



invisible lives  
silent voices

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*Book of Abstracts*

Convenors: Alice Borrego & Héloïse Lecomte

**Professor Guillaume Le Blanc – University of Paris-Diderot**

“To be is to be perceived ? What future for the invisible faces?”

To be is to be perceived? Not being is not being perceived? Who decides who is to be visible or not? During my presentation I would like to suggest that invisibility is a social construction related to norms of apprehension, recognition and justification. Not seeing a person is making her/him absent, letting her/him die. What happens when one is thus made invisible? Can the voice bring us back to life? And under what conditions is a silent voice still a living voice? Why is invisibility always attached to inaudibility? If losing one's voice is losing one's face, then keeping one's voice, even when it is lost, is allowing an inner face to appear that is forbidden to the eyes of others but yet present. What future for this face? These are some of the questions my lecture will address.

Guillaume Le Blanc is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Paris-Diderot. His reflection focuses on the apprehension of precarity and vulnerability through the prism of social norms and constructs. He published *Vies ordinaires, vies précaires* in 2007, *L'Invisibilité sociale* in 2009 and *Que faire de notre vulnérabilité ?* in 2011, as part of his philosophical enquiry on social critique, dwelling on the exclusion and invisibilisation of the precarious.

**Professor Esther Peeren, University of Amsterdam**

“Invisible Lives of the British Countryside”

In my book *The Spectral Metaphor: Living Ghosts and the Agency of Invisibility* (2014), I wrote about communities living, in the present and while still alive, like ghosts: rendered invisible, overlooked, ignored and considered exploitable and expendable, but also, on occasion, capable of exerting a powerful haunting force. In my current ERC-funded project on Rural Imaginations, I am looking at the rural, and specifically the British countryside, as a spectral site – often ignored in favor of the city, especially in discussions of globalization and climate change – and a site of spectralization, with certain elements hypervisible and others unseen. An important factor in determining what does and does not become visible of the rural in the cultural imagination generated in literature and the other creative arts is the continued dominance of the genre of the rural idyll, which shows no signs of “waning” in Lauren Berlant’s sense, despite its blatant inadequacy to rural realities. In this lecture, I will argue that the persistent haunting of the imagination of the rural by the rural idyll is due to entrenched affective attachments that are difficult to sever. These attachments privilege particular rural lives over others, rendering some – like those of the poor, the non-white, farm laborers, farm animals and other non-human life forms – invisible. Making these lives visible requires the extension of the notion of living ghosts to non-human actors and therefore a posthuman framework, which I take from the work of Karen Barad and Donna Haraway. Taking as my case studies the television series *Midsomer Murders* and *The Casual Vacancy*, a special issue of the magazine *Country Life* guest edited by Prince Charles, and the novel *The Long Dry* by Cynan Jones, I will explore how certain rural lives are spectralized, what role the rural idyll and the conservative and nationalist politics to which it is tied play in this, and how such lives can be rendered visible again by imagining and narrating the British countryside in a more inclusive, non-anthropocentric manner.

**Esther Peeren** is Professor of Cultural Analysis at the University Amsterdam and Academic Director of the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis (ASCA). She directs the ERC-funded project “Imagining the Rural in a Globalizing World” (2018-2023). Recent publications include *The Spectral Metaphor: Living Ghosts and the Agency of Invisibility* (Palgrave, 2014) and the edited volumes *Global Cultures of Contestation* (Palgrave, 2018, with Robin Celikates, Jeroen de Kloet and Thomas Poell) and *Other Globes: Past and Peripheral Imaginations of Globalization* (Palgrave, 2019, with Simon Ferdinand and Irene Villaescusa-Illán).

**Jaine Chemmachery:** “Some believe the men become ghosts, haunting the facades they helped building”: Analysing subaltern figures and spectral metaphors in Sunjeev Sahota, *The Year of the Runaways* (2014), and Deepak Unnikrishnan’s *Temporary People* (2017)

Some works in the British sphere have recently focused on refugees in the UK (Sahota, *The Year of the Runaways*, 2015) or Indian migrant workers in the UAE (Unnikrishnan, *Temporary People*, 2017). The former is about three Indian men and a British-Indian woman in Sheffield. The novel sheds light upon characters which have not often been staged in British literature, such as an “untouchable” who was forced out of the country or a man who was drawn to sell a kidney to pay for student visa. The latter, a collection of short stories, revives the ghost trope, suggesting that the often undocumented workers have spectral lives (cf. title). I wish to reflect upon the representation of subaltern figures in literature and more particularly the spectral metaphor, while the same image was used only a few months ago by French hotel cleaners who were on strike, asking for better pay and consideration. According to Maria del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren, the term “ghost” may refer to social outcasts, “impotent and ineffectual victims rather than powerful aggressors” (2010, x). Is the figure of the ghost in literature still empowering, if fiction is about “restoring the voice of those who suffer from precarity” (Blanc 2007, 18), and while ghosts seem to have lost some of their subversive power recently? The two works oppose specific characters and subjectivities to such phrases as “illegal workers” or “scam marriages” as can be found in the press. A short story like “Birds” (Unnikrishnan, 2017), in which a nurse sews back together labourers who have fallen from rooftops, also challenges the representation of marginalised bodies as “incomplete, [...] threaten[ing] to leak and contaminate [...] [with] open orifices” (Stallybrass and White 1986: 9, quoted in Ahmed 2000, 53). Drawing on Sara Ahmed’s discussion on “marked” bodies (*Strange Encounters*, 46) and other theoretical works, I wish to discuss what literature performs on the lives, voices and bodies of marginalised figures and to ponder over the ethics that are driving such literary works. For, as Barbara Korte puts it, “Representing the misery of others can raise sympathy and awareness [...] but it can also, more dubiously in ethical terms, fulfil needs of the recipient rather than the represented” (Korte; Regard 2014, 8).

Jaine Chemmachery is an alumna of the ENS Lyon and a Senior Lecturer at University Paris-Dauphine – PSL. She is a member of EA 1569, “Transcrit”, based in University Paris 8 – Vincennes Saint Denis. She wrote a PhD dissertation on R. Kipling's and S. Maugham's colonial short stories and the relation between colonialism, modernity and the genre of the short story (2013). Her main research fields are colonial and postcolonial literatures, Victorian and Neo-Victorian literatures, modernity and spectrality studies.

**María Magdalena Flores Quesada, “The In/Visible Aging Woman: Joanna Cannon’s *Three Things about Elsie*.”**

In Joanna Cannon’s *Three Things about Elsie* (2018), her protagonist, Florence, an 84-year old woman, reflects on old people’s homes like the one she lives in. To her, these places are wrongly called “sheltered accommodation”, as old people are not being protected from anything external, instead, it seems to her that they are “the ones hidden away, collected up and ushered out of sight” (17), nursing homes are “full of forgotten people, waiting to be found again” (133). These are only some examples of the multiple observations she makes from where she is now: lying on the floor, waiting to be found after a fall in her flat of the Cherry Tree Home for the Elderly. Lying there, hovering between life and death, she goes over her past, drawing from her unreliable memory. Florence’s physical position during the novel as she waits is a recurrent icon in narratives of vulnerability, as Jean-Michel Ganteau recognises (140), but we soon discover that her vulnerability has many shapes and that the idea of invisibility acquires a new meaning in her case. In this paper I propose to analyse Florence’s life to identify the mechanisms at work in the processes of invisibilisation and silencing of the old. Florence’s life portrays quite clearly Judith Butler’s unequal distribution of vulnerability (*Undoing* 22); a life clearly marked by the evaluation of certain groups as less valuable than others, their lives “less grievable” (*Frames* 22) than the rest. In the midst of a pandemic that has brought to the fore new discourses of ageism across the world and that has pointed at the old as the most vulnerable group in our societies, this novel gives voice to one of them, giving them value and calling for a reconsideration of the ways we can empathise with and care for the old.

María Magdalena Flores Quesada is a fully funded PhD candidate (FPU) at the University of Málaga (Spain). She holds a BA on English Studies, a MA in English Studies and Multilingual and Intercultural Communication, and an MA in Language Teaching (University of Málaga). She has delivered papers in both national and international conferences she has been part of several organising committees in national and international seminars, workshops and conferences. Her main interest is the portrayal of ethics, feminism, and mother-daughter relationships in British contemporary fiction written by women authors.

**Diane Gagneret**, “‘Please, look at me’: masculinity, vulnerability and (in)visibility in Ian McEwan’s tale of madness.”

Ian McEwan’s 1997 *Enduring Love* has its resolutely rational protagonist, Joe Rose, stare madness in the face once he becomes the object of another man’s obsession. Although he remains, for much of the novel, an “invisible presence”, Jed Parry is as central a character as Joe, whose near-monopoly on narrative voice may well relegate Jed’s version of the story to the margins, yet fails to silence him. If, as Stephen Whitehead claims in his study of *Men and Masculinities* (2002), “being at the centre can serve to hide, obfuscate, confuse, obscure”, McEwan’s novel engages both with the paradoxical invisibility of men in the centre, and that, even more problematical, of men on the margin. His tale of erotomania hinges not merely on a confrontation between reason and madness, but also (and perhaps more significantly) on the (un)making of masculinity at play in the interaction between Joe and Jed.

As stated by Guillaume Le Blanc, any sign of vulnerability (if deemed excessive) may lead to exclusion in a society where the vulnerable often tend to become invisible; in *Enduring Love*, however, Joe often finds himself unable to look away from Jed. By foregrounding the rarely explored madness of men, the novel invites a reflection on the effect of such experiences on the (re)definition of masculinity. This paper will therefore focus on the ways in which Jed’s vulnerability seeps into a narrative which both repeats and repeals traditional processes of invisibilisation and silencing of men with mental illness, thus exposing the many cracks in hegemonic masculinity and bringing alternative masculinities to light.

Diane Gagneret has completed a PhD at the École Normale Supérieure de Lyon under the supervision of Vanessa Guignery. Her research, drawing mainly on works Jenny Diski, Janet Frame, Sarah Kane, Ian McEwan, Anthony Neilson and Will Self, focuses on the links between madness and issues of genre and gender in contemporary English literature. Other articles on Ian McEwan’s work include « ‘The Tangled Confluence’: Hybrid Accounts of Madness in Will Self’s *The Quantity Theory of Insanity* and Ian McEwan’s *Enduring Love* » (2017), and « ‘Rationalism Gone Berserk’: Madness and the Scientific Mind in Ian McEwan’s *Enduring Love* » (to be published).

**Gero Guttzeit**, “Unseeing People: Towards a Clear View of Invisible Characters in Narrative Fiction.”

In her critique of what she calls the modernist-formalist paradigm of literary studies, Toril Moi, adapting Wittgenstein’s notion of *übersichtliche Darstellung*, calls for a new approach to characters in literature that would offer a “clear view” of a “specific region of the vast field of literary characters” (2019, 66). Heeding Moi’s call, this paper suggests a map of invisible characters in narrative fiction by way of accentuating the complex relationship between literary and social invisibility. For the emerging field of *invisibility studies* to be a “cutting-edge domain of the human sciences in the twenty-first century” (Král 2014, 6), it needs to come to terms with the motifs and forms of invisibility as they appear in literary history before and after the critical juncture of Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man* (1952).

This paper draws representative examples from a corpus of 250 invisibility narratives, compiled as part of a research project on “Invisible Modernity” and featuring invisible characters of different class, race, gender, sexuality, age, nationality, and disability. Focusing in particular on race and gender as identity categories strongly associated with the visual (Alcoff 2006), the argument will complicate the notion of social invisibility by bringing it into conversation with the idea of “nonvisibility” as it has been developed in queer disability studies by Ellen Samuels (2003, 251).

Building on concepts of “literary invisibility” (Horowitz 2014) and spectral personhood (Derrida 1994, Peeren 2014), I argue that invisible characters emerge in a literary field striated by 1) the socio-political opposition between power and powerlessness, 2) the continuum of realist and non-realist genres, and 3) the form of narration as such, particularly in what narratology defines as focalisation (the question of *who sees?* rather than *who narrates?*). By taking “fictional character as the starting point from which to examine the spectrum of modalities along which persons exist” (Frow 2014, 6), this analysis of literary “unseeing” (Miéville 2011) will help us better understand social “invisibilisation” (Honneth 2001).

Dr. Gero Guttzeit is assistant professor (*Akademischer Rat auf Zeit*) of English Literature at LMU Munich. He holds master's degrees from the University of Edinburgh and Justus Liebig University Giessen, where he also completed his PhD at the International Graduate Centre for the Study of Culture. He specializes in transatlantic literatures of the long nineteenth century and in rhetorical cultures. His first book *The Figures of Edgar Allan Poe: Authorship, Antebellum Literature, and Transatlantic Rhetoric* appeared in DeGruyter’s Anglia Book Series in 2017 (paperback in 2018). His current research project has received Excellence Strategy seed funding from LMU and deals with “Invisible Modernity: Anglophone Narratives, Social Recognition, and the Unseen from 1776 to Today”. In this context, an article on “Invisibility, Monstrosity, and Whiteness in H.G. Wells's *The Invisible Man*” has appeared in the *Journal for the Study of British Cultures* (2018, vol. 25 (1): 71-84). His work has also been published in such journals as *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, *Scholarly Editing*, and *Anglistik*.

**Georges Letissier**, “A “Dorothy Hodgkin of vagabonds, a derelict Nobel Prize-Winner”: The Spectacularization of Social Invisibility in Alan Bennett’s *The Lady in the Van* (1989).”

Before becoming a narrative, a play and, more recently, a film (2015), *The Lady in the Van* was a fortuitous (non-)event in Alan Bennett’s life. It all started off when a tramp woman, living in a van, ended up in the driveway of his suburban house in Camden Town. The playwright let things happen, out of laziness, complacency and passive fatalism. He was obviously not driven by any commitment to alleviating the plight of the poor and needy woman. As the old bum settled in her routine, Bennett noted down in his diaries how her encroaching presence progressively took its toll on his daily life. Then, the random jottings led to a series of talks for BBC Radio Four, a feature article for “The London Review of Books” (1989), followed by a play and a film, featuring Dame Maggie Smith in the lead role and Alex Jennings, in the dual part of Alan Bennett as writer and A.B. as ordinary citizen. The former is engrossed in the creative process, whilst the latter is confronted to the contingencies of the quotidian, including the constant taxing negotiations with this ubiquitous neighbour of sort.

Through *The Lady in the Van*, social testimony morphs into aesthetic creation. However, as theatrical character, the eponymous lady never takes on the metaphoric dimension of these prototypical beggars who have regularly crowded the stage, from absurdist theatre to “In-Yer-Face” representation of trash. Indeed, Bennett’s work is a blending of biography and drama, and the self-named Miss Shepherd draws her substance from flesh and blood, or rather rubbish and faeces as, in hyperrealist mode, she soon becomes a festering pustule ruffling suburban ataraxy. Moreover, her dubious, inconsequential political claims, verging on lunacy – Alan Bennett is the renowned author of *The Madness of King George* (1995) – are not amenable to any consistent grid of analysis and, therefore, contribute to alienating her further.

With the split between the two authorial figures – A.B. and Alan Bennett – the contemporary playwright blatantly tropes the motif of specularisation/spectacularisation. Miss Shepherd’s thespian visibility underscores an existential and ontological denial of individuality. She actually holds the mirror up to bourgeois bad faith (Sartrean *mauvaise foi*): “There was a gap between our social position and our social obligations. It was in this gap that Miss Shepherd (in her van) was able to live.” (13) Such interstitial, liminal existence, however spectacular – and Dame Maggie Smith does achieve a remarkable performance – might ultimately amount to a double denial of the elusive original model, who finds herself eclipsed by the trappings of theatricality. Couldn’t it be claimed that, in the final resort, Bennett’s liberal humanist ideological stance, notwithstanding his recent endorsement of Jeremy Corbyn, transpires through a process of intertextual indexing? The lady in the van is first seen in the light of Charles Dickens: “It was as if she had been a character in Dickens whose history has to be revealed and her secrets told in the general setting-to-rights before the happy-ever-after” (76). She is then apprehended through George Eliot when, in the coda, it is asserted that she could only willingly embrace the perennial erasure of her invisible, peripheral (non-existence): “Her grave in the Islington St Pancras Cemetery [...] is unmarked, but I think as someone so reluctant to admit her name or divulge any information about herself, she would not have been displeased by that.” (Postscript 92). The valedictory note is reminiscent of middle-class Dorothea Brooke, who having lived faithfully a hidden life in *Middlemarch*, finally “rest(s) in (an) unvisited tomb.”

In Bennett's play, though, the denial of posterity comes as a logical conclusion to theatrical spectacularisation, eclipsing the tantalising, albeit elusive, model. So the trace of the derelict woman's anonymous destiny lies somewhere between *The Lady in the Van* and the search for her constantly deferred ghostly passage, forever interstitial and liminal.

Georges Letissier is Professor of English Literature at Nantes University, France. He has published articles both in French and in English, in France and abroad (Aracne, Palgrave Macmillan, Rodopi, Routledge, Dickens Quarterly, Manchester U.P.) on Victorian literature (C. Dickens, G. Eliot, W. Morris, C. Rossetti) and on contemporary British fiction (P. Ackroyd, A.S. Byatt, P. Duncker, M. Faber, A. Gray, A. Hollinghurst, L. Norfolk, I. McEwan, W. Self, W. Stace, G. Swift, S. Waters, J. Winterson). He has published a monograph on Ford Madox Ford's *The Good Soldier* (Éditions du Temps, 2005) and is about to publish a second one entitled *The Higher Inward Life : George Eliot's Middlemarch* (spring 2020).

**Florence Marie**, “Glaring invisibilities and loud silences in “The Gipsy’s Baby” by Rosamond Lehmann.”

Rosamond Lehmann seems an unlikely candidate for the study of the voices and faces of the left-behinds since most of her novels deal with the unsatisfactory romances of women from the middle classes. Her short fiction, however—five stories written during WWII—is another matter as underlined by Niall Griffiths in 2006: “*if they move somewhat away from the focus of her longer works, then to what do they move towards? Well, here you will find wintry illness, dampness, fungus, privation, rural squalor.*”

This is particularly the case of “The Gipsy’s Baby”, the longest piece of fiction in this collection (the story is forty-six pages long), which revolves around “the logic of dispossession” and can be said to show the processes of invisibilisation and silencing at work as far as the destitute are concerned.

To begin with the processes of invisibilisation of the poor are spatial. As summed up by G. le Blanc, “*S’il existe des lieux [...] invisibles et inaudibles, c’est parce qu’il existe une spatialisation de la précarité*” (*Vies ordinaires, vies précaires*, p. 165). Through a series of unforeseen events, however, the usual boundaries crumble to pieces for a while enabling the autodiegetic narrator, who was but a child at the time of the events, to become aware of the people living “*in the back lane*”—people usually hidden away from her by normative discourses and by their own tendency to remain “unseen” for the sake of their illegal activities. It is as she was witnessing the return of the repressed faces of poverty.

During her short acquaintance with one destitute family in particular she registers the way the authorities brush aside their grievances and even their grief when the death of the mother of the family leaves them face to face with ontological vulnerability. His autonomy being reduced by the authorities, the father is dispossessed of his status as a human being and this dispossession is made linguistically obvious: he may have the ability to vocalize his grief but he is never listened to, except by the narrator’s father, a man with democratic leanings.

When one of this poor man’s silent children, Chrissie, begins to speak so as to voice her own grief—albeit in a most indirect and unorthodox way—the address fails completely and tragically. She is whisked away and disappears into thin air as if she was not deemed worthy of being looked at.

Thus the story can be seen as a way for the grown-up narrator to give a voice to the most silent and invisible child of this poor family—the only one who dared to “*create*”—, to write a verbal memorial to this child and to enable the child she herself was to process her own exposure to the precarious.

Florence Marie is Senior lecturer in English Studies at the University of Pau et les Pays de l’Adour. She is a member of ALTER. She defended her thesis on J.C. Powys in 2003 and since then she has published articles on his novels and essays and on other modernist writers (with special interest in Dorothy Richardson’s *Pilgrimage*). She has edited, with Fabienne Gaspari

and Michael Parsons, a volume of *Rives* entitled *Premières rencontres avec l'autre* (L'Harmattan, 2010), and edited another one entitled *Le fou—cet autre, mon frère* (L'Harmattan, 2012). She has co-edited *Le genre, effet de mode ou concept pertinent?* (Peter Lang, 2016) and participated in the writing of *Féminisme et prostitution dans l'Angleterre du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle: la croisade de Josephine Butler* (ed. by Frédéric Regard, ENS Éditions, 2014).

**Cécile Marshall**, “Speaking directly to camera? Outcast voices in the musical documentaries of Brian Hill in collaboration with Simon Armitage.”

I wish to tackle the issue of invisibility and silence in the collaborations of film-maker Brian Hill and poet Simon Armitage (*Drinking for England*, *Feltham Sings*, *Song Birds*, *The Not Dead*). Owing to Dylan Thomas’s *Under Milkwood*, the 1930s GPO Film Unit documentaries and Tony Harrison’s idiosyncratic film-poems, Hill and Armitage’s documusicals mix poetry, song, and actuality focusing on the lives of outsiders living on the fringes of society, invisible people who agree to expose themselves to the public gaze. The verse written by Armitage, and subsequently sung or spoken by the people in the films raises ethical questions as to the risk of misrepresenting vulnerable subjects who do not have the power to speak for themselves. To what extent do the films give the protagonists a voice, as the authors claim? Guillaume Le Blanc suggests, on the contrary, that precarious lives are characterised by some linguistic vulnerability at best, silence at worst. How do the films accommodate the loss of voice and the silence of these invisible lives? Is media exposure synonymous with visibility? And how can the saturated media space account for invisible lives?

This will lead us to question the reciprocity of the gaze between protagonists, audience and film-maker. If the documentary film promotes an illusion of intimacy and togetherness, has making the film allowed these vulnerable people to transcend their invisibility and silence by representing themselves, i.e. narrating themselves as well as viewing themselves? Can we consider that the creative dimension of these documusicals (which have no more status as reality than any other form, according to Brian Hill), turning as it does precarious lives into works of art, is part of the struggle against invisibility, as Hannah Arendt suggests? Further than that, we will argue that the invisible lives and silent voices portrayed in these films are a metonymy of Brian Hill and Simon Armitage’s conception of the documentary genre conceived as “une série de braconnages à l’intérieur de la forêt des normes” (Guillaume Le Blanc).

Cécile Marshall is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Bordeaux-Montaigne. Her PhD dissertation dealt with “Poetry, politics and irony in the works of Tony Harrison” (Bordeaux, 2007). She has translated Harrison’s poetry into French in *Feu United Kingdom* (Petropolis, 2009) and *Cracheur de feu* (Arfuyen, 2011). She was the recipient of the Translation Prize associated with the European Prize for Literature (2010). Her research focuses on 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century British and Commonwealth poetry and drama.

**Miriam McIlfatrick-Ksenofontov**, “Translating the Invisible: Asylum-Seekers in Ireland as Artists of their Experience.”

The paper examines the emergence and impact – in artistic and socio-cultural terms – of the publication of *Correspondences: an anthology to call for an end to direct provision* in Ireland (2019). The anthology comprises prose, poetry, essays and visual art and is the product of a collaborative artistic endeavour that pairs the work of Irish writers and artists with that of members of the asylum-seeking community in Ireland. The latter are resident in Ireland under the Direct Provision scheme (DP) introduced in 1999, which provides accommodation and a living allowance in DP centres across the country but denies or restricts economic, political and social integration into the local host community. The asylum-seekers are invisible insofar as they are behind two barriers: an administrative barrier and a cultural barrier of stereotyping.

*Correspondences* was initiated and edited by poet Jessica Traynor and actor Stephen Rea, who sought to give voice to human experience that was neither expressed nor recognised in the island. I approach their project and its product from the perspective of my research in literary translation, viewing (i) the work of literature/art as a way of thinking that does something to language/material and (ii) writers and translators as creative agents of this change. Traynor and Rea’s project rests on an understanding of art and literature as the translation of experience into text and work; in creating a space for the articulation – artistic expression – of the asylum-seeker experience, they are the mediators who make the work visible. Putting all participants on an equal footing, as collaborators engaged in the work of art as process, passage and product, they allow the journey of migration to manifest as a journey of understanding and recognition.

Miriam McIlfatrick-Ksenofontov is from Ireland and has lived in Estonia since 1991. She is lecturer of English-Language Literatures at the School of Humanities of Tallinn University in Estonia and a freelance translator of poetry. Her scholarly interests include the poetics of translation, cognitive literary studies, comparative literature, Irish literature, poetry performance and the oral tradition, theories of creativity. Her most recent translation, Doris Kareva’s *Day of Grace* (Bloodaxe, 2018), won the Estonian Cultural Endowment award for translation in 2018. Her own poetry has appeared in Estonian translation and she was awarded 2015 annual prize for poetry by the Estonian literary journal *Looming* (Creation).

**Ana Cristina Mendes**, “Undoing the ‘unarchivable spectrality’ of the statue of Queen Victoria in Georgetown, Guyana.”

As I write this abstract, nearly 3 weeks after the police killing of George Floyd, several statues of historical figures around the world are being pulled down or defaced, rekindling a debate over the legacies of oppression, racism and cruelty in the public sphere. This past week has witnessed the graffitiing of Confederate monuments in the US, the beheading of a statue of Columbus in Boston, the defacing of a statue of King Leopold II in Brussels, and the toppling and throwing into the Bristol harbour of slave trader Edward Colston's statue. About the pulling down of Colston's statue, and in response to accusations that Black Lives Matter protesters were destroying ‘our’ cultural memory, attacking our shared history, the historian and broadcaster David Olusoga stated a few days later that ‘The toppling of Edward Colston's statue is not an attack on history. It is history.’ Whose memory are we talking about when we talk about public art, specifically, statues of Confederate soldiers, slave holders, and imperialists, as supporting collective memory? Whose memory is made visible in these protests?

This presentation focuses on *Hinterland*, an artwork composed in 2013 by the Scottish-Guyanese artist Hew Locke. The artwork is composed of an acrylic painting on a chromogenic print; the C print is of a photograph of a marble statue of Queen Victoria, sculpted by Henry Richard Hope-Pinke, commissioned for Victoria's Golden Jubilee and inaugurated in 1894, outside the Supreme Court in Georgetown, then British Guiana. The C print is painted over in strong, tropical colours; Locke superimposed the photograph of the statue with otherworldly images of colonial subjects, skeletons singing and banging their drums. Drawing on Athena Athanasiou's idea of ‘unarchivable spectrality’ (Butler and Athanasiou 2013), I argue that the retrovision of this statue of Victoria works as a form of both imaginative and epistemic restitution. Locke's representation as restitution of the haunted hinterland, an area lying beyond what is visible or known, results from an act of undoing the indigenous subjectivities' ‘unarchivable spectrality’ through an imaginative unearthing of their invisible presences of the land. When indigenous spectrality is made to overlay the image of the colonial ruler, the oppressive past of the artist's ancestral homeland, the ravaging of the land through the exploitation of natural and human resources, are projected to the front stage.

Ana Cristina Mendes uses cultural and postcolonial studies to examine literary and screen texts (in particular, intermedia adaptations) as venues for resistant knowledge formations in order to expand upon theories of epistemic injustice. She is Assistant Professor of English Studies at the School of Arts and Humanities, University of Lisbon. Her latest publications include articles in *Continuum*, *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, and *Interventions*, and the co-edited volumes *New Directions in Diaspora Studies* (2018), *Transnational Cinema at the Borders* (2018), and *David Bowie and Transmedia Stardom* (2019). She serves on the board of the Association of Cultural Studies.

**Barbara Puschmann-Nalenz**, “Silenced Voices in Sebastian Faulks’s Novel *Paris Echo* (2018).”

In the novel two individuals, whose conversations and interior monologues thematise conflicts and wars of the 20th century, alternate narrating. The voices are Hannah’s, a lonely 35-year-old American postdoc, who comes to Paris to do historical research on lives of French women during the German Occupation of the early 1940ies, and Tariq’s, a nineteen-year-old Moroccan runaway. He is searching for his European roots in the home country of his long-dead mother of French-Algerian origins, who stays lost to her son. While Hannah intends to work on the documented sources available in Paris the young man’s curiosity is for novelty, an independent life, and an unknown culture. After the narrators have accidentally met, Hannah, who hesitantly lets a room to the dislocated teenager, engages Tariq to help her with interviews and translations of the recorded historical testimonies, which she aims to collect and analyse for her research. In the early 21st century an American is exploring the experiences of Parisian women made almost 70 years previously and hardly ever since raised to public awareness.

The two narrators share the non-committal starting position that is for the American based on her scholarly approach and for Tariq on his youth, his ignorance of Europe, and his lack of interest in French (colonial) history. The question how to evaluate the silenced voices is addressed on two levels of narration: the protagonists’ response to the accounts they are confronted with, and, secondly, the embedded stories as they are/were told at different times by the witnesses. With Tariq’s help Hannah explores discrepant attitudes and life careers. The ‘objects of research’ share the frames of war (Judith Butler), which the focalisers only know from narratives. Like those women, however, they experience a feeling of being lost to their human environment.

Until 2011 Barbara Puschmann-Nalenz taught English and American literature and Cultural Studies in the English Department of Ruhr-University Bochum (Germany) as Senior Lecturer. Her monographs are on Shakespeare’s *Sonnets*, and *Science Fiction and Postmodern Fiction*. She has continued publishing in scholarly journals and edited volumes, mostly on Contemporary British and Irish Fiction. The latest are *The Orphan in Fiction and Comics Since the 19th Century* (2018, with Marion Gymnich, Dirk Vanderbeke and Gerold Sedlmayr) and *Failure: The Humble Tale of Unsuccessfulness in British Literature* (forthcoming).

**Maryam Thirriard**, “Fictionalised biography as a new voice for women’s lives in Virginia Woolf’s *Orlando* and *Flush*.”

Virginia Woolf reflects on the vulnerability of women’s voices in her essays *A Room of One’s Own* (1929) and *Three Guineas* (1938). More specifically, in *Three Guineas*, Woolf uses the term ‘influence’, which women lack because they have neither financial power nor education, rendering them inaudible. She argues that they remain ‘outsider[s]’ with ‘no right to speak’.<sup>1</sup> At the end of the essay, Woolf reveals that she has transformed this condition into a form of resistance by refusing to occupy a position in the male-dominated public sphere.

In *A Room of One’s Own*, Woolf sees the absence of women’s lives in history books as one of the causes of their effacement. In the twenties, Woolf’s awareness of the inaudibility of women’s lives made her want to write a woman’s life herself, leading to her first biography, *Orlando*. Surprisingly, both of Woolf’s biographies of women are fantasised, in contrast to her third nonfictional biography of Roger Fry. *Orlando* (1928) is a fantastical biography of her close friend Vita Sackville-West, and *Flush* (1933) tells the story of Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s life through the biography of her dog.

Why did Woolf choose to fictionalise her ‘woman’ biographies? This paper argues that, similarly to Woolf’s unconventional choice in *Three Guineas* to remain an ‘outsider’ to better fight gender inequality and militarism, fiction can also be considered a political tool in that it allows for an alternative mode of biographical representation. Not only does Woolf’s use of fiction enable her to compensate for the lack of visibility of her feminine subjects, but she also develops a powerful technique capable of delivering an authentic and vivid portrait of the women she depicted.

Dr. Maryam Thirriard teaches at the DEMA (Département d’études du monde anglophone) at Aix Marseille Université. She has a PhD in British literature and specialises in modernist biography. Her thesis, under the supervision of Pr Christine Reynier and Pr Sophie Vallas, is entitled “Crafting the New Biography: Virginia Woolf, Harold Nicolson and Lytton Strachey” (2019). Her publications include the article “Harold Nicolson, the New Biographer” as well as the following book chapters: “Virginia Woolf et le pari de la nouvelle biographie : rendre le fait créatif” (“Virginia Woolf and the challenge of New Biography : making the fact creative”), “Biographical Truth as Represented in Virginia Woolf’s *Orlando*: A Biography” (2019), and “The Transnational Aspect in Harold Nicolson’s *The Development of English Biography*” (2020).

**Pascale Tollance**, “‘Not dead yet’: rescuing the silent voice of May Young in Ali Smith’s *There but for the*”.

*There but for the* is not simply a highly experimental and metafictional novel which also happens to concern itself with political issues such as the place of foreign, marginal or dispossessed subjects in contemporary British society. In line with the rest of Smith’s fiction, this fifth novel intimately binds together the aesthetic and the political, in particular through its imaginative articulation of what gets to be spoken, or written, and what does not. Silence and invisibility form the core of the novel, as its main event consists in the puzzling behaviour of a man who disappears during a dinner party and locks himself up inside the guestroom of his hosts, for months. The four main stories that compose the book only partly fill the blank produced by Miles Garth’s enigmatic presence as the characters on which they center are only remotely related to Miles. Besides, one of these stories seeks another, more permanently silent, voice: the part devoted to May Young presents us with an old lady who is also locked up between four walls (those of a hospital – to be replaced in the future by an old people’s home) and who, most of the time, fails to make herself heard outside “the confines of her head”.

The question of why May Young’s voice matters and how it matters in the general economy of the novel is one way of approaching the central riddle of the book. May’s story seems to result from one main impulse: to rescue from silence a life made invisible. While the old lady may be considered by some as good as dead, her lively monologue proves rather the opposite. My contention is that while it rescues a voice *from* silence, the novel also rescues *its* silence – a silence which stands in sharp contrast with the loud vacuous dinner conversation during which Miles, the mystery man, absconds. May’s mute resistance, like Miles’s disappearance bores a hole into the fabric of social so-called exchange, small talk riddled with deadly clichés. Silence becomes a productive force that compels us to listen rather than talk. Challenging the received notion of a “second childhood”, May’s monologue invites us to reflect instead on the value of a notion of “*in-fancy*” that may be approached through what Jean-François Lyotard calls *infantia* and our “debt to *infantia*”. In this perspective, May Young’s vibrant silence must also be thought in relation with the lively chatter of Brooke Bayoude, the garrulous child who hops across the four parts of the book, carrying pen and paper.

Pascale Tollance is Professor of English at Université Lumière—Lyon 2 (France). She has written extensively on British-Canadian author Malcolm Lowry, as well as on a number of British contemporary writers. She is the author of several articles on Graham Swift and of a book (*Graham Swift. La Scène de la voix*. Villeneuve d’Ascq: Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, 2011) which focuses on the staging of gaze and voice in Swift’s fiction. She is co-editor of the online journal *L’Atelier* and is on the editorial board of the online journal *Polysèmes* and has coordinated a number of volumes for both journals. Her field of research includes postcolonial literatures.

**José M. Yebra, “Re-problematizing truth after Brexit: Ian McEwan’s *The Cockroach*.”**

Ian McEwan’s short novel *The Cockroach* (2019) is the writer’s last piece of fiction so far and his response to the Brexit. It reverses Kafka’s *The Metamorphosis* (1915), the protagonist being a cockroach that wakes up as Jim Sams, the British Prime Minister. However, as Fintan O’Toole argues, McEwan’s farce is closer to Swift than to Kafka’s masterpiece. Indeed, drawing on Swift’s satirical parallel universes, Sams inhabits one which he calls Reversalism, a parody of neoliberal politics. Besides the more or less obviously Kafkaesque undertones of *The Cockroach*, this paper delves into a political metamorphosis. In the novel, the Brexit referendum reveals the formulae whereby citizens’ voices are paradoxically silenced rather than people’s will. The metamorphosis is thus an act of dispossession. When the cockroach wakes up as a trickster Prime Minister, people are dispossessed of the truth they deserve to speak out and choose their future. In other words, they are dispossessed “through situated practices of economy and citizenship” (Butler and Athanassiou 2013: 18).

*The Cockroach* does not directly address Esther Peeran’s “living ghosts” and John McLeod’s “trespassers” in contemporary Britain. However, Sams’s (and international) politics in the era of rampant neoliberalism, Brexit, and Twitter does address new ways of silencing voices and manufacturing realities. With Reversalism, the protagonist argues, “the country was about to be set free from a loathsome servitude” (21). Yet, the novel shows the journey from “Clockwise” politics (in reference to European institutions) to a deregulated economy that makes citizens into a destitute mass in so-called liquid modernity. With all this in mind, the paper finally explores the role of literature, more specifically satire, when democracy is being dismantled and multifarious voices are monopolised and/or silenced. Hence, as will be proved, to combat Sams’s simplistic discourse, *The Cockroach* underscores the problematic complexity of truth-finding and “reality”.

Jose M. Yebra is a Lecturer in English at the University of Zaragoza (Spain). He has recently published articles on literatures in English such as “Re-framing Vulnerability and Wound Ethics: Colm Tóibín’s *The Testament of Mary*” in *The Journal of Language, Literature and Culture*, “Transmodern Motion or the Rhizomatic Updated in *In a Strange Room*, ‘Take me to Church’ and *Babel*” in *Anglia* and “Acheronta Movebo: Violence and Dystopia in Naomi Alderman’s *The Power*” in *Orbis Litterarum*. He has co-edited the volume *Transmodern Perspectives on Contemporary Literatures in English* (Routledge, 2019) with Jessica Aliaga-Lavrijsen. His current research interests include literatures in English, transmodernism, and gender studies.

**Imad Zrari**, “*Middle England* by Jonathan Coe: Voicing "Deep England".”

In his latest novel, Coe traces the fracturing of Britain from April 2010 to September 2018. Brexit and the 2016 referendum are portrayed as pivotal events in the history of British politics. By attempting to grasp the national mood of that period, Coe shows how the decision to leave the European Union has affected the country and its inhabitants from different perspectives and proves, once again, his ability to weave national history – especially topicality – and fiction.

This novel is without contest a means to enter the British psyche and the national mood preceding Brexit and its aftermath, so as to understand the causes of the fault line running through British society. The answers are multifarious and broached in Coe’s latest novel: the rise of populism and British nationalism, the disparities between a thriving and cosmopolitan London life and a forlorn province, the decline of politics, a breeding-ground for banter and indecision. The consequences are hefty for British society: the fragmentation of solidarities, the prominence of two social universes and a strong sense of division.

The notions of social invisibility and marginality are of prime importance and turn out to be reshaped in *Middle England* in the light of the politics of Brexit. They appear to be reversed since the heterosexual white middle-class man is portrayed as a victim reduced to silence. This invisibilisation of what can be seen as the norm may have led to a rise of populism and a new definition of marginality that explain the results of the Brexit referendum in June 2016. It appears clear that the novel intends to voice this new category of outcast reduced to silence, shedding light on a new schema of the dominant and the dominated. These new logics of marginality and vulnerability also appear to be mapped onto the landscapes and settings that Coe depicts in his latest novel. Nature, cities and the country usually seen as silent elements, are given voices and may have become a foil to politics. As a matter of fact, the silencing of what Coe calls "Deep England" in reference to *France profonde* and the personification of landscapes seem to be politicised and to embody different Englands.

My paper shall intend to examine how figures of visibility and invisibility are performed in the light of Brexit and in times of crises. This article shall explore how it is voiced and whether it appeals for narrative experimentation or low-key prose. Indeed, Coe does not seem to favour experimentation, however this novel takes on a cathartic fiction where Coe, through the main protagonist and alter ego Benjamin, explains some literary choices. Likewise it will be an opportunity to explore Brexit as a source of inspiration in British literature and further our understanding of Brex-lit as a new sub-genre. I shall refer to several academics such as Pierre Rosanvallon in *Le Parlement des invisibles*, Nelly Wolf in 'Le roman comme démocratie' or Guillaume Le Blanc in *L'Invisibilité sociale*, their endeavour to theorise the motifs of invisibility and marginality, concepts and a critical debate endowed with ambivalence.

Imad Zrari is currently in his third year of doctoral studies at the University of Toulouse Jean Jaurès and the subject of his thesis is “The politics of oscillation and metamodern transitions in the novels by Hanif Kureishi and Jonathan Coe” under the supervision of Professor Laurent Mellet. His fields of research are postmodernism, metamodernism, postcolonial studies and British politics. His research focuses on the motifs of oscillation and transition, be they narrative, political, theoretical or generic. This doctoral project will enable Imad Zrari to assess

if Coe and Kureishi re-think or re- consider postmodernism, if they take distance or if their novels may be completely far from being postmodern or/and postcolonial. In addition, this project will give him the opportunity to consider metamodernism as a form of continuity, the celebration of a before or rather a reaction/rejection of modernism and postmodernism. In October 2018, he had the opportunity to attend an international conference entitled Narrative Democracy in 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Century British Literature and Visual Arts at Université Toulouse Jean Jaurès. As a result of his participation, a paper on the novels by Jonathan Coe and Hanif Kureishi was published in *Etudes Britanniques Contemporaines* in 2019.