

invisible lives  
silent voices

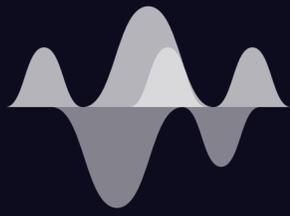
## Refugees and Migrations

Thursday January 27th 6-8 pm (CET)

### **Alison Bouffet (LCSP, University of Paris) - Political invisibilization: national frame and regimes of visibility of "migrant" subjects**

The vocabulary of invisibility is often used in the field of migration as a tool to analyse and describe the condition of "migrants". Indeed, the complex regime of visibility that affects exiled persons, i.e. non-nationals who have lost or cannot claim the protection of their country of origin, is characterized by the following elements: 1/ a material and spatial invisibilization (urban relegation and geographical dispersion, dematerialization of administrative procedures, dismantling of camps, refoulement, marginalization and externalization); 2/ a "legal" invisibility ("no-rights zones", creation of administrative categories subject to discretionary and arbitrary decisions, non-publicity of administrative decisions); 3/ a lack of media coverage, associated with a stereotypical over-visibility (i.e. the production of stereotypical "figures" and the marginalization of certain profiles - especially migrant women), and finally 4/ a long history of occultation and epistemological marginalization. The vocabulary of invisibility is on the other hand a register of claims specific to immigration social movements, especially when demanding the regularization of undocumented migrants (for example, the "Black Vests" (Gilets Noirs) movement in 2019 in France, or the Italian "Invisibles" in 2020). Immigration struggles are however often depolitized and reduced to a humanitarian problem.

This typology aims to shed light on the mechanisms of deprivation of the conditions of appearance in the public space specific to "migrants", who are pushed out of the framework of representative citizenship and often forced to wander in Europe. Contrary to the "struggles for visibility" (Voirol, 2005) of citizens, who have access to media and political representation, the "Stateless" (Arendt, 1951; Butler, 2009) are deprived of access to existence as political subjects. Beyond social invisibility, we must therefore think of the specific political invisibilization of "migrants", understood as a neutralization of the resources of action and collective subjectivation. If they are precisely defined by their legal and political exclusion, i.e. by their inability to participate in the conditions that organize their own existence, how can we restore a political perspective on the subjects of migrations?



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**Dr. Jaine Chemmachery (VALE, Sorbonne University) - The Refugee Tales: a challenge to academic practice in literary studies**

In this paper, I wish to examine the third volume of the *Refugee Tales* (2019), a series of pieces combining first-hand accounts and texts co-written by refugees detained in the UK and authors including Bernardine Evaristo, Kamila Shamsie and other writers. Claire Gallien argues that refugee literature's impact lies in its "extraterritoriality" i.e. "its capacity to interrogate dominant literary histories defined along national borders, frustrate unilingual visions of national languages and individual conceptions of authorship and inspire [...] 'turbulence' in artistic, critical, and academic practices." ("Refugee Literature" 2018, 735).

The *Refugee Tales* certainly raise questions pertaining to reading methodologies. Is the Chaucerian intertext an invitation to read these texts as fiction? Yet, the affiliation of these texts with the testimonial genre may complicate their apprehension through traditional literary methodologies. Such literature also compels us to reflect in ethical terms: while texts remain the main working material of literary scholars, can these "stories" which narrate the extreme conditions under which refugees are held in detention centres in the UK be considered as objects of academic research? Having authors tell these stories is maybe the only way for such lives to gain visibility and audibility while refugees otherwise experience what Guillaume le Blanc calls "social invisibility" (*L'Invisibilité sociale*, 2009). However, is there no risk that these voices end up being appropriated or that these texts become "spectacles of suffering" (Jokic 2018, 792)? The examination of some of the strategies used in this hybrid collection should provide interesting material to discuss further the issues surrounding the (in)visibilisation of these voices.