disorientation can be a hopeful process, since it “can offer us the hope of new directions” (158). This implies that, depending on “what we do with such moments of disorientation” (158), we might be able to re-orientate ourselves towards new, unexplored and hopeful ways to understand and live in the world. The consequences of the social and sanitary crisis produced by the outbreak of Covid-19, furthermore, has led later critics to develop and support Ahmed’s idea. In this sense, Fernández Velasco, et al. see disorientation as possessing “positive aspects [that] can help us conceptualise the potentially transformative effect” of crisis (454).

Following this trend of thought, this paper addresses Hanya Yanagihara’s third novel *To Paradise* (2022), and, more specifically, the ways in which it is entangled with Henry James’s *Washington Square* (1880). Yanagihara’s text, written during the Covid-19 pandemic, is divided in three parts, each dealing with different disorienting situations

and each set in Washington Square, New York. I shall argue that this seemingly irrelevant fact both connects the novel to James's novel and, more importantly, readapts its way of dealing with disorientations as a productive and hopeful tool through which to address a reality entangled in complex social crisis.

This paper, in other words, seeks to reflect on how contemporary literature remains in dialogue with classical works to pose referents through which to establish ways to find hope in disorientating situations.

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### **Lara-Rallo, Carmen**

(Universidad de Málaga, Spain)

### **"Polytemporal Traces and Spaces in Penelope Lively's Works"**

#### Abstract:

In the context of the dynamic aspect of the concept of orientation, in terms of the exercises of retrospection and anticipation, the production of the British writer Penelope Lively (b. 1937) occupies an outstanding position. Since the beginning of her career, with early works such as the non-fictional *The Presence of the Past* (1976), or the novel *Treasures of Time* (1979), Lively has shown an abiding interest in the topics of time and memory. Lively's multidirectional perception of time, with the interaction of temporal layers bringing together past, present, and future, connects with her approach to the exercise of memory as non-linear, "more like assorted slides that come up unprompted" (Lively, qtd. in McGrath n.p.). All this acquires particular relevance when considering the critical concept of polytemporality, as developed by Victoria Browne in *Feminism, Time, and Nonlinear History* (2014). As Browne argues, historical time should be seen as "generated through the interweaving of different temporal layers and strands [...] there is no 'one' historical time or temporal structure within which histories are all embroiled" (Browne 2-3).; therefore, historical time is polytemporal.

This implies a fluid conceptualisation of temporal traces that goes beyond Paul Ricoeur's typology of the trace as an intratemporal and static object. Such a dynamic perception offers a fruitful theoretical framework to address Lively's production from the perspective of the presence of objects and spaces with a historical or mnemonic function. In the light of this, the present paper aims at exploring works by Lively that belong to different genres (both fiction and non-fiction), from the perspective of

polytemporality, to discover the recurrence and meaning of traces and spaces that prove how, in Lively's view, memory and history make [what is no longer there] "miraculously permanent and accessible because it matters so much, because we need it" (Lively, *Dancing* 149).

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## Letissier, Georges

(Nantes University, France)

**"Queering *Middlemarch* in the Digital Age"**

### Abstract:

The ways canonical texts resonate in contemporary culture are unpredictable and so is the transformation they undergo, which retrospectively attests to the potentialities their original plasticity affords. Rebecca Shoptaw's *Middlemarch webseries* is a 70-episode video-blog (or vlog) series aired on Youtube from March 15th to December 1st, 2017. It follows a group of students at Lowick College (the toponym is of course an instance of transfiction in transmedia) in the fictional town of Middlemarch, Connecticut. By transposing and editing some key episodes of Eliot's *Middlemarch*, to adapt them to the existential quest of a group of American teen-agers, Shoptaw, herself a Yale student in 2017, queers a classic novel as a militant answer to what she sees as the erasure of LGBTQI+ in literature. But far from being a dis-orientation, or undue appropriation, of a canonical source, Shoptaw argues that it is a re-orientation towards what was

potentially there in the first place: ‘less about appropriating a classic text and reworking it to tell a radically different story, and more about reading back into a text the echoes of something that could have been there’ (Shoptaw in Bell, 2018).

Shoptaw’s vlog series raises a number of questions which are relevant to the Orientation/dis-orientation Project. Adaptation by morphing an intellectually demanding, subtly narrated fiction into a succession of short scripts performed and shot by students is of course the first one. What Shoptaw calls ‘adaptation by circumstance’ (Shoptaw in Bell) is both a cinematic technique and a way of reading probably befitting the generation Z of so-called ‘digital natives’. More widely, it is the stratified perception of culture and its finality that are destabilised when what is hastily alleged to rank as high-brow, elite culture, and deemed as patrimonial legacy, is re-oriented to help a group of students articulate their present queries and anxieties on love, life, interpersonal ethics and so forth. Lastly, the possibility of a temporal re/dis-orientation should be considered when the posterity of a classic text is counterbalanced by the ephemerality of a media event, caught up in the relentless succession of proposals on the net, destined to be replaced almost as soon as they appear.

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### **López Serrano, Lucía**

(University of Salamanca, Spain)

**“Dis-Orienting Pain: Byung-Chul Han’s Palliative Society in Ottessa Moshfegh’s *My Year of Rest and Relaxation* (2018)”**

#### Abstract:

“I tried to put everything out of my mind. Valium helped. Ativan helped. Chewable melatonin and Benadryl and NyQuil and Lunesta and temazepam helped”

—Ottessa Moshfegh, *My Year of Rest and Relaxation*

In his 2021 collection of essays *The Palliative Society*, South-Korean philosopher Byung-Chul Han argues that contemporary Western societies are experiencing a process of algophobia: “a generalized fear of pain” by which our “ability to tolerate pain

is rapidly diminishing” (1). He argues that neoliberalism is re-orienting contemporary society’s relationship to pain by establishing an imperative for happiness and positivity as a ‘dispositif’ of individual self-regulation (10). Suffering is understood as a sign of personal failure (12) and becomes privatized, losing its political dimension as a shared root for unrest and revolution. For Han, in the palliative society, the response to pain is numbed by the “strictly medical and pharmacological” (11) in an attempt to follow the happiness imperative of neoliberal positivity.

In this paper, I posit that reading Moshfegh’s 2018 novel *My Year of Rest and Relaxation* through the lens of Byung-Chul Han’s theories on the palliative society offers insight into contemporary understandings of pain and the pursuit of happiness through the examination of the unnamed protagonist, who voluntarily medicates herself to achieve a full year of continuous sleep in order to escape her pain, and Reva, her best friend, who is obsessed with an “ideology of permanent well-being” (*Palliative* 3) that she expresses in a constant parade of fad-diets, wellness mantras, and the newest self-help theories. Ultimately, Moshfegh’s novel satirizes the pursuit of happiness through contemporary wellness culture and the over-medicalization of pain, highlighting two stages of Han’s palliative society: a relentless pursuit of happiness that works as a self-regulatory device in substitution of disciplinary “allo-compulsion” (*Burnout* 46), and an introspective fishbowl existence that seeks to turn itself numb to pain.

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#### **Martín-Salvan, Paula**

(University of Córdoba)

**“Apocalypse, again? Postapocalyptic temporalities in Colson Whitehead’s *Zone One*”**

#### Abstract:

In a seminal essay on Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, J. Hillis Miller discussed the paradox inherent to the literary genre of apocalypse: “When each veil is lifted, however, it uncovers only another veil [...] since all apocalypses ultimately fail to lift the last veil” (117). This image of infinite regress feeds on the Derridean notion of the “always to come”. Colson Whitehead’s 2011 novel *Zone One* belongs to the intrinsically



paradoxical genre of post-apocalyptic fiction, in which apocalypse has not only taken place, but has passed, giving way to a new world order typically expressed as social and technological regression (Berger). In it, the moment of apocalypse is also “both infinitely distant and immediately imminent” (Miller Others 117), but it is located in the irretrievable past, rather than in the future.

I would argue Whitehead plays with such disorienting temporality in *Zone One*. In this paper, I intend to analyze in detail the temporal structure of the novel, mainly focusing on two major areas: First, its management of multiple temporalities set around the unnarratable moment of apocalypse, which I take to be typical of the genre to which the novel adheres. Second, its articulation of apocalypse as an event that may be subject to iteration, that is to say, that may happen a second time. Thus, in *Zone One*, the issue at stake is not so much whether apocalypse can be now, but whether it can be again, as the end of the novel seems to suggest, challenging the eschatological temporality of most postapocalyptic fiction.

**Martínez García, Ana Belén**

(University of Navarra)

**“New Orientations Towards Migration: Testimonial Entanglements”**

Abstract:

Within the field of life writing, attention has long been paid to the concept of “entangled self” (Miller 2007) to argue for the necessary relationality of self and other in constructing one’s identity.

Moving from this notion of entanglement and life writing to social media, it becomes harder to dis-entangle the self from the digital paradigm. I have discussed the pros and cons of deploying online means of communication for activism (Martínez García 2020a, 2020b), focusing on the emotional attachments they construe. Now I would like to address how we may take advantage of affect theory, in particular Sara Ahmed’s (2006) re-orientation towards other Others, to explore the panorama of contemporary crises the Global North seems to be submerged in through the lens of ethics.

To challenge wrongly labelled crises such as the so-called migrant crisis, we need to think of those as systemic social processes. In this paper I aim to analyze testimonial narratives as “mobility assemblages” (Tamboukou 2020: 237) that showcase migrant voices by contemporary activist authors (e.g., Mustafa 2015, 2017, 2018; Mustafa and Lamb 2017), produced both online and offline, seeking to shed light on the entanglements among human and technology, individual and collective, self and other, expectations and contestations. I will put assemblage theory to the test in these self-narration exercises, paying special attention to the experience of other Others

(migrants, disabled, youth... those whose lives and livelihoods, rights and identities are at stake) and the web of affective attachments we as readers/audiences/users become entangled in.

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## **Moyano Rejano, Rocío**

(University of Málaga)

**““The time is out of joint”:(Re)Shaping Time in John Everett Millais' *Ophelia* and Lisa Klein's *Ophelia*”**

### Abstract:

The Pre-Raphaelites have become a repeated reference in the contemporary representations and revisions of Victorian culture. Neo-Victorian writers use Pre-Raphaelite artists and their art to comment on images and norms of femininity in the nineteenth century, as Murray argues, “the prominence of womanhood and femininity is something that Pre-Raphaelitism and Neo-Victorianism have in common as cultural movements, and which act as influencers upon each other.” (25) In parallel, the

dialogue between literature and painting continues to be a source of interest in contemporary criticism, with the reconsideration of classical approaches to the subject such as Leonardo Da Vinci's Paragone of Painting. Here, Da Vinci argued that "painting is superior to poetry" and "painting surpasses all human works by the subtle considerations belonging to it" (653) contrasting the direct images of the painting that are generated by the painter with the mental images of poetry that are based on the interpretation of the reader. One of the main differences between literature and painting is their treatment of time in terms of persistence. Why does the aesthetic reception of a text stretch along time whereas that of the painting lasts an instant? The answer lies in the characteristics and limitations of each medium. That is, a painting captures a moment, or a short stretch of time since it is static. By contrast, a written work is dynamic across time and space with the possibility of appreciating its transition. Joseph Frank argues that "form in the plastic arts, according to Lessing, is necessarily spatial, because the visible aspect of objects can best be presented juxtaposed in an instant of time. Literature, on the other hand, makes use of language, composed of a succession of words proceeding through time". (223)

This paper draws on the representation of Ophelia, one of Shakespeare's most emblematic heroines, in Pre-Raphaelite art and contemporary fiction, focusing on John Everett's Millais's iconic painting *Ophelia* (1851), and Lisa Klein's novel *Ophelia* (2006). Special attention will be paid to the possibilities and limitations of two media in terms of their persistence. In this context, Pre-Raphaelite paintings are seen as a visual reading of Shakespeare's source text through reverse ekphrasis, while Lisa Klein's novel is told from Ophelia's perspective through interfigurality.

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## **Muñoz Valdivieso, Sofía**

(University of Málaga)

### **“Entanglement and Network Aesthetics in Bernardine Evaristo’s Fusion Fiction: Girl, Woman, Other”**

#### Abstract:

When Bernardine Evaristo published *Girl, Woman, Other* in mid-2019, the UK was struggling with its position in relation to Europe on the brink of Brexit. The novel’s web of interconnected lives across time and space resonated even more poignantly as the world plunged into the pandemic crisis of 2020. Written against insularity and with an intersectional feminist agenda, *Girl, Woman, Other* explores black British experience in twelve novella-like sections focalised from the perspectives of different women. As the network that links their apparently unrelated narratives is revealed, a celebration of human connectedness emerges from their entanglement, with the one-word paragraph that closes it, “together” (452), an emblem for it. The notions of entanglement and network aesthetics (Jagoda 2016) help articulate the analysis of *Girl, Woman, Other* at different levels, since the identities of its black and British women are marked by entanglement, their complexity compounded by the intersections of dimensions like gender, ethnicity, class and age; their twelve narratives weave a network novel which dispenses with the conventions of punctuation and paragraph construction; and its experimental form interlaces elements of prose, verse and drama to gingerly open up a generic space of its own that the author herself has described as “fusion fiction”. Evaristo’s kaleidoscopic recreation of black lives with varied roots/routes in/to Britain captures the entangled histories of Britain and Empire and conveys the interlinked nature of the transmodern present. *Girl, Woman, Other* is thus connected to her previous experimentation with novels-in-verse, novels-with-verse and punctuation-free fiction, all of them polyvocal texts that write against monologic narratives of the past and present as they put presence into absence by channelling the voices of black Britons.

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## **Nnodim, Rita**

(Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts)

## **“Emotional Geographies and Temporalities of Urban Marginalization – Perspectives from Bombay Fiction”**

### Abstract:

Within the context of global urban literary studies and inspired by the recent turn to affect and emotion in urban geography and cultural studies, this paper suggests a critical approach that focuses on emotional geographies and temporalities of urban marginalization in literary writing that evokes human beingness, urban lives, conviviality, and responses to cityness from within embodied and emplaced experiences of unbelonging. The paper represents a close reading of selected examples of 21<sup>st</sup> century Bombay/Mumbai fiction, ranging from Cyrus Mistry’s novel *Chronicle of a Corpse Bearer* (2012) to Altaf Tyrewala’s genre-bending *No God in Sight* (2006) and *Ministry of Hurt Sentiments* (2012). In literary writings such as the foregoing, we encounter multiple, diverging, but also intersecting spatialities and temporalities – dis-orienting at times – that question privileged forms of urban belonging, that write-with emotion and affect in the city and what it might mean to experience cityness from within cast-out spaces, imagining different ways of being with each other in the city that articulate and reclaim a sense of urban belonging.

## **Pedro, Leopoldina**

(University of Valencia)

## **“Adapting Medea for a Neo-Victorian Context: The Monstrous Mother in *Taboo*”**

### Abstract:

The Victorian period has traditionally been regarded as a product of patriarchy, where women’s lives were controlled by a male authority. However, if we take a closer look at (neo-)Victorian fiction we can see a “female genealogy” where mothers are not victims, but rather “the wardens of the patriarchal prison and perpetrators of ‘punishment’” (Braid 91). For Nadine Muller, “matrilineal genealogies” are a prominent motif in contemporary literature and popular culture, especially in the case of neo-Victorian fiction (110).

Likewise, the trope of the ‘bad’ or ‘monstrous’ mother was exploited in Greek mythology and drama, particularly through strong-minded and homicidal characters, including Medea, Clytemnestra and her daughter, Electra. They also became the epitome of female ambition, sorcery, madness and racial Otherness. Therefore, these Greek characters have been adapted and appropriated throughout Western literary history, where they represented female oppression within the family, most notably in nineteenth-century England. James Robinson Planche’s *The Golden Fleece; or, Jason*

*in Colchis and Medea in Corinth* (1845) inaugurated a tradition of ‘Medean’ plays that culminated with *Jason and Medea: A Ramble after a Colchian* in 1878.

Neo-Victorian fiction also appropriates these multitemporal characters, as in the case of the TV series *Taboo* (2017-), which portrays a monstrous mother that is also well-versed in witchcraft and accused of being a madwoman. In this paper, I analyse the mother in *Taboo*, Salish, as a neo-Victorian appropriation of the Greek Medea –and other adaptations of this character throughout the nineteenth century– that embodies “the need to escape identity-constricting cultural, political and economic forces and to achieve personal liberty” (Bartel and Simon 4). Thus, I argue that this Medean character has a multitemporal projection, as it denounces women’s oppression in the past and present periods, in an attempt to prevent it in the future.

**Pellicer-Ortín, Silvia**

(University of Zaragoza)

**“Illness as a Source of Temporal, Spatial and Relational Disorientation in Linda Grant’s *The Dark Circle*”**

Abstract:

Linda Grant’s orange prize-winning novel *The Dark Circle* (2016) is set in the aftermath of WWII, depicting Londoners trying to recover from this obscure period. However, teenage Jewish twins Lenny and Miriam Lynskey are diagnosed with tuberculosis and dispatched to the Gwendo, a newly built sanatorium in Kent which provides free care to citizens of all social classes. There, they encounter a very diverse group of characters who are given a voice to recount the harsh discipline and painful treatments they had to endure while preparing for the long-awaited medicine that would help eradicate this disease within the next decade. By drawing on the tools provided by close reading and narratology as well as some theories within the fields of affect (Ahmed, 2006), illness (Frank, 1995) and vulnerability (Ganteau and Onega, 2017) studies, the main aim of my paper is to demonstrate that Grant’s novel encompasses some of the notions of “dis/orientation” explored in this conference. Firstly, the narrative structure combines different temporalities that echo the stages of the protagonists’ illness, even looking at their future lives. Secondly, space acquires a quintessential dimension by turning the sanatorium into a microcosm where different subjects’ lives intersect in their shared disorientation, caused by their common illness. Thirdly, the relational dimension of disorientation is explored by examining the affective relationships established among the patients in the sanatorium and by highlighting the social meanings ascribed to tuberculosis in the 1950s. All in all, I would like to demonstrate that the temporal, spatial and relational disorientations represented in this novel revolve around the disorientating effects that illness has on the main characters. For them, the years in the sanatorium

remain deeply engraved in their memory and identity, as a “dark circle” they will never leave behind – the figure that gives both the novel and the final section its title.

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## **Pettersson, Lin**

(University of Málaga)

**“The female body in pandemic crisis: Doctors, Nurses and Mothers in Emma Donoghue’s *The Pull of the Stars*”**

### Abstract:

This paper examines the social and individual challenges presented by pandemics in fiction to disclose the ways in which literature helps us understand our entangled world in times of sanitary crises. Emma Donoghue’s *The Pull of the Stars* (2020) portrays the female experience of nurses, doctors, voluntary workers and birthing women in a Dublin maternity ward during the 1918 Flu Pandemic. My principal aim is to analyse embodied subjectivities and the intersections of medical, political and religious discourses on the female body through the lens of entanglement to explore human resilience. In doing so I hope to demonstrate the interrelation between the past Great Flu Pandemic and the current Covid-19 pandemic.

## **Puchal Terol, Victoria**

(International University of Valencia)

**“Recognising the Stranger: The ‘Fast Girl’ and Mid-Victorian Popular Drama”**

### Abstract:

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines ‘fast’ as “engaging in or involving activities characterised by excitement, extravagance, and risk-taking” (adj. 6). In the nineteenth century, the epithet was most commonly used to refer to the (female) prostitute.

However, by the 1860s, it caught on and went on to describe a different kind of woman: the 'fast girl'. In short, 'fast girl' was a label ascribed to a certain 'tribe' of modern women, who, according to the British press, were in the habit of forgetting "the line that separates the impure woman from the pure" (*Morning Advertiser* 3). Not quite prostitutes, but still: 'fast girls' would inevitably fall into a 'strange' category. Indeed, as Sara Ahmed suggests, "the stranger is *some-body* whom we have *already recognised* in the very moment in which they are 'seen' or 'faced' as a stranger" (21). In this way, we could say that for the Victorians, the 'fast girl' was both a familiar figure and an alienated one, because she represented a certain form of gender and "moral degeneration" (Nead 93).

Thus, in this paper I analyse the "embodied strangeness" of the 'fast girl' during the mid-nineteenth century in England. To do so, I establish the links between the Victorian printed press' perception of such women and the social phenomenon's influence on both the period's popular drama and its agents. More specifically, I propose an understudied comedietta, *Our Female American Cousin* (Gayler) and actress Lydia Thompson's *carte-de-visites* from 1868. As I shall contend, these representations of the 'fast girl' contribute to the Victorians' recognition of a progressively redefined perception of womanhood.

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### **Revelles Benavente, Beatriz**

(University of Granada)

**"Contemporary literature as a feminist new materialist methodology, or "what's the use" of literature?"**

#### Abstract:

In one of her latest works, Sarah Ahmed (2019), makes a brief reflection regarding the dash in Virginia Woolf's *The Voyage Out* as *anything*. Thinking through the common expression "what's the use" she starts wondering what is the direction that certain words have and how they are put into practice. Orientation (Ahmed, 2010) provides a departing point in order to theorize about our everyday practices and how they provoke



differences that matter. I argue, that one way in which the everyday becomes theory provoking these differences that matter is through literature and it becomes materialized in the dash that Virginia Woolf uses in *A Room of One's Own*. Using feminist new materialisms (Colman, 2020), I pursue to engage with a genealogy (van der Tuin, 2015) of literature that enables generative knowledges, instead of classificatory practices, based upon a conceptualization of critique beyond suspicious oppositions (Felski, 2015). That, is an affective affirmative critique built on the concept of intra-mat-externality (Revelles-Benavente, 2021). In order to put theory to work, I will use Toni Morrison as an example. Transposing Toni Morrison's work into literary theory, we see how she, already in the nineties, pointed the literary critic towards the need to identify holes in literature that re-create the past; while at the same time, they transform the ethical frame of literature by stretching and breaking the limits of the discipline itself. In order to break these limits, we need to look for porous borders (Rowoska-Standgret, 2017), the relation between those borders and how these borders interfere in creating a feminist political modality (Colman, 2020) able to transform the entanglement between past, present and future. That is, this paper wants to define literature as a feminist new materialist methodology.

## **Roberts, Beth**

(University of Surrey)

**“Reorientating a personal past: Disembodied confrontations in *Emilie: La Marquise du Châtelet Defends Her Life Tonight*”**

### Abstract:

Lauren Gunderson's 2010 play *Emilie: La Marquise du Châtelet Defends Her Life Tonight* offers the titular protagonist the opportunity to re-evaluate the decisions she made throughout her life by allowing her to revisit her memories post-death. We encounter two Emilies throughout the span of the play: the one acting as a facsimile for Emilie's memories and the one who observes from the side, considering her past choices. The facsimile is the embodied Emilie; she can touch the other actors and perform scenes of passion. The observer cannot because the lights fade and she is rendered breathless any time she tries to touch another person on stage. I argue that the observer Emilie reorientates her beliefs around love and her scientific work from a disembodied perspective, watching her counterpart live the life she once knew and being unable to experience those moments once more. As a seventeenth-century woman who centres her life around scientific study, her embodied life is imbued with conflicts that require impassioned responses; on more than one occasion, she must defend herself and her work from men of science. The disembodied observer Emilie can reconsider these moments through a new lens and can reorientate her feelings to

understand her actions and reactions. In this paper, I demonstrate that the audience are placed alongside observer Emilie as disembodied observer and are encouraged to reorientate their perspectives of their own beliefs.

**Rodríguez Casas, María**

(University of Salamanca)

**“The Earth is Moving and so Are We: A Horizontal Reorientation of Neo-colonial Subject-Positionality in *The Rabbits*’ Narrative Politics”**

Abstract:

If in the contemporary globalised world home is the journey, then its ontology should predicate upon the travel from one level of existence into another: imaginative and physical borders are to be crossed in the unstable experience of both personal and collective identity. Transcending an essential way of being into a metaphysical dimension of becoming, its contradictory dynamics account for a fluid process of metamorphosis; continuously flourishing to other selves, identity is not a totality, but an infinite rebirth into different cross-cultural and transnational, inner and outer, worlds. Amongst the philosophical concerns of the Caribbean thinker Édouard Glissant (1928-2011), this fragmentary pluralism is significantly mirrored in the metaphorical possibilities of the rhizome — a placeless distinctive root, albeit firmly rooted to the earth. Splitting in a broadening horizontal development into multiple interconnected directionalities, the rhizome illustrates a correlative entangled existence in an equitable shared experience. Drawing upon its anti-hierarchical and anti-monolithic nature, *The Rabbits*’ (1998) narrative perspectives will be explored in endeavouring to deconstruct the ethical Utopia presented by its authors. Verbalised by John Marsden and illustrated by Shaun Tan, this seemingly children-book is indeed a subversive ideological weapon that confronts the former politics of colonialism with today’s capitalist rationale and its process of otherness in the neo-colonial era. Seeking to transform the course of environmental devastation, by reorienting postcolonialism in ecocritical terms, *The Rabbits* transgresses the legitimacy of the hegemonic episteme with an admonitory urge to horizontally disentangle human subjectivity from anthropocentrism in favour of a biocentric positionality. If addressed in globality, the climate crisis can be overcome — the planet travels in the same boat towards a liveable future.

**Rossi, Stefano**

(University of Padova)

## **“Orientation-lessness Towards the Future in Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*”**

### Abstract:

Swallowed by an existential nothingness, deprived of any *élan vital*, unable to implement evolutionary changes, and severely disoriented within the flow of time, several of Samuel Beckett’s characters appear suffocated by an aura of hopelessness, a strong feeling of apathy and disillusion towards ‘tomorrow’. Taking into consideration *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*, this paper focuses on the orientation-lessness towards the future that affects the characters of these two theatrical plays. The theoretical frame for my investigation into the inability – or unwillingness – of the protagonists of these two works to tackle the future will be offered not only by Beckett’s *Proust*, but also by the clinical notes on the ‘nameless dread’ formulated by Wilfred R. Bion, Beckett’s psychoanalyst in 1934-1935. After highlighting the pathological incapacity of Beckett’s characters to escape habit and the tedious immobility that keeps them tied to a stagnant present, I will consider the phenomenology of suicide – recurrently mentioned in the two plays in question – by looking at this phenomenon as the only chance that the characters of *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame* seem to have of escaping their changeless existence, in which they have no sort of protention and orientation towards their future Other-self.

## **Sánchez Cabrera, Alejandro**

(University of Salamanca)

### **“Me Contradigo / Yo me Transformo”: the Construction of the Self, the Literary Tradition, and the *Motomami* Idiolect**

### Abstract:

It was Walt Whitman who, in *Song of Myself*, published in 1855, wrote “Do I contradict myself? Very well then I contradict myself, (I am large, I contain multitudes)”. In his train, the Spanish artist Rosalía defends in her latest work *Motomami* (2022) that she, indeed, contradicts herself and contains multitudes (“Me contradigo . . . soy to’a’ las cosa” (“Saoko” 0:53). Met with critical acclaim, the album deals with themes that go from fame, solitude, the passage of time, love, or sex to the conceptualization of the self in the cultural and historical moment we are living in. The present paper will discuss how, by presenting a new paradigm in pop culture of transgression, poetic meditation and autobiographical writing that places the self at the core of the narrative, *Motomami* functions as an avant-garde reflection on the multiplicity of selves in a society that leans toward unification, thus orienting her work towards a literary tradition that goes back to Whitman and Woolf, while also examining the history of the female body, and, as

Ahmed would point out, of its comportment, horizons, historically-otherized nature and revindication (56). It will, thus, study the conceptualization of the self in *Motomami* and how the artist has been able to portray such conception by channeling disparate literary and musical influences and tendencies to create a distinctive idiolect and redefine today's pop.

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## **Soler i Arjona, Sara**

(University of Barcelona)

**“Towards Queer Disorientations: Envisioning Alternative Temporalities in Ocean Vuong’s *On Earth We’re Briefly Gorgeous* (2019)”**

### Abstract:

“To make things queer”, Sara Ahmed suggests, is to disturb “certain forms of living—certain times, spaces, and directions”—around which the world has been organized (565). A subject’s futurity, for instance, is conventionally envisioned “in terms of reaching certain points along a life course”, which accumulate “creating the impression of a straight line” (554). To stay on this line, then, means inhabiting what Judith Halberstam (2005) understands as ‘straight time’—the dominant logics of temporality in Western culture, grounded in the heterosexual frames of reproduction, progression, and inheritance. Queerness, in contrast, has the potential to imagine alternative forms of being in the world and in time; this is indeed Ocean Vuong’s intention in his debut novel, *On Earth We’re Briefly Gorgeous* (2019).

More precisely, Vuong’s non-linear narrative excavates the protagonist’s family history, blurring the boundaries between past and present, Vietnam and the US, to trace the multiple histories of displacement informing who he is today. The novel’s temporal dislocation, I argue, becomes a formulation of queer time: by disorienting the heteronormative structure of temporality that normalizes linear patterns of repetition and

progression, the novel envisions an alternative understanding of time where the queer subject is endowed with agency (Muñoz 2009; Freeman 2010). Specifically, the resisting potential of this temporal mechanism is twofold: first, it contests dominant war narratives—those embedded within US imperialism—by unearthing the voices of those who have been effaced by Western representation; second, it reveals the ongoing histories of violence that queer diasporic subjects must still face in contemporary America.

## **Stefanova, Svetlana**

(International University of La Rioja)

### **“Between Freedom and Safety: Mapping Uncertainty in Lauren Beukes’s *Afterland*”**

#### Abstract:

The severity and scale of the Covid-19 pandemic has led to a dramatic transformation of our capacity to interpret reality. Heavy reliance on data-infused digital mediation soon saturated us with mental images of restricted areas and space intrusions. Familiar spaces felt threatening and easily identifiable landmarks and pathways proved inadequate spatial coordinates. Alternative ways of experiencing space stemmed from orientation based not on moving towards the others, but rather trying to move away from them. The constant tension between the need to connect to people and distance from them created a feeling of anxiety. This tension between trust and mistrust is in the heart of Lauren Beukes’s *Afterland* (2020). The novel is constructed as a quest narrative in which a mother embarks on a journey to save her son, who is one of the few males left, after a virus called HCV has killed the rest. As a result of a global pandemic that intensifies inequality and diminishes reproductive capacity, the world is transformed into an all-female society of desolation and despair, where the boy, immune to the virus, is treated as a commodity. The protagonists’ journey, which involves constantly changing locations and negotiating the meaning of new environments, underscores the need for determining which spatial and social cues cause disorientation and how Cole and her son cope with uncertainty. This paper proposes a form of mapping that locates sites of uncertainty and explores their potential for understanding the effects that the tension between two seemingly opposed dimensions – freedom and safety – has on the protagonists of *Afterland*.

## **Strydom, Wemar**

(University of Witwatersrand)

## **“‘Go die over there, please’. Civil dis-orientation and queer migrancy in the work of Eben Venter”**

### Abstract:

The oeuvre of South African author Eben Venter deftly creates deceptively un-intricate-seeming landscapes of affective orientation, with movement, migrancy, the interiors of cars, the infrastructure of roads, roadsigns, bridges, border-crossing(s), and walking as central to each narrative. This is most notable in two novels, *Ek stamel ek sterwe* (1996; published in translation as *My Beautiful Death* in 2006) and *Horrelpoot* (2007; published in translation as *Trencherman* in \*). Both are searing stream-of-consciousness narratives about a white male gay Afrikaner expat – in voluntary exodus, as nearly all Venter protagonists are – slowly dying from the meticulously documented onslaught of disease. Existing scholarship on these novels find consensus in pointing to the metonymic relation between the national body and the physical body – in which both are shown to be porous, open to the 'invasive' - and in which the decay of the body is read as mirrored commentary on specific social ills experienced in the host country.

In this paper, however, I'd like to suggest an alternative, non-moralistic reading, one which views the processes of dying - not only corporeally, but also narratively - as a series of progressive civil dis-orientations. In effect, Venter's protagonists have to unlearn to be South African in order to die. Such a view allows us to consider larger, systemic questions, such as *why* Venter conflates the process of dying with the post-(im)migration of the (specifically, white) protagonist. Or to what extent the reception of these two novels read a causal orientation from origin to host country into/onto the decaying body, instead of from host to origin country.

**Tal, Michal**

(Israel Institute of Technology)

### **“Some Observations on the *Whens* and *Wheres* of Contemporary Fiction”**

### Abstract:

Twenty-first century selves are often decentred, comprised of simultaneous multiple identities, and reflect an infusion of partial identities. People are claimed to construct identities through social interaction (e.g., Mead, 1934). However, their others in the current context of cyberspace age are frequently “shadow realities”, and the relationships they form are characterized by both polytemporality and polyspaciality. This reality is well manifested in contemporary literature.

A case in point is Juan José Millás's 2016 novel *From the Shadows* [*Desde la Sombra*], which investigates the impact of the digital age on our way of constructing the self and forming relations with others. His protagonist needs no physical space whatsoever and his concrete environment serves very few of his necessities. Instead, he creates a mental studio, where he is constantly interviewed in front of a live audience following his whereabouts. As he hides inside an old wardrobe purchased by a woman in an antique shop, he lives a parallel reality to the one held by her family and identifies himself as a ghost. This ghost – by definition a timeless and spaceless entity - is very active on Internet forums discussing mysticism, where it immediately becomes popular. Thus, the protagonist's existence is profoundly dependent on being viewed and reflected by others.

This paper will try to reveal how these two fundamental voids – the timely and the spacious ones – may lead to de-personalization, and to highlight its negative effects on one's identity construction, manner of perceiving the world, and relations with society.

**Tejero Marín, Ana**

(University of Salamanca)

**“Anthropomorphizing physical spaces: N. K. Jemisin's *The Broken Earth* trilogy and *The City We Became*”**

Abstract:

This presentation will consider how space is understood as a fluid, dynamic and *alive* entity in two works by the contemporary fantasy author N. K. Jemisin. On the one hand, *The Broken Earth* trilogy (2015-2017) introduces us to a world destroyed by humanity in which the Earth is presented as an angry father who seeks revenge for the loss of his child. On the other, *The City We Became* (2020) displays cities as sentient beings which effectively act upon the world via human avatars. In both narratives, the physical setting is anthropomorphized and turned into proper characters with personalities, goals and agency, which consequently changes how human characters relate to and interact with their environment. Moreover, the fantastical elements function as metaphors for humanity's shifting relationship with the world in the Anthropocene, an era characterized by human modification of the environment and the acknowledgment that we live in a profoundly entangled planet. In these two works, the personification of physical spaces is also partnered with an orientation towards the ground, understood as the baseline for all material and cultural constructs that support the thriving of human civilization. Contrasting the central figures of Father Earth in *The Broken Earth* trilogy and New York City in *The City We Became* will reveal the points of connection of these two distinct

spaces and how they relate to our current understanding of reality as unstable, fragile and mutable.

## **Teske, Joanna Klara**

(John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin)

### **“Nonsensical care in the fiction of Ali Smith”**

#### Abstract:

Care is the theme Ali Smith pursues consistently throughout her fiction. She seems particularly intrigued by “nonsensical care” – care that for lack of adequate resources cannot bring any relief and is confined to empathetic experience and symbolic action. Convinced the information is crucial to her dead sibling, Clara in *Hotel World* bends over backwards to measure the time her sister took falling down the dumb-waiter shaft in the tragic accident; in *How To Be Both* George resolves to watch each day a porn movie for the sake of the young actress abused in the process of its production, in “Virtual” a bed-ridden girl takes care of a virtual pet. These are just a couple of examples. I have called the kind of care these cases exemplify “nonsensical care” but this care actually makes sense in the theistic context, where what counts most is spiritual experience. It is in nontheistic contexts, which pragmatically value effectiveness, that this care becomes problematic. It suffices to compare Søren Kierkegaard’s Christian view of “works of love” with Mark Bickhard’s interactivist model of the human person.

Ali Smith may be classified as a metamodernist writer (e.g. Huber and Funk) and metamodernism may be seen as contradictorily adopting an optimistic stand towards the disillusioned view of reality, its postmodern heritage (Vermeulen and van den Akker). The motif of nonsensical care might be taken to reveal Smith’s deep commitment to spirituality, exhibiting her affinity with postsecular authors (McClure).

## **Zamorano Llena, Carmen**

(Dalarna University)

### **“... be brave and [do] not be paralysed by these shameful memories”: Re-orientation toward the Older Migrant’s Temporalities in Abdulrazak Gurnah’s *The Last Gift*”**

#### Abstract:

Recent approaches to the study of time and temporalities in relation to migration have observed the dearth of research on the life course in migration studies (Griffiths et al.



2013: 12). In this research, the focus has mostly concentrated on the life stages that are comprised between the early and mid-life stages, namely those often regarded as the productive years of an individual's life course. Since the 2000s, the intersection of migration studies and gerontology has fostered increasing scholarly attention to older migrants, even if in migration literary studies and literary gerontology, the older migrant is still a rather elusive figure. In this sense, Abdulrazak Gurnah's novel *The Last Gift* (2011) contributes to re-orientating critical attention to the older migrant in literature as an "object of thought" (Ahmed 2006: 56).

Gurnah's novel centres on the older migrant Abbas, as well as on the nature of the silences and conflicts that have shaped his life in England from early adulthood to late life and infirmity. Abbas's limited physical mobility and illness set off in him a process of re-examination of his own subjectivity in old age through resorting to memories of his past life in England as well as those of his past in Zanzibar. The essay will contend that Abbas's times and temporalities as an older migrant having aged in the receiving society, crucially shape his subjectivity and that of his descendants. In Abbas's case, his "imagined mobilities" (Ciobanu and Hunter 2017: 4) contribute to articulating his different temporal subject positions throughout his life course. In his children, Hanna and Jamal, their subject formation is crucially shaped by "intergenerational temporalities" (Santelli 2014), namely how Abbas's own temporal subjectivities are inextricably interrelated with his children's.

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