



Picture: Ai Weiwei - *Remains*, 2015 (Courtesy Neugerriemschneider and the artist)

## Thanatic Ethics : The Circulation of Bodies in Migratory Spaces

### Workshop #2

September 29 - October 1, 2021

Venue: Université Paul Valéry Montpellier 3, France

Auditorium  
Site St Charles 2

Convened by **Bidisha Banerjee** (CPCH, The Education University of Hong Kong),  
**Judith Misrahi-Barak** (EMMA, Montpellier 3) and **Thomas Lacroix** (CERI)

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## Thanatic Ethics

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### Abstracts and Bios for Workshop #2 at Université Paul Valéry Montpellier 3

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#### **Nada Afiouni**

##### **Evolutions in Muslim burial practices in Le Havre in the wake of the Covid 19 pandemic?**

This paper discusses the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic on the habitus of Muslim families of migrant origin regarding the “placing of the dead”. The pandemic forced an abrupt reconsideration of the traditional options, putting to a sudden halt that traditional question facing minority and diasporic groups, whether to repatriate or to bury locally. The paper investigates the general implications this situation had for policymakers and public service providers at the municipal level and for professionals in the funeral industry in the city of Le Havre, Normandy. It presents the preliminary results of ongoing fieldwork initiated in November 2020. The study seeks to reveal new patterns in accommodating Muslim burial needs at a local level drawing on in-depth qualitative interviews with Muslim undertakers, representatives of Muslim communities and conservators of the municipal cemeteries in Le Havre. The overarching question emerging from this paper is whether the pandemic initiated new interactions in the funerary sector regarding minority death, thus allowing for the possibility of a less traditional, more flexible approach to minority burial practices on the local level.

Nada Afiouni is a senior lecturer at Le Havre Normandie University. Her research focuses on cultural pluralism and religious minorities from a cross-cultural perspective. Her areas of specialisation include funerary rituals in the context of migration, and particularly the funerary rituals of Muslim minorities in France and Britain. She specialises in public policy, multiculturalism, discrimination, minority death and citizenship

#### **Anja Benedikt**

##### **Resistance and Remembrance in Border Art: A Response to the Violence of EU Border Regimes and Migrant Deaths in Tunisia**

This paper examines the art of Tunisian activist Mohsen Lihidheb in response to migrant deaths in the Tunisian fishing village Zarzis. The rebordering of the Mediterranean has led to a crisis in migrants' plight and death. The South Tunisian town Zarzis represents an externalized borderland between the EU and North Africa, in which the biopolitical impact of the EU border regime becomes visible. Faced with a never-ending stream of migrant bodies washed up on the shores of and around Zarzis, this paper investigates the collection and art of local activist Mohsen Lihidheb and examines by means of (multimodal) discourse analysis his understanding and interpretation of the border crisis, as it is displayed in his physical work of art, collection and writing. It will argue that his border art establishes a space for resistance and remembrance which make migrant deaths uniquely and authentically visible. It will further show how the artist contests and renegotiates the hegemonic representation of the EU border and its security narrative, thereby locating responsibility for border deaths with the EU. Furthermore, I will show that his humanitarian response circumvents the trap of the victimisation of

migrants, yet due to political constraints and geographical distance is limited in its ability to increase international visibility and awareness.

This paper is in the process of being published with Uni-GR CBS Border Studies.

Anja Benedikt completed a PhD at the Political Science and International Studies Department and at the Institute for German Studies at the University of Birmingham. Her thesis investigated national identity constructions in discourses on migrant integration in the German news media. She completed a placement in the Migration and Border Analysis unit at the British Home Office and worked as a research assistant at the Centre for Applied European Studies at Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences. She has taught modules on social divisions, the European Union and comparative political science in Birmingham and Frankfurt. Currently she carries out evaluation research of a government programme relating to democracy building and extremism at the Institute for Social Work and Social Pedagogy in Frankfurt. Her research interests are racism and extremism, boundary drawing and belonging, border studies and migration.

**Sabine Broeck**

### **Abjective Violence as White Pedagogy**

My paper will draw on studies of lynching representations and suggest an analogy to the representations of practices of letting Black people die in the Mediterranean. Gazing at Black suffering runs the risk of pornotroping (Spillers) conditioned as it is on a spectacularization of anti-Black violence. Empathy campaigns do not escape this conundrum. Responding to recent work by Hartman, Sharpe, Bradley, and others I want to pursue the question: what is the function of this spectacularization for white observers, including critical activists? What is the use a white public makes of watching Black being die? I discuss the ongoing spectacularization of Black death as the creation of a specific form of Black fungibility for white society, as a kind of repeat "teachable moments" of do-ability, arguing that the abundance of representation of Black death not only enables white civil society's coherence, or "kin" (Sharpe) in the relief of NOT BEING THE OBJECT of gratuitous killings, but is also a kind of white-on-white pedagogy which teaches successive white generations proactively what can be done to Black people without redress. The spectacularization actually works as a white future-generative practice to ensure the enslavist scope of untried anti-Black violence to come. It is an insurance pedagogy, so to speak, which - even in acts of apparent shock and empathy - ensures the permanence of the always already given possibility of anti-Black violation into the future, by perpetuating a visual and textual repertoire of white practices repeating themselves in the absence of Black redress. How might a destruction of this "pedagogy of Black fungibility" be possible?

Sabine Broeck is professor emerita of *English-Speaking Cultures* and *Transnational /Transcultural Studies* at the University of Bremen, with foci on intersectionality, narrativity, and slavery. Her research critiques the coloniality and structural anti-black violence of transatlantic modernity as a social formation and culture of enslavism. She was president of the international scholarly organization *Collegium for African American Research* (CAAR) from 2007 to 2015, as well as founder and director of the University of Bremen *Institute for Postcolonial and Transcultural Studies* (INPUTS) until 2015. Early in her academic career, she published the monographs *Der entkolonisierte Koerper* (1988) and *White Amnesia-Black Memory? American Women's Writing and History* (1999), and she is co-editor, with Stella Bolaki, of *Audre Lorde's Transnational Legacies*, University of Massachusetts Press 2015, as well as, with Jason Ambrose, of *Black Knowledges/Black Struggles: Essays in Critical Epistemology*, Liverpool University Press 2015. Her third monograph, *Gender and the Abjection of Blackness*, was published by SUNY Press in 2018. For more information see <http://www.fb10.uni-bremen.de/lehrpersonal/broeck.aspx>.

Also see <https://uni-bremen.academia.edu/sabinebroeck> for further publications.

**Gwen Cressman**

### **The Migrant Body as Presence and Absence at the Canadian and Mexican Borders**

The experience of migrants as border-crossers speaks of processes of mobility and immobility, rupture and continuity, visibility and invisibility. This paper will consider contemporary representations of the migrant body — its erasure, its absence, the traces it has left behind — in the act of border — crossing at the Canadian and Mexican borders. The visual and aesthetic strategies at work will be studied through the photographic works of two Canadian and American photographers, Michel Huneault (Roxham, 2018) and Mark Ruwedel (Crossings, 2001--2020) and through the installations created by the Undocumented Migration Project, in particular, Hostile Terrain 94 (2020). This corpus at the crossroads between documentary photography and visual anthropology, seeks to explore how these different projects deal with the indeterminacy inherent in the migrant condition. All three projects address in very different and sometimes complementary ways the questions of identity and identification of migrant bodies, whether dead or alive, and the violence at the heart of this process. I will be looking at the ways in which these works represent the bodies of migrants, how the circulation of the body is central in all three works, and how they also point to the body as suspended in time. While Huneault seeks to hide the body to protect the migrants' identities on entering Canada illegally, Ruwedel soberly records the traces of the migrants' passage in the desert at the U.S. — Mexico border. The Undocumented Migration project installation, for its part, is the fruit of a forensic approach which seeks to put names and faces on the bodies of the dead or those gone missing in their attempt to walk across the desert from Mexico into Arizona. The exploration of the ethical, aesthetic and political problems in the representation of the migrant body at the border, through the dialectics of presence and absence, seeks to convey the very ontological problem of being a migrant at the border.

Gwen Cressman, Associate Professor in North American Studies at the Département d'Etudes Anglophones, Faculté des Langues, Université de Strasbourg. Initially specialized in multicultural education and immigrant language policies in Canada, I have more recently pursued my interests in migration, identities and the representation of the other with a focus on documentary and conceptual photography in Canada. I am interested in the ways photographic representation of/at borders, landscapes and territories articulate questions of identity and memory.

Most recent publication: "Sensing the Border at Roxham Road", *Intermédialités / Intermediality*, Issue 34, Automne 2019, DOI: <https://doi-org.scd--rproxy.u--strasbg.fr/10.7202/1070874ar>

**Pilar Cuder-Domínguez**

### **A Thanatic Genre: Crime Fiction and Refugee Vulnerability in Ausma Zehanat Khan**

This paper asks whether the conventions of the crime fiction genre (a "thanatic" genre par excellence insofar as death is its most prominent topic) can be used for denouncing systemic forms of violence against refugees and the failure of supra/national institutions to end them. Drawing from vulnerability, affect, refugee and human rights studies, its main argument is that the refugees' situational vulnerability is compounded both by the contradictions inherent in the discourse of international human rights and by the racial and gender politics of nations towards forced migration. These contradictions are pursued in the analysis of Ausma Zehanat Khan's fourth police procedural, *A Dangerous Crossing* (2018), which manages to paint a complex picture of the gender vulnerability of Syrian refugees stranded in Greek camps, showing that female and male refugees are perceived and treated differently despite their

common racialisation; risk is emphasised in the case of men, vulnerability in women. Further, the paper argues that this particular novel mobilises a transformative kind of empathy by drawing alternative affective economies that push against the genre's conventions and that help readers expand the limit of our imagination. Thus, Khan's affective work and refugee advocacy rest on envisioning the human within those who are depicted as nonhuman in media and political descriptions of forced migration in the context of increased border securitisation.

Pilar Cuder-Domínguez is Full Professor in the Department of English at the University of Huelva, Spain. Her research interests are the intersections of gender, genre, nation, and race. She is the author of three books and (co-)editor of eight collections of essays. Her latest publications have discussed the work of writers of Black and Asian ancestry in the UK and Canada. She is currently lead investigator of the research project "Bodies in Transit 2" ([bodiesintransitproject.com](http://bodiesintransitproject.com)) and team member of the international project "Thanatic Ethics: The Circulation of Bodies in Migratory Spaces."

**Corinne Duboin**

### **Migrant Deaths, Borderscapes, and Necropolitics in Edwidge Danticat's (Non)Fiction**

Edwidge Danticat's eclectic *oeuvre*, that includes novels and short stories, a family memoir, a travelogue, personal essays and articles, sheds light in various ways on the tormented transnational history of Haiti and its American-based diaspora. It is also a militant work that resonates with the current global concerns such as migration issues and recent debates on state "brutalism" and systemic racism or ethnicism in both neoliberal democracies and authoritarian regimes. As an "immigrant artist at work," Danticat feels she must "quantify the price of the American Dream in flesh and bone."<sup>1</sup> She thereby claims her social responsibility as a writer to reflect upon and expose the genealogy of sufferings intricately connected with a long history of displacements and border crossings. She focuses on the corporeality of life and death to deal with the figure of the postcolonial migrant and the human as a "biopolitical" subject reduced to matter. In our presentation, we will therefore adopt a transversal approach to her works of nonfiction and fiction, in which aesthetics, ethics, and politics intersect. We will critically examine Danticat's literary representation of dying, missing, or dead migrant bodies and their forced (im)mobilities resulting from necropolitical practices. We will explore how the author depicts heterotopic spaces and liminal borderscapes that entrap Haitian migrants, exclude them, and endanger their precarious, "disposable" lives, away from home. At the same time, Danticat's texts aim to show how the living (including herself) face grief, perform rituals, deliver personal testimonials, and fight absence, silence, and oblivion in a resilient way.

Corinne Duboin is Professor of African American and postcolonial literatures in the Department of English Studies at the University of Reunion Island, France. Her research interests include contemporary migrant and diasporic literature, and black women's writing. She has published articles in the *CLA Journal*, *Mississippi Quarterly*, *Obsidian*, the *Southern Literary Journal*, *Commonwealth*, *Etudes caribéennes*, *Etudes Littéraires Africaines*, and other journals. Her most recent book, co-edited with Markus Arnold and Judith Misrahi-Barak, is *Borders and Ecotones in the Indian Ocean: Cultural and Literary Perspectives* (PoCoPages series, 2020).

**Justine Feyereisen**

### **Black Corpses Matter: The Atlantic Ghosts, a Cosmopoethical Utopia of Repair**

While Black Lives Matter protests are reverberating around the world, the silence around black lives lost at sea is still astounding. Yet the possibilities afforded by new media technologies to observe, control and

help the human movements reaching the EU shores are exponential. Two migration narratives bring drowned Sub-Saharanans back from the depths of the Atlantic Ocean: the parable *L'Archipel du chien* (2018) written by the writer and director Philippe Claudel and the feature film *Atlantique* (2019) directed by Mati Diop. The presence of black corpses on the island haunts its inhabitants as much as the absence of bodies haunts the grieving widows of Dakar, whilst the voice of the dead seize all the minds and the elements. By going beyond the modern binary of individualism and communalism, the mind and the body, the living and the dead, Claudel and Diop's otherworldly fictions draw a third space. A utopian space that is radically open, and thus not confined by the politics of impossibility and closure that underlie neoliberal democracies on the one hand and racial oppression on the other, which currently drive border policies. Instead, migrant ghosts would embody a politics of repair in response to Europe's supported "necropolitics" (Mbembe) of the refugee crisis. Based on a narratological analysis, open to political philosophy and ecocriticism, my intervention will probe this hypothesis to think of reparation in cosmopoethical terms from and by the Sub-Saharan revenants as a wider and relational understanding of human mobility.

**Justine Feyereisen** is currently a FWO Senior Postdoctoral Research Fellow at Ghent University (BE) where she is conducting a project in French and Francophone Studies entitled "Reimagining Migration Narratives with Eco-poetical Postcolonial Perspectives in Transatlantic Francophone Literature". She is affiliated with Wolfson College (Oxford) and Maison Française d'Oxford. Since 2016, she is a non-tenured Assistant Professor of French and Francophone Studies at the Université libre de Bruxelles, after a FNRS PhD Fellowship at the Université libre de Bruxelles and the Université Grenoble Alpes, and a Fulbright Postdoctoral Fellowship at the University of California, Berkeley. Her research also led her to Wolfson College (University of Oxford) as a Wiener-Anspach Junior Research Fellow (2019-2021). Her research interests and expertise include 20th-21st Literature in French, postcolonial and decolonization literature, utopian fictions and sustainability, international migrations, body and senses, memory and postmemory, spatial studies, gender studies, photography and text intermediality, eco-poetics and ecofeminism. She is President of the Association des lecteurs de J.-M.G. Le Clézio. Justine Feyereisen is the author of *Sens: J.M.G. Le Clézio. Essai de sensopoétique* (Classiques Garnier, forthcoming), editor of *Movere. Littérature, corporéité et mouvement. Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire* (98.3, 2020), and co-editor of *Corps. Cahiers J.-M.G. Le Clézio* (12, 2019).

### **Elsa Gomis**

#### ***Between the magical and the sordid. Artistic gestures as funerary rites for missing migrants.***

This presentation aims to offer an overview of the artistic gestures honouring missing migrants. After identifying their authors' intentions, it explores the ethical complexity these acts can bear as they can also perpetuate borders' injuries beyond the death. At first glance, efforts to honour deceased migrants whose bodies are missing are made by two seemingly separate groups of people. On one hand, the individuals directly involved into these deaths, such as relatives, activists and forensic doctors. On the other hand, artists who undertake performative acts to homage the memory of the dead. However, a careful examination of these acts of remembrance shows that the border between voluntary civilian actions and artistic endeavours seems to be blurry and that dividing line between them shifts from one into the other. Actions initiated by individuals appear to tend towards art, and those pursued by artists can transpire spirituality attached to funerary rites. Moreover, within artistic works intended to honour these memories, artists' intentions often fluctuate between mere remembering and

political condemnation. From there, there is just a short step before sliding into voyeurism and the use of migrants' death for artistic-career building.

The presentation will be built on a personal reflection on *Barca Nostra* by artist Christoph Büchel (Gomis, 2020), and on a corpus of contemporary artworks ranging from star artists such as Ai Weiwei to emerging artists such as Guillermo Galindo and Banu Cennetoğlu.

Elsa Gomis is a PhD researcher, a Film director and a visual artist from University of East Anglia. She is also co-editor of the 'En Images' section of the De Facto journal at Convergences Migrations Institute, Paris. Her work explores the connections between the collective imaginary of migration by the Mediterranean and today's European lethal policies. Her feature film *The People Behind the Scenes* has been screened in various places such as COMPAS Oxford and the Collège de France Visual Anthropology seminar. Elsa's work was recently selected for the *Bold New Voices in Migration Research Conference* at Harvard Immigration Initiative.

**Wanjiru Kamuyu's** career began with its genesis in New York City. As a performer she has worked with **Jawole Willa Jo Zollar, Bill T. Jones, Molissa Fenley, Okwui Okpokwasili, Nathan Trice, Dean Moss, Tania Isaac...** and in Europe with choreographers **Robyn Orlin, Emmanuel Eggermont, Nathalie Pubellier, Irène Tassebedo, and Stefanie Batten Bland.**

Alongside Kamuyu has performed in industrials, television and Broadway musicals, *The Lion King* (Paris) and *FELA !* (UK and Equity European and US tours).

Kamuyu founded dance company, [WKcollective](http://www.wkcollective.com) based in Paris, France. Her choreographic projects include tours in the US, Africa and Europe. Commissions include musical *À la recherche de Joséphine*, director **Jérôme Savary** (Paris and International tours); *Love is in the hair*, director **Jean François Auguste** (French tour); *Maître Harold*, director **Hassan Kassi Kouyate** (Paris); US esteemed dance departments (Mills College, University of Michigan, Wayne State University, Stephens College; artistic consulting for choreographers **Bintou Dembele's ZH; Nathan Trice's** *Their speech is silver, Their silence is gold*; storyteller **Nathalie La Boucher's** *La Chevauchée du Gange*;) and community engagement projects with New WORLD Theater (USA), choreographer Eun-mi Ahn's project *1:59* (Festival Paris Quartier d'Été), Euroculture and the National Center for Dance project *Assemblé* (France).

While touring she offers master classes and workshops for dance companies, universities, community and dance centers. Kamuyu also served as Visiting Guest Professor at Mills College (USA) and is currently core faculty for University of South Florida's Dance in Paris semester and summer programs.

[www.caminaktion.eu/wkcollective/](http://www.caminaktion.eu/wkcollective/)

### **Mike Lehman**

#### **Waste, Aesthetics, and Human Rights: Remapping Human Rights from Below in Amitav Ghosh's *Gun Island***

Current notions of human rights are limited in its inability to expand how and where the concept applies or indeed to whom. After all, human rights are attached to citizens not humans. Anxiety surrounds the untold stories of unidentified bodies across our oceans, often resulting in a static view of the dead migrant body rather than mobility and living migrants. In February 2021, a border agent found a motionless leg inside a sealed bag of toxic ash amid cargo being shipped from Melilla to mainland Spain. The leg began moving and a young man "emerged from the ashes". The border agent states that he will "never get used to it" as he sees the migrant move, which underscores the obscenity of national bordering policies (Brito and Parra 2021). The agent cannot get used to the encounter with living migrants, while dead migrant bodies have become normalized as waste found in recycling cargo ships or

along the shores of the nation. Thus, we must ask why do images of discarded, lifeless bodies garner more attention and empathy than the image of the migrant that survives the crossing? The tragedy of the border crossing, I suggest, necessitates other forms of human belonging outside a national understanding. In my reading of Amitav Ghosh's *Gun Island* (2019) alongside theories of waste mobilities, I argue that the literary imaginary provides a conception of rights and protection in which the migrant becomes agential in the border crossing. I contend that *Gun Island* fractures the here and there of spatial demarcation that expels the migrant from current concepts of human rights.

Mike Lehman is a postdoctoral fellow in the Department of Literature, Media and Communication at Georgia Tech. His research explores the potential of borders in reimagining our notions of human rights and belonging. He posits the figure of the migrant as central for an alternative understanding of literature as a site of resistance, and as a way to being to imagine new logics of global connection. His published work examines organ trade as part of the traffic in whole and partial bodies in migration, as well as global boat migration and refugee narratives.

**Ewa Macura-Nnamdi**

### **“Saving”, Slavery and Refugees at the Maritime Borders of Europe**

This paper looks at the acts of saving that unfold in the maritime spaces of the Mediterranean as they are represented in Helon Habila's 2018 novel *Travellers*. Read in dialogue with Banksy's Dismaland diorama featuring a pond and a boat filled with refugees (subsequently raffled off at an Internet auction), Habila's radical proposition links the sea crossings undertaken by refugees to slavery. But rather than positing violence against black people as what structurally ties the refugees to the slaves, Habila's novel suggests it is saving and its politics that establish continuities between slavery and the so called “refugee crisis.” Probing 18<sup>th</sup>-century insurance discourses, especially the notion of the general average, and the ways it informed the legal proceedings of the notorious *Zong* case, I argue that the paradigm of saving that emerged from those discourses, can be found, and operates in the Mediterranean scenes of rescue. Bringing these various discourses into a critical proximity, allows us not only to discern how contemporary acts of saving thrive, politically and economically, on the utility of the refugees' life rather than death but also to reveal a set of other significant and related claims: that refugee deaths in the Mediterranean are not exceptional; that structural unsaveability is a form of border control; and that the maritime borders redefine refugees as those who fail to arrive.

Ewa Macura-Nnamdi is Assistant Professor at the Institute of Literary Studies (University of Silesia, Poland). Her main research interests include postcolonial Anglophone literatures of Africa, refugees and migration in cinema and literature. She is currently working on a book project provisionally titled *Fictions of Water: Refugees and the Sea*. She is also guest co-editing a special issue of the journal *Angelaki* devoted to water.

**Yumna Masarwa and Osman Balkan**

### **The Transnational Afterlives of European Muslims**

How do European Muslims navigate death and burial in countries where they face systematic barriers to political inclusion? This article investigates the complex negotiations surrounding end-of-life decisions for Muslim communities in France and Germany. Drawing on multi-sited ethnographic research among Algerian and Turkish diasporas in Marseilles and Berlin, it illustrates how burial decisions reflect divergent ideas about citizenship, belonging, and identity. While some Muslims are interred in local cemeteries, many more are repatriated out of Europe to be laid in ancestral soils in countries of origin.

Through interviews with Muslim death-care workers and community members holding repatriation insurance, along with close readings of informational literature produced by Islamic civil society organizations in France and Germany, we theorize the significance and symbolic value that such posthumous journeys carry in diasporic settings. The Muslim corpse, we argue, embodies a range of overlapping desires, experiences, and expectations connected to histories of migration, settlement, and return, as well as attitudes towards death and beliefs about the afterlife. Consequently, it offers a compelling window into the transnational afterlives of empire and migration.

Yumna Masarwa is an Associate Professor and the Director of the School of Art at the American College of the Mediterranean (ACM)/The Institute for American Universities (IAU) in Aix-en-Provence. She teaches a variety of courses on Islamic art and Muslim presence in France. As an art historian, her research combines written sources (religious, historical, geographical etc.) with material culture and examines the influence of Islamic art on European art. Her work has been published in *Antiquité Tardive*, *Al-Usur al-Wusta: The Bulletin of Middle East Medievalists*, *Excavations and Surveys in Israel* and in edited volumes such as *Housing the Holy: Shrines in Ritual Architecture* (forthcoming). Since 2018, she has been conducting a multi-sited ethnographic research in the Mediterranean city of Marseilles focusing on burial and body repatriation among Algerians, and Muslim tombs in French cemeteries. Some of her research has been published in *Nouvelles Etudes Francophones* and *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* (CSSAAME, forthcoming).

Osman Balkan is Visiting Assistant Professor of Political Science at Swarthmore College. His research focuses on global migration, borders, race and ethnicity, identity and inequality, and necropolitics. Balkan's first book manuscript, *Dying Abroad: The Political Afterlives of Migration in Europe* (under review) offers an ethnographic account of how minoritized communities navigate end-of-life decisions in countries where they face structural barriers to full citizenship and equal social standing. His work has been published in *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*, *Theory & Event*, *Project on Middle East Political Science*, *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, *Contemporary French Civilization*, and in edited volumes such as *The Democratic Arts of Mourning* and *Turkey's Necropolitical Laboratory*. Please consult his personal website <http://www.osmanbalkan.com> for further information.

### **Ana Cristina Mendes**

#### **Atlantic expeditions, the Mediterranean refugee 'crisis', and the pitfalls of transhistoricity in adaptations of Théodore Géricault's 'The Raft of the Medusa'**

The adaptation of iconic images, such as Théodore Géricault's painting 'The Raft of the Medusa' (1818–19), has been a typical move when drawing attention to the current plight of migrants crossing the Mediterranean Sea in search of better lives. Banksy, for example, while at the 'Jungle' refugee camp in the vicinity of Calais from 2015 to 2016, adapted Géricault's iconic oil painting into a stencil. The survivors from the 1816 shipwreck off the coast of present-day Mauritania of the Medusa, a French naval frigate heading to the Senegalese port city of Saint-Louis during the rule of Louis XVIII to recapture Senegal from the British after the Napoleonic Wars, are transformed into modern-day migrants asking for help from a luxury yacht on the horizon. As in Géricault's pro-abolitionist, anti-imperial painting, there is already a pile of corpses on Banksy's raft. Speech bubbles coming from those who are still alive feature the pound symbol. Both artworks are politically confrontational in their depiction of harrowing scenes of human suffering, underscoring the financial imperatives behind the suffering.

This paper is inspired by Yogita Goyal's (2017) probing of the uses of transhistorical analogies between Black enslavement and the Middle Passage, and the Mediterranean refugee 'crisis'. Pairing 'The Raft of the Medusa' with its various recent afterlives that conjure an analogy between the Medusa shipwreck in

1816 and the capsized boats in the Mediterranean invites a reflection on the ongoing legacies of Atlantic imperial expeditions as racial capitalism (Robinson 1983) and 'an Atlantic cycle of accumulation' (Baucom 2005, 32). At the same time, using Goyal's words, 'the logic of analogy' deployed in these adaptations of *The Raft of the Medusa* and their reception also potentially asks us to confront the pitfalls of transhistoricity in the conflation of 'past and present' and 'a hegemonic global north and a perpetually marginalized global south' (Goyal 2017, 544).

Ana Cristina Mendes is an Associate Professor in English Studies at the School of Arts and Humanities, University of Lisbon. She uses cultural and postcolonial studies to examine literary and screen texts (in particular, intermedia adaptations) as venues for resistant knowledge formations to expand upon theories of epistemic injustice. Her research interests are visual culture, postcolonial theory, adaptation studies, and Victorian afterlives (specifically, the global/postcolonial dimensions of Victorianism and its fandoms, and extractive economies).

**Ravi Rana**

### **Migrants and migratory spaces: a political and ideological construct**

In a disturbing example of Achille Mbembe's *Necropolitics*, the Indian government passed the Citizen Amendment Act (CAA, 2019) that allowed non-Muslim refugees from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh to voluntarily become citizens of India. The law boasted as life saver for the prosecuted minorities from these countries proved to be discriminatory on both religious and geographical grounds: Muslims from all these neighbouring countries and Tamil refugees from the war-ravaged Sri Lanka were not covered with this Bill.

*Exit West* (2017) by the British-Pakistani writer Mohsin Hamid, and *The Boat people* (2018) by the Canadian writer Sharon Bala depict the ordeal of those migrants who would fall outside the scope of the CAA protection. These two novels written a few years before the proposal and promulgation of this law by the Hindu right-wing government in India underline the presence of an official structure that deliberately puts these migrants' lives in peril by shutting the doors to safer havens in India, which would have provided them a 'home' close to their homeland, as opposed to the unknown perils of seeking refuge in Europe transiting through Africa. In *Exit West*, Nadia realises that not all migratory doors are similarly guarded; the ones that lead back to the homeland; towards death are deliberately left unguarded. One comes across a similar plight for Mahindan in the *Boat people* in which he realises that the heavily guarded doors are the one that are situated in Sri Lanka depriving him from migrating towards life elsewhere.

I will base my paper on Michel Foucault's notion of heterotopia pertaining to spaces and on cemeteries, a space that is personal and that gives right to decent burial close to one's own people. Nadia and Saeed return to their homeland from the West after half a decade whereas Mahindan's dreams depict a paradox of escaping death in his homeland and his desire to remain somehow attached to it through language and culture.

This paper will investigate the role of the state in creating the dichotomous definition of migrants: the wanted and the unwanted ones. I will also delve into the notion of losses in the form of deaths that a migrant confronts, losses that cannot be solely evaluated in human terms; loss of cultures and languages as bodies also travel with these elements in migratory spaces.

Ravinder Singh Rana teaches English at Université Grenoble Alpes, France. His main focus is on British and Commonwealth literature and civilization. He defended his PhD thesis in December 2015 at Paul-Valéry University, Montpellier 3, in comparative literature on the theme of Holocaust. It was titled

*Race, langage et culture dans l'œuvre de Jonathan Littell, Les Bienveillantes.* His current areas of research include Holocaust studies, Partition studies and Dalit studies.

**Alan Rice**

**Invisibility, Fugitivity and Hypervisibility in Excavating Black Atlantic Lives in the North: Engaging with the Work and Words of Jade Montserrat**

This paper explores the latest works of Jade Montserrat whose exhibition Future Connect is a commission to excavate the collection of the Manchester Art Gallery for buried histories of African diaspora lives. The paper takes as its starting point the observation of Stuart Hall that “globalization must never be read as a simple process of cultural homogenization; it is always an articulation of the local, of the specific and the global.” It will examine the way Montserrat’s response to the Collections seeks to excavate buried and obscure black lives to make them matter in the here and now. It will include a discussion of Shakespearean performer Ira Aldridge, itinerant wanderer James Johnson and escaped slave ‘Ibo Boy’ whose presence in the North has invisibilised them to various degrees to Metropolitan London-based ideas around Black Britishness. It will examine works in the exhibition to see how Michael Rothberg’s ideas of multidimensional memories enable a dynamic exploration of hidden histories of migration and slavery. It will explore the latest controversies over so-called “alleged” slavery links to signature British architectural gems showing how Montserrat’s “muscle memory” seeks to reveal the ghosts of the past.

Alan Rice is Professor in English and American Studies at the University of Central Lancashire, Preston, co-director of the Institute for Black Atlantic Research (IBAR) and director of the UCLan Lancashire Research Centre in Migration, Diaspora and Exile (MIDEX). He has worked on the interdisciplinary study of the Black Atlantic publishing *Radical Narratives of the Black Atlantic* (2003) & *Creating Memorials, Building Identities: The Politics of Memory in the Black Atlantic* (2010). He was a founder member of the Slave Trade Arts Memorial Project in Lancaster which was responsible for unveiling a memorial commemorating victims of the slave trade in 2005, co-curated *Trade and Empire: Remembering Slavery* at the Whitworth Gallery Manchester in 2007 and has been consultant and talking head on a variety of documentaries with the BBC and other broadcasters. He has given keynote presentations in Britain, Germany, Switzerland, Greece, the United States, Italy, Denmark, Spain, Poland, the Netherlands and France His articles have appeared in a wide range of journals including, *Slavery and Abolition*, *Atlantic Studies*, *Patterns of Prejudice*, *Journal of American Studies* *Zeitschrift fur Anglistik und Amerikanistik* and *Research in African Literatures*. His latest co-written work, *Inside the Invisible: Memorialising Slavery and Freedom in the Life and Works of Lubaina Himid* (2019) is the first academic monograph on the 2017 Turner Prize Winner. In 2021 he is curating the exhibition ‘Lubaina Himid: Memorial to Zong’ for the Lancaster Maritime Museum and working on projects with Preston Black History Group, Sewing Café, Lancaster and Lancaster Jazz Festival.