

CONFERENCE #3

DEATH "MATTERS": THE (IM)MATERIAL AND THE SENSORY IN DEATH IN MIGRATION



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

ABSTRACTS AND BIOS

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Abstracts and bios

Invited Guests' Section

Catherine Bernard (Université Paris Cité)

Seeing / Sensing (Dis)appearance: Contemporary Art's Poetics of Complication

In 2028, art critic and visual activist Nicholas Mirzoeff guest curated a group exhibition for CAMP / Center for Art on Migration Politics in Copenhagen. In his introductory essay, he insists that "to appear is to matter, in the sense of Black Lives Matter, to be grievable, to be a person that counts for something." But, he further wonders, what does the disappearance of migrants' lives do to what Hannah Arendt defined as "the space of appearance," that is to the very "place where politics takes place" (Mirzoeff)? What does the hollowing out of the *polis* by the disappearance of those lives do to visibility itself? How does it affect it?

Artists like Trevor Paglen have long tested dominant visibility by exploring the invisibilized zones of the visible delineated by mass surveillance and the "war on terror," thus critically addressing the "civil contract" (Azoulay) of vision. In relation to death in migration, artists have tested aesthetics against the unthinkable politics of disappearance, centrally wondering how art may allow the disappeared to appear, in Arendt's meaning of the verb. Confronted with a form of aesthetic aporia, i.e. making us see the unseeable in the unseen's lives, it has often opted for formats and media that produce what this talk will define as a poetics of complication, that is a visual praxis folding the materiality of sensation together with a critique of biopower.

Turning to works by John Akomfrah, Reena Saini Kallat, Diana Li, as well as to Mati Diop's 2029 film *Atlantique*, or installations by Nino Sarabutra, it will explore how the legacy of conceptual self-reflexiveness is here reaffected by multimodal sensory experiences. Borrowing from the discursive strategies of allegory, these works also produce hermeneutic short-cuts in which the materiality of experience connects to the historical material structures of domination. Critique and sensation are here entangled so as to produce what, with Karen Barad, one might define as "intraactions" fostering complex forms of repoliticized emotions.

Catherine Bernard is Professor of British literature and visual studies at Université Paris Cité. Her research hinges on the politics of form, from Modernism to contemporary aesthetics. She has published extensively on modernist and contemporary visual culture and art (from the Bloomsbury group, to Gillian Wearing, Rachel Whiteread or Sam Taylor-Johnson). Among her recent publications, one can mention the edited journal issue: "Ubiquitous Visuality: Towards a Pragmatics of Visual Experience," *InMedia. The French Journal of Media Studies*, 8.1, in collaboration with Clémence Folléa, 2020. <https://journals.openedition.org/inmedia/>. Her latest monograph was published with Sorbonne University press: *Matière à réflexion. Du corps politique dans la littérature et les arts visuels britanniques contemporains* (Presses de l'Université Paris Sorbonne, 2018). She is currently

working towards a monograph turning to the politics of the commons in contemporary fiction and visual arts.

Edwige Tamalet Talbayev (Tulane University)

Bodily Utterances: Sensoria of Exposure

This lecture seeks to identify a material, sensory archive of maritime spaces that function as overdetermined sites of loss and necropolitical power in the context of deadly migratory crossings—sites of disappearance, dissolution, and ontological instability. In oceanic depths, the corrosive, lethal encounters between body and water reveal the multiple imbrications between the human and the aqueous, their mutual lacerations. Against the backdrop of an ever-increasing incorporation of watery bodies into practices of border policing and surveillance, we will refocus our lens on the singularity of death by water—an intimately personal, lived event that cannot be experienced in its totality (Maurice Blanchot) but only evoked through imaginary projection—as it is represented through contemporary artistic practices. Through close readings of installation art by Berni Searle, Enrique Ramírez, and Nikolaj Bendix Skyum Larsen, this lecture parses the sensory aesthetic regime mobilized to render the uniquely individual, solipsistic experience of submersion at sea and the fatal encounter between body and aqueous substance—a multisensory epistemology encompassing soundscapes, haptic exposure to the elements, and visual cues of anamorphism. The talk queries the ability of art to embody the ineffable, intimate absence-presence of the drowning in a resonant act of witness (a posture read here through Robert Harvey's concept of "witnessness"), setting the stage for a memorialization of the migrant's material remanence in *longue durée* cycles of Life.

Edwige Tamalet Talbayev is a New Orleans-based literary and theory scholar working at the intersection of Maghrebi literature, Mediterranean Studies, and the Environmental Humanities. She is Associate Professor of French, an affiliate of the environmental studies program, and the Founding Director of Middle East and North African Studies at Tulane University (USA). She is the author of *The Transcontinental Maghreb: Francophone Literature across the Mediterranean* (2017) and the co-editor of several collections of essays, among them *The Mediterranean Maghreb: Literature and Plurilingualism* (2012), *Critically Mediterranean: Temporalities, Aesthetics, and Deployments of a Sea in Crisis* (2018), and *Water Logics* (forthcoming). She is currently at work on several projects that examine borders and migration from the standpoint of water as an epistemological site. Her book in progress, *The Residual Migrant*, draws on biotheory, border studies, and ecocriticism to theorize the ontologies specific to drowned migrants whose bodies are dissolved into ecologically ravaged, deep-sea environments. She is Editor of the international journal of North African literature *Expressions maghrébines* and co-editor of the "Passagen" book series on transcultural Francophone Studies at Georg Olms Verlag (Germany). Since 2016, she has served as a Vice president of the Center for Francophone Studies at the University of Leipzig. She currently sits on the Advisory Committee for *PMLA*, the journal of the US Modern Language

Association (MLA), and she is a former chair of the Executive Committee of the CLCS Mediterranean Forum at that same association.

Freya Powell (The New School)

Notes on voice

While sitting on the floor of a gallery of the New Museum in Manhattan during an exhibition of Ragnar Kjartansson's work I first noticed this feeling. In "Me, My Mother, My Father, and I" Kjartansson presented a live durational composition in a ten-part polyphony. These ten musicians, each sang and played guitar, and their voices blended and clashed to evoke an inescapable sense of nostalgia. Nostalgia for a story that wasn't mine. The layering of voices, the harmonizing, and the inevitable excess stirred a strong emotional reaction. I was brought to tears. Here started my investigation into the vocal capacities of chorality and voice to evoke feelings of empathy and mourning.

This essay considers the poetics and politics of listening to the voice in the space of performance. It attempts to trace the influence of non-verbal effects, bodily utterances and excess, as they resonate in the listener's ear as well as spaces of silence. In utilizing the voice as a medium for mourning, 'Notes on voice' asks the questions: Can the voice illicit empathy? Can the voice, beyond a conveyance of language, access a human experience? And, ultimately can the voice be harnessed as a political tool? Utilizing notions on the politics of sound and questions of mourning and grievability as laid out by, Christoph Cox and Judith Butler respectively, I will make the case for the use of the voice and chorality as a political tool.

Freya Powell uses time-based and linguistic platforms to explore language and its relationship to memory, myth, and history. Her work has been exhibited in solo shows at Art in General, Brooklyn, NY (2017), Herron School of Art, Indianapolis, IN (2017), Arts Santa Monica, Barcelona, Spain (2014.) She has participated in group shows at institutions including MoMA PS1 (NY), EFA Project Space (NY), Queens Museum (NY), Socrates Sculpture Park (NY), and the Bronx Museum, (NY), among others. Most recently she was awarded a development residency at MoMA PS1 (2019), New Work Grants from the Queens Council on the Arts (2019 & 2021), and a NYSCA grant (2022.) Powell holds an MFA in Combined Media from Hunter College and a BA from Bard College and is Associate Professor of Photography at Parsons, The New School.

Speakers' Section

Jenna Ann Altomonte (Mississippi State University)

Thanatic Ethics and the Politics of Serious Gaming

My contribution to Death "Matters" examines the impact of border-themed video games within the framework of thanatic ethics. I extrapolate on the work of three independent software developers/artists who employ interactive gaming platforms to expose human rights violations along/between contentious border zones. The first game, *Liyla and the Shadows of War* (2015), was developed by Palestinian software engineer Rasheed Abueideh. In *Liyla*, users play a father attempting to save his family during a night raid in the Gaza Strip. The second example focuses on *Borders* (2017), a serious game created by Mexican American illustrator and game developer, Gonzalo Alvarez. *Borders*, a top-down style arcade video game, is based on his parent's contentious desert crossing(s) from Mexico into the United States in the 1980s. The third game, *Bury Me, My Love* (2019), is a collaborative project developed by Pixel Hunt. *Bury Me* is an interactive, mobile app game that follows Syrian refugees Nour and Majd across the country as they negotiate the dangerous journey to safety.

Considering the premise of each game, I position *Liyla*, *Borders*, and *Bury Me, My Love* as didactic games, or games that instruct users on cultural, social and/or political issues impacting vulnerable populations. Questions to address: How can Thanatic ethics cultivate empathy via the video game platform? How can video games be viewed as didactic tools to educate users about the loss of human life in spaces/regions fraught with violence? What can these games teach users about the perils of migration and forced displacement?

Jenna Ann Altomonte is an Associate Professor of Art History at Mississippi State University. She received her Master of Arts in Art History (2009) and Ph.D. in Interdisciplinary Arts (2017) from Ohio University. Her primary area of research centers on global contemporary art and digital performance studies with a specialization in political and social intervention practices. Her current research endeavors examine responses to contested, occupied, and conflicted spaces in the post-9/11 era. Forthcoming publications include, "Conflict Fetishization and the Politics of Graffiti," in *Dust, Scratch and Paint: Street Art in the Global South* (2023) and "Look to the Skies: Drone Art in the Age of Telepresence," in *Human Rights in the Age of Drones: Critical Perspectives on Post-9/11 Literature, Film and Art* (2024). She is currently a Charles E. Scheidt Faculty Fellow in Atrocity Prevention through Binghamton University's Institute for Genocide and Mass Atrocity Prevention.

Paolo Boccagni (University of Trento)

Coping with the absence that is always present. Sensorial traces and impingements of death in the everyday lives of young West African migrants in Europe

Based on a four-year ethnography of an asylum centre in Italy, my presentation approaches the subtle emergence of death in the self-narratives and everyday lives of young male people in 'waithood'. Among my closer interlocutors, a certain sight, noise or smell was sometimes enough to bring back to the senses episodes of eerie proximity to death. Drawing on the interdisciplinary scholarship on "absence" as a critical past that may encroach on the present, both mnemonically and sensorially, I show how past encounters with death loom on the here-and-now – a sheltering facility where people share a past life-or-death migration pathway and a present need to "float" above untold and weighty life histories. Stimuli as random as a movie, a picture, a certain dress or song may bring them back there-and-then, for a while. More often than not, instead, death is an absent presence that demands silence and attempts at forgetting. In sum, the sensorial weight of death in migration does not involve only the use of the senses in commemorating the loss of human lives. As critical, everyday life "banal" sensoriality discloses unexpected interstices that connect refugees with their past interaction with death and have deep cognitive, emotional and moral impingements for them, and for the ethical and political debate on death in migration. Why, as my interlocutors put it, *some* (fellow migrants) died, whereas *they* survived? What's the sense of that? Furthermore, how far can (or should) you share your past death encounters with 'ordinary' people who know nothing of them and make every effort to expel death from their phenomenological field, despite its stubborn ways of creeping back in?

Paolo Boccagni is a Professor in Sociology (University of Trento). He has written extensively in migration, home, diversity and social welfare studies. He is currently doing comparative research on the lived experience of home, with a particular focus on the temporalities and boundary-making of asylum seekers in reception facilities. His emerging research interests involve the experience of death out of place, the social working of metaphor, the ways of coping with absence and distance and the significance of future-related imaginaries and practices. Recent publications include *Homing: a category for research on space appropriation and 'home-oriented' mobilities* (*Mobilities*, 2022), *Migration and domestic space* (co-ed, OA, Springer-Imiscoe, 2023) and the *Handbook on home and migration* (ed, Edward Elgar, 2023).

Jaine Chemmachery (Sorbonne Université)

"Zong! is Song": Embodied Performances of the Text as Augmented (un)Rituals of Death

This paper will discuss NourBese Philip's *Zong!* which deals with the horrific event that happened in 1781, the throwing overboard of about 130 enslaved people and the consequent claim for insurance compensation by the owners of the slave ship. As the text of a "story that must be told yet cannot be told" (back cover of *Zong!*), as a material product whose author wanted to "murder the text" (Philip 193) – that of the written archive and of the ensuing poems written, *Zong!* has an impact that lies beyond its written dimension. Performances of the text address senses other than vision and turn *Zong!* into an embodied "site of mourning" (Austen 68). The songs, music and reading in canon format call upon our sense of hearing while a haptic dimension is present in how Philip includes the audience in the performance by giving them objects or speaking directly to them (2016 *Zong!* reading). All these gestures create an immersive atmosphere and contribute to making us (attendees and spectators, albeit in different degrees) more attentive to the tragic event. The paper will ponder whether the soundscape created in *Zong!* performances can complement, if not resist, the colonial written archive (and soundscape?). Philip's work has inspired Amanda Gorman's piece "In memory of those still in the water" (June 2023). What do sensory experimentations, acts that speak to our senses other than vision (at a time when migrant death is spectacularised in the media), "do" differently when it comes to mourning those that died without being granted rituals of death?

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Dowling, Sarah. "Persons and Voices: Sounding Impossible Bodies in M. NourbeSe Philip's *Zong!*" *Canadian Literature* 210/211 (2011): 43–58.

Ganteau, Jean-Michel, *The Poetics and Ethics of Attention in Contemporary British Narrative*, New York: Routledge, 2023

Loichot Valérie, *Water Graves: The Art of the Unritual in the Greater Caribbean*, Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2020.

Philip, M. NourbeSe, *Zong!*, as told to the author by Setaey Adamu Boateng, Middletown, Wesleyan University Press, 2008.

[Bodies Borders Fields Symposium Video Final 8mROM Miami+ - YouTube](#)

[2016 Zong! Durational reading/performance -6min - YouTube](#)

Jaine Chemmachery is a Senior Lecturer in Postcolonial Literatures at Sorbonne Université. She wrote a PhD dissertation on R. Kipling's and S. Maugham's short stories on Empire and the relation between colonialism, modernity and the genre of the short story (2013). Her main research fields are postcolonial literatures, decolonial praxis and body studies. Her current research focuses on mobility, body studies and the representation of precarity/precariousness in postcolonial literature. Her latest publications include "'He wants me to bring him home, even in the form of a shell': Criminalized Bodies and Repatriation in Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire*" (*Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, 2023) and "'Violence, Ritual, and Space': Aleshea Harris in Conversation with Julie Vatain-Corfdir and Jaine Chemmachery" (De Gruyter, 2023).

Sealing Cheng (Chinese University of Hong Kong)

Managing a Death in Exile – cosmologies, power, and moral burden

This presentation will take the form of ethnographic theatre, drawing on interviews and participant-observation into the experience of an East African asylum-seeker's management of a fellow countrywoman's death, cremation, funeral, and repatriation of her ashes home from Hong Kong. Dying in exile means locating one's dead body in a transnational web of conflicting cosmologies, temporalities, kinship structures, and national imagination. Is an asylum-seeker – an "illegal immigrant" in the eyes of the state – released from the illegalization processes upon death, and acquires the right to cross borders legitimately? What legal and moral strictures does death re-introduce a body into? How does the diasporic community get mobilized in managing a co-national's death? How are funds raised? How are decisions made? To what extent and in what ways are the families of the dead involved at different stages of mortuary practices that ideally would usher the dead home? Through the experience of an asylum-seeking woman who was "elected" by her co-nationals in Hong Kong to manage her friend's death rituals, this presentation investigates the multiple meanings of death in exile, the politics of dead bodies, and the moral debates about the living in a transnational field. The first-person theatrical performance re-enacting some of the struggles of the main character is meant to invite audience into the position of the subject, and think along with her about how to give her friend a "proper" final journey, while dealing with the ethical and moral demands both locally and transnationally, joining her own future with that of her now deceased friend's.

The performance will be between 10-15 minutes. With visual image projection.

Sealing Cheng teaches at the Department of Anthropology at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Before that, she was Associate Professor of Women's and Gender Studies at Wellesley College in the US. Her research is focused on sexuality with reference to sex work, human trafficking, women's activism, and policy-making. Her book, *On the Move for Love: Migrant Entertainers and the U.S. Military in South Korea* (University of Pennsylvania Press 2010) received the Distinguished Book Award of the Sexualities Section of the American Sociological Association in 2012. She started researching on asylum-seekers in Hong Kong since 2012 and is completing on her manuscript on intimate relations between asylum-seeking men and Hong Kong women.

Cédric Courtois (University of Lille)

"Let's throw one of the corpses so they can see what state we're in!": Thanatic Ethics and the Sensory in Abu Bakr Khaal's *African Titanics* (2014[2008])

Eritrean writer Khaal's novel *African Titanics*, initially written in Arabic, depicts "violent borders" (R. Jones) and the dreadful impact of border crossing, which

includes sea crossing on unsafe boats provided by smugglers. As “the water was spreading to the area around the engine”, a scene reminiscent of the titular Titanic catastrophe, the reader not only (co-)witnesses (I. Kacandes) the African refugees’ anguish, but also their falling ill, their drowning, and their dying. When they spot a “massive oil tanker”, the remaining few realise that they will not be helped even if their boat is situated in international waters, hence their decision to “throw one of the corpses so they can see what state we’re in!”. There is here an emphasis on the sense of sight in order to make these bodies visible (and, possibly, recognised, or “considered” [M. Macé]), something that is apparently needed so as to make the tanker’s crew — and the reader? — “adjust their perspective” (S. Brownlie) on these voiceless “subalterns” (G. Spivak). Khaal’s work prevents these corpses from “sink[ing] without trace”, to refer to a 2019 exhibition on migrant deaths at sea organised in London, which I will mention.

African Titanics dovetails thanatic ethics with the sensory — mainly seeing and hearing. Despite the fact that the tanker’s crew do notice the corpses thrown into the water, they are not moved as they probably deem them as unworthy and “ungrievable” (J. Butler). Since the “turn to precarity” (J. Morrison) in 21st-century fiction, some authors (including Khaal) have relied on point of view and voice so as to develop the readers’ affects. This is partly achieved through the use of the aforementioned senses as a narrative strategy, alongside a “corporeal narratology” (D. Punday). I will ponder over the ways in which the (suffering or dead) migrant bodies represented in Khaal’s novel shape the narrative. I will also try and answer Punday’s question: “How do certain ways of thinking about the [suffering or dead] body [and senses] shape the plot, characterization, setting, and other aspects of narrative?”

Cédric Courtois is Senior Lecturer in Anglophone studies at the University of Lille, France. He specialises in Nigerian literature, which was the focus of his PhD dissertation on the contemporary Nigerian rewritings of the *Bildungsroman*. He has published various articles and book chapters on mobility studies, refugee literature, LGBTQIA+ studies, etc. Among his recent publications are “Politics and Poetics of (De)colonization in Namwali Serpell’s *The Old Drift* (2019)” (2023) for *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*; “Visibilizing ‘Those Who Have No Part’: LGBTQIA+ Representation in Contemporary Nigerian Fiction in English” (2022) for *Études anglaises*; “‘Into the Mutation’: Osahon Ize-Iyamu’s ‘More Sea than Tar’ as Climate Fiction” (2021) for *Commonwealth Essays and Studies*; and “Bernardine Evaristo’s ‘Black’ British Amazons: Aesthetics and Politics in *Girl, Woman, Other*” (2021) for *Études britanniques contemporaines*.

Sanghamitra Dalal (Universiti Teknologi MARA)

Requiem for Reclamation: Storying Otherwise in Cecile Pin’s *Wandering Souls*

My presentation will focus on French-Vietnamese Cecile Pin’s debut and 2023 Women’s Prize for Fiction longlisted novel *Wandering Souls* (2023). Spurred to excavate her mother’s repressed memories as boat-people, who had to flee her village in Southeast Vietnam after the war, first to a camp in Thailand, and then

settling in France, losing her parents and half of her siblings on the way, Pin's novel similarly unfolds the story of three siblings, who lose their parents and four other younger siblings in the sea on their way from a war-torn Vietnam to Tai Tak refugee camp in Hong Kong, in search of the promised land.

However, as this polyvocal novel charts the travails of the surviving fifteen-year old, Anh, and her two brothers, Minh (thirteen), and Thanh (ten), I will particularly focus on the phantom voice of Dao, Anh's seven-year old brother, who perished at sea and is cursed to wander like ghost on earth. Yet, Dao's impalpable voice throughout the narrative is uniquely significant, as it ceaselessly acts as a pensive observer, interweaving the death and the living, evoking the necessity of reclaiming stories we don't own. Consequently, extending Donna Haraway's advocacy of storying otherwise which cultivates the vital sense of response-ability, my reading of Dao's spectral voice from beyond and under the sea will argue that such symbolic reincarnations of the lost and the dead transmute death into porous borders which quietly precipitate the understanding of how everyone and everything in our planet are connected to each other.

Sanghamitra Dalal is a Senior Lecturer at the College of Creative Arts, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia. She completed a PhD in postcolonial diasporic literature at Monash University, Melbourne, Australia, and had taught in Goethe University, Frankfurt, Germany, and in different secondary and tertiary academic institutions in India. Her research interests include postcolonial migration and diasporic literatures, transnational and transcultural literatures and cultures, life writing, and food writing. She has published articles in indexed journals and book chapters with Routledge and Palgrave Macmillan.

Nabil Ferdaoussi (University of Cape Town)

The Right to Look for: Reclaiming Corporal Materiality of the Missing through Visual Activism and Visionary Clairvoyance

Migrant death and disappearance have become structural technologies of border policing. Yet much of this policing work is outsourced from human actors (e.g., supranational bodies, federal governments, policymakers and border patrols) to non-human actants (e.g., seas, rivers, deserts, mountains, and rough weather conditions, operating not only as 'strategic slayers' of migrant bodies, but also as erasure machines that leave no material trace of the migrant body behind. They produce a disappearance of disappearance. Moving beyond the body of the dead, the paper shifts its conceptual focus towards the families' tactical use of the visual and the visionary alike to claim the right look for their missing sons. Drawing on extensive ethnographic research with families of missing migrants in Morocco, I frame the visionary as an imaginal site where dreams, imagination and fortune-telling work as the guiding search recourse embraced by families to see and look for their lost ones. On the other side of the search spectrum, Moroccan families are mobilizing powerful visual and auditory mottos of pains and loss to shame border regimes and reclaim truth and justice about the whereabouts of their lost ones. The visionary is deeply immersed in the socio-cultural while the visual is staked out as a

political plea. Both tactics are mobilized by families to search and establish truth and justice about their lost ones. In the realm of the visionary, the immaterial figuration of the dead as a figment of haunted imaginations or its return in dreams of families makes resort to fortune-tellers as form of solace from insomniac waiting for the material body. This *spectral* agency of the visionary capital that families embrace is coupled with the *spectacular* branching of visuals during mobilizations.

Nabil Ferdaoussi is a Doctoral Research Fellow at HUMA-Institute for Humanities in Africa and PhD candidate in Social Anthropology at the University of Cape Town. His doctoral dissertation examines the politics of (dis)engagement with border death and disappearance at the EU-Moroccan borders. It brings a new conceptual framework to bear on the study of border death and disappearance. His work broadly investigates the EU's externalization strategies in the Maghreb region, with a sharp focus on the interlocking relationship between border control, visibility, anti-black racism and postmortem violence.

Justine Feyereisen (Ghent University)

Utopia and Migrant Rights through Literature

This paper will bring Ernst Bloch into dialogue with Edouard Glissant to examine how literature deal with the concepts of human rights and utopia to challenge migration issues. The methodology lies on a philosophy of history which seeks in literature pragmatic alternatives for migrant rights – even in death. Ernst Bloch (1885-1977) developed a conception of utopia in a plural relationship to time, which is re-emerging in the 21st century. According to the German philosopher, utopia is neither projection nor idealization, but the resurgence of the past, that of dispossession, suffering and alienation, into a different narrative that transforms experience into experimentation. It is a question of knowing how to inherit so that unfinished futures can burst into the present where they take place pragmatically. In his vibrant plea, *Natural Law and Human Dignity* [*Naturrecht und menschliche Würde*, 1961], Bloch reveals the legal dimension of utopian practical philosophy with a special focus on individual freedom, dignity, and rights of a citizen as something to be fought for and defended. Within Marxism, Bloch's utopian ideal is natural law, a utopian humanistic community of dignity, existing beyond the state and a communitarian praxis that is in the process of seeking its most adequate realization. Works of art and literature, in Bloch's interpretation, are perfect examples of utopian objects, in that they always transcend their immediate meanings and contexts and serve as non-contemporaneous indications of unrealized possibilities. "See how we graft Utopia onto all these plants of the Creole vegetation," said the Martinican poet, writer, and philosopher Edouard Glissant (1928-2011) in his novel *Tout-monde* (1993). Glissant's pragmatic utopianism draws on the Caribbean archipelago as a space for Relation and difference to challenge the model of the nation-state and enable struggles for minority rights. I will therefore discuss the Blochian concept of utopia in light of Glissant's poetic work (*poiésis*, the action of doing) which draws both from the traces of enslaved ancestors (their practices, their conceptions, their experiences) and from the possibilities of the archipelago's pluriverse the power to act for non-hegemonic human rights.

Justine Feyereisen is a FWO Senior Postdoctoral Fellow in French studies at Ghent University. Her current project aims at demonstrating how postcolonial literatures rethink habitability in face of recent migrations and climate change, and therefore how “concrete utopia” is redefined in the 21st century from the former colonies. J. Feyereisen holds a PhD in Languages, Literatures and Translation Studies from the Université Libre de Bruxelles and the Université Grenoble Alpes; and three Master degrees in French studies, multilingual communication and political philosophy at the ULB. She has held research positions at the University of California, Berkeley (UCBerkeley 2014; Fulbright 2015), the University of Oxford (Wiener-Anspach, Wolfson College, 2019) and the Maison Française d’Oxford (2019). She is the author of *Sensopoétique* (Classiques Garnier) and some thirty articles in journals such as *Alkemie*, *Études Littéraires Africaines*, *Nouvelles Études Francophones*, *Phantasia*, *Revue Belge de Philologie et d’Histoire*, *Sextant*. She has edited three collective volumes, including “Movere. Littérature, corporéité et mouvement” (RBPH) and, in collaboration, “Home: les sens d’une maison” (PULM). She has translated *Refugia: Solutions radicales aux déplacements de masse* (Éditions de l’ULB). She is President of the Association des lecteurs de Le Clézio and Secretary of the Association des Amis de la MFO. She is co-editor-in-chief of the *Cahiers J.M.G. Le Clézio*.

Florence Galmiche (Université Paris Cité) and

Carolina Kobelinsky (University of Paris Nanterre)

Resonant Narratives.

Sensing the Wandering Souls of Korean Forced-Workers and African Border-Crossers

A “bitter soul” who wanders without being able to settle down, a ghost who offers help so that someone can finally succeed in crossing a border: so many intangible entities that embody the dead in migration. This paper explores a selection of accounts about souls, ghosts, and spectres collected in the course of our respective investigations on Korean forced-workers who died in Japan in the 20th century and on deaths at the European borders in the 21st century. These first-person accounts describe different ways of dealing with the dead whose bodies cannot be repatriated or even found. How do the living come into contact with the dead, who may be close to them but also remain both unknown and yet familiar, and with whom they share a common longing for a home? In the narratives selected for analysis, the sensory dimension is at the heart of entanglements between the materiality and immateriality of the dead. For example, these connections can be experienced and intensified through dreams that leave lingering sensations, through the weight of a funeral urn, or through a return to places where the dead have lived. Dreams, places, material artefacts, and the way our interlocutors approach them through the senses (visual, auditory, haptic, olfactory) foster the emergence of affects and put the imagination to work.

We aim to bring into resonance different narratives related to deaths that occurred in different places and at different times. Our hypothesis is that the interplay between our respective fieldwork will bring out both the singularities and the similarities present in affective engagement with the dead in/by migration. Through an interplay of resonance, we will take terms and gestures from one field into the other. In doing so, we wish to explore how an anthropology focused on the sensory can bring to light the interdependence of human experiences beyond their specificity and thus contribute to greater accountability.

Florence Galmiche is an associate professor at the Université Paris Cité, a member of the Centre for Studies on China, Korea and Japan (EHESS-CNRS-UPCité), and a junior member of the Academic Institute of France (IUF). Her research in Anthropology focuses on Korea and is based on two main themes. The first one revolves around the contemporary practices of Buddhism, especially those that aim to have an influence on this world. The second one focuses on the relations between the living and the dead, more specifically on the contemporary treatment of the Korean dead from Japanese colonial mobilisation. She is the author of "Prendre soin des âmes amères d'un pays disparu: Rapatriements et alliances avec les morts coloniaux coréens au Japon". *Traces et mobilités posthumes. Rêver les futurs des défunts en contextes migratoires*, directed by Carolina Kobelinsky and Lilyane Rachedi, Editions Petra, 2023, p. 35-72 ; "Praying in Kangnam and Longing for the Mountains: The Dilemma of Centrality in Contemporary Korean Buddhism". *New Perspectives in Modern Korean Buddhism*, directed by Hwansoo Ilmee Kim and Jin Y. Park, Suny Press, 2022, p. 251-75.

Carolina Kobelinsky is CNRS Research fellow in anthropology at the Laboratory of Ethnology and Comparative Sociology, University of Paris Nanterre. Her current research deals with the material and symbolic treatment of dead migrants at the Southern borders of Europe. Her latest publications are a co-edited volume (with L. Rachédi) entitled *Traces et mobilités posthumes. Rêver les futurs des défunts en contextes migratoires* (Pétra, 2023), a collective essay (with M. Lagumier, C. Jungen, S. Houdart, A. Herrou, A. Guillou & S. Carton de Grammont), *Parier sur l'espérance. Exercice d'anticipation pour s'accrocher à ce qui vient* (Cambourakis, 2023), an article (with F. Furri), *Towards a New Kinship? Affective Engagements with Migrants Dead in the Mediterranean*, in the *Thanatic Ethics Special Issue* published in *Interventions* (2023), and a short piece (with L. Carayon), *Mourir. Puis disparaître ?* in *Plein droit* (2023).

Thomas Lacroix (Sciences Po Paris, CNRS)

The Sensoriality of Thanatic Ethics: How Representations of Death Imbue Perceptions of Migratory Spaces

This paper defines the moral framework of migration and migrant practices in relation to death. It distinguishes between thanatic moral (a system of representations of the good and the bad) and thanatic ethics (the code of conduct deriving from it). It shows how this framework imbues the very perception of space and time of migration and affects the senses of individuals. The paper draws on personal research on migrant

hometown associations and revisits the works presented in the framework of the thanatic ethics programme.

Thomas Lacroix is a geographer, CNRS director of research at the Centre for International Research of Sciences Po Paris and a fellow of the Institut Convergence Migrations. Thomas Lacroix works on the social and spatial aspects of transnational migratory worlds and the way they affect states and territories. He has published some fifteen books and special issues of journals, including, *Hometown organisations : long distance villageness among Indian Punjabis and North African Berbers* (Palgrave 2016), with Amandine Desille, *International Migrations and Local Governance. A Global Perspective* (Palgrave 2018), with Bidisha Banerjee and Judith Misrahi Barak, a special issue of *Intervention* titled "Thanatic Ethics: The Circulation of Bodies in Migratory Spaces" (2023).

Yumna Masarwa (American College of the Mediterranean)

The Case of French Muslims based on Participant Observation with Muslim Corpse Washers

In Islam, death is not the end; it is a transition from this world to the next. When people die, they go to the *barzakh*. The Persian Arabic word *barzakh* means 'separation,' and the term becomes central to belief in life after death and, thus, co-opts a range of issues related to the continual existence of the soul. *Barzakh* is also understood as a barrier between this world and the world beyond. It acquires a life of its own, where the dead are depicted as conducting an active afterlife.

Based on ethnographic research in Marseille, which includes participant observation with female Muslim corpse washers, this paper examines the relationship between beliefs and practices surrounding death. It shows how the beliefs about the afterlife among French Muslims strongly influence the way Muslim corpse washers care for the 'body of the dead' during the ritual washing and shrouding, when they prepare the body for repatriation to the country of origin. I argue that Muslim corpse washers treat the deceased as persons with agency and not as bodies. Thus, I use the term 'body of the dead' rather than 'dead body.' Muslim corpse washers understand the deceased as an agent who hears and feels. They wash the dead gently so as not to hurt them, recite Qur'anic verses in their ears, talk to them, kiss them and ask for forgiveness. In addition, Muslim corpse washers tell the bereaved families that the deceased hears them and that they should pray for them and ask God to forgive them. This leads to the paradoxical conclusion that the Muslim dead body is subject and object at once.

Yumna Masarwa is an Associate Professor and the Dean 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, the role of French Muslim women in the death 'business,' and Muslim tombs in French cemeteries. Some of her research has been published in *Nouvelles Etudes Francophones, Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East (CSSAAME)*, and *Etudes sur la Mort*.

Judith Misrahi-Barak (University Paul Valéry Montpellier 3)

Drifting as Comprehension: Immersing oneself in Anuk Arudpragasam's A Passage North

This paper will offer a follow up on the article published in the Special Issue on Thanatic Ethics in *Interventions*. "Narrative as Forensics in Michael Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost*" focused on mass killings during the civil war in Sri Lanka, and on the search for the identification of the bones of the murdered. It suggested that the literary text was crafted in such a way as potentially enabling justice to be delivered in an open court of law (*forensis*). If literary *drifting* is sometimes perceived as a stumbling block in the reading of the novel, the article aimed to demonstrate it created a public space to be shared (*forum*), in deliberate opposition to the tearing apart described in the story.

Remaining in the context of the civil war in Sri Lanka, this paper will focus on Anuk Arudpragasam's two short novels, *The Story of a Brief Marriage* (2016) and *A Passage North* (2021). In the latter, notably, Arudpragasam structures his narrative on another kind of *drifting*: Krishan, who moved back to Sri Lanka from India, hears that the woman who had looked after his grandmother after losing both his sons to the war, has just died. His need to identify and understand the causes of Rani's death takes him on a train journey from South to North, across Sri Lanka, to attend the funeral. I will argue that the geographical, mental, emotional and sensory *drifting* he allows himself to be immersed in on the journey takes him and the reader away from *desolation* (from the Latin *de-*, thoroughly + *solus*, alone), to a new form of *comprehension* (from the Latin *cum-*, with + *prehendere*, seize, comprise), and closer to *consolation* (from the Latin *consolari*, *con-* + *sōlārī*, to solace, to soothe), suggesting repair can only be relational.

Judith Misrahi-Barak, a former student at the Ecole Normale Supérieure (Fontenay-aux-Roses), is Professor in Postcolonial Studies at the English Department, University Paul Valéry Montpellier 3, France, where she teaches English and postcolonial literatures. Her prime areas of specialization are Caribbean and Indo- and Sino-Caribbean literatures in English, diaspora and migrant writing, as well as Dalit literatures.

She is General Editor of the series *PoCoPages* (Pulm, Montpellier). *Home* is the latest volume (2023). Her latest publications are an article on Edwidge Danticat's short stories in *The Journal of the Short Story in English* (2023) as well as a chapter

in *The Bloomsbury Handbook on Edwidge Danticat* (2021); an article in a Special Issue of *The Caribbean Quarterly* on Sino-Caribbean literature (2021); and *Kala pani Crossings, Gender and Diaspora: Indian Perspectives* (co-edited with H. Kalpana and Ritu Tyagi, Routledge, 2023). Her monograph in French entitled *Entre Atlantique et océan Indien: les voix de la Caraïbe anglophone* was published with Classiques Garnier (2021).

Alan Rice (University of Central Lancashire)

“What Remains of the Remains”: The Afterlives of Black Bodies in the African Atlantic Imagination

This paper will examine the response of African Atlantic artists and musicians to deaths in the Middle Passage. Imaginative reconstructions of what happened next after death or survival at sea are key to this paper. The concept of Drexciya as developed by Detroit techno artists in the 1990s will be examined through a recording which creates the sounds of imagined utopian, underwater communities formed by the children of pregnant women thrown overboard by slavers. Ellen Gallagher’s visual imaginings of this utopian seascape in her signature piece *Bird in Hand* (2005) will be discussed at length and its implications for more nuanced Black Atlantic theoretical ideas as a counterweight to the nihilism of some contemporary theories of Afro-pessimism will be examined. It will be compared to the works of Lubaina Himid, Jade Montserrat, Isaac Julien and Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons, all of whom discuss middle passage death and survival often through the material reality of the interaction of bodies with water and the earth. The works of Himid, Montserrat, Campos-Pons and Julien, compare Transatlantic slavery to the current migrant crisis in the Mediterranean and beyond, and their discussion of delving “inside the invisible” to make sense of diasporan deaths, the importance of “muscle memory” to identity for generational survivors, of the importance of ritual to memorialise death and of links between labour regimes across centuries will frame the discussion. The paper will use the latest work of Christina Sharpe (*Ordinary Notes*, 2023), and multi-disciplinary perspectives from Avery Gordon, Ian Baucom, Michael Rothberg, Eduardo Glissant, Giorgio Agamben and Dionne Brand to show the importance of a comparative, historical approach to fully understand the multiple meanings of deaths in transit.

Alan Rice is Professor in English and American Studies at UCLan, Preston, co-director of the Institute for Black Atlantic Research (IBAR) and director of the UCLan Research Centre in Migration, Diaspora and Exile (MIDEX). He has published *Radical Narratives of the Black Atlantic* (2003), *Creating Memorials, Building Identities: The Politics of Memory in the Black Atlantic* (2010) and *Inside the Invisible: Memorialising Slavery and Freedom in the Life and Works of Lubaina Himid* (2019). In 2021 he curated the exhibition *Lubaina Himid: Memorial to Zong*. Most recently in 2023 together with Lancaster Black History Group and Facing the Past he has rolled out his Lancaster Slave Trade, Abolition and Fair Trade Tour to new audiences and written the catalogue *Facing the Past: Black Lancastrians* for Lela Harris’s exhibition. In 2023 with Preston Black History Group he organised landmark commemorations for the 80th anniversary of the Battle of Bamber Bridge.

Kaia S. Rønsdal (University of Oslo)

“Your Brother’s Blood is Crying Out to Me from the Ground”

We begin with the ethical assumption that you can never encounter with another human without holding pieces of her life in your hand. We argue that non-generative definitions of hospitality, creates an obscuring binary within a much more complicated, or perhaps simpler engagement. When the relationship between migrant and non-migrant is more nuanced than static notions of hospitality, can fluid hospitality with its sense of calling apply even in cases where one human is dead? Furthermore, when thinking about dead migrant bodies, our spatial premise is that they are perpetually out of place. Rather than absenting the dead bodies, the practices we highlight emplace them. Theologizing that relies on absenting the dead body as “right” and “good,” does injustice to embodied spatial calling.

The bodies we concern ourselves with are the thousands of dead migrants in the Mediterranean Sea and the US/TX border. Using examples from two recovery efforts, Águilas del Desierto, and an operation called Melilli⁵,¹ we will show the ways that the engagement with the bodies of dead migrants enacts interpretations of embodied spatial calling.

These examples point to attending to the cardinal meaning of space. Interacting with the bodies in these ways counter the annihilating effects of migration, death, displacement, being lost. Meaning any practice that absents the dead body, such as Christian burial and narratives of resurrection.

Kaia S. Rønsdal is associate professor in the field of leadership, ethics, spiritual and existential counselling/chaplaincy in plural contexts at the Faculty of Theology, University of Oslo, Norway. Her research interests are in the lived practices and human encounters in civil society, addressing issues such as marginality, migration, borders and peripheries, from perspectives including spatial theory, urbanity, phenomenology and theological ethics. Her research also includes methodological explorations within these perspectives and fields. She is involved with several projects allowing for further explorations on the concept of hospitality in the context of migration. She is the co-editor of *Contemporary Christian-Cultural Values: Migration Encounters in the Nordic Region* (2021) edited by Cecilia Nahfeldt and Kaia S. Rønsdal in the Religion, Resistance, Hospitalities Series (RRH) by Routledge. <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2059-9199>

Emily Askew earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in Philosophy from Smith College graduating cum laude. She received the Master of Arts degree from the University of Northern Iowa with a specialty in Mental Health Counselling. After working as a mental health professional for several years, Dr. Askew was captivated by the theological dimensions of the human experience and returned to school, receiving

¹ Amade M'charek & Sarah Casartelli (2019) Identifying dead migrants: forensic care work and relational citizenship, *Citizenship Studies*, 23:7, 739, <http://doi.org/10.1080/13621025.2019.1651102>.

her Ph.D. in theology from Vanderbilt University. As a Fulbright scholar she studied the impact of Muslim immigration into France and Germany. Her research and publication interests include climate migration, climate gentrification in the US, LGBTQIA migration into the US and the EU and theology and domestic violence.

Corina Stan (Duke University)

The Ethics of Narrative Care in the Work of Abdulrazak Gurnah

In the layered, criss-crossing stories of Abdulrazak Gurnah's novels, migration is rooted in the violent intimacies of continents. Whether physical disappearance, social death, cultural annihilation, or insinuation in a series of strokes, death anchors many of his stories, imposing the obligation of a quest: archival research, reading of notebooks, interviewing witnesses, and calibrating the distance from which lives can be pieced back together with integrity. In this talk, I propose to tease out an ethics of narrative care from a close engagement with *Afterlives*, Gurnah's 2022 novel, set in German East Africa and East Germany. The novel is organized around the "negative space" created by the disappearance, in Germany, of Ilyas Hassan, a former fighter in the Schutztruppe Askari, who had not only supported the German colonial occupation in East Africa, but also the recolonizing aspirations of the Nazi government. I argue that the novel's commitment is not only to recovering the story of Ilyas's undignified allegiances after his absurd and brutal death in a camp, but also—primarily, through Gurnah's formal choices—to intimating a sense of the affordances of narrative itself.

Corina Stan is Associate Professor of Comparative Literature at Duke University. She is co-editor, with Charlotte Sussman, of *The Palgrave Handbook of European Migration in Literature and Culture* (forthcoming, 2023) and the author of *The Art of Distances. Ethical Thinking in Twentieth-Century Literature* (Northwestern University Press, 2018). She has also published work in scholarly journals - *New German Critique*, *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, *Comparative Literature Studies*, *Modern Language Notes*, *NOVEL*, *Philosophy and Literature*, *Critical Inquiry*, *English Studies*, among others - and in public venues such as *The Point*, *Aeon*, *Esprit*, *LA Times*, *Public Books*. She is currently writing a monograph on the European self-understanding after decolonization, entitled *After the West*.