

# Women in French UK-Ireland 2023 Conference

## *Women and/in Crisis*

### *Femmes et/en crise*

#### Book of Abstracts

**Friday 26<sup>th</sup> May**

**Session 1: 2.00–3.30pm**

**1.1 Motherhood**

**Stephanie Schechner: ‘Working-Class Mothers Coming to Terms with their Lesbian Daughters in the Novels of Mireille Best’**

When scholars first began to write about lesbians in French literature, the focus was on wealthy and bourgeois women associated with “Left Bank Women” like Djuna Barnes, Colette, and Nathalie Barney. Scholars fell into a standard narrative about the working class, namely that homophobia was rampant in uneducated communities. Due to the triple oppression faced by white working-class lesbians (classism, sexism, and homophobia), many lesbian writers cultivated invisibility as a survival strategy (a topic I and others have explored, see for example “Invisible Women: Retracing the Lives of French Working-Class Lesbians, 1880-1930” by Francesca Canadé Sautman). Mireille Best (1943-2005) offers a different and more complex view of working-class women, one that forces us to acknowledge a diverse set of reactions to lesbians within the community. In this paper, I will examine her portrayal of how working-class mothers react to their daughters’ identification as lesbian. Across her three novels (*Hymne aux murènes*, *Camille en octobre*, and *Il n’y a pas d’hommes au Paradis*) she offers a wide range of maternal figures some of whom react as though in crisis while others treat their daughter’s lesbianism as a blessing or a non-issue. Best uses humor, ambiguity, and silence to create complex representations of these coming-out moments. My central question in this paper is how a reading of these moments across Best's oeuvre will lead us to a more nuanced understanding of her representations of working-class motherhood.

**Stephanie Schechner** is a Professor of French at Widener University located in Chester, Pennsylvania, USA. She has published extensively on Mireille Best as well as on other French and Francophone women writers including Jovette Marchessault, Colette, Nathalie Sarraute, Rachilde, Marguerite Duras and Jocelyne François. Her English translation of Mireille Best’s novel *Camille en octobre* was published by Seagull Books in October 2019.

**Julie Rodgers: 'Mères en crises: Negotiating Maternal Regret Through Narrative'**

In her seminal study *Narratives of Mothering* (2009), Gill Rye astutely draws our attention to an emerging body of first-person texts by contemporary French and Francophone women that privilege maternal subjectivity. What has become increasingly evident since then, however, is that it might in fact be more useful to employ the term 'maternal counternarrative' or even 'maternal crisis narrative' to designate these publications that continue to increase in number each year. This is due to the way in which the authors and protagonists of these works deliberately enter into conflict with prescribed and traditional ideologies of motherhood in a bid to unveil the more problematic aspects of the lived experience. Recent publications by French and Francophone women writers tackle a wide range of maternal crises, such as maternal ambivalence (Abécassis), infanticide (Slimani), maternal bereavement (Daull), and the choice to be childfree (Lê). Very recently, a new form of maternal crisis has come to the fore in the maternal counternarrative in French, namely, the mother who regrets her children. That a mother should have children and then regret them is perhaps the ultimate 'conflict' or 'crisis' in relation to normative cultural and societal constructions of motherhood. With close reference to two texts, *Mal de Mères* (Stéphanie Thomas, 2021) and *Ce qui gronde* (Marie Petitcuénnot, 2021) this paper will examine the uncomfortable relationship that we have with the concept of maternal regret as well as the role played by narrative in the negotiation of this particular affective crisis.

**Julie Rodgers** is Associate Professor and Subject Lead in French at Maynooth University. Her scholarly interests include Quebec literature and culture, women's writing in French, and French and Francophone women's cinema. Her current research focuses on the production and reception of maternal counternarratives and incorporates the study of a wide range of mothering experiences that do not correspond to the normative, patriarchal script of motherhood. Julie is co-editor of *The Truth About (M)Otherhood: Choosing to be Childfree* (Demeter, 2021) and is part of a team of researchers on the EU H2020-funded MotherNet Project.

**Orsolya Petocz: 'Writing about Stigmatisation : Évelyne Pisier and Marie Darrieussecq's Works about "Distilbène"'**

In her 2021 *La Familia grande*, Camille Kouchner testifies to the event of incestuous rape within her family. The book focusses largely on Kouchner's relationship with her mother, Évelyne Pisier, sociologist and writer. Pisier's own literary works are mentioned in *La Familia grande* and in interviews with Kouchner. From *La dernière fois* (1994), and Pisier's childhood in Cuba, to *Une question d'âge* (2005), which can be read as touching on the rape committed by Olivier Duhamel.

Pisier's TV film *Vital désir* (2010) sheds light on the stigmatised drug 'Distilbène', intentionally creating a fictional narrative to unveil the harms of the stigmatisation and silence which surround the anti-miscarriage drug. Starting from the work of Évelyne Pisier, this paper brings in Marie Darrieussecq's own experiences with the drug, and her activism. Darrieussecq notes that her personal experiences have impacted the imagery of her novels, from notions of monstrosity to childlessness. I thus propose to put Pisier and Darrieussecq in conversation around a close analysis of descriptions of motherhood, stigmatisation, and shame. I highlight connections between the two writers to offer a reading of *Truismes* (1996), and an introduction to Darrieussecq's and Pisier's work with the Réseau DES, a Distilbène related association – this brings in an analysis of Pisier's *Vital Désir*. I argue, in this, and other papers, that a study of a network of women writers, including their lesser known works, might allow us to reread expressions of trauma and autobiographically tainted pieces of fiction.

**Orsolya Katalin Petocz** is a PhD researcher in the University of Cambridge Italian Department. On a blurred line between visual art, (moving) image, and writing, Petocz explores possibilities of queer testimony and the expression of trauma, between invisibility and (hyper)visibility of marginalised (queer) experiences. From Holocaust memory to testimonies of the HIV-AIDS crisis, Petocz pushes towards an analysis of contemporary resurfacings of memory between Italian and Francophone works. She intertwines philosophical, politico-philosophical and literary analysis for the elaboration of a methodological approach to testimony. Petocz has forthcoming pieces on these topics.

## 1.2 A Nanny in Crisis: *Chanson douce*

Leïla Slimani's *Chanson douce*, which won the Prix Goncourt in 2016, has been translated into more than 40 languages and had sold more than a million copies by 2019. It begins with the brutal murder of two children by their nanny and then returns to unravel the events which led up to this moment of crisis. Much of the book focuses on the tensions between Myriam, the mother, and Louise, the woman hired to provide childcare. In this panel, we will explore the ways in which the portrayal of a contemporary woman in domestic service in *Chanson douce* confirms or challenges tropes about women in domestic service in earlier French fiction.

### **Jessica Rushton: 'From the Malevolent Maidservant to the Nasty Nanny: (Re)Making a Murderer in Leïla Slimani's *Chanson douce* (2016)'**

This paper argues that Leïla Slimani's Goncourt Prize winning novel, *Chanson douce*, recontextualizes and renews a nineteenth-century social imaginary that constructed the female servant as danger around children through the representation of the twenty-first-century avatar: the nanny. The nineteenth-century bourgeoisie saw female servants as scapegoats for vice in the bourgeois home, blaming them for contaminating their children with *mauvaises habitudes*. Nineteenth-century masters and mistresses also feared that female servants had the capacity to inflict their revenge for their own mistreatment onto the household's children. The first part of this paper demonstrates how these nineteenth-century fears constructed the social imaginary of a malevolent maidservant through the analysis of a variety of examples from nineteenth-century literary and non-literary discourses (such as novels, household manuals, and newspapers). These discourses highlight how allegedly 'loyal' servants who were trusted with the care and education of the bourgeoisie's children then turned out to be deadly. This analysis also demonstrates how the press facilitated the permeation of the social imaginary into the public consciousness. I then demonstrate how Slimani renews, as well as amplifies, previous nineteenth-century stereotypes and prejudices surrounding these domestic figures by depicting an increasing sense of wariness surrounding the figure of the nanny in *Chanson douce*. I propose that Slimani's novel moves beyond the fears depicted in the nineteenth-century discourses in order to transform the murderous *bonne* in the bourgeois home into a twenty-first-century *nounou* in a *bobo* apartment.

**Jessica Rushton** is a Ph.D. student at Durham University. Her doctoral project, provisionally entitled 'Revolting Maids: The Nineteenth-Century Social Imaginary of the Rebellious Maidservant', explores how a socio-cultural construct of the female servant as a dangerous and rebellious figure is produced and reinforced through nineteenth-century literary and non-literary discourses.

**Ewa Szypula: 'Madame Bovary on Instagram'**

Slimani's *Chanson douce* presents a number of parallels to Flaubert's nineteenth-century bestseller *Madame Bovary*. Echoes of Emma Bovary can be found in several of Slimani's female characters, including the two middle-class mothers Myriam and her friend Emma (whose briefly evoked inner torment, as well as her modern-day penchant for using social media to showcase her 'perfect' family life, inspired the title of this paper), but especially in Louise, Myriam's nanny. In this paper, I focus on the twin figures of Emma Bovary and Louise. Both women are under pressure to perform respectability; both find themselves confined to roles (such as homemaker, mother) which are ill-suited to their desires and personalities; both come under intense financial stress and confront financial ruin, in each case precipitating a crisis; and both are on a search for what Françoise Gaillard has termed 'moments parfaits' as they attempt to refashion their identities through the stories they tell about themselves. I argue that a comparison of the two texts shows how the burden of performing respectability has shifted from the middle classes and onto the 'gig economy' class, to which Louise belongs. The psychological pressure of keeping up appearances, which has to an extent shifted from mistress to maid between the nineteenth century and today, combined with the employers' perception of Louise as a disposable automaton, fuels the growing crisis central to Slimani's novel.

**Dr Ewa Szypula** completed her PhD on Balzac at King's College London in 2013. Her monograph, *Balzac's Love Letters: Correspondence and the Literary Imagination* (Legenda, 2016), funded by the MHRA Research Scholarship, is the first study of Balzac's letters as literature, and led to an invitation to contribute to *The Cambridge Companion to Balzac* (Cambridge University Press, 2017). She currently lectures at the University of Nottingham.

**Martina Williams: 'A Cuckoo in the Nest? Homelessness in *Chanson douce*'**

*Chanson douce* takes as one of its two epigraphs a quote from Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment* which begins 'Comprenez-vous, Monsieur, comprenez-vous ce que cela signifie quand on n'a plus où aller?'. Homelessness features in at least two further ways in *Chanson douce*. First, it is a real practical risk for Louise. Her work as a nanny is precarious and poorly paid and yet she is reliant on access to the capital where there is demand for childcare for wealthy professional families. Second, I will argue that all of the characters in the novel struggle to create a home, even where they have a living space which they rent or own. Louise's studio flat is deliberately anonymous and she minimises the time which she spends there. The family for whom Louise works have a flat which they feel is cramped and unbearably oppressive, at least until they are able to

benefit from Louise's domestic labour. I will demonstrate that homelessness is one of the key factors which precipitate the novel's key moment of crisis, the murder of the two children. Whilst a risk of homelessness is a longstanding feature of domestic service (a dismissed maid would be out of a house as well as out of a job), the risk is particularly acute for Louise as a result of the particular form which her domestic service takes; she is imagined as an independent worker and not a part of the household. I will argue that the portrayal of Louise's homelessness in the bestselling novel *Chanson douce* is suggestive of a fear that we are (or remain) in a moment of crisis related to the relationship between women, the home, and work.

**Dr Martina Williams** completed a PhD on ethics and politics in Hélène Cixous's theatre at the University of Nottingham in 2016. She is currently revising this thesis for publication. She has held teaching posts at Queen Mary, University of London and the University of Nottingham.

### 1.3 Bodily Crises

#### Naomi Jouan: 'Du corps victime au corps vengeur : la fiction comme outil militant'

Dans le milieu cinématographique, les films de *Rape and revenge* ont beaucoup été critiqués, car ils érotiseraient la violence sexuelle, ce genre étant majoritairement investi par des hommes. Virginie Despentes, dans *King Kong Théorie*, écrit que dans ces films, les réalisateurs montrent comment ils réagiraient s'ils étaient « à la place des femmes, face au viol. » (p. 45) Elle précise que cette esthétique décrédibilise les victimes de viol en posant la question : « comment ça se fait que vous ne vous défendez pas plus brutalement? » (p. 46) Elle réinvestit néanmoins ce sous-genre dans *Baise-moi*, en en faisant un topos féministe. Les vagues de dénonciations de #MeToo ont mis en crise les discours sociétaux entourant les agressions sexuelles et des écrivaines de l'extrême contemporain s'approprient le genre du *Rape and revenge* pour mettre la fiction au service d'une vengeance féministe. C'est le cas de Marcia Burnier avec son livre *Les orageuses*, dans lequel elle propose une piste de réflexion sur la manière de se rendre justice en dehors des tribunaux. Elle s'éloigne de la pure violence physique que mettait en scène Despentes en proposant un récit polyphonique sur la sororité qui offre un contrepoids à cette crise à la fois personnelle (traumatique) et collective (discursive). La fiction permet de problématiser le corps des protagonistes, d'abord corps violé, corps objectifié, qui devient corps agent, corps puissant, et permet aux personnages de recréer une nouvelle narrative, pour elles-mêmes comme pour la société. Nous verrons comment la fiction littéraire permet de mettre en corps des personnages et comment la transformation s'opère à travers la vengeance, du corps victime individuel au corps vengeur collectif.

**Naomi Jouan** est doctorante à l'Université du Québec à Montréal en études littéraires, concentration en études féministes. Son projet de thèse en recherche-crédation consiste à explorer comment les corps féminins agressés sexuellement sont mis en scène et problématisés dans la littérature extracontemporaine des femmes québécoises. Elle se spécialise dans l'imaginaire des corps, les récits de témoignages d'agressions sexuelles, le passage d'une situation réelle à une mise en scène fictionnalisée et ce qu'apporte la création.

#### Owen Heathcote: 'Writing, Reading, Surviving Rape: Chantal Chawaf's *Nocturnes*'

In her forthcoming survey, *Féminicides. Une histoire mondiale* (La Découverte, 2022), Christelle Taraud demonstrates the ubiquity and the seeming eternity of male violence against women. A recent 'documentaire d'utilité publique' entitled 'Réparer les vivantes' on LCP (31 August 2022) showed how, despite this violence, women's groups and agencies can support 'victims' of rape though the traumas of male violence by helping women to re-inhabit their pre-crisis identities and

thereby put them in a position to confront and reconfigure the ensuing trauma. This latter approach echoes and reinforces what Chantal Chawaf has written in her recent trilogy of rape narratives entitled *Nocturnes* (June 2022). In *Nocturnes* Chawaf claims that her writing enables her to embark on ‘la mise à mort de la mort par le langage’ (Podcast with Nicolas Gary, 18 July 2022). In *Nocturnes*, Chawaf’s three female protagonists are enabled to work through trauma via the agency of written language rather than through the more traditional therapy of the talking cure. This paper will examine *Nocturnes* in order to assess the curative powers of literature for the author, the female protagonists and the reader. It will thus suggest new avenues in trauma studies and in the reparative writing and reading of literature.

**Owen Heathcote** is a Senior Research Fellow in Modern French Studies at the University of Bradford. He has published extensively on the relations between violence, gender and representation in such authors as Balzac, Cardinal, Chawaf, Desportes, Duras, Guibert, Hyvrard, Jourdan and Wittig. He is the author of *Balzac and Violence* (2009) and *From Bad Boys to New Men? Masculinity, Sexuality and Violence in the Work of Éric Jourdan* (2014).



**Session 2: 4.00–5.00pm****2.1 Virginie Despentes****Michèle Schaal: ‘Masculinities in/as Crisis: Virginie Despentes’s *Vernon Subutex*’**

From the first academic studies on her work to the most recent ones, scholars have emphasized how Virginie Despentes is an acerbic, yet fair, portraitist of how toxic gender norms continue to negatively impact women’s identities and lived experiences. Nonetheless, she has also, from the very beginning of her career, provided a reflection on masculinities. Her dissection of both hegemonic and alternative virilities in her trilogy *Vernon Subutex* (2015-2017) participates in this critical endeavor. *Vernon Subutex*’s portrait of men’s identities in twenty-first-century France particularly echoes the study *Histoire de la virilité* (2011, eds. Alain Corbier, Jean-Jacques Courtine and Georges Vigarello). Starting in the twentieth century, various historical events, equal movements, and crises (including feminism, new technologies, neoliberalism, and *précarité*, among others) have (re)defined masculinity. While such changes enabled the emergence of alternative gender identities, they also rendered the achievement of “conventional” virility more difficult to attain. Paradoxically, despite these challenges, masculinity continues to grant men (even more so if they are white, straight, and from the middle-class) many privileges. In this presentation, I will explore how this paradoxical context (from which men feel excluded but undeniably remain dominant) prompted the characters Patrice, Xavier, and Vernon to develop masculine identities. They respectively embrace working-class, neo-fascist, and shamanic virilities in reaction to the various crises and changes they have faced. Despentes ultimately provides a mixed portrayal of contemporary masculinities in and as crisis since they remain marred by heteropatriarchal norms, including misogyny, homophobia, and racism. To the author, French society, thus, remains profoundly androcentric, homophobic, racist, and classist as well.

**Michèle A. Schaal** is Associate Professor of French and Women’s and Gender Studies at Iowa State University. She specializes in Virginie Despentes’s work, as well as contemporary French feminisms and women writers, with a current emphasis on essays and manifestos. Dr. Schaal is the author of *Une Troisième vague féministe et littéraire* (Brill, 2017) and the co-editor, together with Dr. Arline Cravens, of the first scholarly volume dedicated to Despentes for the *Rocky Mountain Review* (2018). She also co-edited, with Prof. Adrienne Angelo, a special issue on “Contemporary ‘Feminisms’” for *French Cultural Studies* (2020). Dr. Schaal is currently working on a monograph titled *The Art of Genre- and Genderbending: Virginie Despentes’s Authorial Politics*, to be published by Peter Lang.

**Dominique Carlini Versini: 'De #MeToo au Covid : imaginaires de crises dans *Cher Connard* (2002) de Virginie Despentes'**

La crise est au cœur du dernier roman de Virginie Despentes, *Cher Connard*, paru en août 2022. Crise existentielle pour le protagoniste masculin, Oscar Jayack, le « cher connard » dont il est question dans le titre de l'ouvrage, qui se retrouve « metooïs[é] » (p. 28) au début de ce roman d'inspiration épistolaire, caractérisé par un nombre d'échanges entre Oscar et Rebecca Latté, une grande actrice française féministe délaissée par l'industrie du cinéma alors qu'elle atteint la cinquantaine, avec qui il forme une amitié inattendue. De fait, la crise au centre des rapports femmes-hommes est explorée dans le récit, qui délivre une riche réflexion sur les féminismes contemporains, le traumatisme lié aux violences sexuelles et aux différentes formes de harcèlement et la masculinité toxique, notamment à travers les chroniques du troisième personnage dont on entend la voix, Zoé Katana. Enfin, la crise sanitaire est également dépeinte, puisque le confinement constitue la toile de fond d'une partie du récit et participe du processus d'introspection des personnages. À travers cette communication, je propose donc de me pencher sur les différents modes de crise brièvement abordés dans ce résumé et de réfléchir à leur imbrication dans le récit. Cette étude sera le moyen de commenter à la fois la pensée féministe intersectionnelle de Despentes tout en observant l'évolution de sa conception des rapports femmes-hommes. Elle me permettra également de situer l'imaginaire de crise de *Cher Connard* dans l'œuvre despentienne et dans une esthétique romanesque contemporaine plus large qui place la crise en son centre.

**Dominique Carlini Versini** est Maîtresse de Conférences au département de français de l'Université de Durham et elle se spécialise dans l'étude d'œuvres d'autrices et de réalisatrices françaises à la période contemporaine. Sa première monographie *Figures de l'excès chez Marie Darrieussecq, Virginie Despentes et Marina de Van : Ecrire et filmer le corps-frontière* vient d'être publiée chez Brill, dans la collection « Faux Titre ». Ses recherches ont paru dans des revues telles que *Women in French Studies*, *Dalhousie French Studies*, *L'Esprit Créateur*, *Fixxion*, *French Studies* et *Nottingham French Studies*. Elle dirige en ce moment deux numéros spéciaux sur les récits et représentations de l'avortement pour *Modern and Contemporary France* and *L'Esprit Créateur* (en collaboration avec Caroline Verdier).

## 2.2 Crisis and Creation

### Isabelle Marc: 'La féminité en crise chez Mylène Farmer'

En 1987, Mylène Farmer cartonnait avec «Sans contrefaçon». Dans celui qui deviendra un de ses tubes iconiques, l'artiste, qui s'était (re-)présentée tour à tour comme une Lolita décalée puis comme une «libertine» sulfureuse, adopte une attitude de provocation/déstabilisation/questionnement des identités de genre et de sa propre féminité. En effet, sur un air dansant et légèrement oriental, avec un look qu'à l'époque on qualifiait d'androgyné, Farmer posait la question toute rhétorique : « dis maman, pourquoi je ne suis pas un garçon ». La réponse était livrée dans le refrain : « sans contrefaçon, je suis un garçon ». Cette chanson formule ainsi avec toute la simplicité et la force aphoristique de la pop nombre des questionnements sur l'identité sexuelle qui ont marqué les quatre dernières décennies. Il n'est donc pas surprenant que les collectifs LGTBQI se soient approprié « Sans contrefaçon » comme hymne et Mylène Farmer comme égérie. Dans ma communication, j'analyserai comment Mylène Farmer, d'abord grâce à « Sans contrefaçon », mais pas exclusivement, est devenue une icône pour les collectifs LGTBQI. J'essaierai de comprendre les mécanismes expressifs et promotionnels qui ont favorisé une réception empathique de la part de ces collectifs et comment elle continue, encore aujourd'hui, à incarner/représenter/promouvoir des identités sexuelles qui mettent à mal les visions traditionnelles de la féminité. Enfin, mon travail essaiera de démontrer dans quelle mesure l'œuvre pop de Mylène Farmer se situe dans un espace ambivalent, donc critique, à la fois en ce qui concerne son esthétique et sa réception.

Docteure en littérature française de l'université Complutense de Madrid (Espagne) où elle est MCF HDR, **Isabelle Marc** travaille sur la culture française contemporaine ; elle s'intéresse notamment aux musiques et aux littératures mainstream, dans leurs rapports à l'esthétique (populaire, élevée, moyenne), à l'identité (nationale, de genre, de race) et aux phénomènes de transculturalité dans le contexte européen (transferts musicaux et diplomatie musicale). Du point de vue des études culturelles et des études de genre, elle a publié de nombreux travaux sur les auteurs-compositeurs-interprètes (ACI) français et les musiques actuelles en France dans et aussi sur des écrivaines contemporaines, notamment Virginie Despentes. Elle a récemment co-dirigé trois volumes collectifs : *The Singer-Songwriter in Europe : Paradigms, Politics and Place* (Routledge, 2016) ; *Canon et écrits de femmes en France et en Espagne dans l'actualité (2011-2016)* (Peter Lang, 2020) et *Carmen revisitée/Revisiter Carmen* (Peter Lang, 2020). En 2014-2015, elle a obtenu une Leverhulme Research Fellowship pour étudier les transferts musicaux dans leurs rapports aux politiques culturelles publiques à l'université de Leeds (Royaume-Uni), où elle co-dirige

l'European Popular Musics Research Group. En 2021-2022, elle a été Fellow à l'USIAS de Strasbourg pour étudier les représentations de genre dans les musiques populaires actuelles en France. Elle dirige également la revue *Thélème. Revista Complutense de Estudios Franceses* ainsi que le Groupe de recherches en études littéraires et culturelles et études de genre de l'université Complutense de Madrid.

**Sandra Daroczi: 'No Laughing Matter? War, Humour and Creativity in the Works of Darina al-Joundi and Patricia Finaly'**

After more than 70 years of *pax americana* dominating the Western hemisphere, war was rarely on the list of crises humanity needed to tackle. Nonetheless, armed conflicts in the Middle East, the horn of Africa, between the drug cartels in South America, and more recently the Russo-Ukrainian War have clearly shown that war and its corollaries remain a major contemporary crisis. Women's roles in wars and armed conflicts are often examined through the lens of humanitarian aid, studies rarely dwelling on the day-to-day lived experiences of women and girls. This paper aims to present and compare two novels that fill in this gap in our understanding of war: Darina al-Joundi's *Le Jour où Nina Simone a cessé de chanter* (2008) and Patricia Finaly's *Le Gai ghetto* (1970). Both novels are autofictions set during traumatic conflicts and periods of intense social and personal crisis: the Lebanese Civil War in al-Joundi's work, and World War Two in Finaly's novel. Both narrators deal with the challenges imposed to identity formation by either Islam or Judaism, and with the violence that was often legitimized through religious discourse. In both novels, the narrators internalize and embody the violence and traumas of war, before re-presenting them in writing through devices such as humour, exaggeration, juxtaposition, satire, and irony. The aim of this paper is to analyse the extent to which humour can become an effective means of survival and resistance, in the face of war and religious violence. In addition, I will also look at how both narrators use creative endeavours (writing, theatre, and cinema) to revisit, challenge, and rewrite hegemonic sites of memory. The choice of novels also speaks to WiF's desire to 'promote critical interest in less known French and Francophone women writers.' While Darina al-Joundi is very well known in the theatrical and cinematic *milieux*, her written work remains understudied, with the very notable exception of Helen Vassallo's brilliant translations and analyses. Professor Lucille Cairns was the only one to have analysed 'Finaly's discursive scalpel'; moreover, Finaly's two published novels have already been digitized by the BNF, since they are 'indisponible[s] dans [leur] format d'origine.'

**Dr Sandra Daroczi** is a Lecturer in French Studies at the University of Bath, having carried out her doctoral research at the University of Exeter with a project analysing the reception of fictional works by contemporary French women writers. She guest coedited a special issue of *L'Esprit créateur* (2018) and has an article on depictions of food in Marie Darrieussecq's work in a special issue of the *Journal of Romance Studies* (2020). She has also contributed to edited collections, with chapters on Darrieussecq, Julia Kristeva, and the MLF. She is currently working on a monograph examining the reading dialogues put forward by Monique Wittig's fiction.

## 2.3 Childhood

### **Sarah Tribout: 'Literature and Care: Child Neglect in Delphine de Vigan's *Loyautés*'**

Delphine de Vigan's *Les Loyautés* (2019) is a fictional novel about child neglect. Twelve-year-old Théo sinks into alcohol abuse, the victim of his parents' messy divorce, his father's neglect and his mother's silence. Across the fractured narrative told in different voices, we realise that there are many hidden stories of isolation and vulnerability in domestic settings.

Despite its best-selling status, Vigan's work as a whole has received very little critical attention. In *Les Loyautés*, Vigan turns the coming of age novel on its head in an examination of children who have been robbed of their childhood, through neglect, abuse, or being forced into the role of the parentified child or child carer. Care is something that is undervalued and overlooked in society and I argue that in exploring the subject of neglect through raw social realism, Vigan places the public debate about care centre stage. Vigan has variously treated topics such as eating disorders, homelessness, abuse, mental illness, and autism and she has a valuable contribution to make to the medical humanities.

I first examine how an Ethics of Care model can offer a framework with which to approach texts and in this respect consider recent interventions by Alexandre Gefen to show how literature can be effective in promoting a more caring society and in tackling social issues. Next, I examine the issues of vulnerability and care in the novel before looking at the act of writing, betrayal, and agency. The topic of neglect is tragically overlooked and this paper seeks to give it the urgent attention that it needs.

**Sarah Tribout-Joseph** is Senior Lecturer in French and Francophone Studies at the University of Edinburgh. There have been two overlapping strands to her recent research: one on literary and filmic engagement with social justice in the city and the *banlieue* and a second on care and the limits of care. Her most recent publications include articles on inequality, discrimination and police violence in Ladj Ly's film *Misérables*; Care narratives by Annie Ernaux and Michael Rosen in the light of the Coronavirus pandemic; and Homelessness, disability, and care in Delphine de Vigan's *No et moi*. She is currently working on a monograph on Care. Her previous research was on Proust, modernism, dialogue and the visual arts.

### **Jasmine D. Cooper: 'Spiralling Into and Out of Crisis: Transracial Adoption, Rage and the Reclamation of Agency in Amandine Gay's *Une poupée en chocolat* (2021)'**

In her 2021 text, *Une poupée en chocolat*, Amandine Gay details her experiences of trauma and crisis as both a transracial adoptee and a queer Black woman in France. As 'une personne née sous

X', she is severed from her ancestry, her history and black cultural heritages and practices. Her precarious sense of belonging results in complex crises of identity, 'tendances autodestructrices' and a growing rage at the injustices she endures. Indeed, rage is central to the momentum generated in this blend of autobiography, autotheory and critical analysis. Anger pulses throughout the personal recollections of racism, micro-aggressions and exclusion; but rage is keenly felt in her comprehensive analysis of systemic failures and social injustices, reflected in the 'spirales de questionnements' that emerge. The vector of the spiral is a potent frame for the analysis of rage, crisis and the recuperation of agency. Firstly, the spiral mirrors the expansive scope of Gay's text: starting from the personal, the text curves outwards into a poignant afrofeminist, materialist critique and exposure of historic and ongoing socio-political and juridical injustices in France. Equally, 'to spiral' as a marker of 'a continuous or dramatic increase' in the intensity of feeling or activity can be read in the multiple crises Gay narrates. Yet, whilst emotional spiraling is often characterized as wholly negative or destructive, Gay harnesses her anger and mobilises it as an energizing force against complacency and silence. Thus, the spiral – alongside other motifs of expansion or widening in the text – is symbolic of how Gay both bears witness to her entanglement within multiple forms of discrimination and violence, as well as simultaneously gesturing to the potential to widen our notions of family-making, belonging and identity *beyond* existing hegemonic structures. In so doing, Gay defiantly, bravely and uncompromisingly writes towards a reclamation of agency, not just for herself, but for those who came before her and those generations yet to come.

**Jasmine Cooper** recently completed her doctoral thesis entitled 'An End in Herself: Non-Motherhood in Contemporary French Women's Writing' at Newnham College, Cambridge. Her thesis examined non-motherhood in the works of Fatou Diome, Négar Djavadi, Agnès Vannouvong, Linda Lê and Marceline Loridan-Ivens. She teaches twentieth and twenty-first century French literature, thought and culture at Cambridge, and is currently Director of Studies at Corpus Christi College, and Bye-Fellow at Downing College, both in Modern and Medieval Languages. In 2019, she won the award for most inclusive teaching practice by the Cambridge Student-Led Teaching Awards. She is currently co-editing a collection on rage as an affect of resistance in France from 1960 to the present, forthcoming with Peter Lang. Her new project centres on expressions of rage as a decolonial praxis in contemporary works by French women of colour authors and filmmakers.

## Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> May

### Session 4: 9–10.30am

#### 4.1 Caring and Crisis

This three-paper panel examines care and caring as they are affected by crisis. Its theoretical underpinning draws on the rich body of feminist care theory which has assumed new relevance and gained extraordinary purchase during the COVID pandemic. It applies this theory to intimate, embodied relationships of care as elaborated in female-authored narrative fiction, in a range of non-fictional works about caring written by women, and in visual representation through the little-known work of photographer Martine Franck (1938-2012). The emphasis in each paper is on caring for older people, both in institutional contexts and in the home.

#### **Susan Ireland: ‘The Ethics of Care in Retirement-Home Mystery Narratives’**

This paper will examine a burgeoning subgroup of the care home narrative, detective fiction set entirely or partly in retirement communities and featuring elderly residents as detective figures. In recent years, several influential investigative studies of institutional care in France have exposed the inadequacies of a system that is failing the elderly and have documented the privileging of profit over care that has resulted from the rush to benefit from the lucrative market produced by the so-called grey tsunami. The analysis will focus in particular on the ways in which Virginie Lauby’s *Le mouvoir aux alouettes* uses the conventions of the *roman noir* to address issues related to elderabuse identified in the non-fictional works. Indeed, in Lauby’s engaged novel, which exemplifies Claire Gorrara’s contention that post-1968 romans noirs constitute “powerful narratives of protest” (313), unethical practices of care constitute the main crime and determine the unfolding of events. The fact that one of the residents of Les Alouettes is both the narrator and the lead detective foregrounds the perspective of the elderly and encourages empathy for the plight of those who find themselves in similar situations in real life. Throughout the novel, the combination of detection and social criticism incites the reader to reflect on crucial questions concerning longevity and retirement homes and to consider where the guilt lies for allowing substandard care to continue to exist.

**Susan Ireland** is the Orville and Mary Patterson Routt Professor of Literature at Grinnell College. She is an editor of *The Feminist Encyclopedia of French Literature* (Greenwood, 1999) and, with Patrice Proulx, of *Immigrant Narratives in Contemporary France* (Greenwood, 2001) and *Textualizing the Immigrant Experience in Contemporary Quebec* (Praeger, 2004). Her current



research interests include memory studies, trauma narratives, the Algerian novel, representations of the harkis, aging studies, and the literature of immigration and diaspora in France and Quebec.

**Shirley Jordan: ‘Ageing, Crisis and Care in Photographs by Martine Franck’**

This paper on Belgian-born documentary and portrait photographer Martine Franck (1938-2012) will analyse the photographer’s interest in older people, their living conditions, and the care that is provided for them by, for example, volunteers working for the charitable organisation *Les petits frères des Pauvres*. Franck’s ethically driven photographs provide powerful insight into the lives, embodied identities, and physical environments of older people. Her photographic practice often entailed the development of deep relationships with individuals and communities either in, or on the brink of, crisis. This paper will focus on photographs which document situations of care and which form part of Franck’s work in nursing homes such as Nanterre and Ivry, and of her extensive study of care provided in private domestic environments. It will explore her photography as a form of critique of French social policy during the 1970s, notably its inadequacies in terms of care for older people. It will also examine her subsequent more positive coverage of the ways in which *Les petits frères des Pauvres* provides structured care within communities. The paper will offer close readings of specific photographs that demonstrate Franck’s concern, and that allow us to characterise her photography itself as a form of care. It will draw on contemporary feminist care theory to demonstrate the renewed relevance of Franck’s work.

**Shirley Jordan** is Professor of French Studies at Newcastle University. Her research interests are wide, including 20th- and 21st-century women’s writing in French, art and art criticism, photography, and experimental self-narrative across media. Since moving to Newcastle University in 2017, her research has focused on ageing, ageism and care as explored in a range of narratives, visual representations, and theory. She is Co-Lead of the NUCoRE (Newcastle University Centre of Research Excellence) on Ageing and Inequalities and Co-Director of the Centre for the Study of Contemporary Women’s Writing at London University’s School of Advanced Studies. She is currently undertaking a Leverhulme Research Fellowship (2022-23) on the representations of ageing and of care for older people made over several decades by Magnum photographer Martine Franck.

### **Siobhán McIlvanney: ‘The Architecture of Institutionalised Care in Recent French Women’s Writing’**

This paper looks at representations of crises in care homes in recent French women’s writing. The COVID-19 pandemic has trained the social spotlight on the living and dying conditions of the elderly in care homes across the globe. This paper will analyse representations of institutionalised care – both fictionalised and real – as experienced by those being cared for in care homes as well as by those allocated the task of caring for the elderly in EHPADs and private residences in France. It looks at three quite different works within the genre of care literature, two focusing mainly on the experiences of the cared for and one on the life of a professional carer - a growing narrative subsection of care home literature: Régine Détambel’s *Le long séjour* (1991); Christie Ravenne’s *Gagatorium* (2013); and *EHPAD, Une honte française: Maltraitance, Le témoignage choc d’une soignante* (2019), by Anne-Sophie Pelletier. The paper will focus specifically on the architecture of care, examining the intersection of the spatial/geographical with the ethical and practical provision of care. By giving voice to stories of crisis from within the care home, these authors demonstrate the key role the humanities can play in removing the staged façade to reveal the behind-the-scenes reality of many care homes, thereby injecting empathy and sensitivity into the institutionalised care we provide our elderly – and providing them and us with a form of narrative power. However dark their narratives, these texts share the same aim of seeking to manage effectively and humanely the crises in care, and to help us all to age better.

**Siobhán McIlvanney** is Professor of French and Francophone Women’s Writing at King’s College London. She has published extensively on French and Francophone women’s writing and on the origins of the French women’s press. Her current area of research focuses on representations of the female body and on paradigms of ageing. She has recently published a monograph, *Figurations of the Feminine in the Early French Women’s Press, 1758-1848* (Liverpool University Press, 2019) and a co-edited volume, *Women and the City in French Literature and Culture: Reconfiguring the Feminine in the Urban Environment* (University of Wales Press, 2019). Her most recent publication is a book chapter, ‘Fictional Transgressions and the Matter of Bodies’, in *Transgression(s) in Twenty-First-Century Women’s Writing in French* (Brill, 2020), edited by Kate Averis, Egle Kačkute and Catherine Mao.

## 4.2 Crises Inside and Out

### **Mary McCullough: ‘Knitting Through Trauma: Women’s Refashioning of Domestic Duties in Wartime Narratives’**

This paper will give a brief history of knitting and historical explanation of the term “tricoteuse”, and will examine different genres (journals, poems, postcards, fiction) written by French women during World War I (Marcelle Lerouge, Geneviève Duhamel, Marylie Markovitch, and Colette), focusing specifically on how trauma is intertwined with knitting. The narratives complicate the multiple roles women had to play during and after World War I. The texts show how women negotiated their identities, their work, their places in the family and/or society, and their losses. The narratives raise the importance of the tangled complexities of politics, propaganda, patriarchy, and traditional gender roles in a changing society, to help elucidate women’s complicated positions as their trauma parallels that of the soldiers who experienced post-traumatic stress disorder. As women negotiate their patriotism as sock-knitting “marraines de guerre”, nurses, factory workers, agricultural “replacements” for men, and bargain for their precarious positions in society while attempting to heal from sadness and trauma and eventually move beyond the war, they voluntarily or involuntarily attempt to refashion their roles during and after World War I, thus creating a new way forward for French society’s concept of gender.

**Mary McCullough** is Professor of French and the French Program Director at Samford University in Birmingham, Alabama, where she has worked for the past 21 years. She enjoys teaching all levels of the French language, Francophone literature and film, and Core Texts classes (an introduction to literature and philosophy for first year university students). She has published articles on the works of Maryse Condé, Yamina Benguigui, Azouz Begag, Assia Djebar, Leïla Sebbar, and Claude Chabrol. She has also recently turned her research and teaching interests to French narratives on World War II and its aftermath, particularly focusing on domesticity and the representation of women.

### **Claire Moran: ‘Hidden Crises in Berthe Morisot’s Impressionism: Female Anger and Domestic Bliss’**

A re-evaluation of Impressionism is currently taking place, on a number of fronts, through different viewpoints, focusing on industry and manual labour, as well as on domestic space (eg. Shields, 2019; Kalba, 2017 and Moran 2021). In recent decades Impressionist criticism has foregrounded issues of gender and space, questioning assumptions about the separation of spheres and Parisian space through, for example, the figure of the *flâneuse* (D’Souza and McDonough, 2008). My aim

in this paper is to contribute to the discussion on reinterpreting Impressionism by highlighting the hidden realities behind some of the major works of one of the founders of Impressionism, Berthe Morisot (1841-1895). Drawing upon her published letters as well as unpublished correspondence and documents, housed at the Musée Marmottan, Paris, I analyse key paintings such as *Mother and Sister of the Artist* (1869, Washington: National Gallery of Art), *The Cradle* (1872, Musée d'Orsay), *The Wet-Nurse Angèle Feeding Julie* (1880, private collection). I show how the art criticism produced by male critics in both 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>-century writings neglected to see the depression and anger which both fuelled and are displayed thematically in these works. Morisot's personal and aesthetic crises are, I argue, interlinked and, interestingly, echo in the works of and letters from Renoir, Monet and Mallarmé. Anger, despair and depression are rarely discussed in Impressionism but are central, I argue, to its pioneering aesthetics.

**Claire Moran** is Reader in French at Queen's University, Belfast. Her research is broadly based on art and literature in 19<sup>th</sup>c France and Belgium. Most recently (2022), she's published an edited volume with Bloomsbury *Domestic Space in France and Belgium*, as well as two special issues on *19<sup>th</sup>c Belgian Interiors* and on *Intimacy with Dix-Neuf* (2019; 2022). She's currently working on a monograph on Berthe Morisot, contracted with Routledge called *Morisot's Modernism and Impressionist Art*, for which she was awarded the 2021 Society of French Studies Research Prize Fellowship.

### **Mark Lee: 'En bien ou en mal: Prisons, Crises, Nathacha Appanah'**

Selon le dictionnaire Robert, le mot *crise* a pour source étymologique le terme grec *krisis* ou « décision ». Il provient à l'origine du discours médical pour désigner le 'moment d'une maladie caractérisé par un changement subit et généralement décisif, en bien ou en mal'. À la lumière de cette définition, je propose dans cette communication d'interroger un moment et un lieu décisifs dans l'imaginaire littéraire de Nathacha Appanah : la prison. Dans le cadre de ce colloque, le retour persistant de l'espace carcéral dans plusieurs romans, nouvelles et essais de cette autrice présenterait un lieu critique. Il nous invite du fait de sa répétition à explorer son rôle et nous enjoint à demander quels moments décisifs s'y jouent pour quelles 'maladies'. Espace certes d'enfermement et de solitude où l'individu purge en bien ou en mal son infraction du contrat social – *En attendant demain* (2015) – la prison est aussi sous la plume d'Appanah un refuge, un sanctuaire temporaire des maux sociaux – *Tropique de la violence* (2016) – et un endroit à l'écart où se soignent la maladie physique – *Le Dernier frère* (2007) – comme la souffrance psychologique – *Le ciel par-dessus le toit* (2019) – pour ne mentionner que les exemples les plus flagrants. Lieu

où Foucault nous a appris à voir se déployer en concentré les rapports de pouvoir et les valeurs du corps social, quelles fonctions, en bien ou en mal la prison joue-t-elle dans l'écriture d'Appanah?

**Mark Lee** est professeur de littérature contemporaine française à Mount Allison University au Canada. Auteur d'études sur Sarraute, Nothomb, Duras, Varda et Ernaux, il a récemment publié sur l'imaginaire littéraire de Shumona Sinha, et en 2023 paraîtra un article sur les femmes migrantes et la maternité chez Sinha et Nathacha Appanah dans *Contemporary Women's Writing*.

### 4.3 Migration Crises

#### **Natalie Edwards: 'Migration and Multilingualism in the Works of Kim Thúy'**

This paper analyses the literary representation of the crisis of forced migration. It examines the work of a specific writer: Kim Thúy, whose family left Vietnam for Canada during the 1980s, when the author was still a child. Thúy's first language is Vietnamese and she learned French mainly as a refugee in Quebec. Thúy adopted the French language for her literary writing and achieved success with *Ru*, her partially autobiographical account of her migration. This paper focuses upon two of Thúy's later works, both of which are examples of life writing: *Man*, her more overtly autobiographical text, and *A toi*, an epistolary work published with fellow migrant writer Pascal Janovjak. This paper focuses on the narrative strategies Thúy develops to express her multicultural and multilingual identity as a migrant writer. I analyze how this multilingual author blends French and Vietnamese to create a dynamic, plurilingual idiom. Highlighting the interplay between languages as a constant presence in her work, I show that she underlines her dual linguistic heritage and the mixing that this necessitates. I also point to the inconsistent approach she takes to translating Vietnamese vocabulary, reading her technique through theories of translation advanced by Roman Jakobson and Jacques Derrida. I focus on three narrative strategies that Thúy develops: her bilingual inscriptions in the margins of pages, her frequent citations of Vietnamese with no accompanying translation and her creation of words and expressions that meld the two languages to create plurilingual neologisms. These strategies move her writing beyond the blending of two discreet languages to the invention of a new form of communicating migrant subjectivity. This author's dynamic shifting between the two languages highlights the cultural specificity of Quebec as a site of transit and resettlement, and underlines her unique experience of the trauma of migration.

**Natalie Edwards** is Professor of Literature in French and Head of the School of Modern Languages at the University of Bristol. She specializes in transnational writing, migrant writing and women's writing. She has published three monographs in these fields, the most recent of which is *Multilingual Life Writing by French and Francophone Women: Translingual Selves* (Routledge, 2020).

#### **Antonia Wimbush: 'The BUMIDOM: A Gendered Migration "Crisis"??'**

Migration has always been a divisive issue, and the media has frequently adopted the discourse of 'crisis' to tap into people's emotional responses towards migration. In the French context, migration is all the more complex because it involves movement from France's former colonies, forcing

France to confront its colonial past. This paper explores a specific instance of internal migration which occurred in France in the post-war era. Responding to a need to rebuild France after the war, and the high birth rates and unemployment rates which were causing economic decline on the Caribbean islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique, the French government actively facilitated migration to mainland France. In 1963, the BUMIDOM (Bureau pour le développement des migrations dans les départements d'outre-mer) was established. The BUMIDOM facilitated the transportation and recruitment of 160 000 Martinican, Guadeloupean, and Réunionese workers between 1963 and 1982. While they were promised a better life in mainland France, many were given low-paid jobs in transportation and domestic service, and racial discrimination was felt acutely by these Black French citizens from the overseas departments. What is striking about the BUMIDOM is its gendered and racialized approach to migration – officials tapped into stereotypes about Black Antillean men and women, and then oriented training and work opportunities around these stereotypes. This paper will examine how women experienced migration through the BUMIDOM, drawing on policy documents and migrant files located in the Archives nationales in Paris and the Archives départementales in Guadeloupe, as well as on oral history interviews with Antillean women. It will argue that women were oriented towards jobs in mainland France which decreased rather than elevated their social status, and reinforced their domestic roles as mothers, caregivers, and homemakers. For some women, then, migration was perceived as a form of ‘crisis’.

**Dr Antonia Wimbush** is a Leverhulme Early Career Fellow in the Department of Languages, Cultures and Film at the University of Liverpool, and from July 2023 she will be Lecturer in Global French Studies at the University of Melbourne. Her current research project investigates cultural responses to post-war migration from the French Caribbean to mainland France. Her second monograph *BUMIDOM (1963-1982) and its Afterlives: Literature, Memory and Migration* is under contract with Edinburgh University Press, and she has recent and forthcoming work published in *Memory Studies*, *Contemporary French Civilization*, and *Australian Journal of French Studies*.

**Katie Fleming: ‘Bearing Witness Through Sound: The Migrant Crisis in the Films of Mati Diop’**

Contemporary conditions of migration have resulted in a humanitarian crisis, as those fleeing conflict, persecution, poverty, and environmental changes encounter hostile immigration policies. As they seek safety, unprecedented numbers of migrants are forced to cross the seas connecting Europe and Africa by boat: a perilous and often deadly migration route. In recent years, a number of filmmakers have sought to bring this crisis to representation. In doing so, they are forced to

confront the responsibilities and risks at stake in bearing witness to human crises through film. As a result, some have turned to experimental film form, seeking to forge new modes of representation. Two recent films by Mati Diop, *Atlantiques* (2009) and *Atlantique* (2019), explore the stories of the men who make the dangerous journey from Senegal to Europe, and also attend to the women who remain behind, mourning those who die. Both films consider the afterlives of those lost at sea, and sound and the voice become key mechanisms for registering the testimony of migrants. Diop uses sound to draw us into the ethical world of her subjects: as the films moves from the fraught registering of testimony to the sensual, sonic world of the films' settings, Diop engages the spectator in a practice of listening which encompasses the linguistic and the sonic. While focusing on individual lives, Diop also considers broader, intersecting political contexts, both historical and contemporary. In doing so, she highlights the histories and global networks which are so often disavowed in discussions of the contemporary migrant crisis. Thus, in both films, Diop interweaves global contexts and individual testimony, political critique and experimental form, in these intimate explorations of the lives at the centre of the contemporary migrant crisis.

**Dr Katie Fleming** is an Early Career Teaching and Research Fellow at the University of Edinburgh. Her research examines connections between contemporary French and Francophone cinema and philosophy. Her PhD thesis explored questions of politics and ethics in the cinema of Marguerite Duras and Claire Denis. Her current research focuses on the role of sound in work by Francophone female filmmakers. Her research brings contemporary Francophone cinema into dialogue with postcolonial, critical race, film, and sound theory in order to examine the ethical and political possibilities of sound and listening.



**Session 5: 11–12.30pm****5.1 ASMCF Panel****Survival Strategies: Corporeal and Clandestine Responses to Crisis**

This panel brings together three papers on French texts or films in which women go to great lengths to cope with crisis. In the works considered, crisis manifests as a spatial and sensory experience, and pushes women into clandestine and criminal acts. From the first paper to the last, the ‘survival strategies’ in the works in question are increasingly extreme, yet crisis simultaneously figures as an everyday experience. All three papers thus take inspiration from Lauren Berlant’s understanding of ‘crisis ordinariness’, wherein ordinary life is characterised by an affective, attritional state of crisis.

**Emma Flynn: ‘Sensing the City: Psychogeography and *La femme au petit renard*’**

This paper will focus on *La femme au petit renard*, Violette Leduc’s 1965 novella which tells the story of an ‘old lady’ who walks the streets of Paris while living in extreme poverty. Leduc’s lady, in her intense relationship with Paris, staves off loneliness by engendering connections with the everyday objects she encounters. Her experience of crisis is, too, everyday. She is virtually destitute: hungry and poor, with no friends or family to speak of. This, however, insists she derive meaning from the quotidian and, particularly, from an intentional form of wandering around the city. Her wandering is a deeply sensorial experience; she listens to the sounds of the rumbling metro at Jaurès, smelling croissants she cannot have in the hands of schoolgirls. This paper will explore the psychogeographical potentials of the text, considering how the Parisian urban environment impacts the lady’s emotions and behaviours, as well as her search for meaning amongst chaos and crisis. Psychogeography as a concept will not be taken as uncomplicated here, and I will argue for an understanding of the term across axes of gender and class, asking what changes when a *flâneuse* performs her duties out of necessity rather than choice. Of particular interest will be the ways through which fulfilment and interconnectedness are fostered through this walking, and how it functions interrelatedly with the ‘crisis ordinariness’ of the lady’s existence.

**Emma Flynn** is a third-year PhD candidate in Gender Studies at the University of Strathclyde. She is supervised across French and Gender Studies by Caroline Verdier and Karen Boyle. Her thesis explores representations of sexual violence in contemporary English and French literature and film, with a particular focus on how the #MeToo moment is configured as a context in these narratives. She teaches across English Literature and Journalism, Media and Communications departments at Strathclyde and runs a feminist theory reading group at Glasgow Zine Library. She has a BA in

English and Comparative Literature and an MLitt in Comparative Literature from the University of Glasgow.

**Alexandra Pugh: ‘Can You Feel It? Abortion and Sensation in *L’événement*’**

This paper will focus on the 2021 film *L’événement*, directed by Audrey Diwan and adapted from Annie Ernaux’s 2000 abortion memoir of the same name. Largely faithful to Ernaux’s text, the film tells the story of Anne (Annie to her parents), a talented student from a working-class background who experiences a crisis when she unexpectedly falls pregnant. *L’événement* is set in 1963, and abortion would not be legalised in France until 1975, so the film follows Anne as she desperately seeks, and eventually obtains, an illegal abortion. In *L’événement*, the crisis that pregnancy presents for Anne is depicted in richly sensory ways. In the abortion scene, the camera peers over Anne’s shoulder, framing the abortionist between Anne’s bent legs; from this position, we can almost feel her hot, strained breath at our ear. Elsewhere in the film we watch as Anne’s friends share chewing gum, instruct each other in masturbation techniques, and file in and out of the communal showers, wet and shrouded in steam. The film invites a ‘haptic,’ or tactile, gaze: it engages the non-audiovisual senses (touch, taste, smell) and encourages ‘the viewer to respond to the image in an intimate, embodied way.’ Diwan’s depiction of abortion through the medium of ‘sensory cinema’ also highlights the ordinariness of Anne’s ordeal. *L’événement* is an account of everyday lived experience, in its sheer, unruly physicality. The film captures what Lauren Berlant calls ‘crisis ordinariness’: abortion here is an intense, traumatic event, but it is also embedded in the everyday. *L’événement* focuses its audience’s embodied attention on this extraordinary, yet also ordinary, crisis.

**Alexandra Pugh** is a PhD candidate in French and women’s studies at King’s College London, where she is supervised by Professor Siobhán McIlvanney and Dr Ros Murray. Funded by the London Arts and Humanities Partnership, her PhD thesis puts the work of Virginie Despentes into conversation with contemporary queer-feminist theory. She teaches in the Modern Languages department at King’s and is currently one of the postgraduate representatives for Women in French UK-Ireland. She has an MSt in Women’s Studies and a BA in History and French from the University of Oxford.

**Ciara Gorman: “‘La galérance, elle est finie !’ Crisis and Criminality in Hannelore Cayre’s *La Daronne* (2017)’**

*La Daronne* depicts a noirish world of present and impending crises in which its central protagonist, Patience Portefeux, is struggling to stay afloat: her mother is seriously ill in an expensive nursing home, her meagre income as an off-the-books judicial translator affords her neither security nor pension, and she feels thoroughly disillusioned with her all-consuming and once-beloved job. To cope with what Lauren Berlant describes as a state of ‘crisis ordinariness’ — where the ordinary has been consumed by anxiety and impasse — Patience develops an intriguing strategy of ‘adjustment’: she takes possession of a metric tonne of cannabis and, abusing her position of trust within the Parisian drugs police, becomes the enigmatic and uncatchable dealer ‘la Daronne’. The proceeds of her illicit activities secure her mother’s care and her daughters’ futures, and allows Patience to flirt briefly with power and prestige, and recover a *joie de vivre* which has long been absent from her life. This paper will examine the manner in which ‘crisis ordinariness’ is presented in *La Daronne* — as an emotional upheaval, an existential dread, and a precarity which is perniciously gendered — and the potentially (anti)heroic aspects of Patience’s survival strategies in the face of it. Due attention will also be paid to the film adaptation of *La Daronne*, directed by Jean-Paul Salomé, where aspects of the care-related crises which motivate Patience’s criminal activity in the novel are altered, changing significantly our understanding of her as a criminal woman; and where feminine solidarity in the face of such crises — as well as feminine power in a masculine world of crime — is brought to the fore.

**Ciara Gorman** recently submitted her PhD at Queen’s University Belfast, funded by the Northern Bridge Doctoral Training Partnership (AHRC). Her thesis examines the representation of criminal women in contemporary French crime fiction. She is the current Web & Media Officer for Women in French UK-IRE, and her most recent publication, ‘Good Housekeeping: Domestic Noir and Domestic Work in Leïla Slimani’s *Chanson douce*’, appears in *Taking Up Space: Women at Work in Contemporary France*, edited by Siham Bouamer and Sonja Stojanovic (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2022).

## 5.2 Activism

### Christopher Hogarth: 'Activism and Continued Literary Relevance: Fatou Diome as Black Marianne'

Until 2015, Fatou Diome's activism was confined almost solely to the messages contained in her literary work. In her novels and short stories, she tackles questions of social injustice, gender and migration in Africa and Europe, but remained a quite private person, more averse to public appearances and involvement in cultural collectives than, for example, French-Cameroonian author Calixthe Beyala. The fact that she, a woman of African descent living in Europe, was able to have a literary career without becoming a public intellectual or activist of some sort, is due to historical conditions surrounding the production and promotion of African literature in Francophone Europe. Recent work by and about African writers underlines a reluctance to take on a "burden of engagement" (Mabanckou, Cazenave and Célérier). However, in two recent polemical works, *Marianne porte plainte* (2017) and *Marianne contre les faussaires* (2022) Diome has felt compelled to take an activist stance due to what she sees as a political crisis in an anti-immigrant France that is lurching towards the far right wing. In this paper, I argue that Diome, previously a rather reluctant public intellectual, has recently re-emerged as a polemicist, arguing in favor of the memorialization of victims of colonialism, but also casting doubt upon the originality of the idea of decolonizing thought and of its efficacy as a means of making black lives in Europe more visible. To some, Diome displays a certain conservatism in her professed love of the French intellectual canon and language. In her native Senegal, especially, Diome has drawn criticism for her endorsement of French Enlightenment thought. Diome's engagement can therefore be linked to ideas of decolonizing but is tempered by the underlining of a greater need to see positive Afro-European overlaps.

**Christopher Hogarth** is a Senior Lecturer in Comparative Literature at the University of South Australia, Adelaide. He received his PhD in French and Italian from Northwestern University. He has published especially on the intersection of literature from France, Italy and Senegal. He is a prolific editor of eight volumes and issues of journals such as *L'Esprit Créateur*, *Women in French*, and *French Cultural Studies*. He is currently a joint Chief Investigator on an Australian Research Council-funded Discovery Project entitled "Transnational Selves. French Narratives of Migration to Australia".

**Maggie Allison: 'Femme et politique(s) en France en 2023'**

'Crisis ? What crisis ?' These words of a *SUN* journalist in the Britain of 1979, picked up, derisively, a week later in a party political broadcast by Conservative leader Margaret Thatcher, helped turn the tide and lead her to victory after the Labour government under James Callaghan fell to a no-confidence vote. Forty-three years later, in France, one could say that the '*pas de panique*' approach of President Macron, his absence from the scene (busy with important international matters...), worked to create a level of stress among his rivals across the political board with, I maintain, particular effect for potential women candidates, struggling to manage their campaigns. A crisis for women in the making. In the wake of the 2022 French Presidential election, a timely reminder of the political gender gap in France came in the title of Professor Gill Allwood's presentation at ASMCF September 2022: *From Édith Cresson to Élisabeth Borne: Thirty Years of Gender and Politics in France*, elaborating government policy in gender terms. But, glaringly, the thirty year gap between female holders of the most senior governmental office is generously equivalent of a whole generation--one which has had no female role models to be found in either prime ministerial or, crucially, presidential posts, despite representation in other ministerial positions. This paper will posit that the above constitute an endemic crisis, arguably a 'virus' which attacks the potential of French women politicians. It will examine the campaigns and media representations of women candidates, in particular Valérie Pécresse and Marine Le Pen (perhaps the exception to the 'rule'), while referring to the many who failed to establish themselves clearly in the run-up to the election--for example the late-declared candidacy, confused and unfortunate, of former minister Christiane Taubira. While acknowledging gender shifts in the *Assemblée Nationale*, we shall assess this crisis point in women's representation and women *representing* in the context of the controlling behaviour of a monarchic, elusive male President.

**Maggie Allison** is a Senior Research Fellow in Modern French Studies at the University of Bradford. Her research focuses on gender, representation and media (both audiovisual and print) and women's role in French public life with emphasis on women in French politics and the causes they have championed. Her current research charts French women's fluctuating absence/presence in the French political arena, including the failed presidential attempts of Ségolène Royal and Marine Le Pen and the demise of women 2022 presidential candidates (notably Valérie Pécresse), contrasting with the appointment of Élisabeth Borne as French Première Ministre. Among her co-edited volumes are several resulting from Women in French conferences. She is a founding member of Women in French UK.

**Corinne M. Belliard: 'Le personnel féminin des Postes et Télécommunication françaises en crise : de la désobéissance silencieuse à la résistance active (1940–1945)'**

Nous nous proposons de réfléchir aux différentes manières dont les femmes des Postes, Télégraphes et Téléphone (PTT) se sont illustrées à la fois par un engagement personnel ou militant en réponse à la crise qu'a provoqué l'occupation. Le choc de la défaite française en 1940 face à l'Allemagne nazie a entraîné l'occupation de la zone nord du pays (intégrant à l'ouest la côte atlantique). Un certain nombre de membres du personnel féminin des PTT a été révoqué en application du règlement publié le 18 juillet 1940 apportant des précisions sur l'application de la convention d'armistice du 16 juin. Une première plongée dans les sources a permis d'examiner quelques dossiers de déclassement des agents féminins dans les départements de la zone occupée et de la zone sud, dite libre. Face à la diversité de situations sur tout le territoire, plusieurs questions se posaient : Qu'ont fait ces femmes pour désobéir et résister à l'occupant et au gouvernement de Vichy ? Qui les a dénoncées et accusées ? Ont-elles été victimes de suspicions de leur administration ? Comment leurs dossiers ont-ils été instruits dans l'après guerre ? Ont-elles obtenu réparation pour les préjudices subis ? Cette communication pourrait s'inscrire dans « Femmes et Révolte ». En effet, le personnel féminin des PTT était manifestement en rébellion contre le gouvernement de Vichy et humilié par l'occupant. On en veut pour preuve Simone Michel-Levy (1906-1945), employée à la direction générale des PTT, qui avait mis en place avec des collègues une agence clandestine d'informations vers la Normandie et vers la France libre de Londres.

**Corinne M. Belliard** est historienne, angliciste, docteure de l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, spécialiste en histoire en civilisation britannique. Elle a enseigné dans de nombreux établissements, son dernier poste étant à l'Université d'Orléans. Elle a publié deux ouvrages sur les femmes et de nombreux articles sur le genre. Parmi ses dernières publications, il est noté : « L'Institut universitaire de France : 25 ans de politique genrée » (2021) ; « 1903-1928 : Les luttes des suffragettes » (2020) ; « Germaine Lebel : une Chartiste à l'Ecole des hautes études en sciences sociales » (2019). Elle est membre du Women in French depuis 2021.

### 5.3 Trauma

#### **E. Nicole Meyer: ‘Traumatic Impact: Questioning Bodily and Textual Fractures in Marguerite Duras’s *La Douleur* et *L’Amant*’**

The impact of her traumatic past circulates through Marguerite Duras’s works. In this presentation, I propose to show how devastation erupts through her representation of bodies (especially her own and that of her husband, Robert Antelme), for instance through broken skin, “inhuman” bodily emissions and decomposing organic matter. Furthermore, this process reveals itself through fragmented time and text--the many temporal and narrative ruptures and breaks between and within her writing. In short, family fractures, such as incest, from her youth infiltrate Duras’s narration of her later World War II experiences. Her life writing published decades later reveal a systemic network of fissures that deserve examination in order to better understand Duras’s innovative form of writing. These fractures flood several of Duras’s works (specifically for this presentation, *La Douleur*, 1985 and *L’Amant*, 1984). To better understand the transformation of trauma to fractured narrative, I will explore the transformation of pivotal bodily devastation in relation to earlier versions of “la douleur” with the support of *Cahiers de la guerre* and “Pas mort en déportation.” Thus, this presentation will explore Duras’s narrative control of merging body and identity, as well as blurring boundaries between life and death. Through these blurred boundaries and narrative gaps, she creates a new understanding of identity, especially in relation to traumatic events.

**E. Nicole Meyer** (Ph.D. University of Pennsylvania) is Professor of French and Women’s and Gender Studies at Augusta University (Augusta, GA), Chevalier dans l’Ordre des Palmes académiques and immediate past Vice President of Women in French. She publishes on a wide array of topics from French and Francophone women’s autobiography to Flaubert, French for Specific Purposes, Service-Learning, contemporary French cinema and nineteenth-, twentieth- and twenty-first-century French and Francophone literature. She is co-editor of *Rethinking the French Classroom: New Approaches to Teaching Contemporary French and Francophone Women*, (Routledge, 2019) and of *Teaching Diversity and Inclusion: Examples from a French-Speaking Classroom* (Routledge, appeared July 2021). Her current book project is *Fractured Families in Contemporary French and Francophone Women’s Autobiographies*.

#### **Anna Chiari: ‘Gendered Trauma in Marguerite Duras’**

Late modernism is an era that spawned a generation of artists reflecting a new sensibility touched by trauma, as experienced through devastating events such as the Holocaust, Hiroshima, and colonialism (Kaplan, 2009), which shattered the world into million pieces and called forth an



urgency to witness, to communicate the “unimaginable” horrors of the traumatic events. Language’s adaptable, flexible, and redemptory capacities appealed to survivors with the promise of overcoming the traumatic events and undermining the impulse to incredulity caused by them (Loew, 2011). On the other hand, artists felt literature was too self-conscious, worked on, studied, and removed from the horror of trauma they wanted to represent. In general, maybe even too removed from the instability and violence of the 20th century (Loew, 2011). Thus, late modernism engaged with reflections on the relationship between writing and trauma, with a tone refined by the awareness of the problems of this relationship, by a lack of certainties, turning towards an aesthetic of silence and anti-narratives strategies (Loew, 2011). In particular, as opposed to language, silence became a strategy used to achieve specific ends and responses in the representation of trauma. Marguerite Duras’ narratives, which bear witness to the fracture between language and the experience of trauma, are exemplars of the use of narrative techniques such as blanks, displacements, repetitions, and slow, fragmented dialogues, embodying a minimalist mode of storytelling (Loew, 2011). Duras, in particular, used silence to reveal her concerns about women in a patriarchal society (Kaplan, 2009). To her, silence was an element of darkness and darkness an inevitable metaphor for women: only through silence and passivity could women express themselves, while language, which she conceived as male, acted as a barrier against female expression (Kaplan, 2009). Duras’ women express themselves through silence, even voluntary mutism (Kaplan, 2009), slow and fragmented dialogues, the same kind of language Duras had chosen for the representation of trauma, a form of storytelling that is not immediate or direct and does not rely on language as we know it. A sort of “withholding” characterizes Duras’ representational minimalism, a strategy of saying less rather than more, of evoking a horrifying past while obstructing its portrayal, rendered in the text through the use of ellipsis and fragmentation, of short, abrupt sentences and parataxis instead of elaborate, syntactic structures and linear narrative form (Just, 2012). This kind of narrative style is the same used by Duras’ women, who chose to communicate through means other than language, through gaze, gestures, movement, unspoken understanding, and sympathy (Kaplan, 2009). Indeed, Duras shows that the need to tell, to fix meaning is endemic to male culture, while a more fluid, open, uncertain, and relaxed modality is closer to how women function (Kaplan, 2009). The urgency to tell, to externalize through language, appears in Duras as a characteristic of the male sphere, while silence, associated with remembrance and pain, belongs to women. As telling has the power to transform the past (Just, 2012) by retrieving it, leading to forgetting, to a form of loss of the past experience, trauma appears irrevocably linked to the pain which resides in silence, in remembrance. Consequently, trauma and its representation appear in Duras’ texts directly related to the female



sphere, in other words, gendered. Indeed, throughout her career, her works carried an inevitable haunting of catastrophe, a haunting that in the 70s society was linked to French culture's pervasive patriarchy (Kaplan, 2009).

**Anna Chiari** is a Ph.D. candidate in Comparative Literature at the University of Edinburgh. She holds a BA in English and French literatures and languages and a Joint Master's Degree in English and American Studies from Ca' Foscari University (Venice). Before moving to The University of Edinburgh, she specialized in Comparative Literature with an MA at UCL. Holding two MFAs in dramaturgy and screenwriting from IULM University (Milan) and Silvio D'Amico Academy of Dramatic Arts (Rome), she also works as a writer and a freelance journalist.

### **Helen O'Sullivan: 'Translating Trauma'**

My PhD project is a translation of the Guadeloupean writer Gisèle Pineau's narrative *Mes Quatre Femmes* (2007) with critical analysis. Within the analysis, I focus on the topic of representation of women's experience. The text offers a complex and nuanced insight into Creole female identities. Three of the four titular women are also members of the author's family, her mother, aunt and grandmother. The portrayal of the women mixes biography, fiction and psychological reflections, informed by the author's profession as a psychiatric nurse. The fourth character is a putative ancestor, who is a freed slave. Throughout, the portrayals are nuanced and complex and avoid stereotyping. The women are flawed and vulnerable unlike the traditional "Poteau-mitain" figure of Caribbean literature and yet strong and resistant to their persecutors. The text interrelates with Pineau's other works, in particular *Folie, Aller Simple* (2010) the autobiographical account of the author's life as a nurse, which acts as a metatext providing additional evaluation of the characters' motivations. Here, Pineau also reveals the relationship between her vocation and writing, "j'apprends la beauté et la fragilité des êtres" (idem:171). The challenge in my translation is to convey the complexity and individuality of these women who have all experienced trauma in different ways. Pineau acknowledges the commonalities of existence and concludes that everyone is broken inside (idem:100). The translation reflects the interplay of memory, characterization and narrative voices as the women come to terms with past events through their storytelling.

**Helen O'Sullivan** is a first-year PhD student at Birmingham University studying Practical Translation. The goal of her PhD is to translate a text of up to 50,000 words alongside an extended critical analysis. Last year, she studied for a Masters degree in Translation and Interpreting Studies at Manchester University. Prior to that, she worked in banking for thirty years.

**Session 6: 4.30–6.30pm****6.1 Eco-Feminism****Elly Walters: ‘Crisis and/in Water in Nathacha Appanah’s *Rien ne t’appartient*’**

This paper considers the lines between water and crisis in the Mauritian writer Nathacha Appanah’s *Rien ne t’appartient* (2021). Beginning in France, the text meets Tara as she stews in incapacitating grief following the death of her husband. She cannot move or eat; she considers: ‘je crois que je perds la tête, c’est à cause de l’eau, toute cette eau’. As the novel retraces Tara’s girlhood in Sri Lanka, the reader learns of the crises occupying her past. As a child, Tara witnessed the paramilitary assassination of her parents; as an orphan, she was locked away and sexually abused. Her resulting pregnancy was grimly, forcibly terminated in a carceral home for ‘filles gâchées’. Years later, she was caught in the violent tsunami that struck the Sri Lankan coast on 26 December 2004. The text provides her account of being engulfed and dragged through debris by the filthy waters rushing inland; she sees families torn apart by the current, and bodies face-down in the flood. Tara survives the tsunami, but lives on traumatised ‘à cause de l’eau, toute cette eau’. In *Rien ne t’appartient*, the protagonist’s experience of crisis becomes bound up with water. Not only does water pervade the landscape she inhabits, but it settles into the inner workings of her body. Following the tsunami, she describes how ‘mes pensées prennent l’eau, deviennent inutiles et imbibées’ as her mind is bloated with the element of her trauma. And, after stepping into the rapids of a nearby stream to end her life by drowning, the novel closes with Tara’s ashes being scattered into this same waterway. As Tara’s remains form part of the stream, the reader witnesses the protagonist become ‘l’eau, toute cette eau’ in an ultimate becoming-tide, becoming-trauma. Through the lens of postcolonial ecocriticism, I will study the becoming-water of Tara in dialogue with that of her homeland, as both are devastated by ‘toute cette eau’. In so doing, my paper will situate Tara’s personal strife within a context of enduring social, political, and ecological crisis, an approach that sits in line with Appanah’s prolific writing on violence, poverty, and colonialism in the Indian Ocean region.

**Elly Walters** is a second-year PhD student in French at Wadham College, University of Oxford. In July 2021, she completed an MSt in Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, also at Oxford, and holds a BA in Modern and Medieval Languages from the University of Cambridge. Her doctoral project explores the entanglements of water and distress in twenty-first-century French and francophone women’s writing. Elly’s other research interests include disability and crip theory; francophone feminist cinema; queer theory and literatures; and the work of Paul B. Preciado.

**Andrea Jonsson: ‘Seeds of Change: Voicing Ecofeminism in Popular Music’**

Ecofeminism was first used to establish parallels between the oppression of women and nature by Françoise d'Eaubonne in her work *Le Féminisme ou la mort*, (1974). In her 2017 album *Ouï*, Camille Delmais, known as simply Camille (b. 1978)—a singer-songwriter, dancer, actor, performance artist, and filmmaker—originally meant to reflect on the contemporary challenges affecting France. Instead, it became an album about nature, tracing the connections between personal and transitional states, about motherhood and birth, about transforming semen into breast milk. I claim this artist's style highlights the 21<sup>st</sup>-Century struggles women suffer, while also using vocal vulnerability to broadcast the necessity for an urgent ecofeminist revolution and align women's vocal empowerment with environmental justice. In this paper, through an analysis of songs connecting maternity with nature, I demonstrate how the female voice in song strengthens urgent environmental messages and demonstrates the agency of the non-semantic affective voice. For example, Camille's song and accompanying music video “Seeds” (2017), expresses a metaphor for love between humans and the planet using a repeated play on words with seeds as beginnings, futures, and progress: “seeds of children, seeds of rose but only to seeds what is going to happen, seeds of change” set to a militaristic beat. Engaging with this year's theme of *Women and/in crises* as this research addresses changes in the field and the growing prominence of sound and voice studies in ecofeminism.

**Andrea Jonsson**, assistant professor of French at the Georgia Institute of Technology, received a Bachelor of Music from McGill University and a PhD in French from the University of Pittsburgh. Andrea has several recent articles and chapters on humor, transgressive graphic narratives, popular music, and performance poetry in *The French Review*, *L'Esprit Créateur*, *Modern and Contemporary France*, *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies*, *Essays in French Literature and Culture* among others. Her co-authored book with Heather Warren-Crow (The University of Minnesota Press-Forerunners Series) is entitled *Young-Girls in Echoland: #Theorizing Tiquun*. Her current book project, *Amplified Intimacy: Voicing French Feminisms in Contemporary Pop Culture* examines ways women use vocal intimacy to redefine soundscapes historically dominated by men in comedy, podcasts, performance, and music and is under contract with Liverpool University Press.

**Diana Holmes: ‘Colette, Eco-feminism and the Crisis of Ageing’**

Becoming old can be lived as a crisis. The recalcitrant ageing body may neither behave nor look as the subject imagines herself, and physical change along with other factors, notably the increasing

occurrence of illness and death among contemporaries, conspire to remind us constantly of our own mortality. But the way we view ageing and death is shaped by our whole philosophy of life, and some contemporary feminist thinkers have identified the centrality of the individuated self, and the resulting tragic vision of mortality, with a patriarchal philosophy that has dominated (at least) Western thinking. Feminist writers who braid together the politics of gender with the politics of ecology are a particularly fertile source of alternative concepts of human impermanence and of the individual's relationship to the universe. I am thinking here of Françoise d'Eaubonne in the 1970s, and in the present day of Rosi Braidotti, and in a different, less theoretical register, Nancy Huston – among others. Meanwhile 2023 marks the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Colette, widely celebrated (if often misrepresented and sentimentalised) for her eloquent writing on nature and animals, and in whose work the experience of growing old and facing death is represented in a manner radically different from the tragic view. In this paper I want to ask how far Colette can usefully be seen as an eco-feminist *avant la lettre*, using eco-feminist – and what Braidotti terms 'posthuman' – theory to re-interpret Colette's well-known thematics of the natural world, and her treatment of late life and death itself. Never religious, or mystical, or sentimental, yet profoundly affirmative, Colette's work seems to me to resonate with Braidotti's nice encapsulation of a non-tragic vision of age and mortality: 'Making friends with the impersonal necessity of death is an ethical way of installing oneself in life as a transient, slightly wounded visitor'. (*The Posthuman*, 2013, p.132).

**Diana Holmes** is Professor of French at the University of Leeds, and a founder-member of the feminist network *Women in French*. She has published widely on French women's writing from the late nineteenth century to the present, ranging across the hierarchy of culture from 'high' to 'low' brow, with a particular interest in what women choose to read. Her latest book *Middlebrow Matters: Women's Reading and the Literary Canon in France since the Belle Époque* (Liverpool University Press, 2018), won the American MLA Scaglione Prize for French and Francophone Studies, 2019. Her co-edited book *Making Waves: French Feminisms and their Legacies 1975-2015* (with Margaret Attack, Alison Fell, Imogen Long) appeared with Liverpool University Press in 2020. Her edited special issue of *Nottingham French Studies* on *Postfeminism à la française* will appear in 2022, and a co-edited, co-written study of the Belle Époque woman writer Daniel Lesueur is in production with Honoré Champion publishers. She also works on film and co-edits the Manchester University Press series *French Film Directors*.

## 6.2 WiF Australia Panel: Love Crisis

This panel examines love crises in contemporary women's writing in French from across the francophone world. Though love is typically considered within the context of personal relationships or domestic spheres, this panel suggests that a love crisis is an intimate experience relevant to broader sociopolitical issues. The panellists consider 'love' in its broadest sense as a term that encompasses romantic, sexual, physical and emotional experiences, and that, within contemporary fiction, can assist authors in exploring the intimate, social, and political aspects of women's experience and even their very survival.

### **Lina Vale: 'Symbolic Love in the Writing of Jean Rhys'**

Jean Rhys once remarked that 'the whole business of money and sex is mixed up with something very primitive and deep. When you take money directly from someone you love it becomes not money but a symbol' (*Smile Please* 1979). This paper will consider how Rhys symbolises love in her novel *Quartet* (1928), which centres on Marya Zelli, a young woman who moves to Paris with great optimism, but soon finds herself alone and poverty-stricken. Consequently, she turns to prostitution to make ends meet. Rhys illuminate how Marya's vulnerability and desire for protection cause her to fall in love with her client, Hugh 'H. J.' Heidler. While depending on H. J. financially, Marya also relies on him for self-respect. This complicates the power dynamics of their relationship because Marya loses autonomy and her sense of self. By viewing herself through H. J.'s eyes, she sees nothing more than a sex object. Desperate as Marya might feel, she becomes addicted to the dramatic nature of this fruitless love affair. Rhys symbolises the union between love, money and sex through her portrait of Marya's degradation. Embodying the darkness of her behaviour, Marya not only deteriorates physically, but her perceptions of other people and the outside world grow increasingly distorted.

**Lina Vale** is a doctoral candidate at the University of Melbourne and the Université Sorbonne Nouvelle. Her thesis focuses on the emotionally displaced women in the novels of Jean Rhys, Nancy Huston and Leïla Slimani. Lina also teaches at the Sorbonne Université.

### **Frances Egan: 'Love Crises: Intercultural Romance and the Heterosexual Institution in the Work of Faïza Guène and Lilia Hassaine'**

In Faïza Guène's *La discrétion* (2020), the central French-Algerian migrant family follows a series of "lois hybrides": rules that have been invented "à mi-chemin entre le village de leur souvenir et leur idée d'ici". These hybrid laws, or codes, are socially constructed (from "souvenir" and "idée")

and largely unspoken yet shape the lives of girls and women through the regulation of gender and heterosexuality. In this paper, I investigate these codes and their impact on experiences of heterosexual love and romance for French-Algerian women in recent novels by Guène (*La discrétion*) and Lilia Hassaine (*Soleil amer* 2021). Intergenerational family sagas alike, these novels span time and place (sprawling across Algeria and France), revealing vastly different ideas and experiences of romance. Notably, while the mothers are dismissive of true love, their daughters (as second-generation migrants in France) believe in independence and choice, yet (gendered and racial) power imbalances and strict gender roles prevent them from forming satisfying relationships. Intercultural coupledness and dating are especially revealing; frequently spurring *love crises*, these relationships are illuminating sites of the intersection of patriarchal and colonial codes. My paper posits that these failed relationships diverge from a common trope in popular “women’s fiction”, where the inability to find a satisfactory man may not challenge social structures and often enables a happy ending for the (white, middle-class) individual. In contrast, here, femininity is frequently understood as a curse and characterised by the heroism of the women who carry on despite it. Ultimately, I argue that the depiction of failed intercultural heterosexuality in Guène’s and Hassaine’s novels challenges social codes by revealing the racism, sexism and violence that construct them.

**Frances Egan** is a Lecturer in Global Studies at Monash University. She works at the intersection of Gender, Translation and French Studies and is currently researching gaps between lived experience and societal rules about feeling, gender and sexuality in the work of contemporary francophone women writers.

**Beth Kearney: ‘Love Crises: Phototextual Agency in Anne Brochet’s *Trajet d’une amoureuse éconduite*’**

My paper examines Anne Brochet’s *Trajet d’une amoureuse éconduite*, an autobiographical phototext staging a first-person narrator in a love crisis. Following a romantic rupture, the narrator documents empty streets and domestic interiors, literally undertaking a journey through the physical spaces of the failed romance. In my paper, I examine the ways that the narrator seeks to regain a sense of agency and control over her story and, specifically, I do by examining the role that photographs play in this wresting for power. I thus also focus on the association between the photographic medium and the notion of fixing. Ultimately, I show that Brochet’s phototext grapples with a tension between exposure and concealment, between fixing and unfixing. This is because the phototext both gestures toward scopic power, though it consistently disturbs photography’s ability to fix its subject.

**Beth Kearney** is a third-year PhD candidate at the University of Queensland, writing a thesis on phototexts by contemporary women authors from across the francophone world. More broadly, her research specialises in 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century women's literatures and visual cultures across the French-speaking world, with a focus on representations of women's bodies and subjectivities and on the interactions between literature and visual art. She also has a strong interest in surrealism and modernity in France, and is particularly interested in the lesser-known women artists and authors of the surrealist movement.

**Charlotte Mackay: 'Love and Other Crises: Masculine Menace in Djaïli Amadou Amal's *Cœur du Sahel*'**

This paper will consider the representation of love and masculine menace in the most recent novel of Cameroonian writer Djaïli Amadou Amal *Cœur du Sahel* (2022). Amadou Amal's novel is, like most of her other texts, set in the far north of Cameroon and its majority Peul (Fulani) community. In *Les impatientes* (2017; 2020), Amadou Amal recounts the intertwined lives of three individual Peul women characterised by oppressive forces inducing forced marriage, polygamy and domestic violence. This text was informed by Amadou Amal's own experiences growing up in the city of Maroua and sought to break a persistent silence surrounding many of these taboos in Sahelian societies. In *Cœur du Sahel*, Amadou Amal again focuses her literary attention on the lives of women in the Sahel. Yet her protagonists are not sourced from her own Peul community - they are young poor Christian girls who arrive in Maroua from the surrounding regions to work as domestic servants in the families of rich Muslim Peuls. Here they are subjected to oppressive and discriminatory forces on the basis of class, religion, ethnic group and sex. Yet Amadou Amal incorporates other oppressive forces into this text that do not feature in her previous works including notably the threat of exterior masculine violence through the pervasive figure of Boko Haram and that of environmental violence induced by climate change through the figure of the ever-encroaching Sahelian desert and all the implications that this entails. In this text, dedicated to "women victims of the Sahel", the vulnerable female figure is subjected to multidimensional forms of masculine violence. This paper will examine these masculine forms of violence as they relate to questions of existential and affective fulfilment and survival and whether or not Amadou Amal's female protagonists are indeed equipped with the necessary tools to face multifaceted and mutating masculine menace.

**Charlotte Mackay** is Lecturer in European Languages (French) at Monash University where she teaches French and Francophone language, literature and cultures. Her research interests include



Sub-Saharan Francophone literature, postcolonial/decolonial, diaspora, Black Atlantic, gender, epistemological, trauma, memory, fashion and ecocritical studies. She has a particular interest in the contemporary fiction of Franco-Cameroonian writer Léonora Miano and in that of Franco-Senegalese writer Fatou Diome.



## Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> May

### Session 7: 9–10.30am

#### 7.1 Bodily Crises 2

#### **Rebecca Grenouilleau-Loescher: ‘From Silence to #Shout: French-Language Abortion Narratives in Transnational Dialogue’**

This paper takes as premise that stories both reflect and shape the frames through which we understand and articulate lived experiences. Bringing transnational and transgenerational abortion narratives into a space of productive dialogue, then, my goal is to tell a different story about abortion—or, more precisely, to cultivate a space in which abortion stories that reflect lived experiences might challenge dominant, drama-driven depictions of reproductive healthcare. To this end, the corpus of study is comprised of narratives of both clandestine and legal abortions occurring on three continents, including four literary texts (Malinconi, *Hôpital silence*; Bey, *Au commencement était la mer*; Ernaux, *L'Événement*; and Vizzavona, *Interruption*), several collections of testimonies, and one documentary film. Key commonalities, in effect, cut across these accounts, despite significant differences in social, historical, and political context, as well as in narrative genre, scope, and perspective. Each flanked by a unique set of circumstances, each driven by an undaunted will, each woman in these narratives is also plagued by an overwhelming sense of stigma and solitude, many whilst receiving the procedure itself. I will argue, then, that it is within these commonalities that change might be effected. From the perspective of the medical humanities, for example, abortion narratives point to lacunae in reproductive healthcare and challenge the terms through which we grasp parenting, un-parenting, and the space between. But fostering dialogue amongst abortion narratives of all types also harbors a larger potential—that of shifting collective rhetoric so as to foster a more relational understanding of reproductive healthcare. Vizzavona’s 2020 text clearly testifies to this: when allowed to resonate across borders and through generations, abortion narratives cultivate as space where all people capable of pregnancy might find echoes of their experiences and support in navigating them.

**Rebecca Grenouilleau-Loescher** is currently Visiting Assistant Professor of French at the College of Wooster (Ohio) but will be starting a position as Lecturer of French at the University of Maryland Baltimore County in the fall. Specializing in relational storytelling in late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century French-language literature, she has published work on Dany Laferrière (*The French Review*), Alain Mabanckou (*Symposium*), and Maïssa Bey (*L'Édition africaine et la fabrique de la littérature*). Her work on relational character constellations in the novels of Maryse Condé and Maylis de Kerangal will appear in the special issue of *L'Esprit Créateur*, “Connecting

Characters in Modern and Contemporary French-Language Literature” (fall 2023), for which she also serves as co-editor.

**Loïc Bourdeau: ‘Ob/Gyn Violence from Camille Laurens to #PayeTonUtérus’**

This presentation looks at Camille Laurens’ *Philippe* (1995) and *Fille* (2020)—two striking examples that respectively figure the loss of a child and what being a woman patient in medical spheres entails—in the broader context of the #PayeTonUtérus virtual movement. It took Laurens close 60 years and the work of the #MeToo movement to realize that what she has experienced as a woman was neither normal nor natural. This presentation first explores how *Fille* offers new tools to understand better her 1995 *récit* and brings forth a more comprehensive narrative about systemic violence, in particular ob/gyn violence. Legally recognized in South America for about a decade and debated in France since 2020, ob/gyn violence as a legal category, terminology, and framework allows us to see patterns and power dynamics—grounded primarily in androcentric medical knowledge, which this paper analyzes—rather than isolated traumatic acts, and allows us to undo or to advocate, as Laurens does, for more inclusive and sensitive approaches to (women’s) care. A second axis of this presentation looks at the power of #PayeTonUtérus as a both a political *and* literary movement. The hundreds of singular stories available on social media and blogs share in Laurens’ commitment to *dénoncer, réparer*, yet give us access to more diverse experiences by underrepresented women who do not have the means or cultural capital to be published. As such, this paper looks at ob/gyn violence as a crisis in and beyond literature, as a crisis against silence.

**Loïc Bourdeau** is Lecturer in French Studies at National University of Ireland, Maynooth and formerly College of Liberal Arts Board of Regents Endowed Associate Professor of French and Francophone Studies at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette (2015-22). His work has centred on cultural production in France and Quebec, women’s and gender studies, queer studies, literary criticism, film and care studies. He has published four edited or co-edited volumes—*Horrible Mothers. Representations across Francophone North America* (2019), *ReFocus: The Films of François Ozon* (2021), *Revisiting HIV/AIDS in French Culture: Raw Matters* (2022), and *Diversity and Decolonization in French Studies: New Approaches to Teaching*—in addition to articles, chapters, and several edited special-themed journal issues. He is the founder and series editor of *New Directions in Francophone Studies: Diversity, Decolonization, Queerness* (EUP).

**Michèle Bacholle: ‘Curse or Blessing? Menopause in Camille Laurens’s *Celle que vous croyez*’**

Hot flashes, weight gain, mood swings, vaginal dryness, biologically, (peri)menopause truly is a curse. In societies glorifying youth and firm bodies and viewing women as objects of consumption, turning fifty equates to reaching “la date de péremption,” as one of Camille Laurens’ narrators claims in *Celle que vous croyez* (2016). Philosophers like Simone de Beauvoir, Germaine Greer, and Susan Sontag wrote on the double standards between men and women regarding ageing and sexual attraction. Thanks to novelists like Camille Laurens and Chloé Delaume, filmmakers like Agnès Jaoui and Julie Delpy, the fundamental crisis that menopause is for many women in both biological and societal terms is slowly breaking free from its taboo status. After discussing how the biological crisis is often compounded by an affective one – due to children leaving the home and possibly to divorce – that entails an identity crisis, this paper will examine how Laurens’ main characters are affected by and react to the Change and their sudden invisibility and irrelevance. Although Laurens provides them – and her readers – with no sustainable solution (i.e. being visible and sexually relevant again), thereby reflecting a societal reality, their depressive state and institutionalization are anything but grim – which is also Safy Nebbou’s conclusion in his 2019 cinematographic adaptation. Laurens uses humor and formally challenges the topic by producing a novel in crisis mode. Whereas the film refers to Laclos’s *Dangerous Liaisons*, *Celle que vous croyez* relies on shaky narrators and “false confidences” à la Marivaux, and thus mimics the crisis menopause often is. Laurens sends her readers on a quest for truth and meaning – as menopausal women are – and shows that the Curse can be an opportunity.

**Michèle Bacholle** is CSU Professor in French Studies at Eastern Connecticut State University (USA). Her research focuses primarily on contemporary women writers, more specifically Annie Ernaux and Linda Lê. She has published six books and many articles on contemporary writers, on the Algerian war of independence, and on French women’s cinema – she is coediting with Sylvie Blum-Reid an issue of *Crossways Journal* on French and Francophone Film and Series Women Directors. Her current book project, *Portraits of Rebellious French Women in Contemporary Life Writing*, is under contract with Lexington Books and will include a chapter on “The Menopausal Woman” featuring Camille Laurens’ *Celle que vous croyez*.

## 7.2 Language Crises

**Kathy Dillon: ‘Se réappropriier son corps passe aussi par un travail sur la langue, sur le vocabulaire — textual deliverance of the *corps femme* in the political and fictional works of Leïla Slimani’**

*Depuis toujours, je suis obsédée par le corps, que je porte comme un fardeau. Ce corps qui m’empêche, qui me rend vulnérable, ce corps dont j’ai le sentiment qu’il conspire en secret contre moi.* — Leïla Slimani, 2021

Exploring the *fardeau* that is the female body is a central motif throughout the political and fictional works of Franco-Moroccan author Leïla Slimani. Following in the footsteps of many Moroccan women writers before her, Slimani’s texts can be read as a manifestation of Hélène Cixous’ call for woman to write woman in order to reappropriate the female body from patriarchal discourse. Traditionally presented as an object to be possessed, the Moroccan female body is imbued with values of purity and shame, while female sexuality is considered the basis of family and communal honour. This paper aims to present an analysis of the literary strategies employed by Moroccan women writers like Slimani, whose works attempt to deconstruct representations of the ideal Moroccan woman as silent and submissive, and denounce Morocco’s legal code, which requires women to remain virgins until marriage. Drawing on the work of feminist theorists Hélène Cixous and bell hooks, this paper underscores the importance of language to rewriting the female body from a feminist perspective. For Slimani, as it was for Cixous and hooks before her, language is also a place of struggle and it is via *les mots* that Slimani attempts to liberate the female body from patriarchal constraints, to affirm: “mon corps m’appartient.”

**Kathy Dillon** is a third-year PhD student at National University of Ireland, Galway. Her research explores representations of the female body within contemporary Moroccan women's writing of French expression. Her thesis examines the array of literary strategies employed by Moroccan women writers whose texts attempt to rewrite and reimagine the space and place traditionally assigned to Moroccan women. Her thesis is provisionally titled: *Inventing la femme de personne: textual deliverance of le corps femme in contemporary Moroccan women's writing*. Her research is funded by the Irish Research Council.

**Cecilia Bengalia: ‘Androlecte/Alphalecte : Michèle Causse et la crise du langage’**

À partir des années 1960, l’un des centres de la réflexion des mouvements féministes devient rapidement la question du sexisme au sein de la langue. Pour répondre à une injustice langagière millénaire, de nombreuses féministes attaquent, entre autres, les dictionnaires, accusés

d'essentialiser une vision du monde hiérarchisée. Désormais le dictionnaire (rebaptisé par Mary Daly *dick-tionary*) deviendra le lieu et l'objet d'une réécriture subversive à travers laquelle les concepts hérités de la pensée patriarcale seront radicalement mis en discussion, voire rejetés. Dans cette intervention, je discuterai le travail de Michèle Causse, écrivain (sic) féministe lesbienne radicale, qui à partir des années 1970 prend part à cette entreprise collective à travers des œuvres de fiction, mais aussi des essais et des traductions. Le phénomène de la réécriture féministe des dictionnaires, et plus en général la réflexion féministe sur le langage, a eu lieu à une échelle transnationale et multilingue. Causse, qui a été une importante traductrice de textes féministes de l'italien et de l'anglais, était très consciente de cette dimension qui caractérise aussi son travail. Elle était d'ailleurs en contact direct avec des féministes qui, en Amérique du nord et en Italie, s'attelaient à la même refonte des instruments langagiers et conceptuels, comme l'Américaine Mary Daly, qu'elle traduit en 1982, et l'écrivaine suisse italophone Alice Ceresa, dont elle traduit (en 1975) un extrait de son *Petit dictionnaire de l'inégalité féminine*. À partir des textes dont elle est l'auteure et de ceux dont elle est la traductrice ou la commentatrice, je vais donc analyser la réflexion de Causse sur la crise du langage, crise « positive » qui doit à ses yeux mener au remplacement de ce qu'elle appelle l'androlecte (= « langage parlé par tous les corps parlants de la planète [...] qui passe pour neutre, mais qui véhicule en fait la pensée [...] d'un sexe dit fort (mâle) au détriment d'un sexe dit faible (femelle) ») par l'*alphalecte*, un langage à inventer qui reconnaîtrait au contraire « à tous les vivants une valeur égale » et qui montre l'actualité de ses propos.

**Cecilia Bengalia** is Lecturer BB of French Studies and Comparative Literature at the University of Limerick, Ireland. Her research interests include 20<sup>th</sup> century French, Francophone, Italian and Comparative Literature, women's and gender studies, translation and multilingualism studies, and sociology of literature. Her work has appeared in a variety of European and North American journals. Her first book, *Engagements de la forme. Une sociolecture des œuvres de Carlo Emilio Gadda et Claude Simon* came out in 2020 with Classiques Garnier.

**Matilda Nevin: 'Voicing the Self and Other(s) in Meryem Alaoui's *La vérité sort de la bouche du cheval*'**

In a paper delivered at the Narratives of Selfhood and Ambivalence conference organized by the Institute for Modern Languages Research, Lucile Richard analysed Assia Djébar's *Vaste est la prison*, focusing on the ways in which women escape structures of male and colonial signification through their use of the voice, specifically, in Djébar's case, the singing voice, drawing on Adriana

Cavarero's work on voice. Informed by Cavarero's theory of gendered narrativity and Jacques Derrida, Abdelkébir Khatibi and Hélène Cixous' theories of language, I will analyse the centrality of voice in Meryem Alaoui's *La vérité sort de la bouche du cheval* (2018), which foregrounds the voice in its title, not only through its mention of 'la bouche' itself, but through its use of a proverb, a piece of wisdom whose origins are unclear and plural. Confronting the Western reader, who Alaoui suggests may need to consult a glossary, with words and place names in Darija (as Edwidge Crutchfield states, 'Alaoui décrit d'ailleurs son projet d'écriture comme un « processus de traduction simultanée », une représentation hybride et déconcertante de la darija'), as well as exploring her narrator's relationship to colonial languages such as French, Dutch, English, and Spanish, Alaoui explores feminine subjectivity as at once individual and relational. Alaoui also includes the voices of other women, creating a polyphonic text which refuses to reduce its narrator to object in the eyes of French readers. Breaking out of colonial, neocolonial and patriarchal modes of signification, her narrator, Jmiaa, finally expresses herself fully through the voice and the body, rather than a singular language, releasing a stream of 'youyous', which she has previously repressed, on an American stage.

**Matilda Nevin** is a second-year PhD student at the University of St Andrews. She received her BA in English Language and Literature from the University of Oxford and her MPhil in Comparative Literature from the University of Cambridge. Her research focuses on multilingualism in Francophone, Anglophone and Italoophone women's writing about exile, drawing on poststructuralist, feminist and queer theories.

### 7.3 Cinema of Crisis

#### Adrienne Angelo: ‘Filming and Writing a Fractured Self: Eva Ionesco and the Crisis of Self-Representation’

Perhaps most publicly recognized as the eroticized child model in her mother’s semi-pornographic arthouse photographs, Eva Ionesco has, since 2011, turned to filmmaking and writing to recount her traumatic past. In her two films—*My Little Princess* (2011) and *Une jeunesse dorée* (2019)—and two autobiographical novels—*Innocence* (2017) and *Les enfants de la nuit* (2022), Ionesco narrates her childhood and teenage years in two different modalities: image and text. In as much as these echoic narratives may afford a degree of catharsis, their very repetition also suggests a degree of unresolved anguish. In fact, following her mother Irena Ionesco’s death in July 2022, Eva Ionesco wrote a piece for *Les Inrockuptibles* in which she states rather tellingly: “...ma mère est décédée, elle n’est pas morte.” This ongoing process of working through and puzzling out a crisis of identity leads us to ask how Ionesco sees and, even more significantly, represents herself. This presentation considers Ionesco’s crisis of self-representation as suggested by her (re)writing and (re)staging of her life story. In Kathryn Robson’s recent work *I Suffer, Therefore I Am: Engaging with Empathy in Contemporary French Women’s Writing* (2019), Robson explores several autofictional narratives of suffering which dismantle common-place assumptions regarding empathy (and sympathy, compassion, etc.) in self-other relations. We shall consider, too, how Ionesco engages with this aspect of articulating suffering in her visual and textual life-writing projects and, importantly, how she (as childhood victim and adult survivor) struggles to find a place for her mother in these narratives.

**Adrienne Angelo** is Professor of French at Auburn University and Distinguished Visiting Professor of French at the United States Air Force Academy. Her research examines memory, trauma, family, childhood, and exile within the scope of women’s life writing in contemporary France. She has published on Nina Bouraoui, Camille Laurens, and Marie Nimier, among others. Most recently she has submitted an entry to *The Literary Encyclopedia* (edited by Kate Averis and Siobhan McIlvaney) on the author Camille Laurens. She has also contributed a chapter to the forthcoming collection *Disruptive Discourses in Francophone Women’s Writing* (edited by Julie Rodgers, Ciara Gorman and Polly Galis) that investigates disruptive bodies and voices in Ananda Devi’s *Le Rire des déesses*.



**Adina Stroia: 'Reshaping Women in Crisis: Julia Ducornau's *Grave* (2016) and *Titane* (2021)'**

This paper seeks to interrogate the ways in which the violent and forceful breaching of corporeal and societal borders in Julia Ducornau's cinematographic corpus recasts the idea of crisis as a mode of being and not as a situation to be overcome. Through a comparative analysis of *Grave* and *Titane*, this paper will argue that by throwing into crisis rigid notions of gender, filiation, and self-preservation, Ducornau productively ruptures the boundaries of flesh and self thus making a case against containment. I will be paying close attention to notions of spatiality, familial bonds, and gender, while interrogating what makes us human. While the enclosed sanitised space of a veterinary school in *Grave* becomes a terrain on which the neatly demarcated medical borders between the human and the animal reign are renegotiated and the supremacy of intellectual orders of knowledge over instinctual regimes is challenged, the self-propelling rhythm of *Titane* problematizes such neat distinctions even further. A bolder, queerer, and altogether messier film, *Titane* takes the viewer into spaces which straddle the razor-sharp border between ordinary life and extraordinary situations with ever-present danger as a trigger, be it an (erotic) auto-show, a home which becomes the site of a murder spree, or an active firehouse. Actively comparing the director's first and second film, I will seek to show how through increased complexity, Ducornau unsettles and queers the borders between the animal reign and the human, and then the human and machines through metaphors of ingestion as represented by cannibalism, and metaphors of expulsion, as represented by birthing a half-human, half-machine baby, thus questioning our commitment to species-based identities. Through engagement with theories of *cinéma du corps* and haptic visuality, the paper will show how the piercing, tearing, and ingestion of both skin and flesh are means through which female bodies escape corporeal regulation and enter a productive crisis mode which actively reshapes gender norms.

**Adina Stroia** is an early-career researcher in the field of women's life-writing and visual culture. A former Visiting Fellow at the Centre for the Study of Contemporary Women's Writing, Adina is currently Lecturer in French and Francophone Studies at Newcastle University. Her research focuses on psychoanalysis, thanatography, ageing, ethics of care, lesbian studies, and visual studies. Her most recent publications include 'The Traumatic Structure of the *récit de mort*: Camille Laurens's *Philippe*' in *French and Francophone Studies* and 'Visualizing Mourning: The Legacy of Roland Barthes's *La Chambre claire*' in *Dwelling on Grief: Narratives of Mourning Across Time and Forms* (Legenda, 2022), eds. Simona Corso, Florian Mussnug, and Jennifer Rushworth. She is currently preparing her first monograph, *Reconfigurations of Mourning in Contemporary French Women's Writing: Camille Laurens, Marie Nimier, and Annie Ernaux*.



**Session 8: 11–12 noon****8.1 Crise sociale/crise perso**

**Colette Trout:** ‘Quand la crise de milieu de vie croise les crises de société dans *La mer à l’envers* de Marie Darrieussecq et *La Décision* de Karine Tuil’

Le Mouvement # *MeToo* n’a pas seulement permis aux femmes de s’exprimer sur les harcèlements et sévices sexuels qu’elles ont subi mais il a également libéré leur parole pour aborder leurs désirs lorsque passé la quarantaine les femmes souffrent d’une crise identitaire. Dans cette intervention, je me pencherai sur deux romans *La Mer à l’envers* de Marie Darrieussecq (2019) et *la Décision* de Katrine Tuil (2022) qui conjuguent ce mal être de la crise de milieu de vie avec des crises dramatiques de notre société, le problème des migrants chez Darrieussecq, et celui du terrorisme chez Tuil. Dans un premier temps, j’analyserai le malaise des narratrices qui après plus de 15 ans de vie conjugale, et malgré le fait qu’elles aient des professions gratifiantes, l’une comme psychologue, l’autre comme juge anti-terroriste, ont perdu le sens de leur identité tant elle reste entrelacée avec. Dans un deuxième temps, je montrerai que les décisions que prennent ces femmes dans deux des crises les plus bouleversantes de notre société, vont les faire réévaluer leurs valeurs et paradoxalement les aider, tant bien que mal, à se construire et reconstruire leur vie. En conclusion, je m’interrogerai sur le choix de Darrieussecq et de Tuil, d’imbriquer la quête identitaire de leurs personnages dans ces crises sociétales. Peut-on y voir un désir de faire exploser le mythe de la sphère domestique dans lequel les femmes restent souvent encore cantonnées, pour souligner, malgré les risques qu’elles prennent, l’engagement actif de ces femmes dans les affaires du monde ?

**Colette Trout** est professeure de français emerita (Ursinus College). Elle a publié de nombreux articles ainsi que des monographies sur des écrivaines françaises contemporaines, notamment sur Marie Cardinal, Violette Leduc et Marie Darrieussecq. En 2013, elle a co-dirigé une anthologie avec Frédérique Chevillot, *Rebelles et criminelles chez les écrivaines d’expression française* (2013). A été vice-présidente et présidente de WIF et rédactrice de *Women in French Studies* de 1993 à 1997. L’édition critique de la correspondance de Jeanne Flandreysy pendant la première Guerre mondiale, 1914-1915, (Vol. I) et 1916-1917 (Vol. II) en collaboration avec Colette Winn, sont parus chez Garnier en 2018 et 2020.

**Dawn Cornelio: 'Crise de corps mis en spectacle : Les cas de *Chavrier* de Lola Lafond et de *Les enfants sont rois* de Delphine de Vigan'**

*Chavirer* (2020) de Lola Lafond raconte l'histoire de Chloé. Jeune, elle rêve de devenir danseuse malgré la situation modeste de sa famille mais se fait piéger par « La Fondation » un organisme qui lui promettait une bourse qui lui permettrait de réaliser ce rêve, mais qui n'est d'autre que du proxénétisme bien organisé et bien caché. Chloé finira par devenir danseuse, mais elle passera aussi du rôle d'exploitée à celui d'exploiteuse. Quand des photos trouvées sur internet lanceront une investigation la jeune femme aura à affronter toutes les facettes de son passé. Dans *Les enfants sont rois* (2021) de Delphine de Vigan, Mélanie Claux rêve d'être star de télé-réalité, mais elle n'a pas le bon profil. Devenue mère, elle réalise son désir en devenant star des réseaux sociaux où elle se réjouit de la popularité qu'elle gagne à coups de vidéos de ces enfants Kimmy et Sammy, jusqu'au jour où Kimmy disparaît. À partir de ces deux romans, cette communication cherchera à élucider les questions et les crises de volonté, de culpabilité, de responsabilité, et de visibilité vers lesquelles leurs autrices attirent notre attention.

**Dawn M. Cornelio** is full Professor of French Studies at the University of Guelph (Canada) and conducts research focused on contemporary French women's writing and literary translation. Along with chapters in edited volumes, she has published articles in *Translation and Translanguaging in Multilingual Contexts*, *@nalyse*s, for example, she manages a critical website focusing on Chloé Delaume, and has recently founded New Dawn Editions a translation and publishing company which will focus on bringing Francophone women's voices into English. *Sisters, Are You with Me?*, a translation of *Mes bien chères soeurs* de Chloé Delaume *Angelbirds*, a translation of Régine Detambel's *Mésanges* have been published to date, with Hélène Marienské's *Almost All the Women (Presque toutes les femmes)* forthcoming in 2023

## 8.2 Crisis and Creation 2

### Amaleena Damlé: ‘Crisis in Consumption: Sex and Revolt in Ananda Devi’s Writing’

In novels, short stories and poetry, the writing of contemporary francophone Mauritian author Ananda Devi crosses borders in responding to a world governed by global flows of capital and consumption. Devi’s oeuvre invites the reader into different locations – from the culturally layered island world of Mauritius, to the globalised cities of Dehli and London, to a fantastical literary elsewhere – to trace these flows. As her characters grapple with experiences of inequality and vulnerability in a disenchanted and politically divided world that continues to be regulated by patriarchal demands and haunted by the legacies of colonialism and capitalist avarice, Devi’s writing allows for coruscating critical comment on the contemporary crisis of consumption. This paper is part of a wider book project, *Eating the Other*, that scrutinises this politics of consumption in and through Devi’s writing. In this particular strand, I consider capitalism, gender and the circulation of flesh across three novels, *Rue la poudrière* (1989), *Ève de ses décombres* (2006) and *Le Rire des déesses* (2021) written over the spectrum of Devi’s career. In each of these novels, Devi returns to themes of prostitution, sex work and women’s bodies as commodities, relegated to circulation in a globally patriarchal sexual economy. Drawing theories of female flesh under capitalism (Penny 2011; Probyn 2000) into postcolonial and decolonial frames, the paper argues that Devi’s writing opens new perspectives on notions of disposability under global capitalism (Vergès 2019; Wright 2006), where the female body becomes a site of capitalist crisis and revolt.

**Dr Amaleena Damlé** is Associate Professor in French at Durham University, UK, and a specialist in contemporary French and francophone literature and philosophy. She has published numerous articles and book chapters in this field; she is the author of *The Becoming of the Body: Contemporary Women’s Writing in French* (EUP, 2014), and the co-editor (with Gill Rye) of three major co-edited books on contemporary women’s writing (University of Wales Press, 2013; Peter Lang, 2013; Rodopi, 2014). Amaleena currently holds a British Academy Mid-Career Research Fellowship to write her next monograph, *Eating the Other: Ananda Devi and the Politics of Consumption*. She is also working on a project that scrutinises contemporary narratives of birth.

### Geneviève Guetemme: ‘Crise-crise de Laurine Rousselet’

Laurine Rousselet (1974, Dreux) écrit pour la dignité, la justice, la beauté et l’humanité en poussant la poésie jusque ses plus extrêmes limites – verbales, thématiques, biographiques. Son écriture est un *crire* ou l’écriture comme cri cherche à atteindre un point d’infini de mort, de sexe, de terre et de langue. En 2005, *L’été de la trente et unième* (réédité en 2021) présente les pensées des deux

mois de l'été de sa 31<sup>ème</sup> année – deux fois 31 jours – alors qu'elle est née un 31 décembre. Elle y détaille cette « fatigue à tous arpentant par survie, la 'pleine page' (de la vie) au pas lourd ». (*Été*, 29) En 2015, elle applique son mode discursif à la fois linéaire et explosé, à l'actualité de la « crise syrienne avec *Syrie, ce proche ailleurs*, à la fois sauvetage espéré et actualité sans lendemain. Rousselet dit la crise humaine et artistique qui échappe au dicible en développant une écriture sonore et graphique où le non-verbal s'exprime et donne toute sa place aux difficultés de l'artiste dans les espaces en crise – tant personnels que politiques contemporains. Mon intervention s'appuiera sur les recueils de Rousselet, mais aussi sur ses expériences collectives récentes avec un groupe de migrants à Olivet (France, mars 2022). Elle analysera une posture poétique soucieuse de prendre position face aux crises d'un genre (la poésie), d'une expression personnelle en constant renouvellement, mais aussi du lien que l'artiste entretient avec le monde. Elle abordera une poésie qui interpelle et tente de faire quelque chose face à l'inacceptable (ce qu'elle ne peut accepter en tant que poète et que citoyenne) tout en faisant quelque chose pour la poésie.

**Geneviève Guetemme** est maître de conférences en arts plastiques à l'université d'Orléans/laboratoire REMELICE (EA-4709). Sa recherche est à l'intersection des arts plastiques, des langues et des sciences sociales, et tente de faire émerger un regard dynamique sur les œuvres comme représentations complexes, distanciées et réflexives sur l'altérité. L'esthétique y est pensée comme une modalité de pensée et une méthode pour réfléchir aux flux et aux transferts inhérents aux espaces contemporains. Ses derniers ouvrages incluent *Écrire la mobilité* (dir. Geneviève Guetemme et Sylvie Maréchal ; Orléans, Paradigme, 2020) ; "From Greece to Germany: a photo documentary by Marie Dorigny on European hospitality", ILCEA [Online], 50 | à paraître 2023. URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/ilcea/>; et « Laurine Rousselet : la tentation de l'apatridie ». *Modern Languages Open*, 2019(1): 11 pp. 1–15. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3828/mlo.v0i0.217>.