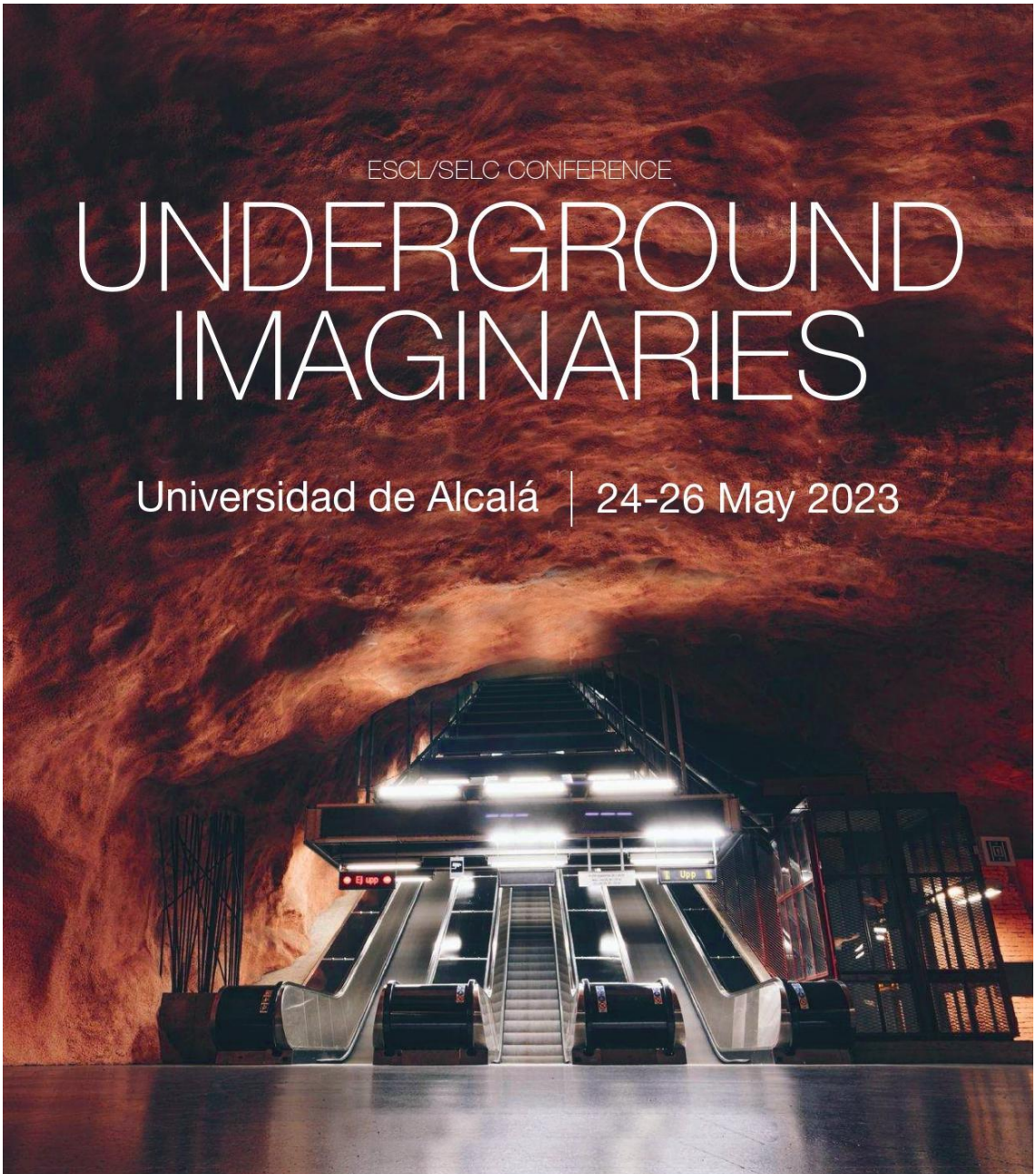


BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

ESCL/SELC CONFERENCE

# UNDERGROUND IMAGINARIES

Universidad de Alcalá | 24-26 May 2023



[underground-imaginaries.jimdosite.com](http://underground-imaginaries.jimdosite.com)

## ABOUT THE ORGANIZERS

**Patricia García** is a senior researcher in Literary Theory and Comparative Literature at the Universidad de Alcalá (Spain), where she currently leads a Ramón y Cajal project on urban peripheries in contemporary literature (Ministerio de Universidades, Spain + European Social Fund). She has previously been Associate Professor in Hispanic and Comparative Literature at the University of Nottingham (2014-2020) and a fellow of the Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies with a EURIAS/Marie-Curie fellowship. Her research focuses on literary urban spaces, which she analyses in their intersections with peripherality, gender and with representations of the supernatural. She is the author of *The Urban Fantastic in Nineteenth-Century European Literature* (Palgrave, 2022) and *Space and the Postmodern Fantastic in Contemporary Literature* (Routledge, 2015) and her most recent publications feature in *Comparative Literature and Culture*, *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*, *Philosophy and Literature* and the *Routledge Companion to Literary Urban Studies*. She was the PI of the British-Academy project *Gender and the Hispanic Fantastic* and directs the research network *Fringe Urban Narratives* ([urbanfringes.com/](http://urbanfringes.com/)). She is the Vice-President of *ALUS: Association for Literary Urban Studies*, member of the Executive Committee of the *European Society of Comparative Literature*, co-editor of the Palgrave Series in Literary Urban Studies and of *BRUMAL: Research Journal on the Fantastic*.

**Jean-Philippe Imbert** lectures in Comparative Literature and Sexuality Studies at Dublin City University. He runs a Research Centre called EROSS@DCU (Expressions, Research, Orientations: Sexuality Studies). He researches and publishes on literary and/or artistic Mexican, Irish or French 20th and 21st centuries, focusing on the relationship between sexuality, gender and the aesthetic treatment of evil, trauma, angst or perversion. He has been president of the ADEFFI (Association des Études Françaises et Francophones d'Irlande) and of the Irish Association of Mexican Studies. He has also curated international art exhibitions (photography) in Delhi, Dublin, Mexico City or Paris.

## LIST OF ABSTRACTS

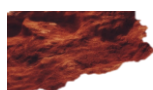
(in alphabetical order) Group sessions at the end.

### “The Trapdoors of Plot: The Gothic Novel and Underground Space”

**Riccardo Antonangeli**, University of Rome “La Sapienza”, Italy

In this paper I will investigate the narrative function of trapdoors in 19<sup>th</sup> century French *feuilletons* and in English Gothic novels. Secret doors leading to hidden underground spaces were a common narrative device in the novels, among others, of Anne Radcliffe, Eugène Sue and George Sand. These passageways had the double function of keeping latent, and out of sight, the shortcut to the solution of the mystery, and, at the same time, of accelerating and moving the plot forward. Moreover, thresholds of this kind bestow space with an ambiguous, porous nature: they make boundaries disappear and distances collapse, opening up urban and domestic spaces to *unseen* regions and connections.

In *Spiridion* (George Sand, 1839) the protagonist's path toward regeneration and resurrection is a descent into an underworld modelled on Dante's *Commedia*. The spiritual journey through the monastery secret underground, crypt coincides with a reading and interpretative experience; the solution to the riddle being, in fact, a *text*: Joachim of Fiore's commentary on the *Book of Revelation*. In *The Brothers Karamazov* (Fëdor Dostoevsky, 1880) the defence attorney mentions in his speech *The*



*Mysteries of Udolpho* (Anne Radcliffe, 1794), when he famously states that, according to the persecuting attorney, truth is to be found in the underground basement of Udolpho's castle.

The 'Gothic underground', then, might be read as the site for the *uncertain* and the *uncanny* underneath the veil of the text. The descent and journey through its tunnels are the metanarrative representation of the act of reading: a way of experiencing domestic and urban spaces, and texts, as enigmas and riddles turning the straightforward, unproblematic journey through 'familiar' spaces into a spiralling fall in 'unfamiliar' territories where revelation awaits.

**Riccardo Antonangeli** is an adjunct professor in English and Anglo-American Studies at the University of Rome "La Sapienza" (Department of European, American and Intercultural Studies). He earned a Ph.D. in Italian Studies from New York University in 2018. Before "Sapienza" he has taught in the US at NYU, CUNY and FIT. His main areas of research are comparative literature, theory of the novel and narratology. His latest book is "Non esisterà più il tempo: eternità e trama nell'arte del racconto" (Studium, 2020). He is currently a member of the ESCL Executive Committee.

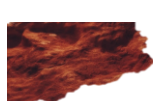
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### **"Enclaves of Entrapment: Capitalism's Waste in *Maquilapolis* and *Sete Prisoneiros*"**

**Andy Leonel Barrientos-Gómez**, Cornell University, USA

The exploitation of human beings can manifest itself in different iterations of power. These can range from human trafficking, debt-bondage, or labor exploitation. In Latin America there are numerous networks of legal and illegal businesses that subjugate and exploit individuals in a system reminiscent of modern-day slavery. These foreign businesses prey on the labor force of individuals who are socioeconomically disadvantaged and who do not have other means of income and must resort to exploitative measures to support their livelihood. In other instances, these businesses operate as clandestine networks of human trafficking who use debt-bondage to enslave women and men for their sexual or physical labor. These social ills have been a central theme in recent Latin American cultural production. Two of these cultural artifacts include the Mexican documentary *Maquilapolis* (2006) and the Brazilian film, *Sete prisoneiros* (2021). *Maquilapolis* features a group of women in Tijuana Mexico who work in a *maquiladora*, or a foreign factory in Mexico which exploits their workers. The documentary narrates the abusive nature of the work environment while also showcasing the resistance the women have fighting against these precarious and unfair conditions. Meanwhile, the fictional account in *Sete prisoneiros* focuses on seven young men who have been inducted into human trafficking and are enslaved using the capitalistic mechanism of debt-bondage. In this presentation, I do a comparative analysis of *Maquilapolis* (2006) and *Sete prisoneiros* to argue that late-stage capitalism has developed an infamous system of clandestine network of legal and illegal businesses that exploit human beings to produce profit. I use the theoretical framework of Teresa P.R. Caldeira's, *City of Walls: Crime, Segregation, and Citizenship in São Paulo* as well as Zygmunt Bauman's sociological discourse to analyse how these clandestine and public businesses exploits the individuals while operating in the shadows of Latin America today.

**Andy L. Barrientos-Gómez** is a PhD candidate in the department of Romance Studies at Cornell University. His research interests focus on contemporary Mexican and Brazilian cultural production, such as literature, film, and television. He is working on his dissertation which investigates cases of human trafficking, sexual commerce, the notion of the potlatch, as well as other capitalistic mechanisms that exploit the individual. In the future, he would like to work on a project featuring cults and their influence on Latin American society today.



## “Bajar al metro - cartografías subterráneas en la obra del poeta madrileño Eduardo Haro Ibars”

**María Beas Marín**, Université Paris 8 Vincennes Saint-Denis, France

El objetivo de mi ponencia será situar la aparición de la epidemia de VIH/Sida en España como un momento clave en la reconfiguración del Estado español postdictatorial y la puesta en práctica de un nuevo orden moral de los cuerpos y las subjetividades, al mismo tiempo que se proyecta una nueva ordenación de la cartografía urbana. A través de la obra del poeta madrileño Haro Ibars (1948-1988), él mismo enfermo de sida, pretendo dar cuenta de cómo los márgenes simbólicos y literales que ocupan su obra: pasillos subterráneos del metro, alcantarillas, descampados, urinarios fríos y sucios; estos espacios que representan el no-lugar al que han sido relegados estas subjetividades serán también la metáfora del lugar que ocupan los cuerpos enfermos, drogados, prostituidos como ciudadanxs en la España de los años 90 y 2000. La ciudad de Madrid -como tantas otras capitales del Norte Global- está inmersa en un proceso simultáneo de guetificación y gentrificación, la pandemia del VIH va a servir como “pretexto sanitario” para cerrar y vigilar los espacios de reunión no heteronormados (saunas, zonas de cruising, etc.) A la luz de obras como *Empalador* (1980), *Sex Fiction* (1981), *En rojo* (1985) e *Intersecciones* (1991) analizaré qué cartografía subterránea se va dibujando en la literatura del VIH/sida y cómo desde la ficción se desafían estos límites trazando otras cartografías urbanas. La obra de Ibars, influida por el género literario “zombi” americano de los 60, la contracultura *beat*, el *vamp*, el *glam* o el *camp* está repleta de referencias a brujas, vampiros, licántropos y zombis, esos «humanimales», ocultos hasta que llega la noche, habitantes del *underground*, como el propio artista los describe, van a subvertir los imaginarios que representaban la enfermedad abriendo la posibilidad hacia otros futuros no antropocéntricos.

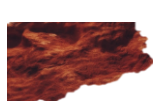
**María Beas Marín** es graduada en Literaturas Comparadas en la Universidad de Granada y Máster en Estudios de Género en la Universidad de Paris 8 Vincennes – Saint-Denis. Actualmente curso mi segundo año de doctorado en esta misma universidad, en el departamento de estudios hispánicos y de género. Mi proyecto de tesis titulado: *Dire le temps dans les poétiques du VIH/sida de l'Espagne post-franquiste*, versa sobre las relaciones entre temporalidades, necropolíticas estatales, epidemia y literatura durante los veinte primeros años de la epidemia (1980-2000). Este trabajo se enmarca, además, dentro del Labex: *Les passés dans le présent (Labex PasP)* en el que se trabaja de manera interdisciplinar la presencia del pasado en el presente.

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## “La escritura como excavación”

**Laura Benedicto Escajedo**, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Spain

La ponencia que se propone quiere ser una exploración acerca de la concepción del acto de creación como un acto de escarbar el lenguaje y, por subsiguiente, la realidad. Se tomarán como guía en este recorrido las teorías de Maurice Blanchot sobre la escritura. Partiremos, en concreto, de dos de ellas: su lectura del mito de Orfeo y Eurídice, cuya analogía con la escritura conlleva asumir que el escritor debe realizar un descenso a los infiernos para lograr crear el artífice, atrayendo a la nocturnidad; y la expresión de la “experiencia-límite”, como asunción de que escritura y lectura constituyen experiencias extremas del pensamiento donde el sinsentido no se opone al sentido, pensando más allá de dualismos, excediéndolos. Así, se plantea del mismo modo un paradigma en que el escritor debe excavar el lenguaje, que a causa de su arbitrariedad no puede decir ya nada—siempre lo mismo, el vacío, una y otra vez. La experiencia-límite es la exploración entre el escritor, el lector, el lenguaje y la muerte: la creación y la recepción marcadas por el límite que conlleva coincidir con la muerte, aquello



inexpresable e incomprensible para el ser humano por caer más allá de los límites cognoscitivos, aquello que no es conocido, de lo que no se tiene certeza alguna. Finalmente, la ponencia se cerrará con las consecuencias de dicha visión para la poesía, forma de escritura que se caracteriza por su uso otro del lenguaje.

Nacida en Barcelona, **Laura Benedicto Escajedo**, prepara su doctorado bajo la dirección de Virginia Trueba Mira, con el título "Cuerpo y texto: hacia una nueva lectura poética". Graduada en Estudios Literarios, formación en Teoría Literaria y Literatura Comparada por la Universidad de Barcelona, inició su carrera de investigación acerca del cuerpo y lo poético a través de una Beca de Colaboración del

Ministerio de Educación con el Departamento de Filología Hispánica y Teoría Literaria. En 2021 se traslada a Madrid a cursar el máster de Estudios Artísticos, Literarios y de la Cultura en la Universidad Autónoma de Madrid donde, de la mano de José Manuel Cuesta Abad disfruta de una Ayuda Fomento de la Investigación UAM, desarrollando una investigación sobre el texto, el cuerpo y la muerte en el poemario Poeta en Nueva York de García Lorca. De vuelta a Barcelona, forma actualmente parte del Grupo de Estudio del Festival Sálmon de danza contemporánea y artes escénicas.

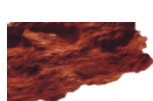
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### **“The Underground Voices of Silence: A Re-definition of Sound and Silence through the Perspective of Deafness”**

**Melek Chekili**, University of Southern California, USA

Silence has traditionally been defined as an absence of sound, and associated with either calm and peace, or fear of the unknown. The underground seems to shelter this ambivalence as well, for, on the one hand, it conveys the idea of peace through the development of alternative forms of expression. On the other hand, the underground - what is situated beneath the surface of the ground - triggers a certain unease, a reminder of death and morbidity. My intention is thus to carry out a *rapprochement* between the imaginaries of silence and those of the underground, an exhumation of the unheard through deafness, and a re-thinking of the widely entrenched binary sound/silence in urban life. Basing my paper on the visual works of sound artist Christine Kim Sun on sound, senses, bodily expression, and the city in her compelling art installation *Captioning the City* (2021), the conceptualization of music as action by musicologist Nina Sun Eidsheim, and the call to listen differently in Pin Pin's *Singapore GaGa*, I will present the common conception of silence as constructed by the hearing-dominated city. I argue that to envision the possibility of a deaf-friendly city, one needs to re-define one's approach to sound and silence, not as two fixed concepts, but dependent on the level of familiarity that the listener possesses with the sound emitted. My intent is not to sustain a naturalized view of hearing as the predominant sense to approach sound, but rather to extend the experience of sound to other senses. Using deafness as metaphor to refer to the inherent way of living of the city dweller, but also **considering** deafness literally, I will reflect on learning to listen to sound beyond sound, and open the figure of sound to time, visibility, emotions. Finally, I will present listening as an ethical way to relate to others in the city, namely by deconstructing the pervasiveness of the verbal and acknowledging the voice in its materiality as worthy of being listened to.

**Melek Chekili** is a fourth year PhD student in Comparative Studies in Literature and Culture (specialized in French and Francophone literature and culture) at the University of Southern California. She is interested in the ways in which North African women's voices have been articulated across literature, cinema and music within colonial and migratory contexts. She reflects on the possibility to carry out a musical approach to those voices, and on what can a genealogy of North African women's voices reveal



about the urgency of listening beyond one's fixed idea of what can be accepted as valid and valuable sound or voice.

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### **“The houses of the crimes’: Labban District in the Egyptian Imaginary”**

**Elena Chiti**, Stockholm University, Sweden

In 1920, in the Alexandrian district of Labban, a gang was charged with the murder of seventeen women. The press portrayed its male members as secondary figures, while demonizing the sisters

Rayyā and Sakīna ‘Alī Hammām. Their involvement in illegal prostitution, constantly underlined, was considered sufficient evidence of their role as chiefs of the gang. Rayyā and Sakīna, as they are known in the whole Arab world until today, were the first women to be sentenced to death by the Egyptian secular justice. Executed in 1921, they are still vividly present in the Egyptian collective memory. Cultural productions, fictional and non-fictional, have been revisiting their myth and re-signifying their figures for one century. The district of Labban, where the gang once operated, and the houses where the sisters lived, have been at the core of such re-significations.

This paper intends to reconstruct and compare the images of “the houses of the crimes” during the century, as they emerge in both written and visual sources, fictional and non-fictional, in different settings and supports. The “houses” appear in moralizing descriptions in newspaper *al-Ahrām* and in gloomy pictures published in *al-Laṭā’if al-muṣawwara* in 1921. Descriptions and pictures have been recontextualized at the National Police Museum in Cairo, but also on social media until today. Some movies, theatrical plays, and a TV series, since the 1950s, have visually represented the “houses”. In 2015, the announcement of a new movie in the making has reignited the debate around Rayyā and Sakīna, refocusing attention on Labban. From source of stigmatization, the “houses” are becoming a tourist attraction, yet this renewed fascination contributes to othering Labban as a living past untouched by the present.

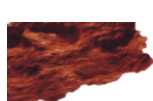
**Elena Chiti** is a translator of Arabic literature and a cultural historian of contemporary Egypt, interested in the study of state-citizens relationship through popular culture, in particular criminal myths. She is currently conducting research on the different versions of the myth of Rayyā and Sakīna in Egypt, from the 1920s until today. She has studied their criminalization by looking at their framing in the newspaper *al-Ahrām* in the fall of 1920: Chiti E. 2020, “Building a National Case in Interwar Egypt: Rayyā and Sakīna’s Crimes through the Pages of *al-Ahrām* (Fall 1920)”, *History Compass* 18 (2), p.1-13. She has started exploring their resignification as “social bandits” in present-day Egypt through ethnography, press, and broadcast sources from 2015 to 2020: -Chiti E. 2021, “National Robin Hoods and Local Avengers: On Two Shifts in the Criminal Myth of Rayyā and Sakīna in Present-Day Egypt”, *Journal of Historical sociology*, 4 (3), p. 517-534.

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### **“Down the Rabbit Hole: Fictional Explorations of the Mind’s Recesses”**

**Maria Micaela Coppola**, University of Trento, Italy

Two texts with subterranean settings will be the milestones in a journey into the (fictional) recesses of the mind. In William Blake’s colour print *Newton* (1795–c.1805) the physicist and mathematician is a naked muscular young man, couched on a rock and solely focused on a diagram he is drawing with his compass. He appears to be blind to the natural context, which is seemingly the bottom of the sea:



rocks, algae, shells, and darkness surround Newton, whose gaze is, nonetheless, drawn to the luminous scroll at his feet only. This monotype will provide the metaphor for the role of narrative competence and the psychological humanities in comprehending those dark areas of the mind which evidence-based medicine and psychology still cannot account for satisfactorily. Fiction can provide the tools (i.e., approach, metaphors, competence, language) for illuminating the mind's chiaroscuro and for seeing and recognising those areas of the mind that, in Virginia Woolf's words, are "buried in mud" and, therefore, "unaccountable" (*Letters*).

We will focus on the language of fiction – opposed and complementary to the language of science – seen as a tool for exploring the recesses of the mind and lingering on its dark corners. We will consider

poems (by Oliver de la Paz, Mary Dorsey, Mariangela Gualtieri, Toni Harrison) that represent neurodivergent or cognitively impaired minds from the point of view of onlookers (caregivers, poets, readers). Through these fictional dialogues, we can direct our gaze away from the spotlight (brain scans, tests, questionnaires) into the darkness of inaccessible minds, whose speech and language is considered to be delayed, lost, illogical in the context of doctor-patient dialogues. Like Alice in the first chapter of her adventures – our second milestone – we can follow the rabbit/patient down their puzzling, unintelligible hole and practice new, albeit feeble, ways of communicating, and, ultimately, we "know/ there are beyond us impossible cylinders/ where meaning lives" (de la Paz).

**Maria Micaela Coppola** is Associate Professor of English Literature at the Department of Psychology and Cognitive Science of the University of Trento (Italy). She has published on twentieth century and contemporary women writers in English, lesbian literature, and feminist cultural periodicals. Her more recent publications are on fictional accounts of mental illness (with a specific focus on dementia) and the psychological humanities. Her current research interest is the role of narrative competence in promoting health and well-being from the perspective of feminist and narrative medicine studies.

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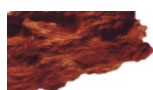
### **"Transworld Underground: Casanova's *Icosameron* and the Limits of Cosmopolitan Hospitality"**

**Didier Coste**, Bordeaux Montaigne University, France

Unlike Jules Verne's *Journey to the Center of the Earth* or Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Casanova's *Icosameron* proposes the science of an imaginary space discovered by his young characters Edward and Elizabeth, materializing their unconscious desire for the same projected as other.

The verticality of their crashing descent into the protocosmos inside "our" globe and of their explosive ascent back to the ageing surface of human history frames the horizontality of their encounter and coexistence for 81 years with (almost) (non-) human creatures. This is not a dark world, an inferno, but a differently enlightened world, with its own central sun.

The Megamicric non-Adamic hominids are not victims of the original sin, they escape the binaries of sexual and cultural difference in similar, but not identical ways to Ursula Le Guin's Gethenians. Thanks to their fixed, regulated twin courses, they are not haunted by the un-certainty of death and separation. This relative security explains their unlimited universalist and cosmopolitan hospitality, but this effective utopia is threatened and will be doomed by double-edged human inventions (the progress that should have "improved" their lives) and by the proliferation of Adam's progeny on their soil.



Non-cyclic clocks start ticking. In the long run, the Biblical virus of history will irreversibly contaminate a slow, preserved culture. In 1788, the very year Captain Arthur Phillip sails into Port Jackson and establishes the first colonial settlement at Sydney Cove, the full-fledged underground universe of the *Icosameron* both remembers the destruction of the Indies (Las Casas) and anticipates the tragic exoticism of European colonial appropriation in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as well as the sinister aspects of Anthropocenic globalization. Underground and in a buried, marginalized narrative, lies the shocking, queer inner truth to be unearthed; above ground, it is already a non-viable underworld.

**Didier Coste**, Professor Emeritus of Comparative Literature at Bordeaux Montaigne University, has also taught and researched Literary Theory, Semiotics, Cultural History, and Translation Theory in Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Canada, India, the USA, and Tunisia. He is the author of some 150 scholarly articles, chapters and reviews. His book *Narrative as Communication* (1989) was considered as a landmark in Narrative Theory. More recently, a large part of his work is dedicated to questions of Cultural Cosmopolitanism, editing a double special section of the journal *Eu-topías* (# 13 and 14, 2017), co-editing the collection *Migrating Minds: Theories and Practices of Cultural Cosmopolitanism* (Routledge, ©2022) prolonged by the new journal *Migrating Minds Journal of Cultural Cosmopolitanism* (Georgetown University, from 2023), and authoring *A Cosmopolitan Approach to Literature: Against Origins and Destinations* (Routledge, ©2023). Coste is also a trilingual poet, a novelist, and an award-winning literary translator.

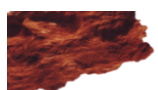
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### **“De-Generaciones”**

**Francisco De León**, Universidad de Barcelona, Spain

“La tarea consiste en reagruparse, reorganizarse, recuperar las fuerzas en silencio, con los dientes apretados y sin dejarse llevar por la desesperación”  
José Revueltas

Luego de que los movimientos estudiantiles de fueran reprimidos con la matanza del 2 de octubre de 1968 ocurrida en la Plaza de las Tres culturas del barrio de Tlatelolco y luego con la masacre conocida como “Halconazo” del 10 de junio de 1971, en todo México se genera un ambiente de violencia constante en contra de cualquier movimiento juvenil: se prohíben los conciertos, se censuran actividades culturales, etc. Ello provocó que aparecieran, especialmente en zonas periféricas de las ciudades más grandes del país (Ciudad de México, Tijuana, Guadalajara, etc.), lugares conocidos como Hoyos funky, mercados culturales (Como el tianguis del Chopo) entre otros centros en los cuales se gestaron las que Néstor García Canclini llama “Tribus urbanas”: punketos, darketos, jipitecas, escatos se convierten no solo en equivalentes de sus pares europeos y estadounidenses, sino en colectivos con identidades propias que reflexionan su entorno, su realidad política y experimentan modos de convivencia. La crisis económica de 1982, el terremoto de Ciudad de México en 1985 y el fraude electoral de 1988 no hicieron sino aumentar el descontento de la sociedad general, enfatizaron las diferencias de clase y la sensación de exclusión (aparecen, por ejemplo, “centros de damnificados” que tenían como propósitos dar habitación a quienes perdieron sus hogares a consecuencia del terremoto, pero que se convirtieron en márgenes de pobreza y exclusión al grado que algunos de ellos aún existen casi cuarenta años después) lo cual afectó profundamente los imaginarios políticos y artísticos de los jóvenes que durante la década de 1990 reconfiguraron el espacio urbano. Escritores, músicos, y artistas visuales ocuparon locales en zonas marginadas (consideradas peligrosas) para presentar sus trabajos, para discutir sus realidades. En su ensayo *Generación Z*, Alberto Chimal analiza obras que





reflejan el espíritu del momento. El propósito de esta propuesta es hacer una aproximación al cómo conciben esas obras (y esas tribus) los espacios urbanos, cómo trataron de destirrotiarizarlos, de convertirlos en espacios de experimentación. Pero también esta aproximación pretende no romantizar estos movimientos y contemplar también a sus fallos, sus prejuicios pues ellos también son importantes para la comprensión de estas nociones en el momento actual.

**Francisco de León**, Doctor en Filosofía por la UNAM, Productor y locutor de Radio UNAM desde 1997 hasta 2010. Autor de 4 libros de Poesía: *Traición al silencio*, *Las guerras floridas* (Coautoría con Gerardo Castillo), *Mitologías*, *Concierto para piano y poesía* (música de Juan Pablo Villa) y *La noche mil y un veces* (CONACULTA). Fue becario del Banff Centre para Artistas residentes de Alberta, Canadá (2008) con el proyecto de poesía *Tres invocaciones a la fragilidad*. Miembro del Colectivo artístico Pánico de Masas. Guionista para las cintas *Íncubo* del director Óscar Blancarte, *Las orillas del infinito* y para el corto "Nene", ambos de Carlos Meléndez. Es dramaturgo de las puestas en escena *El enviado de Cthulhu*, *Zombicentenario*; *La Ruina de los naufragos*, *Trilogía: Rostros iluminados*, *El Legado*, entre otras. Fue profesor de asignatura del Instituto Tecnológico de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey; autor del libro de ensayo *Prometeo en llamas: Metamorfosis del monstruo* y publicó en los libros *Reflexiones sobre cine mexicano contemporáneo*, *Arte y redes sociales*, *Territorios de la imaginación* (Universidad de Alcalá, España), *Reflexiones desde la nube (Redes, estética y arte)*, entre otros. Es colaborador en revistas académicas como *Reflexiones Marginales*, *Brumal* y *Pasavento*.

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### **"Forms of Underground Lives: Images of Urban Landscapes and their Visualization in Dante and Milton"**

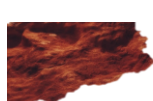
**Emilia Di Rocco**, Sapienza Università di Roma, Italy

In the Middle Ages Hell, as a real, corporeal and tangible place, was considered the logical antithesis to Heaven, the city of the damned souls in opposition to the kingdom of the saved souls. In fact, the concept of Hell was easier to describe, discuss and visualize than that of Heaven because it didn't imply difficult theological issues as the representation of Paradise did.

Drawing on Virgil's *Aeneid* and namely on his description of Tartarus as a large fortress, Dante's depiction of the underworld relies on urban imagery. As a matter of fact, in the *Divine Comedy* Hell is a city, as we read in the famous inscription on the gates of hell in canto 3 and God is the supreme architect of the place. This inscription also alerts the reader to the moral position of the underworld and the damned in Dante's Christian universe. Going to hell means to freely will and reject the Creator in favour of His creation, that is to accept the material and corporeal reality in place of the true substantiality of Heaven.

In the seventeenth century John Milton models his description of hell on Virgil's and Dante's urban landscape of the underworld and transfers the power they claimed for their hell to his representation of an inner condition rather than an external and material location in *Paradise Lost*.

In this paper I will look at the description of hell in Dante and Milton, focusing on the urban imagery and its relevance to the description of a moral and inner condition. To this end, since Dante's and Milton's pictures of hell have been particularly influential for the Romantic movement, I will consider the illustrations of the underworld in the works of William Blake, Gustave Doré and John Martin.



**Emilia Di Rocco** is Associate Professor of Comparative Literature at the Department of European, American and Interdisciplinary Studies, at Sapienza Università di Roma. In 2019 she was awarded the Fulbright Distinguished Chair Lectureship at Northwestern University, Department of Italian and French (spring term 2021). She is vice-president of the European Society of Comparative Literature. She has published many articles and books in Italy and abroad. Her latest publications include: *Baciare la terra. Un topos letterario* (2012), two monographic issues on the prodigal son in western literature (Studium 2013, 2014) and *Raccontare il ritorno. Temi e trame della letteratura* (2017). Lately she edited *Storie del Grande Sud. Per Piero Boitani* (2017), *Mondi di Fede e di invenzione. Intersezioni tra religioni e letteratura* (2018 together with Elena Spandri) and *Astonishment. Essays on Wonder for Piero Boitani* (2019). Her current research interests include literature and theology, literature and the Bible, the rewritings of ancient myth in medieval and modern literature. She is a member of the Board of Directors of the *Fondazione Lorenzo Valla/Mondadori, Collana dei classici greci e latini* where she is also Deputy Director of the comparative literature research group of the Fondazione Balzan Premi at the Fondazione Lorenzo Valla (Principal Investigator and Director of the Project: Piero Boitani). She is a member of the Medieval Academy of America Leeds IMC Programme Committee (2020-2024). She is Vice-President of the *European Society of Comparative Literature/Société Européenne De Littérature Comparée*. She is a Member of the Board of Editors of *Nuova Informazione bibliografica* and of *Thersites. Journal for Transcultural Presences and Diachronic Identities from Antiquity to Date*, of the Editorial Committee of *Edizioni Studium* and *Marcianum Press* where, together with Professors Fabio Pierangeli and Giuseppe Leonelli, she coordinates the humanities section. She writes for the *Osservatore Romano*, *Nuova Informazioni Bibliografica* and *Indice dei libri del mese*. She is the Editor in Chief of *Status Quaestionis. Language, Text, Culture*.

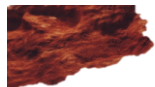
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### **“Parallel Spaces on your Doorstep: An Approach to Multi-layered Fictional Architectures”**

**Rosa María Díez Cobo**, Universidad de Burgos, Spain

In our collective imagination everything related to secretive or alternative worlds is usually associated with distant, enigmatic spaces, difficult to reach both from a physical and conceptual point of view. However, one of the most common strategies in fantasy and horror literature is the rupture of everyday spatiality in line with the Freudian notion of the uncanny: it is in the familiar realm where the most inconceivable or dreadful horrors could be housed. The symbolic potential of this conception, as we know, is enormous, and has given rise to a considerable number of literary or audiovisual productions of a fantastic tenor that recreate the interior-external, superior-inferior binomials and their interpretative extrapolations.

Yet, some literary fictions, particularly in recent times, has displaced the figurative side of the constructive element and has focused on its physical possibilities instead, on alternative spaces articulated in underground, hidden spatial frames. In this presentation, I will analyze a series of contemporary fantastic narrative texts where different examples of everyday buildings reveal their veiled architectonic pillars, a parallel or covert structure. Specifically, titles in English such as *House of Leaves* (2000) by Mark Z. Danielewski, or *Horrorstör* (2014) by Grady Hendrix, and examples in Spanish such as the novel *Las madres negras* (2018) by Patricia Esteban Erlés, or the story “Calamidad doméstica” (2014) by Solange Rodríguez Pappé, from different critical aspects and aesthetic objectives, show the multiple options of exploring the concealed background of everyday built spaces. Given the number and length of some of these narratives, in this paper I will circumscribe to a brief analysis of the discursive resources used by the authors to configure these multidimensional architectures and the diverse functionality that they embody.



**Rosa María Díez Cobo** is Assistant Professor of English at the University of Burgos (Spain). She holds a PhD in Comparative Literature from the University of León (Spain). Her research interests revolve mostly around North American - Latin American postmodernist comparative studies as well as the comparative consideration of spatiality in fantastic narratives. She has published several articles, as well as chapters in books with various international publishers, among others Iberoamericana / Vervuert, Pearson, Peter Lang and Routledge. She has also authored two books: *Nueva sátira en la ficción postmodernista de las Américas* (University of Valencia, 2006), and *Arquitecturas inquietantes. Antología de relatos de casas encantadas* (Eolas, 2022).

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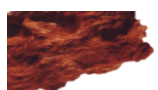
**“Las reflexiones del diseño arquitectónico y urbano en la vida cotidiana bonaerense a través de la mirada fílmica en *Pizza, birra, faso* (1998) y *Medianeras* (2011)”**

**Caglar Erteber**, Universidad de Arizona, USA

Los procesos sociales no pueden considerarse con independencia de los urbanos, como indica David Harvey. El espacio urbano se convierte en un testigo esencial de todos los procesos y transformaciones históricos, económicos, sociales, infraestructurales, arquitectónicos y urbanos. Las grandes urbes como Buenos Aires son lugares en los que se encuentran contrastes antagónicos, particularmente entre el centro y la periferia. Este análisis pretende abordar cómo dialoga audiovisualmente el argumento del estudio de Fabiola López-Durán *Eugenics in the Garden: Transatlantic Architecture and the Crafting of Modernity* (2018) con dos filmes: el de Israel Adrián Caetano y Bruno Stagnaro *Pizza, birra, faso* (1998) y el de Gustavo Taretto *Medianeras* (2011) que pertenecen a distintos periodos de la historia contemporánea de Argentina. Este diálogo se produce en el ámbito de la política urbana y arquitectónica, es decir, de la representación del espacio público y el diseño arquitectónico desde diferentes paisajes urbanos y clases sociales. Por un lado, *Pizza, birra, faso* lleva fragmentos del mundo subterráneo en plena crisis económica y urbana a la pantalla, por el otro, *Medianeras* introduce historias desde la óptica de la clase media dentro del tejido urbano y diseño vertical arquitectónico. Asimismo, es crucial marcar la conexión existente entre el pasado y el presente en la reconstrucción del Buenos Aires monumental y demostrar de qué manera estos elementos penetran en la vida cotidiana de sus habitantes a través de los personajes de ambas producciones cinematográficas. Al compaginar el argumento textual y la mirada fílmica de los cineastas, también se recurre a la aproximación teórica de los estudios urbanos (David Harvey y Henri Lefebvre), la biopolítica (Michel Foucault) y la necropolítica (Achille Mbembe).

**Caglar Erteber** es estudiante de doctorado en Estudios Culturales y Literatura en la Universidad de Arizona y también asistente editorial de Arizona Journal Hispanic Cultural Studies. Sus campos principales de investigación son el cine español contemporáneo, el cine quinqué, el cine de la Transición y los estudios urbanos y espaciales. Además, la enseñanza de la lengua española es gran parte de su carrera profesional. Él imparte clases de español en diferentes países e instituciones académicas desde noviembre de 2008. Tiene publicaciones académicas en turco, español e inglés y un libro basado en la gramática española para los turcohablantes (2012).

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### **“Conceiving Crime: The Evolution of the *Cour des miracles*”**

**Cesare Esposito**, Scuola Normale Superiore of Pisa (Italy) / Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne (France)

The identification and definition of criminal groups has essentially been based on a dichotomous division of society into two macro-categories: the true members of society and the *others*. This social division has been the basic nucleus of numerous historical and cultural representations of individuals considered as outsiders to society, resulting in the elaboration of famous and important social and literary topoi. In 17th-century France, the imagery of the *Cour des miracles* emerged, becoming the geographical and political concept most identifiable with the issues of crime and deviance. Gradually, the Court evolved as the most representative symbol of a cultural imagery entirely dedicated to those members who did not belong to the true and legal society – a *counter-society* – and who in fact contrasted it with their very existence and deviant actions. The depiction of the *Cour des miracles* was, however, the offspring of centuries-old literary and philosophical considerations dedicated to the theme of deviance; numerous characteristics of the Court's imagery can in fact be traced back to the 13th and 14th centuries. This paper, therefore, analyses the theme of the *Cour des miracles*, including an exploration of the portrayals of the counter-society established between the 13th and 16th centuries. This paper will consider the effects that previous depictions of crime had on the imagery of the *Cour des miracles*, examining the persistence of numerous similarities between the earlier

literature on *counter-societies* – conceived mostly in Spain and Italy – and the 17th century French writings on the criminal world. Specifically, the focus will be on examining the two elements that constitute the backbone of the collective and literary imagery of the *counter-society*: the existence of an internal hierarchy headed by a king and the use of a language specific to the criminal world.

**Cesare Esposito** is a doctoral student in Modern History at the *Scuola Normale Superiore* of Pisa, as well as a co-doctoral student in the Doctorate in History at the *Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne*. In 2021, he received his MA in History and Civilisation from the University of Pisa and his diploma in

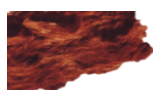
Modern History from the *Scuola Normale Superiore*. His doctoral research analyses the processes of identification and repression of the vagabond and the marginal classes in the period between the end of the Ancien Régime and the advent of the July Monarchy, paying particular attention to the representations of vagabondage developed during the French Revolution and the underlying links with the imagery of the *classes dangereuses* developed during the Restoration.

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### **“It Came from Underground: Narratives of Emerging Arctic Apocalypse”**

**K.M. Ferebee**, Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies/ University of Helsinki, Finland

As climate change chips away at Arctic ice, one category of popular fear has concerned what frozen biological horrors might be unloosed from underground. From the television show *Fortitude* and the graphic novel *Sweet Tooth* to novels such as Jim Shepard's *Phase Six* and Sequoia Nagamatsu's *How High We Go in the Dark*, contemporary culture is fascinated by the spectre of a (literally) deep past that emerges to obliterate the future or render it unrecognizable. Even when the "emerging Arctic apocalypse" is of a more positive character— as in Erica Ferencik's *Girl in Ice*, in which a resurrected Dorset-culture child might hold the secret to human immortality— posit the depths of the Arctic as an uncanny and alien space where humans intervene only at the risk of apocalypse. How has such a specific fear come to figure so centrally in contemporary Arctic literature?



In this paper, I build on Jen Hill's analysis of the Arctic's symbolic role as staging-ground for imperial anxieties, arguing that the Arctic has come to function as an "imaginary place" where geontological anxieties are worked out in ways that ultimately sustain the Anthropocene. I examine how Arctic apocalypse narratives participate in a larger genre that portrays nonhuman nature as inexhaustible resource in the face of rising human consumption— and, specifically, the rising threat of extractive industry in the Arctic. Drawing on recent work in eco-deconstruction, I ask how the Arctic underground can cease to be "imaginary" and start to be taken seriously as a material place.

**K. M. Ferebee** is a postdoctoral research fellow with the Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies, where her work examines the mobilization of Arctic narratives in constructing environmental meaning during the Anthropocene. From 2021-2022 she served as a research fellow with the Narrating the Mesh (NARMESH) Project at Ghent University, where her work included analysis of climate change narratives and an investigation of human/nonhuman dynamics in the 2021 evacuation of Kabul, Afghanistan (where she lived and worked from 2019-2020). She holds a PhD in English from The Ohio State University; her doctoral dissertation examined narratives of contamination and mutation in literatures of the Anthropocene.

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### **“La profondeur de la mine comme lieu de dépassement d’inimitiés « héréditaires » ”**

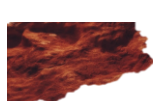
**Caroline Fischer**, Université de Pau et des Pays de l'Adour, France

« Kameradschaft » ou « La Tragédie de la Mine » est un chef-d'œuvre cinématographique franco-allemand de Walter Pabst, sorti en salle au début des années 1930 (la version restaurée en 2018/19). Le focus de notre contribution portera sur l'aspect narratif de l'œuvre, rendue possible par la publication du scénario en 1997.

Ce qui rend l'analyse particulièrement passionnante pour le contexte étudié pendant la conférence sur les *Underground Imaginaries*, ce sont les multiples renvois entre surface et sous-sol, entre le superficiel et le profond sur les différents plans du politique, de l'humain et du géologique.

La dimension politique n'est pas celle de 1906, année où avait lieu la plus importante catastrophe minière de tous les temps en Europe à Courrières qui a servi d'inspiration pour le film. L'action est transplantée dans l'époque contemporaine de la réalisation, et la mine est transfrontalière, ce qui permet de montrer en surface les inimitiés franco-allemandes persistantes suite à la Première Guerre mondiale, s'exprimant même entre enfants qui jouent aux billes près de la frontière. Cette frontière est mise en scène à plusieurs moments clés : lorsque les mineurs allemands volent au secours de leurs camarades français et bravent les contrôles des douaniers et quand, dans la mine, ils se retrouvent devant cette même frontière sous forme de grille qui leur barre l'accès aux ensevelis. Sous terre la fraternité humaine évolue et s'exprime pleinement.

La dimension linguistique souligne elle-aussi la dichotomie entre « dessus » et « dessous », car elle n'empêche aucunement la compréhension dans les galeries tandis que une fois sortis du drame, les mineurs n'ont plus de langue commune. Elle donnera aussi lieu à une étude comparative entre les deux versions, allemande et française, du scénario, dont la différence s'exprime clairement dès le titre cité en amont.



**Caroline Fischer**, since 2009 professor of General and Comparative Literature at the UPPA. Numerous publications on exciting literature (*Gärten der Lust*, Metzler 1999) and poetry (*Der poetische Pakt. Rolle und Funktion des poetischen Ich in der Liebeslyrik (Ovid, Petrarca, Ronsard, Shakespeare, Baudelaire)*, C. Winter 2007); editor of the first German translation of Ronsard's *Amours* and *Sonnets pour Hélène* (2006/2010/2017); co-editor of several books, notably *Intermedialités* (Lucie ed. 2015); *Un siècle sans poésie? Le lyrisme des Lumières entre sociabilité, galanterie et savoir* (Champion 2016); *Konzepte der Rezeption*, 3 vols. 1. *Réception productive : imitatio, intertextualité, intermedialité*. 2. *Esthétique de la réception*. 3. *Réception et transferts culturels*, Stauffenburg, 2015, 2018, 2021.

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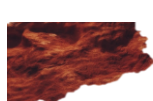
### **“When Dinosaurs Rise to Challenge Fossil Fuel Extraction: Anthropocene Unburials, Fossil Pasts, and Prehistoric Futures”**

**Michael Fuchs**, University of Innsbruck, Austria

The Lost World tale has always been characterized by its intricate ties to colonialism and imperialism. Early examples such as H. Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1885) and Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Lost World* (1912) not only echo the ex-pansive politics of the times but also draw on racist ideas of human evolution that place the inhabitants of Africa and South America in what Dipesh Chakrabarty has called the “imaginary waiting room of history” (2000, 7). However, not just non-Europeans were decidedly placed in the past, so were nonhuman animals, made explicit by the presence of prehistoric animals in a number of the classics of the genre.

Stories such as *The Lost World* have not only inspired countless adaptations, but their constant circulation has also ensured that the Lost World genre would not be forgotten, finding contemporary expressions in various media, including novels such as Russell James's *Mammoth Island* (2021) and Eric S. Brown's *Amazon Horror Cruise* (2021) and movies such as *Piranha 3DD* (2012) and *The Meg* (2018). In my proposed paper, I would like to explore a particular type of the Lost World tale, which has appeared in recent years—stories in which the neo-colonial and neo-imperial practices of continued fossil fuel extraction cause dinosaurs trapped in underground worlds to rise. Accordingly, my paper will respond to Maria de Lourdes Melo Zurita, Paul George Munro, and Donna Houston's observation that “the role of the underground has been discursively absent from contemporary debates about the Anthropocene” (2018, 298), stressing that “the challenges of the Anthropocene are very much entangled with the underground's past, present and future” (2018, 299), while drawing on Robert Macfarlane's notion of the “Anthropocene Unburial”—that “forces, objects and substances thought safely confined to the underworld are declaring themselves above ground with powerful consequences” (2019b; e.g. methane, but also bodies and viruses buried in permafrost for thousands of years)—and his exploration of the “Underland” (2019a).

Using the examples of the movie *Cowboys vs. Dinosaurs* (2015) and the novel *Fracking Dinosaurs* (2017), I will suggest that the rise of the prehistoric animals acknowledges the workings of what Justin McBrien has called the Necrocene (2016), as the fossil fuel industry was founded on (and continues to be based on) the deaths of carbon-based lifeforms. By invading the present from the past, the monstrous creatures not only “ask us why we have created them,” to quote from the final line of Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's influential elaborations on monstrosity (1996, 20), but also ask us whether we are ready to face the real-world monsters lurking underground.



**Michael Fuchs** is a postdoctoral researcher in the project “Delocating Mountains: Cinematic Landscapes and the Alpine Model” at the University of Innsbruck in Austria. Michael has co-edited six books, most recently *Fantastic Cities: American Urban Spaces in Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Horror* (UP Mississippi, 2022), and two journal special issues, most recently one on science and/in audiovisual media, and (co-)authored sixty-plus essays on topics including contemporary North American and Austrian literature, American, Australian, Canadian, Austrian, and Chilean cinema, horror television, and videogames. For more on his past and ongoing research, see [www.michael-fuchs.info](http://www.michael-fuchs.info).

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### “Cambio de andén: el metro de Santiago como portal subterráneo en la ciencia ficción chilena”

**Guillermo González**, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso, Chile / Universidad de Alcalá, Spain

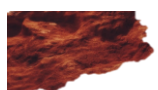
Este trabajo explora las posibilidades que ofrece el espacio subterráneo del metro de Santiago de Chile tanto desde su estructura lineal como medio de transporte, así como desde la red de túneles que recorren la ciudad por debajo de la tierra dentro del establecimiento de ficciones que lo posicionan como un escenario constituido a partir de su inherente ocultamiento no solo a la vista sino también al conocimiento de su historicidad, puesto que como proyecto resultaba ser ambicioso en un país tan sísmico como Chile y que dentro de su proceso de construcción (que comenzó como idea en la década de 1930) sufrió una serie de tropiezos, siendo implementada su construcción en el año 1969 e inaugurado en plena dictadura, el año 1975.

La ciencia ficción chilena recoge la espacialidad del metro/túnel para construir fabulaciones que ponen de manifiesto parte de la historia de la ciudad y reposicionan a los personajes desde un espacio público (representando lo que se ve, lo que se conoce) hacia un espacio privado (lo oculto, lo desconocido), haciendo patente lo íntimo de las dinámicas familiares y sociales, desarrollando sujetos que, así como se desplazan, así mismo son desplazados. En este sentido, las novelas *Diagonales* (2009) de Maorí Pérez, *Los próximos días* (2021) de Francisco Ortega y otras manifestaciones literarias como la novela *Synco* (2008) y el cuento *Metro* (2017), ambos de Jorge Baradit, o el cómic *El Gran Guarén* (2013) de Claudio Álvarez, utilizan la espacialidad del subsuelo y la movilidad (o detención) de los personajes para desarrollar relatos que entrecruzan mito, ciencia ficción, espectáculo y, sobre todo, expectación.

**Guillermo González**, Doctorando en Literatura por la Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso. Doctorando en Estudios Lingüísticos, Literarios y Teatrales por la Universidad de Alcalá. Becario de la Agencia Nacional de Investigación y Desarrollo. Las líneas de investigación que trabaja se relacionan con la memoria histórica, la ficcionalización histórica, la narrativa gráfica y la ciencia ficción. Su tesis doctoral se centra en la narrativa de ciencia ficción de la generación de postdictadura chilena. Ha participado como ponente en distintos congresos internacionales, ha publicado artículos en diversas

revistas académicas y ha dado seminarios en universidades chilenas y europeas. Destacan sus trabajos más recientes: *Ecos de la dictadura: Pinochet en las novelas gráficas de ciencia ficción chilena* (2021), *La narrativa gráfica chilena del siglo XXI: entre la estructura y la estética fragmentaria* (2022) e *Incorpóreos.net: sociedades digitalizadas en la ciencia ficción latinoamericana del tercer milenio*. Recientemente ha sido colaborador del Proyecto de Extensión de la Universidad del Estado de Río de Janeiro titulado *Diccionario Digital do Insólito Ficcional* (2022) con las entradas *Ciencia Ficción Chilena* y *Novum*, y participa como investigador en formación en el *Laboratorio de Estudios del Futuro* de la Universidad de Alcalá.

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## **“Beneath the Hermit’s Hut: Temple-ized Remains and Monastic Life in Vernacular Hinduism”**

**Brian A. Hatcher**, Tufts University, USA

This paper explores the texts and built structures that both represent and shape monastic practices of ascetic burial in vernacular Hinduism. Based on several years of field-based study in West Bengal, India, the paper combines photographic evidence with translations from popular Bengali narratives to bring into view a lesser-recognized feature of monastic habitus as found within movements like the Dasanami Sampraday. Central to the narratives and built structures are the miraculous deeds and relics of holy men who worshipped the great god Shiva and who, after death, were thought to have attained oneness with the god. During life, the ascetic characteristically inhabits a modest hut, emblematic of worldly renunciation. After death, and in view of their spiritual attainment, they are buried in the seated yogic posture. Then another kind of hut is erected over the ascetic’s bodily remains. The hut becomes, in fact, a kind of temple, housing the emblem of Shiva (*linga*). My research has found that over time the ascetic’s unity with Shiva and subsequent temple-ized remains renders their history invisible to local communities. Absent any inscriptions to ground these structures in history, memorials are often understood locally as generic temples to Shiva. I am curious to explore what modes of religious practice and imagination are buried underground, as it were. Equally there is another level of invisibility, which has greater political import. It has not been uncommon for Bengali scholars to dismiss the monastic institutions and communities where these structures are sited as somehow alien to Bengali culture. Such claims about regional identity only drive further underground what lies beneath the hermit’s hut. My work challenges such politicized constructions of Bengali Hinduism.

**Brian A. Hatcher** is Packard Professor of Theology in the Department of Religion at Tufts University. A scholar of religion and colonialism in modern South Asia, he is the author of several monographs, including *Idioms of Improvement: Vidyasagar and Cultural Encounter in Bengal* (1996; 2020), *Eclecticism and Modern Hindu Discourse* (1999), *Bourgeois Hinduism, or the Faith of the Modern Vedantists* (2008), and *Hinduism Before Reform* (2020). He is the translator of Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar’s *Hindu Widow Marriage* (2011), co-editor with Michael S. Dodson of *Trans-Colonial Modernities in South Asia* (2012) and editor of *Hinduism in the Modern World* (2016). At present he is conducting research on the rise and fall of a Hindu monastic network in colonial Bengal.

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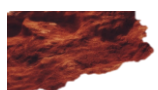
## **“Lancing Subcutaneous Skin: Sacrilege and Sacrifice of a *Fin-de-Siècle* Milkmaid: « Péhor » (1894) by Remy de Gourmont”**

**Jean-Philippe Imbert**, Dublin City University, Ireland

A daemon, a young milkmaid. The descending spiral of salaciousness and sexual satisfaction as a means to account for the underground sexual appetite of a librarian: « Péhor » (1894) by Remy de Gourmont is a short story of inversion, perversion and pleasure which is also his sad story of loneliness and estrangement from society.

Using theories belonging to libertine criticism and fin de siècle theory, this presentation will analyse this short story as the one text by Gourmont which voluptuously unveils his descent into sexual perversion as a means to fall further down into a chasm of folly and perversion.

In a first part, we will see how the mechanisms of fantasy and dreamlike trance activate the workings of metamorphosis, thus allowing the arrival of the Demon. Then we will see how the Demon takes the protagonist, Douceline, into the abyss of erotic ecstasy so as to enjoy the religious transcendence of





catabasis. In a third part we will see how « Péhor » could also be read as a somber apologue by Gourmont, a lonely writer who realized the limits and limitations of his being, of his sexuality and of his art.

**Jean-Philippe Imbert** lectures in Comparative Literature and Sexuality Studies at Dublin City University. He runs a Research Centre called EROSS@DCU (Expressions, Research, Orientations: Sexuality Studies). He researches and publishes on literary and/or artistic Mexican, Irish or French 20th and 21st centuries, focusing on the relationship between sexuality, gender and the aesthetic treatment of evil, trauma, angst or perversion. He has been president of the ADEFFI (Association des Études Françaises et Francophones d'Irlande) and of the Irish Association of Mexican Studies. He has also curated international art exhibitions (photography) in Delhi, Dublin or Mexico City.

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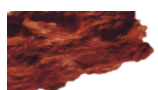
### “Escrituras corticales: razón, lenguaje y subsuelo en el Antropoceno”

**Albert Jornet Somoza**, Universitat de Barcelona, Spain

Cuando en 1864 Jules Verne escribió su *Voyage au centre de la terre* logró representar mucho más que una aventura de ciencia ficción; en ella se cifran los modos de relacionarse con el saber y con el lenguaje propio del paradigma de racionalidad científica del empirismo decimonónico. Como en la disciplina clínica analizada por Foucault, de la que participa, en éste se establece una alianza entre lo visible, lo enunciable y lo cognoscible, donde la idea de transparencia resulta central. La posibilidad de un viaje al centro de la tierra tiene que ver, pues, con la voluntad de desvelación del corazón del mundo, en un ejercicio épico de hybris racionalista que está en la base de la relación colonial con el mundo natural que el saber occidental establecerá en la modernidad. La mirada expansiva y extractiva sobre el planeta es inseparable, pues, de una concepción del conocimiento en tanto que deseo de totalidad, del lenguaje en tanto que transparencia y de las prácticas derivadas del saber en tanto que horizonte de habitabilidad y de control sobre lo natural.

En una época como la actual, en la que esta mirada colonial se ha redirigido hacia la estratosfera y lo galáctico mientras que el planeta alerta de sus límites de autopreservación a causa de la acción humana, las “escrituras geológicas” (Rivera Garza) marcan un movimiento contrario: reculan hacia la superficie terrestre, indagando sobre los regímenes de lo habitable —material, sociocultural y epistémico— en un marco antiépico donde el sujeto racionalista y colonial es substituido por formas politizadas de la subjetivación, a través de la interrogación y el desvelamiento. Si el centro de la tierra verniano señalaba el centro de un discurso que percibe toda existencia como cognoscible —y por ende dominable— y donde la corteza terrestre se tomaba como garantía de existencia, la inversión de ambos ángulos es necesaria para dar la palabra a estos hábitats corticales, a menudo amenazados, donde suelo y subsuelo se necesitan mutuamente en un juego de ocultación, que es el de sus usos políticos y epistemológicos. Podemos, de esta manera, llamar “escrituras corticales” aquellas que, en el Antropoceno, dirigen su mirada hacia la corteza terrestre para encontrar en ella lo ignoto, lo ilegible, lo silenciado o lo invivible. Bajo esta clave queremos analizar novelas como *El año del desierto*, de Pedro Mairal, *Intemperie*, de Jesús Carrasco o *Los pichiciegos*, de Rodolfo Fogwill, así como los documentales *Nostalgia de la luz*, de Patricio Guzmán, y *La ciudad oculta*, de Víctor Moreno.

**Albert Jornet Somoza** es investigador posdoctoral en la Universitat de Barcelona y la École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales de París (EHESS). Ha realizado estancias de investigación o enseñado en la UPF, UB, Columbia University, Università di Pisa, Reed College y University of Pennsylvania. Selección de publicaciones recientes: Tesis doctoral : [2020] *Un pensar vulnerable. El ensayo de la precariedad*



en el campo intelectual español de la crisis (2008-2018). Artículos: [2022] “El vano hoy: técnicas de revelación y desplazamiento de la voz intelectual en la prosa periodística de Isaac Rosa”, in Cristina Somolinos (ed.), *Narrar la grieta. Isaac Rosa y los imaginarios emancipadores en la España actual*. [en prensa] [2021] “Aprendiendo a escribir(nos) en precario. La década del cambio generacional en el ensayismo español”, *Quimera. Revista de literatura*, 446, 33-36. [2020] “Hermenéuticas del sujeto suicida: formas de vida y de muerte (autoinducida) en la España de la crisis financiera”, in Esther Alarcón-Arana (ed.), *Muerte y crisis en el mundo hispano: respuestas culturales*. Peter Lang, 120-141. [2017] “Nuestro cuerpo también: pensar en precario en la España de la crisis”, *Artes del ensayo. Revista internacional sobre el ensayo hispánico*, nº 1, 153-182.

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### “Narrating the City in Four Underground Images: Hugo, Baudelaire, Zola and Aragon”

**Bart Keunen**, Ghent University, Belgium

In my contribution I will give an overview of some of the most conspicuous underground metaphors in urban literature from the last two centuries. I will make use of the theoretical frame of my upcoming book publication “The Aesthetics of the City” and will present them as the result of contrasting ways of aestheticizing the city. To make my point I will analyze four emblematic literary texts. My presentation of the paper will consist of text fragments and of contemporary paintings of urban landscapes.

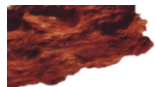
1. In Hugo’s *Notre Dame de Paris* and in *Les Misérables* parts of the city have the mythical connotation of a Dantesque inferno. The description of those dark and threatening spaces illustrate the typical romantic instrument of the “urban sublime”. By means of an evocation of threatening and dark spaces the city is aestheticized as an analogue of the uncontrollable forces of nature.

2. In naturalist renderings of the city the unmasking of bourgeois attitudes is a central concern; they confront the reader with a world of greed and lust that lies hidden under the surface of bourgeois society. This is perfectly illustrated by the violent happenings in the caves of the market halls in Emile Zola’s *The Belly of Paris*. The underground space symbolizes the hidden side of the upcoming welfare state—as does also the metaphor of “the belly” in general.

3. Another instance of the underground metaphor is found in the (as Benjamin has called them) “chthonic” motives in Baudelaire’s *Paris Spleen*. The devil in the prose poem “A generous gambler” lives in a subterranean house of gambling and pleasure, which symbolizes a decadent life “beyond good and evil”. For Symbolism and Aestheticism the underground metaphor overlaps with the aesthetic opposition of the artistic subcultures of the 19th century.

4. The image of “Babylon Berlin” in Expressionism and the cult of intoxication in Surrealism illustrate the fourth type of underground imagery. The avant-garde celebration of freedom and tolerance (towards alternative life styles) in the metropolis is clearly embodied in *Paris Peasant* by Louis Aragon. In this novel the shadowy tunnels of the Parisian arcades are associated with the “underbelly” of Paris and reveal a heterotopic space of transgression.

**Bart Keunen** is tenured professor in Comparative Literature at Ghent University, Belgium. He teaches graduate and postgraduate courses in European Literary History, Sociology of Literature and Comparative Literature. He studied philosophy in Louvain and literary criticism in Ghent, Berlin and Klagenfurt. He published articles on topics concerning urban studies, genre criticism, literary historiography and literary sociology in international journals and books. Book publications include:



*The Aesthetics of the City. Chronotopes and Emotions in Urban Narratives* (forthcoming in 2023), (with Pieter Uyttenhove and Lieven Aemeel), *La Puissance projective. Narrativité et Paysage* (Métis 2021), *Time and Imagination. Chronotopes in Western Narrative Culture* (Northwestern UP, 2011), (with GUST) *The Urban Condition: Space, Community, and Self in the Contemporary Metropolis* (O10 Publishers, 1999).

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### **“Losing and Finding Oneself in Johannesburg’s Underground: A Psychogeographic Exploration of Literary Underground Imageries”**

**Sophie Kriegel**, Free University Berlin, Germany

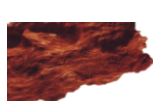
The proposed paper will explore literary representations of Johannesburg’s underground as an aesthetic strategy to negotiate (civic) belonging. This inquiry will be visualised in the form of psychogeographic maps. Underground imageries have been central to the city’s cultural significance from the beginning since its existence is founded on the gold in its ground. The novel *Mine Boy* (Abrahams 1946) and the non-fictional *Portrait with Keys* (Vladislavić 2006) can be read as commentary on collective identities in postcolonial contexts, wherein, the underground is used to negotiate belonging. Under the city’s surface, the main characters’ desires and desired relationships become materialised and accessible in the mines, sewers, or underground garages. Although the aesthetic strategy of both texts is similar, its effect differs for each period.

The analysis will focus on comparing the mobility of the main characters and how these movements relate the underground to other urban spaces thus being crucial in their construction. The comparison will, therefore, give insights into how mobility is used to create the underground as an intersection of trajectories (Massey 2005) and further compare its functioning in different literary genres and periods (beginning and end of apartheid). Psychogeographic maps (in the spirit of Debord’s 1957 *Psychogeographic Guide to Paris*) of the main characters’ mobility and subjective representations of spatial imageries will aid the paper’s comparative inquiry. This method of mapping allows to visualise the individual value of spaces and how they interrelate from a particular subject position (Hemmens *et al.* 2020, Knabb 2006). In this manner, intersectional aspects of situating collective belonging from different subject positions can be better foregrounded in their similarities and differences.

A psychogeographic exploration of Johannesburg’s literary underground will uncover how discourses of belonging are negotiated, resisted, and maintained in times of stark social change and bring together the different disciplines of postcolonial, literary urban, and mobility studies.

**S. U. Kriegel** is currently a PhD candidate at the department of English Studies at Free University Berlin (Germany). She has taught a variety of classes on British culture and media, the history of the British Empire, and South African culture. Her PhD thesis focuses on mobility and space in South African literature and film in regard to questions of power. Other research interests include terrorism in a transatlantic context, gendered spaces, and the use of new media.

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## **“Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Madness and Underground Cultures in Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia”**

**Elisa Kriza**, University of Bamberg, Germany

In his short story “Ward no. 6” (Palata nomer shest’, 1892), Anton Chekhov describes a lonely doctor who is declared a patient in a psychiatric ward for befriending one of his patients there. The story’s exploration of madness and normativity has inspired generations of writers, like the Finnish writer Rosa Liksom, whose novel “Compartment no. 6” (Hytti Nro. 6, 2011) is a multi-layered, autobiographically inspired narrative that alludes both to Chekhov and other Russian writers. Liksom’s Finnish protagonist is a young female student who descends into the underground culture of the Soviet Union in the 1980s, falling in love with a local woman. The novel also tells the story of her friend Mitka, who chooses to be interned in a psychiatric asylum to avoid being drafted into the war in Afghanistan. The novel’s protagonist reads Vsevolod Garshin’s “The Red Flower” (Krasnii tsvetok, 1883), a description of an asylum in the 19th century, and, thinking about her friend in the Soviet asylum, she wonders if anything will ever change. Picking up on the idea of immutability and underground life in Russia, Juho Kuosmanen’s film version of Liksom’s novel is set in the 1990s, during the raucous years of the Yeltsin Era. In the Russo-Finnish movie “Compartment no. 6” (Kupe nomer shest’, 2021), very personal aspects of life remain underground – such as the protagonist’s lesbian relationship – and underground criminal dealings as response to poverty have become more prominent. Laura, the protagonist, travels by train to Murmansk, near the Barents Sea. In her journey, she meets a shady miner whom she ultimately befriends as he cautiously invites her into his world, and she comes out about her homosexuality. The movie and the novels that serve as hypotexts explore the limits of normativity and exposure and the permeability of underground cultures, broadly defined.

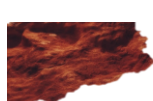
**Elisa Kriza** is post-doctoral researcher and adjunct lecturer at the Chair of Literature and Media Studies at the University of Bamberg, Germany. Her comparative research places Russian culture in a dialogue with other cultures, mainly from Western Europe and the American continent. Elisa is the author of two monographs. In her book, “Alexander Solzhenitsyn: Cold War Icon, Gulag Author, Russian Nationalist?”, she discusses the Western reception of Soviet underground literature as she assesses problematic issues such as homophobia in Russian dissident and non-dissident culture. Her work on Soviet dissident culture has also been published in journals such as *Comparative Literature Studies*, *German Life and Letters*, *Slavic Review*, *Letras Libres*, and *HUMOR: International Journal of Humor Research*. Elisa is a member of the Executive Committee of the European Society of Comparative Literature.

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## **“The (e)utopian turn of underground Paris: 1962-1985”**

**Irène Langlet**, Université Gustave Eiffel, France

The underground imaginary of Paris has a long tradition since the *Mystères de Paris* by Eugène Süe. It is a "city under the city" from the 19th century, because the exploitation of the subsoil reaches the industrial scale: to extract building materials and to extend the networks of sanitation, energy supply, and finally, with the metropolitan, underground transport. This underground Paris is marked by the same funereal aspects as all places linked to death or fear: catacombs, war shelters. But on the other side, it has fascinating aspects that attracts tourists and explorers; we thus speak of « *cataphilia* » to designate the passion of these lovers of the depths, precursors of urbex or urban exploration (Liehr, Faÿ, 2007). Since the beginning of the 21st century and the Anthropocenic crossing of the



environmental alert thresholds, life underground benefits from an increased interest, which goes beyond exoticism. Paris thus comes in a good position in the arguments of certain architects to revalorize "the city under the city", because it is a good example of the reversal of the imaginaries of death into imaginaries of refuge and counter-culture (Williams, 2008 ).

How are backward and forward-looking signs intertwined in this reversal? I will take as a subject of observation one "(e)utopian turn" of underground Paris, from the memory of the 1939-45 war to the futuristic stations of the RER (regional rail network) of the 1980s. Through three films: *La Jetée* by C. Marker (1962), *Les Gaspards* by P. Tchernia (1974) and *Subway* by L. Besson (1985), we will see that these images express the culture of the "Trente Glorieuses", but also the fears that accompanied an unequal modernization. The underground space thus becomes an urban margin, installing a structural trouble in the city.

**Irène Langlet** is a professor of contemporary literature (French and comparative) at Gustave Eiffel University. Her two research fields are non-fictional literature (like the literary essay) and science fiction, about which she has published three books : *La science-fiction. Lecture et poétique d'un genre littéraire* (Armand Colin, 2006), *L'Abeille et la balance. Penser l'essai* (Classiques Garnier, 2015) et *Le Temps rapaillé. Science-fiction et présentisme* (Presses universitaires de Limoges, 2020). She has directed or co-directed research programs on the forms and theories of literary collection (publication in 2003), the media essay (publication 2022), the imaginaries of the future city (PARVIS, I-SITE FUTURE 2019-2022 : <http://parvis.hypotheses.org>). Since 2011, she has directed the online journal *ReS Futurae*, the only refereed French-language academic journal devoted to the study of science fiction (<https://journals.openedition.org/resf/>).

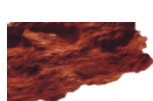
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### **"Graveyard Politics: Earth and Unearthing in Frank McGuinness's *Carthaginians* (1988) and Antonio Morcillo's *Al hoyo* (2008/22)"**

**Laura Lonsdale**, University of Oxford, UK

This paper will analyse two plays dealing with the aftermath of politically motivated massacres in Northern Ireland and Spain, one set in a graveyard, the other in a mass grave. In McGuinness's play the living hope the dead will rise, while in Morcillo's the dead hope the living will dig them out, with the action above or below ground largely static and driven by mundane conversation. In both plays the earth is an unbreachable barrier between living bodies and dead ones, manifesting the painful finality of separation and loss in the absence of a meaningful afterlife. At the same time, the motifs of burial and unearthing are associated with themes of time, memory, survival and rebirth, as the plays unroll in a static present which is also a vast temporal plane, reaching far into the past (through buried languages and civilizations) as well as ahead into an unknown but anticipated future. Concerned respectively with sexual identity and gender-based violence, the plays also present burial as a form of silencing and unearthing as a form of recovery. Although only one of the plays is set underground, both employ subterranean myths and motifs to bring historical, temporal and cultural depth to the particular events in question, exploring the political dimensions of loss, silence, and forgetting in the context of national trauma.

**Laura Lonsdale** is Associate Professor of Modern Spanish Literature and Fellow of The Queen's College, Oxford. Her research in recent years has focused on literary multilingualism and translation, and her monograph *Multilingualism and Modernity: Barbarisms in Spanish and American Literature* was published with Palgrave in 2018. She is also co-editor of the *Routledge Companion to Iberian Studies*



(Routledge 2017), which promotes a comparative approach to the multilingual cultures of the Iberian Peninsula. As a literary translator she has translated works by Ramón del Valle-Inclán, Ana María Matute, and, most recently, Antonio Morcillo. It is her work on Morcillo's *Al hoyo* that led her to the underground theme and this conference.

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### **“Descent to the Underworld: Mexican Underground Loci of Danger in Cross-Border Popular Media”**

**Anna Marta Marini**, Universidad de Alcalá, Spain

In horror fiction set in Mexico, a defined narrative category relies on the exploitation of underground loci that are perceived as distinctive of the Mexican setting. Loosely connecting real places to Mesoamerican mythologic and religious imaginaries, these stories see characters embarking on an often tragic journey of descent, remindful of myths in which the cultural hero-protagonist would become permanently tied to a numinous underworld land. Drawing—more or less accurately—on popular imaginaries, stereotypes, news, folktales, religious and pre-Hispanic mythologies, the construction of danger is bound to the idea of a descent toward it and spaces that are inevitably rife with uncertainty, darkness, and ominous hauntings. Three main categories can be traced depending on the real-life place they are connected to, which structures the unfolding of the narrative as well as the underlying discourses; the protagonists' descent can be into cenotes, pre-Hispanic pyramid temples, or narco tunnels across the border. Each of these categories allow to construct a specific articulation of danger intrinsic to otherness: respectively, insidious nature, threatening heritage, and criminal networks.

This paper examines popular media texts produced in the United States and/or for a transnational audience that reproduce narratives using the journey to a threatening underground dimension as embodiment of the dangers inherent to (Mexican) otherness and the experience of a place that is per se “other.” Among the texts relevant to the construction of this model of analysis, it is worth mentioning films *47 Meters Down: Uncaged* (2019) and *Curse of the Mayans* (2017) (cenotes), film *The Ruins* (2008) and franchise *From Dusk till Dawn* (1996–ongoing) (pre-Hispanic pyramid temples), and films *Belzebuth* (2017) and *Intermedio* (2005) (narco tunnels).

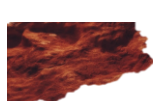
**Anna Marta Marini** is a PhD research fellow at the Universidad de Alcalá. Her dissertation delves into the representations of the dangers intrinsic to border-crossing and the “other side” in US cinema. Her main research interests are related to popular culture and political discourse in the North American context. She mostly works on: representations of Mexican American heritage, the US-Mexico borderlands and border-crossing; Mexican state repression and contemporary political history; critical discourse analysis related to violence and discrimination; identity and otherness re/construction in cinema and comics, particularly in the horror, noir, and (weird) western genres. <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8268-2516>

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### **“Estratos del tiempo, necropolítica y espacialización de la Historia. Una lectura del espectro londinense”**

**Alex Matas Pons**, Universitat de Barcelona, Spain

El filósofo de la Historia Reinhart Koselleck propuso dos categorías conceptuales gracias a las cuales se ha pensado tradicionalmente el período moderno: la experiencia y la expectativa. El régimen global



contemporáneo invita a reflexionar sobre la caducidad de dichas categorías, eminentemente modernas, puesto que nos hallamos ante un nuevo régimen de la historicidad, según François Hartog, o, en términos de H.G. Gumbrecht, en un período de latencia.

La presente ponencia estudia los vínculos entre el capitalismo contemporáneo y dicha nueva concepción de la temporalidad, mediante la revisión y actualización del pensamiento de Deleuze y Guattari y de Derrida. Se analiza, en particular, cómo en sus obras las metáforas cartográficas sugieren el potencial político de una nueva concepción de la temporalidad –no lineal ni progresiva sino estratificada y espectral- que atribuye al espacio un protagonismo que la filosofía de la Historia secuencial le negó.

Se atenderá al caso particular de la ciudad de Londres y las representaciones que de ella se han hecho en los libros de W.G. Sebald, *Austerlitz*, y de Ian Sinclair, *La ciudad de las desapariciones*. En dichos libros, la atención del lector se dirige hacia el subsuelo de las estaciones del ferrocarril, los cementerios y las iglesias del Londres decimonónico. La ciudad es descrita según una cartografía urbana compatible con la temporalidad estratificada y espectral y las prácticas del paseo o la deambulación llevada a cabo por sendos narradores recorren el gran osario en el que habrían quedado registradas y sedimentadas las diversas modalidades históricas y temporales del dominio y la explotación inherentes al capitalismo colonial inglés.

Este ejemplo particular quiere ilustrar el argumento central de la ponencia, según el cual, hoy, –en el seno de una época definida por el ubicuo presentismo, según François Hartog– el presente se haría sólo inteligible mediante una interpretación que contemple la espacialización de la Historia: una lectura del espacio material de los lugares del tiempo histórico.

**Alex Matas Pons** enseña Teoría de la Literatura y Literatura Comparada en la Universitat de Barcelona. Es autor de *La ciudad y su trama. Literatura, modernidad y crítica de la cultura* (2010), *En falso. Una crítica cultural del siglo XX* (2017) y *Els marges dels mapes: una geografia desplaçada* (2021). Ha publicado también diversos artículos capítulos de libro sobre historia cultural, teoría crítica y estética literaria en revistas y obras de autoría colectiva.

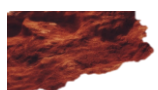
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### **Beneath the Flowerbeds: A Comparative Reading of David Lynch's *Blue Velvet* (1986) and Barbey d'Aurevilly's "Le Dessous de cartes d'une partie de whist" (1874)**

**Maria Clara Menezes**, Dublin City University, Ireland

The opening scenes of David Lynch's *Blue Velvet* show an idyllic American suburb blazing with its lush, methodically crafted greenery flanked by almost too perfectly cultivated flowerbeds. Only a few centimetres below the surface, an army of small, hideous dark insects devours putrid matter in the tepid humidity of the black earth. Elsewhere, in Barbey d'Aurevilly's "Le Dessous de cartes d'une partie de whist", a gelid, impassive widow draws unexpected pleasure from the consumption of bouquets made of the splendid reseda flowers she carefully harvests from her domestic garden. Soon enough, though, it is discovered that the plants' vitality finds its source in a special kind of fertiliser, hidden under thin layers of dirt...

Both in the film and the short story, the natural imagery becomes a metaphor for two distinct worlds. Above, civilization thrives with luminous rationality in the open air. Below, a more obscure, perverse universe simmers with obsession, hate, sex and murder. In *Civilization and its Discontents*, Freud had already pointed out how the unconfessed and pulsing desires which menace society's



orderly functioning must somehow be repressed, buried underneath. However, even the most devilish seeds may sprout, and their crops will feed the surface and blur distinctions. This way, Lynch's insects fertilize the suburban tranquillity, feeding it with their violence in the process. Something similar happens with d'Aurevilly's flowers, whose serene elegance carries much of the Comtesse de Stasseville's hidden and buried crimes.

In this work, I will build on the concept of the Uncanny (*das Unheimliche*) as well as on Darren Springer's readings of *Blue Velvet* and borrow from Deleuze and Guattari's idea of the rhizome. I intend to analyse how these 'botanic images', rather than establishing a hierarchised relationship between the world above and that underneath, create an association of infection and dependency where the so-called 'civility' can only exist because and through the existence of the fertile, hidden world beneath. Conducting a close reading of both film and short story, this paper will provide an in-depth analysis of the aesthetic treatment of underground botanical imagery to show how something from the underworld is always about to creep up.

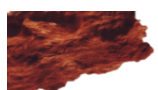
**Maria Clara Menezes** is a PhD candidate in Comparative Literature, Gender and Sexuality Studies at Dublin City University (DCU, Ireland), with a Master's degree in CompLit from the Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG, Brazil). In her current research, "To be the serpent under't": Con-Artists and Contemporary Dissimulation as Female Empowerment, she studies the evolution of female imposture and its depictions in contemporary literary and filmic productions and its intersections with sexuality, feminism and aesthetic treatment of evil, trauma, angst or perversion. She is part of the EROSS@DCU research centre (Expressions, Research, Orientations: Sexuality Studies) and FRINGE Urban Narratives: Peripheries, Identities, Intersections. Her main research interests are 19th-century literature and contemporary artistic expressions, diabolism and satanism, feminism and women studies, sexuality studies, imposture, and dissimulation.

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### **"The Mountain at War: Trenches and Tunnels in Narrative Non-Fiction of the Twentieth Century"**

**Nora Moll**, Uninettuno University, Italy

In the imagery of the War, and in its media account, the surface areas of cities, seas and hills, and the threat of death and destruction coming from the sky have always had a significant presence. Some war conflicts, however, are fought underground, starting with the liminal space of the trenches, which summarize in an emblematic way the Italian and Austrian experience of World War I, fought in the Karst mountains and on the highlands of Asiago. The practice of exploiting underground spaces, moreover, links the War of 1914-18 with the Vietnam War, the tunnels dug into the Dolomites by Austrians and Italians with the Vietcong reticular tunnels. In all these cases – which have left tangible traces on the territory as well as in the memory of those who took part in these conflicts – the factual but also symbolic contrast between the surface (place of the inhuman battle) and the tunnel underground (seat of the very human escape in gestures, habits, dreams) reveals itself. In the trenches, however, those contrasts coexist: they are the lair and the home where to resist for weeks and months, the embankment of the battlefield where to bring or encounter death. These dichotomies are perpetuated in the contrast between madness and rationality, real and unreal, life and death, and in the opposition between deadly light and salvific darkness. Dichotomies that inevitably raise the question about the places where humans also explore their own inner self, where humanity expresses itself or where it is lost. This paper aims to reread some examples of war narrative (both fictional and not), considering such contrasts and meanings: from Emilio Lussu to Erich-Maria Remarque, from Gelasio Caetani to Tim O'Brien, without excluding transmedial references and making use of the





extensive critical bibliography on war literature, as well as of comparative thematology.

**Nora Moll** is Associate Professor in Comparative Literature at Uninettuno University (Rome) and is currently a member of ESCL/SELC. In her publications in Italy and abroad she intervened on the theoretical and methodological aspects of Imagology (Image Studies), on Cross-cultural and Migrant Literature in Italy and in Europe, and on the narratives of urban spaces. Among her publications: *Narrative Strategies, Literary Imaging and Reflections on Identity: Constructing a Narrative Community in Italy*, in G. Bonsaver, E. Bond, F. Faloppa (eds.), *Destination Italy*.

*Representing Migration in Contemporary Media and Narrative*. Oxford, Peter Lang: 2015, 221-239; *L'infinito sotto casa. Letteratura e transculturalità nell'Italia contemporanea*. Bologna, Pàtron: 2015; *La Roma della diaspora somala: i grovigli spaziali ed identitari della narrativa di Cristina Ali Farah*. «Il Capitale Culturale: Studies on the Value of Cultural Heritage», n. 16 (2017), 149-167; <http://riviste.unimc.it/index.php/cap-cult/article/view/1531>. *The fear of cultural belonging: Sharon Dodua Otoo's transnational writing*. In: K. Kaukiainen, K. Kurikka, H. Mäkelä, E. Nykänen, S. Nyqvist, J. Raipola, A. Riippa, and H. Samola (eds.), *Narratives of Fear and Safety: Affective Spaces in European Literature, Arts and Cinema*. Helsinki, Tampere University Press: 2020, 247-266.

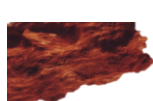
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### **“Underground Immigrant Spaces in New York Texts by Spanish Women”**

**Debra J. Ochoa**, Trinity University, USA

New York City holds a significant place in twentieth and twenty-first century Spanish visual and literary texts due to the migratory flows of artists, writers, and film directors who have incorporated their personal experiences into their work. This city's skyline is an international symbol of capitalist privilege, and although it is referenced in many texts, each character possesses a different level of access to these monumental structures. For example, immigrants often occupy subterranean spaces that evoke an architectural hierarchy determined by one's gender and race. This paper examines how two texts — the first Jana Leo's narrative *Rape New York* (2009) and the second Ana Asensio's film *Most Beautiful Island* (2017) — examine immigrants' metaphorical or material underground spaces. *Rape New York* narrates the sexual assault and violent aftermath the author endures when she realizes the lack of support and protection available to her. Additionally, this text narrates the devastating effects of gentrification: slumlords profit from high turn-over real estate. While Jane Leo occupies a metaphorical underground space, Luciana, the protagonist in *Most Beautiful Island*, works in subterranean spaces. This film follows Luciana's spatial practices (Lefebvre; de Certeau) as she travels from Chinatown to the Upper West Side, exposing a gendered and racial hierarchy among various immigrant communities. The film's climax unfolds when she enters an unmarked building, where she believes she will host an exclusive party, and as the camera follows her steps downward into a basement, viewers soon realize she is caught in a scheme where immigrants who have lived longer in the city make money off others who have just arrived. Similar to what we see in Leo's *Rape New York*, *Most Beautiful Island* distances itself from images of the idealized city. Luciana's peripatetic experiences combined with experiences in enclosed spaces speak to her underground status.

**Debra J. Ochoa** is Associate Professor of Spanish at Trinity University (San Antonio, Texas). She specializes in Contemporary Spanish Literature and Film and has published in various journals, including *Confluencia*, *Ámbitos Feministas*, *Letras Femeninas*, and *Letras Hispanas*. In 2017, she co-edited the volume *Gender in Spanish Urban Spaces: Literary and Visual Narratives of the New Millennium* (Palgrave Macmillan Hispanic Urban Studies Series). Dr. Ochoa's most recent article,



“Precarity and Peripheries in Elena Medel’s *Las maravillas* (2020),” is slated for publication in 2023 by *Romance Notes*. She is currently working on her monograph *Visions of Nueva York in Contemporary Spanish Film from the 1980s to the 2010s*.

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### **“Im/Mobility and Geographies of Resistance in Colson Whitehead’s *The Underground Railroad* and Bernardine Evaristo’s *Blonde Roots*”**

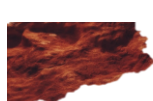
**Marian Ofori-Amofo**, University of Bayreuth, Germany

Throughout the history of slavery, spatial appropriation ensured that enslaved people mapped themselves into spaces of slavery but also carved out entire spaces for themselves where they could thrive. Therefore, this paper examines how underground spaces of slavery, such as maroon settlements, free black town swamplands, the system of abolitionist underground safe houses, the railroad, and accessible black towns served as alternative geographies of Black resistance. The clandestine movements of these circles of friends created a subterranean world for enslaved people who promised freedom from their shackles. These geographies, therefore, functioned as “interstitial spaces” (William Tynes Cowan) against the official and controlled geographies of the plantation and “Big house”, for example.

The paper uses the lenses of spatial literary studies and mobility studies to examine how the positioning of spaces such as “slave quarters” and “swamplands” enabled enslaved people to challenge formation models enforced through the official sites and mobilities of slavery. Mobility and immobility shape how enslaved characters access and reassert their agency amid the harsh conditions of racial slavery. I analyse Colson Whitehead’s *The Underground Railroad* and Bernardine Evaristo’s *Blonde Roots*, two novels 21st-century fictional narratives of slavery which complicate the traditional journey to the North by revealing the pitfalls of such trajectories and the precarity of the “underground” life of enslaved people. Moreover, the literary texts recast multiple mobilities, emphasise enslaved characters’ triumphant immobile choices to reclaim space, and show how these alternative spatialities of slavery help them affirm their agency.

**Marian Ofori-Amofo** is a PhD candidate in American studies. She has worked as a research assistant at the Chair of American Studies/Anglophone Literatures and Cultures at the University of Bayreuth. Her core research areas are spatial, mobility, and diaspora studies focusing on African American and Afro-diasporic literatures. Her dissertation project examines twenty-first-century anglophone novels of slavery, which re-narrate and thematises slave history. Her work interrogates the “afterlives” of transatlantic slavery on Afro-diasporic descendants by showing their processual continuities and emphasises the transnationalism of Atlantic slavery. Since June 2022, she has been working as a research associate on the BMBF-funded project “‘Welfare Queens’ and ‘Losers’: a Critical Race and Intersectional Perspective on the U.S. American Welfare State” at the chair of American Studies/Cultural and Media Studies at the University of Passau.

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## **“Sexuality in Ruins: Cruising Literature and an Aesthetic of Collapse”**

**David O'Mullane**, Dublin City University, Ireland

Cruising is the subcultural practice developed by queer people to identify one another in public space, often for sex. Historically, cruising emerged as a tactical response to the oppression of queer desire and socioeconomic limitations on private space. As Michel de Certeau states, when a minority group lacks secure space, they turn to tactics: a series of opportunistic practices that forge transient spaces “on the wing” (de Certeau, 1984, p. xix). This is precisely how cruising operates: it generates ephemeral pockets of intimate space for queer connection in nominally public places. Liminal zones at the fringe of urban life – derelict warehouses, abandoned lots, rotting piers – offered heterotopic, “smooth spaces” for queer exploration and appropriation (West-Pavlov, 2009, p. 182). Away from the “hegemonic imperatives” of the urban realm, queer people found alternative ways of being and relating among the ruins (Prior, 2015, p. 169).

This paper explores the connection between cruising and ruination in the writing of Andrew Holleran and David Wojnarowicz; how the collapsing New York piers mirrored the deterioration of normative boundaries and temporalities. It compares these depictions of literal and figurative decadence to the work of contemporary artist Danny Jauregui. In exploring Jauregui’s AI-generated images of crumbling monuments to queer bathhouses, the paper highlights the tension between the homonormative imperative to forget the pleasures of the sexual past and uncritical nostalgia for a lost “culture of sexual possibility” (Crimp, 1989, p. 11). In his analysis of sexual identity and urban decay, Jason Prior writes that ruins “[...] evoke the process of remembering itself, the blurred boundaries and multiplicities of memory” (Prior, 2015, p. 171). By examining the aestheticization of cruising cultures in terms of collapse and fragmentation, this paper highlights the complex histories of these marginal spaces and the competing narratives that innervate their memory.

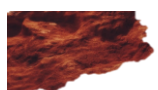
**David O'Mullane** is a doctoral scholar at Dublin City University where he is researching a PhD entitled *The Art of Cruising: Public Sex Cultures, LGBT Politics and XXIst Century Art*. His research on art draws on queer theory, spatial studies, and critical theory to parse the connections between public sex cultures and contemporary sexual/identity politics. He addresses how artists approach the cruising cultures of the past and present, asking if these subcultural practices are mythologized, valorized or pathologized within these works.

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## **“Underground Imaginaries of Extractivism in the African Novel”**

**Marie Pernice**, University of Sorbonne Nouvelle - Paris 3, France

Subterranean spaces are subject to a growing extractivism, partly triggered by fantasies about the riches they conceal. This rush towards earth's depths and their wonders constitutes the backdrop of numerous contemporary French-speaking and English-speaking African novels, such as *Généalogie d'une banalité* by Sinzo Aanza (2015) or *Oil on water* by Helon Habila (2010). This paper aims at questioning the various underground imaginaries associated with mines and oil extraction areas which intertwine in some of these novels. Indeed, staging the conflictual appropriation of supposedly bountiful African subsoils, they often oppose the idealized vision of infinite riches extracted from the underground by powerful mining companies, to the more or less sterile digging of artisanal miners and mining city dwellers, hoping to escape their squalid daily life via the underground. However, those extractive practices on different scales converge in so far as they hollow out the soil, making it liable to collapse. In addition, the narratives considered in our study also depict the pollution caused by



extraction as another subterranean threat to the surface. Oil, for example, permeates the upper geological strata and the water supplies while being drawn from the depths. The instability of the soil thus caused by extractive processes tends to blur the frontier between aboveground and

underground. Literary portrayals of aboveground through a subterranean imaginary ensue. Hence, the thick dust produced by excavating sometimes literally covers up everything in the open air, recreating some sort of new layer above the surface. In parallel, the impression of living beneath the earth can also merely be induced by modified sensory perceptions (pervasive darkness, muffled noises, pungent smells...), oppressive settings and psychological pressure. In this respect, the novels studied in this paper aesthetically bear testimony to a subterranean experience located whether literally underground or aboveground.

**Marie Pernice** is a PhD student at the University Sorbonne Nouvelle - Paris 3. She is a former student of the École normale supérieure of Paris. Her thesis is entitled "The Literary Representation of Urban Subterranean Spaces in the French-speaking and the English-speaking African Novel". Her current research deals with the literary imaginaries of extractivism (mostly mining and oil extraction), the sensory experience of underground environments and an ecocritical approach to subterranean spaces. She is working under the supervision of Prof. Xavier Garnier. She is part of the UMR 7172 THALIM lab (Theory and History of Modern Arts and Literatures 19th-21th).

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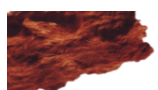
**"Cruising Theory. Constelaciones homoeróticas e incisiones teóricas en la crítica española de los setenta"**

**Ester Pino Estivill**, Universitat de Barcelona, Spain

La teoría no circula fácilmente, sino que suele encontrar barreras ahí donde podría abrirse camino. En el campo de la crítica literaria española de los años sesenta, dominado en la universidad por la estilística católica como método oficial y por las tendencias del realismo social en el campo intelectual extrauniversitario, la teoría francesa encontró muchos obstáculos para su entrada efectiva en España. El estructuralismo, cuyos tres alcances fueron la muerte del sujeto, la problemática del lenguaje y la remodelación de las ciencias humanas, entró con su refutación incorporada y fue amputado de su giro epistemológico. De hecho, en España, la deconstrucción, mucho antes de que lo decretara Compagnon, fue vista como el peor de los demonios.

Sin embargo, durante los años setenta, algunos espacios críticos y literarios experimentaron desde los márgenes con los límites teóricos del lenguaje, la ilegibilidad textual, el placer del texto y el goce de la escritura, en sintonía con las producciones lacaniano-althusserianas de la revista *Tel Quel*. Esta introducción vino de la mano de una serie de escritores pero también de plataformas como las revistas *El Viejo Topo* o *Diwan* o de grupos textualistas (Ignasi Ubac, *Tecstual*) que compartieron un interés por la escritura como campo de transgresión del lenguaje y, en concreto, por las escrituras de la sexualidad como subversión a las políticas oficiales. Es ahí donde podemos trazar una constelación homoerótica en la que la teoría circula, se irradia, se pone en juego y en práctica, penetrando los discursos de la España franquista y posfranquista.

El objetivo de esta comunicación es cartografiar esta constelación. Para ello, en primer lugar nos detendremos en las incursiones nocturnas del último Barthes en textos como "Au Palace ce soir" (*Vogue Hommes*, 1978) o *Soriées de Paris* (1987), y en su relación afectiva e intelectual con Severo Sarduy, quien lo esperaba, cada día, para comenzar la noche, "a las ocho en el Flore". En ellos, podemos observar una serie de elementos transgresores en relación al lenguaje y el erotismo que compartirán



escritores como los españoles Juan Goytisolo y José Miguel Ullán y los argentinos Copi y Raúl Escari, introductores de las teorías telquelianas en la crítica hispánica. De forma simultánea, surgía una literatura homosexual desde los márgenes de la cultura y en diálogo con el lacanismo,

como en *Detrás por delante* (1978) de Alberto Cardín o *Putá marès (ahí)* (1977) de Biel Mesquida, y aparecía también un corpus teórico sobre la intertextualidad y la transgresión, como *Esquizemia* (1975), de Jordi Llovet. Esta cartografía nos permitirá reseguir un capítulo de la historia de los usos teóricos en la crítica española desde una perspectiva subversiva que atentó contra los discursos oficiales de la época, cuyos temas principales fueron la perforación del cuerpo en la letra y la ilegibilidad de la escritura con la intención de crear un lenguaje nuevo o, como escribió Castellet a partir de Goytisolo, de “fer foc nou” y quemar la moral de la España sagrada.

**Ester Pino Estivill** es doctora en Teoría de la Literatura y Literatura Comparada (Universitat de Barcelona), profesora asociada del grado de Estudios Literarios de la UB y profesora colaboradora del máster en Humanidades de la UOC. Ha sido profesora lectora de literatura en la École Normale Supérieure de Lyon y en la Universidad París-Sorbona y actualmente es miembro del grupo de investigación Literatura Comparada en el Espacio Intelectual Europeo (UB). Sus principales campos de investigación giran en torno a la circulación y los usos de la teoría literaria francesa en la segunda mitad del siglo XX y la reflexión sobre las prácticas educativas y la institucionalización de las ciencias humanas. Ha publicado diferentes artículos en revistas académicas, así como reportajes y reseñas en distintas revistas literarias y culturales. Forma parte de los consejos de redacción de la *Revue Roland Barthes* y de la revista *452º. Teoría de la Literatura y Literatura Comparada*.

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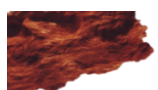
### **“Elden Ring, souterrains mythiques et leur influence sur le monde”**

**Loris Rimaz**, Université de Lausanne, Switzerland

« Toutes les villes contiennent des cités enterrées, mais chaque cité enterrée l'est à sa manière. » (Mattheis et Gurr 2021 : 6) La littérature académique sur les cités enterrées met en avant la possibilité d'une superposition d'événements de temporalités différentes dans un même espace. Mattheis et Gurr soutiennent cette thèse dans leur article pour "Literary Geographies" et avancent qu'un "texte peut [...] très efficacement produire la même superposition qu'un espace urbain peut générer et nous permettre de commenter l'expérience du promeneur et du lecteur." (Ibid. : 8) En d'autres termes, un texte peut, à l'instar d'un environnement urbain, stratifier temporalités et significations. (Gurr 2015 : 24)

Le jeu vidéo, en tant que média ergodique (Aarseth 1997 : 2-4), offre le potentiel de combiner l'expérience du promeneur et du lecteur. Les Game Studies ont longtemps souffert d'une division entre les approches basées sur le récit et celles sur l'expérience de jeu. Pourtant, le vocabulaire pour traiter des deux simultanément existe : dans leur ouvrage fondamental "Rules of Play", Salen et Zimmerman différencient le récit "intégré" – l'histoire que le jeu raconte – du récit "émergeant" – les récits qui émergent au cours de l'interaction du joueur avec le jeu. (Salen et Zimmerman 2004 : 383) Le joueur incarne donc le rôle du lecteur au travers de sa lecture et son interprétation des sens du récit, et celui du promeneur grâce sa capacité à explorer les environnements du jeu.

Elden Ring (FromSoftware 2022) est le terrain idéal pour vérifier cette hypothèse. Au travers d'une play-conférence, nous explorerons les espaces souterrains des "Lands Between", soulignant leur influence sur le monde à la surface et leurs implications pour le récit du jeu. Nous mettrons en outre en lumière la présence, l'influence, et parfois la réinvention de certains mythes littéraires de catabase.



**Loris Rimaz** est assistant diplômé en études vidéoludiques en faculté des Lettres à l'Université de Lausanne (SLI/UNIL) depuis août 2022. Au travers de sa formation en littérature et en informatique, il développe une sensibilité pour l'analyse critique ainsi que les connaissances techniques pour étendre ses analyses au code des jeux. Dans son mémoire de Master par exemple, il s'intéresse aux imaginaires souterrains, en particulier à l'enfer, dans *DOOM* (id Software, 1993). Ses méthodologies innovantes lui permettent de mettre en lumière la présence et l'influence des récits de catabase dans les différentes dimensions du jeu. Il continue sur ces thèmes dans sa recherche doctorale et souhaite, à long terme, proposer une méthodologie de recherche exhaustive pour l'analyse des jeux.

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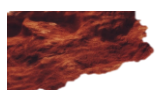
### **“Restos vivientes: alteridad y diferencia en el discurso cultural franquista. Una lectura del «Espacio inferior» a partir de Y. Lotman”**

**Miguel Rivas Venegas**, Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea, Spain

En esta ponencia, partiré de la noción Warburgiana de post-vida o supervivencia (*nachleben*) para tratar de explicar la construcción de la imagen especular de lo «otro» como ser que proviene «de abajo», como recordase en su propio trabajo el semiotista de la cultura Yuriy Lotman. Emplearé la diferencia entre lo subterráneo y lo luminoso, lo blando y lo terso, y en último término, lo seco y lo barroso presente en la cosmovisión cultural del fascismo para abordar el relato político de los años 30

y 40 como auténtico «mito trucado», como espacio de repetición ritual de restos culturales sobrevivientes como lo hubiera entendido Georges Dumèzil. Recuperaré, en este sentido, la noción de *monstra* en su acepción más latina –criatura no monstruosa en el sentido habitual de la palabra, sino ser «otro» con capacidad de *mostrar*, de contar historias– ejemplificando, en este caso, que la reconstrucción política y politizada de las mujeres y hombres resistentes presentes en las artes plásticas y en la producción literaria franquista partía estrictamente de remanentes, de auténticos «mitos trucados» puestos a disposición del relato hegemónico de la posguerra. Restos vivientes – *lebensfähige Reste*, que habría dicho Burckhardt– que constituyeron así un *imago* de determinadas mujeres y hombres como criaturas perimetrales, *ascendentes* –puesto que procedían del espacio desconocido, *inferior*, a partes iguales mítico y concreto, del «arrabal y la casucha de hojalata», como escribiera Agustín de Foxá– y contra natura que lejos de poder considerarse un producto exclusivo de la psique reaccionaria española, hundía sus raíces en las representaciones del mal más atávicas. Constituyendo, así, el arquetipo de la miliciana y del resistente como auténtico *pharmakós* contemporáneo, como depredador sexual antropófago, y rescatando lógicas rituales y terrores patriarcales basados en características y relatos sobrevivientes. La historia que aquí queremos abordar, por tanto, transcenderá con creces la representación puramente ibérica; nos llevará hasta la imagen mítica del monstruo –a veces insectil, siempre periférico– que reaparece; nos acercará a las fuentes literarias rusas que interesaron a Lotman, pero también a las *Crónicas de Indias*, auténticos repositorios de alteridad de autoría ibérica. Nos transportará hasta las colecciones del Prado, a la pintura flamenca, a los lunáticos de Quinten Massijs o a los locos de las Pinturas negras; entrará en diálogo, también, con los *marginalia* medievales y sus criaturas perimetrales imaginadas por la psique occidental blanca.

**Miguel Rivas Venegas** es investigador postdoctoral del Programa Next Generation Eurpe Maria Zambrano de la Comisión Europea en la Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea (2022-), donde también ha sido investigador postdoctoral Juan de la Cierva del MINECO-Agencia Estatal de Investigación. Forma parte del Claustro de Excelencia Internacional EXC 2020 “*Temporal Communities: Doing Literature in a Global Perspective*” (Freie Universität Berlin), donde ha sido investigador postdoctoral en 2019, y del grupo



de investigación *Arts of Memory* (2021-) de la misma universidad alemana, dedicado al estudio del legado de Aby Warburg. Participa también en el equipo de *Erinnerungskulturen und politiken* de la Technische Universität Berlin y forma parte del comité de especialistas encargado de analizar el repertorio iconográfico del Valle de los Caídos (Secretaría de Estado de Memoria Democrática/ CSIC) bajo la dirección de Francisco Ferrandiz. Durante su trayectoria académica ha realizado también investigaciones en la Humboldt Universität Berlin, el Museo Reina Sofía o en la Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung. Su investigación actual analiza, en particular, la construcción de los mitos culturales de lo monstruoso y lo contra natura que articula el *imago* del “otro” como *Kulturzerstörer* en las culturas políticas de la extrema derecha tanto clásica como contemporánea; se centra, así mismo, tanto en el análisis de la retórica del nacional-populismo contemporáneo y el fascismo clásico –países de habla alemana, España, Francia e Italia– como en el estudio de su dimensión estética y *messa in scena*.

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### **“De esta casa no se marcha nadie. Venganza y reparación en el campo literario actual”**

**Violeta Ros**, Universidad de Zaragoza, Spain

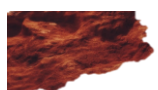
Mi propuesta para el congreso Imaginarios subterráneos se inscribe en la línea sobre necropolíticas y pretende articular un análisis de conjunto de un pequeño corpus de novelas publicadas en España con posterioridad al año 2000 y que abordan, desde la ficción, el motivo de la venganza en relación con los crímenes del franquismo como una forma de reparación que sólo es posible, como catarsis, dentro del mundo de la ficción.

Lo que las novelas que componen este pequeño corpus tienen en común es que todas ellas se proponen como ficciones, todas ellas imaginan –desde la ficción– un crimen mediante al que se busca el castigo o el ajusticiamiento a un perpetrador que no ha sido castigado por la justicia y todas ellas articulan, desde una perspectiva posmemorial, una historia familiar en la que el espacio privado por excelencia –la casa– aparece revestida con una carga simbólica tan intensa que incluso llegará a funcionar, dentro de estas narraciones, como un actor cómplice en el ajusticiamiento de esos perpetradores.

Partiendo del análisis específico del contexto memorial español y su producción narrativa más reciente, mi propuesta busca abrir la puerta a una reflexión más amplia en relación con la naturaleza reparadora de la ficción en los diferentes contextos de justicia transicional, especialmente en diálogo los casos de Argentina y Chile.

**Violeta Ros** es doctora en Estudios Hispánicos por la Universitat de València y está especializada en literatura española contemporánea. Su campo de investigación se centra en el análisis de las representaciones y resignificaciones del franquismo y la Transición en la narrativa actual en relación con la noción de memoria democrática. Sobre este tema ha publicado varios trabajos, entre ellos el libro *La memoria de los otros. Relatos y resignificaciones de la Transición en la novela española actual* (Iberoamericana-Vervuert, 2020), que ha sido reconocido con el Premio Lía Schwartz de la Asociación Internacional de Hispanistas al mejor primer ensayo publicado entre 2020 y 2022. También ha realizado estancias de investigación en University of California-Berkeley, Princeton University, el Centro de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales (CSIC) y el CHAM-Centro de Humanidades de la Universidade Nova de Lisboa. Como investigadora postdoctoral, ha formado parte del grupo de investigación REPERCRI y actualmente es miembro de los grupos de investigación TRANSFICCIÓN (Universidad de Zaragoza) y NECROPOL (Universitat de Barcelona-CSIC).

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## “Decolonial Underground Aesthetics and Political Imaginaries in Hassan Blāsim’s Work”

Rita Sakr, Maynooth University, Ireland

This paper addresses the hauntological dimensions of Iraqi-born writer Hassan Blāsim’s work at the intersection of its transcultural, intermedial underground aesthetics (particularly in relation to the impact of Juan Rulfo’s *Pedro Páramo*, Andrei Tarkovsky’s cinema and electronic music on his nightmare more-than-realism) and its imaginative engagement with the combined political philosophical, affective and ecological implications of the contrapuntal spatialities of the forest/border and tunnel/border. This comparative approach will be developed through the frameworks of necropolitics, taboo, trauma and the more-than-human. It allows a reconsideration, *from below*, of Walter Mignolo’s conceptualisation of ‘border dwelling, thinking, doing’ as the direction of decolonial work. The paper engages with the ways in which Blāsim’s writings render the necropolitical borderscape as the spectral site of a long duration of predation and banishment and emphasise the difficulty for the forcibly displaced to locate themselves in the space of the political as long as their struggle for visibility is associated with the event of shame. In this context, I approach both Blāsim’s re-imagining of the ambiguous power of the decomposing corpse to encroach on the border that is animated by the fight to expel the abjected object-body and his articulation of a multiplicity of hauntological paradoxes with respect to dissident aberration as liberation.

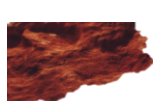
**Rita Sakr** is Lecturer/Assistant Professor in Postcolonial and Global Literatures at Maynooth University, Ireland. Among various other publications, she is the author of *Monumental Space in the Post-Imperial Novel: An Interdisciplinary Study* and of ‘Anticipating’ the 2011 Arab Uprisings: *Revolutionary Literatures and Political Geographies*. Recent work includes an article on Behrouz Boochani’s decolonial imaginaries of sanctuary in *Crossings: Journal of Migration & Culture*, a chapter on Atef Abu Saif’s *The Drone Eats with Me: A Gaza Diary* in the Edinburgh UP volume *Literary Representations of the Palestine/Israel Conflict After the Second Intifada*, and a chapter on Arabic diasporic literary trajectories in the Cambridge UP volume, *Diaspora and Literary Studies*. She is completing a new monograph project, focusing on (im)mobilities especially in relation to ‘necropolitics’ across contemporary Arab literature.

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## “Exclusionary undergrounds in Neil Gaiman’s *Neverwhere* and Slava Mogutin’s *Lost Boys*”

Anchit Sathi, Queen Mary University of London, United Kingdom

In Neil Gaiman’s *Neverwhere*, a fortuitous encounter with a suggestively named character called Door plunges the protagonist Richard Mayhew into the subterranean space of London Below, a topsy-turvy plain of existence that is home to marginalised individuals from the world of London Above. The inhabitants of London Below—the “people who have fallen through the cracks”, in Gaiman’s own words—bear resemblance, then, to the individuals featured in queer artist Slava Mogutin’s *Lost Boys* (2006), a compendium of raw and thought-provoking photographs of Eastern European men from the fringes of mainstream society that, like Gaiman’s text, also “opens the door to a world of displaced people, *underground* cultures and economic instability” (Erb, 2007; emphasis mine). Furthermore, and thematic considerations aside, these two depictions of life below the surface are also united in their creators’ fascination with modes of production different from their own: Gaiman, for instance, has spoken widely of the inspiration that he seeks in photography; and Mogutin, inversely, used to be a writer of poetry and prose before turning to the visual arts. That said, these artists’ disparate choice of medium in these specific instances—prose and photography respectively—naturally also offers





quite different treatments of the underground as a spatial metaphor for exclusion and disempowerment. In this paper, I will bring *Neverwhere* and *Lost Boys* in dialogue with each other, hereby taking this brief outline of similarities and differences further to highlight the various ways in which the nature and materiality of the artists' particular medium of production alternatively constrains, lends wings to and impinges upon the metaphorisation of the underground in this context.

**Anchit Sathi** is a Frenchman of Indian descent, who is currently pursuing a PhD in Comparative Literature at Queen Mary University of London, where his research focuses on queer parenthood in the European modernist canon, and specifically in the work of Marcel Proust, Virginia Woolf and Thomas Mann. Anchit is also a mature student: he embarked upon this PhD at the age of 40, after a career spanning nearly two decades in business—most notably with Amazon and DocuSign, where he served in various executive roles in Europe and in the United States. Anchit is now based out of Berlin—a city that he recently moved to, along with his husband and twin infants, after having spent the past eight years in Seattle (and after having lived in Paris, London, Bombay and Düsseldorf previously). Academically speaking, he holds a B.A. in French literature and economics, a second B.A. in English literature, an undergraduate diploma in German literature and a Master's degree in management (Diplôme HEC).

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### **“Myth no more? Representations of the Warsaw Sewers in Literature, Music, and Film”**

**Anna Seidel**, Humboldt Universität zu Berlin, Germany

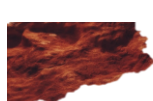
“[T]here were as many sewers as there were streets. Another city. A third Warsaw counting from the top.” (Białoszewski, 2015, p. 142)

During the Warsaw Uprising in 1944, the topography of Warsaw changed radically. As the entire city became a battlefield, staying in houses and walking on streets became a danger to life. So, Warsaw went underground. Cellars were turned into shelters, the city's sewers became, as the Polish writer Miron Białoszewski notes, the new 'streets,' as they provided a safe passage from one part of the city to another.

This life-saving function of the Warsaw sewers during the Uprising is intensively remembered until today. Commemorative plaques at the sewer entrances, a separate section in the Museum of the Warsaw Uprising dedicated to this subterranean urban space and an abundance of representations of it in literature, music, and films about the Uprising point not only to its importance in the city's history, but also to its mythical status, which already evolved during the Uprising.

In my paper I examine the aesthetic means used to depict this subterranean urban topos in various media. My comparative analysis focuses on a selection of representations of the Warsaw sewers in literature (e.g., Miron Białoszewski's *A Memoir of the Warsaw Uprising*, Anna Świrszczyńska's *Building the Barricade*), music (e.g., *Kanały* by Lao Che, *Uprising* by Sabaton) and film (e.g., *Kanał* by Andrzej Wajda, *Miasto 44* by Jan Komasa). This selection will allow me to discuss the different imaginaries of the Warsaw sewers produced in texts, films, and songs about the Warsaw Uprising, but also to show whether these artistic representations perpetuate or subvert the urban myth of the Warsaw sewers.

The aim of my paper is therefore, on the one hand, to examine how artistic representations of subterranean spaces can create spatial imaginaries of the underground or even urban myths. On the other hand, it aims to uncover their subversive and demythologizing potential.



**Anna Seidel** studied Comparative Literature, Theatre Studies, and European Literatures at the University of Vienna, Freie Universität Berlin, and Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. Since 2019, she has been working on literary representations of urban spaces and practices in cities in states of exception as part of her doctoral studies at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. Her dissertation project, which is in its final phase, is funded by the *Studienstiftung des deutschen Volkes* and was awarded a scholarship by the German Historical Institute in Warsaw in 2021.

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### **“Down, down, down”: The Underground as Literary Topos**

**Olga Springer**, Dublin City University, Ireland

Journeys and experiences underground are topoi linking literary narratives as diverse as Orpheus' famous katabasis to save Eurydice, Alice's visit to Wonderland through the rabbit hole (a novel originally entitled "Alice's Adventures Under Ground" (1865)), and the labyrinthine tunnels in Mick Jackson's *The Underground Man* (1997). This presentation will analyse the underground topos in scenes of literal and figurative descent, and in portrayals of life/activities underground in a wider sense, in parallel with and/or contrasted to that/those taking place aboveground. By means of a close-reading

approach, the significance of the underground to the plot of the texts considered will be analysed,

and, in a second step, the potentiality of the underground space, which expands the text's spatial frames vertically, to allow for a re-evaluation of spatial hierarchies such as centre and periphery.

The presentation will moreover focus on the relevance of the narrated underground space to narrative structure, textual representation and formal experimentation, and its particular potential as a reflector of characters' lives of the mind and identities.

Underlying these reflections will be the questions in how far and why movement underground differs from horizontal movement in the texts examined, how the descent into and ascent from the respective underground worlds is aesthetically shaped, and whether the underground spaces retain certain common features across various times and contexts.

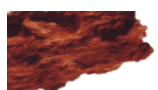
**Olga Springer** is Assistant Professor in the School of Applied Language and Intercultural Studies at Dublin City University, Ireland. Her book *Ambiguity in Charlotte Brontë's Vilette* was published in 2020. Olga's research interests include intertextuality, ambiguity in literary texts, and Victorian literature. She is a member of the Executive Committee of *FRINGE Urban Narratives*. From 2019 until 2022, she was a member of the Executive Committee of the European Society of Comparative Literature, and editor of the Society's Newsletter from 2015 until 2022. She is on the Scientific Committee of the ESCL journal, *CompLit*.

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### **“Burying and Writing Books in the Early-Twentieth Century. Underground as Literary Repository”**

**Aleksandra Stokowiec**, Centro de Estudos Comparatistas, Universidade de Lisboa, Portugal

While burying books does not seem to be a common practice, the early-twentieth century literature happens to be filled with examples of texts either deposited or retrieved from the earth. The underground context, both in relation to writings cautiously hidden in chests, caves, or among the roots, and those unexpectedly resurfacing from the soil, tends to emphasize the material status of such works and their importance as polyvalent carriers of meaning. At the same time, it often plays with the



idea of unreadability or inaccessibility as features contributing to the book's imaginary growth. Finally, it entertains the possibility of secret or suspended communication as buried stories quite literally become sub-plots, waiting to be read by future generations or to slowly decay, enriching the soil.

The following presentation brings together Bruno Schulz's *Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass* (1937), Raymond Roussel's *Locus Solus* (1914), and Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* (1928) as examples of works featuring buried – or almost buried – books. Since each of these texts foregrounds a different relation between writing and burying – as well as, by analogy, reading and unearthing – this study proposes to look at them as separate models for employing the underground as a repository for literary imagination. To support the comparative dimension of this reading, the texts included in the corpus are further juxtaposed with biographical details – especially in the case of Schulz and Roussel, where they allow to explore a peculiar connection between their respective ideas of buried writing and the posthumous reception of their works –, and some more recent artistic practices, such as Sarah Bodman's 2010 tribute to Kurt Johannessen, popular time capsules, or the Future Library Project.

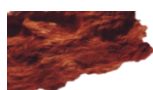
**Aleksandra Stokowiec** holds BA degrees in Cultural Studies (2014) and Art Criticism (2015) from Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń (Poland), and an MA degree in Comparative Studies (2017) from Jagiellonian University in Cracow (Poland). In 2019 she was admitted as an FCT scholarship holder to the PhD-COMP Programme – a joint initiative of University of Lisbon, Catholic University of Leuven, and University of Bologna. Her doctoral dissertation focuses on the movable devices in books – namely: flaps, volvelles, and pop-ups – and their relation to textual practices of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century.

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### **“Underground Urban Mobilities in Francophone African Literatures”**

**Anna-Leena Toivanen**, University of Eastern Finland, Finland

Approaching a set of Francophone African and Afrodiasporic literary texts such as J. R. Essomba's *Le Paradis du nord* (1996), Edem Awumey's *Les Pieds sales* (2009), Wilfried N'Sondé's *Le Silence des esprits* (2010), and Gauz's *Black Manoo* (2020) from a mobility studies perspective, this paper focuses on the underground mobilities of clandestine migrants in European cities. In my reading, I use the notion of the underground both concretely and metaphorically. In addition to paying attention to the texts' portrayals of travel in the Paris Metro, I also discuss other forms of paperless migrants' urban mobilities (e.g., automobility; pedestrianism) as essentially subterranean in the sense that they are defined by the demands of the social exclusion generated by the mobile subjects' clandestine status. I am particularly interested in the position of the clandestine migrant as an urban mobile subject who “looks at the world as [a] stranger” (Schimanski 2018, 313) and whose urban mobilities are characterised by vulnerability and mobility strategies that oblige them to be constantly alert and to acquire specific skills for moving in the city to minimize the risk of deportation (Filipo 2020, 237). In addition to the recurring imagery of exclusion, hiding, caution, arrhythmia and flight that define undocumented migrants' urban mobilities in the analysed texts, the novels also attest to their “urban apprenticeship” that enables them to use and handle the city through mobility practices and claim at least some sort of belonging to it (Buhr 2018). In order to recognise the dissident potential of these creative ways of “working the city” (Buhr 2018, 340), my reading adopts the French term *débrouillardise* for resourcefulness or everyday survival that also connotes the capacity and readiness to be mobile (Grayson 2018, 514).



**Anna-Leena Toivanen** is an Academy Research Fellow at the University of Eastern Finland. She acts as the literary studies subject editor of the *Nordic Journal of African Studies*. She has published widely on mobility-related themes in African literatures, and her most recent articles feature in *Urban Studies*, *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, *Transfers*, *Mobilities* and *Studies in Travel Writing*. She is the author of *Mobilities and Cosmopolitanisms in African and Afrodiasporic Literatures* (Brill 2021).

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### **“Fate in Chigozie Obioma’s Novel *An Orchestra of Minorities*”**

**Aristi Trendel**, Le Mans University, France

In Chigozie Obioma’s quasi-epic novel, *An Orchestra of Minorities*, the author heavily relies on Igbo cosmology to depict his main character’s unfortunate life. Deeds and misdeeds taper off in anger, distress, frustration and near-disaster, in spite of the presence of his guardian spirit, Chi, emerged from the deceased, that watches over him with limited power of intervention. The character Chi has the control of the narrative but not entirely of the man’s fate. This partly migration story, wrapped up in

myth, winks at the *Odyssey* and enquires into the fate of man, always at the crossroads that necessitate clairvoyant decision-making. By bringing together explicitly Igbo cosmology and implicitly Greek mythology, Obioma interweaves his sources of the underground. This paper examines the notion of fate, under a double conceptual background, Igbo and ancient Greek that seem to point to a transcultural world view.

**Aristi Trendel** is associate professor at Le Mans University, France, where she offers courses in American civilisation and Business. She has taught American literature and Creative Writing for several years at the School of Management of Strasbourg. She has published book chapters and articles on American writers in American and European journals (The John Updike Review, Philip Roth Studies, The Psychoanalytic Review, The European Journal of American Studies...), book reviews, and fiction in literary magazines. She is the author of four books of fiction and a study, *Pedagogic Encounters: Master and Disciple in the American Novel After the 1980s* (Lanham: Lexington Book, 2021).

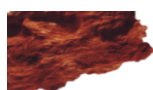
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### **“Poesía y cine que (aún) hablan la noche”**

**Virginia Trueba**, Universitat de Barcelona, Spain

Con motivo de la performance poética *Jinete Ultimo Reino* que María Salgado y Fran Cabeza de Vaca (2017-2022) han llevado a cabo estos últimos años en diferentes espacios alternativos desde una postura manifiestamente underground, este trabajo se propone pensar la noche como espacio disolutivo de las identidades, como territorio liberado de los límites de lo simbólico y como motor de una emancipación política. Se trata de una noche atravesada por un deseo que, a su vez, se entiende como una fuerza o una potencia con capacidad de albergar *lo imposible*. Al mismo tiempo, el trabajo propone pensar de qué modo, sin embargo, esta noche está siendo negada por otra noche, cuyo carácter disolutivo juega a favor de la negación del deseo y de *lo imposible*: se trata de la noche del capitalismo, en la versión neoliberal en que nos encontramos, y de la que da buena cuenta la última película de Albert Serra, *Pacifiction* (2022), producida por *Andergraun Films*, cuyo análisis servirá de contrapunto al de la performance mencionada.

Se trata, por lo tanto, de pensar juntas dos producciones españolas de los últimos años que, desde los géneros respectivos en que se inscriben y los lenguajes que les son propios, se incorporan a una



reflexión que, desde por lo menos Gilles Deleuze y Félix Guattari, ha ocupado a los estudios de la cultura: la de los vínculos del capitalismo con el régimen libidinal, es decir, la reflexión acerca de cómo el capitalismo trabaja capturando el deseo y el régimen nocturno en el que este mayormente se despliega, negando en consecuencia la apertura a aquello que escapa a toda programación, a toda previsibilidad y que, con Maurice Blanchot, uno de los grandes exploradores de la noche, podemos llamar *lo imposible*.

**Virginia Trueba Mira** es Profesora Titular de la Universitat de Barcelona. Imparte docencia en el grado de *Filología Hispánica y Estudios Literarios*, y así mismo en el máster de *Teoría de la literatura y Literatura comparada*. Es miembro de los proyectos de investigación I+D en curso *Usos de la Teoría en la literatura y cine españoles del siglo XXI* (PID2019-108841GB-I00) y *Pensamiento contemporáneo posfundacional. Análisis teórico-crítico de las ontologías contemporáneas de la negatividad y la cuestión de la violencia del fundamento* (PID2020-117069GB-I00). Forma parte del grupo de investigación *GLICIART, Literatura, cine y otros lenguajes artísticos* (UB) y del *Seminario María Zambrano* (UB). Desde 2018 codirige la revista *Aurora. Papeles del Seminario María Zambrano*. Su interés en los últimos años ha estado centrado en el análisis de las relaciones entre poesía y

pensamiento en el ámbito hispánico de los siglos XX y XXI, además de en la obra específica de María Zambrano y en diversas corrientes del feminismo actual. Los resultados de su investigación han aparecido en publicaciones periódicas nacionales e internacionales (*Bulletin Hispanique, Versants, Journal of Hispanic Research, Endoxa, Boletín de la Biblioteca Menéndez Pelayo*, etc.) y así mismo han podido exponerse en universidades como Otawa, University of South Florida, La Habana, París-Sorbonne, Berne, Fez, etc. Entre sus trabajos en libro más destacados destacan las siguientes ediciones: *La vida perra de Juanita Narboni* (Cátedra, 2000) y *El cuarto de los niños y otros cuentos* (Pre-Textos, 2008), ambos del novelista tangerino Angel Vázquez; *La tumba de Antígona y otros textos sobre el personaje trágico* de María Zambrano (Cátedra, 2012); *Lo que el pájaro bebe en la fuente y no es el agua. Poesía reunida (2004-2020)*, de Chantal Maillard (Galaxia Gutenberg, 2022).

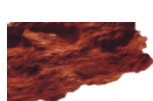
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### **“Between Depths and Surfaces: Nineteenth-Century Philanthropy, Slums, and City Marginals”**

**Alexandra Urakova**, University of Tampere, Finland

In his book “*Le Visiteur du pauvre*,” 1824), a French essayist, moral reformer, and philosopher Joseph-Marie de Gérando encourages philanthropists to visit the poor and investigate their life prior to donating money or rendering help: “Penetrate into secrets of his afflicted heart,” he writes. The metaphor of penetration used by de Gérando is telling: the book is driven by the desire to go beyond the surfaces and get into the depths of human affliction or human vice. Another study in moral reform – *An Address on the Prevention of Pauperism* (1843) by an American author Walter Channing – gives poverty a credit of transparency instead: “Poverty tells its whole story. It has no concealments.” The “essential openness” of poverty, its exposure to the observer’s eye makes it recognizable and transparent “in mass,” despite its use of deception “in individual instances.

This paper will examine conventional representation of the city poor and city slums in the early and mid- nineteenth-century moral reform studies and fiction, teasing out the metaphors of depth and surface suggested by these two quotations. On the one hand, the slum was the “underground” of the city – a place associated with darkness (as opposed to light), death (as opposed to the vivacity of the urban life), and disease (as opposed to health and prosperity). On the other hand, it was a place marked on the city map: cf. “the area between Drury-Lane and Tottenham-court-road” (Charles Dickens); a



spot “between Cranbourne Alley and Covent Garden” (Nathaniel Parker Willis), etc. The external observer – be it a city flaneur or a philanthropist – projected this double vision onto the city marginals seen as simultaneously obscure and transparent, mysterious and open, concealed and exposed. The paper will discuss examples from Dickens, Willis, Child, and Poe.

**Alexandra Urakova** is a Kone Foundation fellow (University of Tampere). Her recent books include *Dangerous Giving in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (Palgrave, 2022) and *The Dangers of the Gift from Antiquity to the Digital Age* (coedited with Tracey A. Sowerby and Tudor Sala, Routledge, 2022). Among her interests are American and comparative nineteenth-century literature, female writing, cultural anthropology, and social history.

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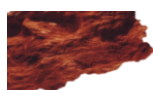
### **“Infierno, descenso y verticalidad en las narrativas patográficas. El caso del sanatorio tuberculoso”**

**Raquel Velázquez Velázquez**, Universitat de Barcelona, Spain

A lo largo del siglo XX se publica todo un tejido de representaciones literarias de la tuberculosis (*Der Zauberberg*, 1924; *Choucas*, 1927; *Genesung in Graubünden*, 1938; *Sette piani*, 1937; *Pabellón de reposo*, 1943; *El mar*, 1958; *Diceria dell'untore*, 1989, entre otras) que tienen en común su enmarcación en el microcosmos del sanatorio. El espacio de confinamiento y exclusión, así como la autoconciencia de la enfermedad y la cercana muerte, que todas estas narrativas comparten, propicia la aparición de metáforas coincidentes, que giran en torno a la imagen del descenso. La metáfora del infierno, fusión de la muerte acechante y la agonía de la enfermedad, más naturalista que romántica, se vuelve recurrente en las narrativas de los enfermos, y potencia la idea de separación, de oposición y diferencia con un mundo (el de los vivos) al que ya no se pertenece. El sanatorio será concebido bien como puro “infierno rojo” (Roberto Arlt), o como “las profundidades donde habitan muertos irreales y sin sentido” (Thomas Mann), bien como tránsito hacia ese infierno final que es la muerte. Este trabajo se ocupa, pues, del análisis de símbolos relativos al descenso, la verticalidad, y el infierno en relación con la enfermedad y el espacio donde se congrega dicha enfermedad.

**Raquel Velázquez Velázquez** has a PhD in Hispanic Philology of the University of Barcelona, with her thesis *The Experiential Articulation by César González-Ruano. His collaboration in 'La Vanguardia Española' (1944-1964)* [2010]; and Master in Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies from the University Autònoma of Barcelona [2012]. She is currently an Associate Professor in the Department of Hispanic Philology at the University of Barcelona, where she teaches undergraduate and graduate courses and she is the coordinator of the Master's Degree in Advanced Studies in Spanish and Hispano-American Literature. She has carried out teaching and research stays at the Universities of Amsterdam, Oxford (Hertford College), Freie Universität of Berlin, Nottingham, and Eötvös Lorand Tudományegyetem of Budapest. Her research production includes the studies of gender and the fantastic, the relations between press and literature, pathographic narratives, or contemporary Spanish theatre.

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## **“Urban Undergrounds in the Maximalist Novels of Ernesto Sábato and Mircea Cărtărescu”**

**Jobst Welge**, University of Leipzig, Germany

In this contribution I want to revisit the representation of urban underground spaces in the Argentine author Ernesto Sábato’s “maximalist” (S. Ercolino) novel *Abbadón el exterminador* (The Angel of Darkness, 1974), which is much indebted to the European Gothic Novel, with its own privileging of crypts and subterranean passageways (F. Orlando). Drawing on arguments and methods proposed by the recent study by Liesbeth François, *Subterranean Space in Mexico City Literature*, 2021, I want to highlight how this last work by Sábato uses the urban underground spaces of Buenos Aires (including its subway) to thematize the dark underside of the idea of modern civilization, including the political state violence committed during the period of dictatorship. In fact, Sábato’s novel may be seen as representative for Latin American works that figure “haunted landscapes” to problematize and unsettle the relation between past and present, or between different geographical spaces (such as the novel *Los ingrátidos*, 2012, by Mexican American writer V. Luiselli). In a comparative move, I want to argue that the motif of “haunting from underground urban spaces” is not only a distinctive feature of Latin American Literature but has been ingeniously assimilated by the Romanian writer Mircea Cărtărescu, who has explicitly acknowledged the influence of Sábato on his work. I want to look especially at *Blinding (Orbitor)*, 1996, a family novel set in Bucharest, which similarly makes use of a hallucinatory, gothic atmosphere, as embodied in subterranean passageways, hollowed-out and ruined spaces, and dead people come to life (for which the author also draws on the Romanian classic *The Cemetery*, 1936, by Tudor Arghezi). Ultimately, I want to argue that the notion of a subterranean city serves both Sábato and Cărtărescu to portray a modern city in times of dictatorship as a kaleidoscope of personal and political anxieties.

**Jobst Welge** was trained as a comparatist and is Professor for Romance Studies at Leipzig University, with a special focus on the literatures of the Spanish- and Portuguese-Speaking Worlds. His research interests concern the theory of the novel, urban, tropical, and family narratives in modern and contemporary literatures. He is author of the book *Genealogical Fictions: Cultural Periphery and Historical Change in the Modern Novel* (Baltimore, 2015). Among his most recent publications is the co-edited volume *Literary Landscapes of Time: Multiple Temporalities and Spaces in Latin American and Caribbean Literatures* (Berlin/Boston, 2022).

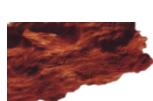
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## **“Not Under, Nor Above: Spatial Disorientation in Gay Sexual Playgrounds and their Representations”**

**Emilio Williams**, independent scholar

This performative paper juxtaposes first person narratives and descriptions of gay sex-clubs and cruising sites with found representations of queer sexual sites (real and imaginary) in texts, movies, photography, theater, and collage art.

Using past and existing examples of gay sex clubs in archival cruising guides, in personal experience, and in published memoirs, the research looks at how “real-life” queer architectures of desire complicates the binaries between underground and above-ground, between inside and outside. From second floors decorated as basements, or dungeons, to indoor hedge mazes, all the way to furnished cruising forests that take the shape of living rooms...gay cruising sites create worlds that are neither underground nor aboveground, inside, or outside. The same strategies are brought to light in the representation and potential readings of imagined worlds in queer artistic artifacts across disciplines.



Finally, the paper will find examples in which queer artists have deployed these queer performative tactics of spatial disorientation in mainstream artworks, where the disorientations include the smashing of further binaries in liminal space that are at the intersection of urban and rural, private and public, domesticated and wild. As some of these queer artists go from underground to mainstream figures, the disorientations percolate into plots and artifacts that at times are, and at times are not explicitly sexual.

Among other sources this survey will look at or listen to Pedro Almodóvar, Samuel R. Delany, Patrick Cowley, Federico García Lorca, Brion Gysin, Rotimi Fani-Kayode, George Platt Lynes, Charles Ludlam, Angus McBean David Wojnarowicz, and several anonymous gay collage artists.

**Emilio Williams** is a bilingual (Spanish/English) award-winning writer and educator. His queer, fragmented essays have appeared in *Hinterland Magazine* (UK), *Imagined Theatres* (USA), *Brevity* (USA), *The Writing Disorder* (USA), the anthology *Beyond Queer Words* (Germany), and soon in *Transatlantica Journal* (France). He researches forgotten or under-appreciated queer histories, later deploying them in essays and on his performative, transdisciplinary lectures. As a playwright, his plays has been produced in Argentina, Estonia, France, Mexico, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States, including New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Washington DC. His play *Smartphones, a Pocket-Size Farce* is included in the anthology *New Plays from Spain*, published by Martin E. Segal Theatre Center at CUNY. His play *Camas y mesas* was published by Ediciones Irreverentes in 2010 and won the IV Premio El Espectáculo Teatral. Other awards include a Teaching Fellowship and an MFA Fellowship Award in Creative Writing from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and Best International Show for *Medea's got some issues* at United Solo Festival, New York. A freelance scholar, he currently holds adjunct positions at DePaul University, Columbia College Chicago, and Georgia State University; he also teaches at Chicago Dramatists where he is a Resident Playwright. He holds an MFA in Writing from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

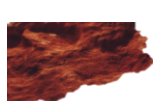
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### **“Necropower and Subterranean Survival in Rodolfo Fogwill’s *Los pichiciegos: visiones de una batalla subterránea*”**

**Jennifer Wood**, Prifysgol Aberystwyth University, Wales

Rodolfo Fogwill’s *Los pichiciegos* was first published in 1983, shortly after the end of the Falklands / Malvinas war, in which the novel is set, being written between 11<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> of June 1982, just a few days after the end of hostilities. The story concerns a group of around 25 Argentine soldiers who have ‘disappeared’ themselves from their army posts and are in hiding in a subterranean refuge – *la Pichiciera*, part trench, part burrow, part bunker. The inhabitants (*los pichis*) only express objective is to survive the war. To this end, they traffic and trade in goods and information between both sides in the conflict, existing in a liminal, subterranean, otherworldly space (a no-man’s land) of their own making, with its own rules and codes of behaviour. Their circumstances and living conditions confer upon them the status of living dead, a form of death-in-life, in which they take on animal-like qualities, becoming unreal and ghostlike, even to themselves (Mbembe: 2003).

The novel interrogates both the socio-political and personal understandings of this specific conflict and of warfare in general, criticising the actions of the military Junta, the poor treatment of the Argentine conscripts and the support of Argentine society for the war. It also references aspects of the Dirty War and suggests those clandestine elements who opposed the Junta in the community of the *pichis*.





This paper will consider Fogwill's novel in the light of necropower, via the body of the soldier, where the lines between life and death, victimhood and survival, resistance and suicide, sacrifice and redemption, martyrdom and freedom are blurred (Mbembe, 2003). It will also explore this text's place within the wider cultural productions of the Falklands / Malvinas War, including the poetry of Gustavo Caso Rosendi and Martín Raninqueo, particularly via the multifaceted concept of the trench in its shifting from safe haven to pseudo-grave.

**Jennifer Wood** is Senior Lecturer in Spanish & Latin American Studies at Prifysgol Aberystwyth University. Her scholarly background is in the fields of C20th Spanish poetry, visual culture and the avant-garde, particularly the work of Rafael Alberti, as well as the cultural legacies of the Falklands / Malvinas conflict and constructions of national identity. She is an active member of the research group The Centre for the Movement of People (CMOP) and has current articles under review on the topics of language and migration in Rafael Alberti's early poetry of exile, and the trope of the captive female in patriotic poetry of the Malvinas. She has also published recent articles on national (be)longing in Marc Evans' *Patagonia* (2010), in *Spaces of Longing and Belonging: Spatiality, Culture and Identity in Literature and Film* (Brill: 2019), and on the Argentine dogme film *Fuckland* (2000) in the co-edited volume *Gender. Nation. Text. Exploring Constructs of National Identity* (LIT Verlag: 2017). She is currently preparing a monograph on the poetry of the Falklands/Malvinas War.

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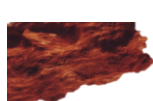
### **“Orpheus in Xibalbá. Syncretic Underworlds in Latin American Fiction”**

**Nora Zapf**, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, Germany

Since the beginning of the 20th century, underworld imaginaries play a central role in Latin American fiction. In their descents to the world below, the main characters who resemble Orpheus or Dante often deal with political infernos as well as with different histories. They become what Cristina Rivera Garza calls the “restless dead” (*los muertos indóciles*, 2013) who challenge with their appearance the polis of the present. The many references to mythological underworlds originating as much in *cosmovisiones indígenas* as in Afro-American and European cultures form a hybrid mixture of cultural, historical and political identities. Descending to the underworld means to encounter different layers of time: the present transforms into the past and points at the future

(Platthaus 2004). Orpheus reappears in new adaptations: as black Orpheus living in the favelas of Rio in Vinicius de Moraes' play *Orfeu da Conceição* (1956) and the movie adaptation *Orfeu negro* by Marcel Camus (1959); as aimless writer in the barrios of Buenos Aires in *Adán Buenosayres* (1948) by Leopoldo Marechal or in Cuba in José Lezama Lima's dilogy *Paradiso / Inferno* (1966 / 1977); as indigenous protagonists during the Guatemalan military dictatorship of the 70s in Luis de Li6n's novel *El tiempo principia en Xibalbá* (1985). Female Orpheus figures appear in recent novels by Samanta Schweblin and Cristina Rivera Garza, citing the talk among the dead in Juan Rulfo's famous novel *Pedro Páramo* (1955), an author Rivera Garza frequently discusses on her blog <https://cristinariveragarza.blogspot.com>. The Orpheus *revenants* turn their heads to the (other) origins of history, to (other) political and social pasts. By speaking to the dead, these works of art contribute to what Rivera Garza calls *necrowriting* as an act of decolonization by taking the indigenous and marginal perspectives into account and challenging the existing views on history.

**Dr. Nora Zapf**, postdoc researcher and poet, is currently working on her habilitation „Descending as Remembering: Underworld and Collective Memory in Latin American Prose“ at the University of Innsbruck. She obtained her PhD on *Atlantic Poetry in Comparative Literature* 2017 at the University



of Munich. Selected publication (forthcoming 2023): “¿Tierra Tomada? El suelo transformándose en infierno en José Eustasio Rivera, Yuri Herrera y Samanta Schweblin”, in Jörg Dünne und Jenny Haase (ed.): *Pensar y escribir la tierra. Reflexiones sobre lo terrestre en las literaturas y culturas latinoamericanas*. Madrid/Frankfurt a.M.: Iberoamericana/Vervuert.

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## GROUP SESSIONS

### Underworld Cities (Association for Literary Urban Studies)

Metaphorical and metonymic affinities between the city and underground worlds abound. One common strand is identified by Rosalind Williams, who argues in *Notes on the Underground* that both modern cities and constructed subterranean spaces can be perceived through the logic of ecological simplification, a reduction of organic life to the likes of ‘humans, rats, insects, and microbes’ in the absence of other forms of conventionally experienced nature (20). As technologies of excavation and city-building developed in relative unison during the long process of modernization, the urban and the vertical began conversing in multiple ways in both fact and fiction.

If cities are seen in terms of such human-made ‘world-reduction’, for which the manufactured underground serves as an extreme image, subterranean realities also deserve to be examined from the perspective of literary urban studies. This session focuses on the intersections of the city and the underground – not only along the lines suggested by Williams and Mumford but with varied notions of buried cities as well as urban undergrounds.

This Association of Literary Urban Studies panel discusses three fictional representations of three different European cities, Brussels, Athens, and London, approaching different co-articulations of the urban and the vertical. These presentations travel from imaginaries of literal underground cities to mythical city underworlds to the ‘underworld’ as a symbol for the urban night side of danger and illegal activities. Guided by such concepts as foreignness, characterization, and rhythmicity, the presentations in the panel step into the urban underworld in its many meanings.

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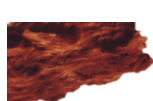
### **“Symbolic Cities Beneath Brussels: *Brüsel* and Other Underground Cities in Graphic Novels by François Schuiten and Benoît Peeters”**

**Lieven Ameel**, Tampere University, Finland

This paper examines underground cities located underneath the Belgian and European capital, Brussels. It focuses on two Belgo-French graphic novels by François Schuiten & Benoît Peeters: *Brüsel* (1992) and *Le Dernier Pharaon* (2019). I will draw on existing research on literary urban studies in the context of graphic novels, including work by Jan Baetens, Giada Peterle and Benjamin Fraser. This paper aims to provide a tentative classification of the functions of underground cities by adapting James Phelan’s character classification of synthetic, mimetic, and thematic functions to the functioning of literary spaces.

**Lieven Ameel** is a Senior lecturer in comparative literature in Tampere University.

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## **“Tracing the Foreign. Representations of Athens’ Underworld in Contemporary City Literature”**

**Riikka P. Pulkkinen**, University of Helsinki, Finland

This paper focuses on the representations of the urban underworld in the 21<sup>st</sup> century Athens. Drawing on James Phelan and Alex Woloch, I discuss the role of minor characters as thematic components and keys to the urban underworld, focusing on the novels *Άκρα ταπείνωση* (“Utmost Humiliation”, 2019) by Rhea Galanaki, *Οι τυφλοί* (“The Blind Ones”, 2017) by Nikos A. Mandis, *Η πόλη και η σιωπή* (“The City and the Silence”, 2013) by Konstantinos Tzamiotis and *Εύα* (“Eva”, 2009) by Ersi Sotiropoulou. In the novels the urban underworld is related to the powerless and to the foreign; the minor characters represent minorities as a commentary on the present situation in the city and function as plot-helpers to guide the main character into the underworld. By analyzing the minor characters in the chosen novels, this paper aims to present their main functions in contemporary Greek city literature and the key characteristics of the underworld in Athens.

**Riikka P. Pulkkinen** is currently a PhD candidate in the Doctoral Programme of Philosophy, Arts and Society in the University of Helsinki. Her research is a combination of literary urban studies, narratology and character studies, and she applies this framework to explore the individual experience in the 21st century Athens.

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## **“Stepping into the Urban and Human Underworld in *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*”**

**Hanne Juntunen**, Tampere University, Finland

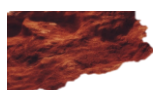
This presentation looks at movement into and out of the ‘night side’ of London as a metaphorical urban underground of danger and taboo in the nineteenth century literary classic *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson (1886). A story about the nightside of humanity, it maps how various urban rhythms act as a passage from the ‘proper’ daylight city to the nocturnal ‘underground’ city mirroring the bodily rhythms that change Dr Jekyll to Mr Hyde and back. The presentation follows spatial scholar Henri Lefebvre’s conceptualization of rhythms as constituted by space and time, repetition and change, and how these might be read as textual effects in addition to thematic content.

**Hanne Juntunen** is a PhD researcher in Tampere University, Finland. She’s working with digital methods and cognitive theories on how the experience of urban space has been fictionalized in historical British literature.

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## **Heading North: Underground Anxieties and Utopias**

The history of fictions that penetrate the surface of the earth has consistently exhibited a creative interplay of anxiety and utopia. From images of hell and claustrophobia to fantastic narratives of ideal underground communities and the geological discourses of the Anthropocene, subterranean spaces and their imagined inhabitants have been subjected to a full range of ethical and technological evaluation. This session, focused on contemporary texts by British and American writers, considers this dynamic of idealism and uneasiness from two separate but interlinked viewpoints: that of specific (marginalised) communities, and that of the epistemological and imaginative work of archaeology. All three papers involve some version of the northward journey, an act of imaginative travel that involves both promises and threats and frequently crosses the boundary between the material and the



metaphorical. Furthermore, the underground entities mediated by these texts exemplify a range of philosophical emphases, from the nineteenth-century “fable of the technological underworld” (Rosalind Williams, *Notes on the Underground* 19) to twenty-first-century “geological intimacy” (Farrier, *Anthropocene Poetics* 48).

The three speakers come from the research group on Spatial Studies and Environmental Humanities, based at the English Department of Tampere University, Finland. The group’s research focuses on the ways in which cultural texts and narratives are entangled with the emerging environmental and spatial concerns of contemporary society.

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### “Writing and Unearthing in Kathleen Jamie’s ‘In Quinhagak’”

**Markku Salmela**, Tampere University, Finland

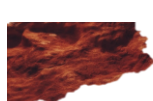
Kathleen Jamie’s essay “In Quinhagak” (2019) finds the Scottish author visiting the eponymous Yup’ik village in Alaska, where an international archaeological effort is underway. Threatened by erosion when permafrost is melting, the old and buried village site is being washed away by the waves, the archaeologists racing with the Bering Sea to recover a lost material culture. This sense of urgency and volatility is emphasized by two additional factors: the dramatic speed of climate change characteristic of Arctic locations, as if the site had been “towed five hundred miles south” in a few years (Jamie 29);

and the fact that many of the traditions embodied in the objects to be recovered have been truly lost as a result of religious and other forms of colonialism. The dig then signifies, for part of the Yup’ik community, a genuine rediscovery of the past in times of profound uncertainty, as well as promise for the future through the preservation of essential cultural practices – an enterprise with a touch of utopia, based upon unpredictable soil and surrounded by eschatological images.

Part of a more extensive project on the Arctic underground, this paper examines the intersections of materiality, temporality and community in Jamie’s essay against the background of the underground’s profound importance in imagined twenty-first-century Arctic geographies. Marked by distinctive combinations of permanence and instability, the Arctic underground has become a focal point for economies of extraction, technologies of preservation and the doomsday visions of climate change. All of these concerns, I argue, are present in “In Quinhagak”. Yet Jamie’s textual mediation of archaeological practices and community also draws attention to complex notions of memory and empathy, evoking multiple parallels between writing and digging. Both practices, as recent work in archaeological thinking has suggested, require “constant tacking back and forth between past and present, self and other” (van Helden and Witcher 122). A creative method of sorts, associated here with the underground, then emerges for the writer. Like excavation projects, and like many of her other prose texts, Jamie’s essay reaches for partial understanding through fragments of both matter and experience.

**Markku Salmela** is University Lecturer in English Literature at Tampere University, Finland, and co-editor of five books, including *Literatures of Urban Possibility* (2021). He also co-edits the book series Literary Urban Studies for Palgrave Macmillan. Most of his publications examine aspects of spatiality in literature and culture. His current work explores the significance of subterranean spaces in contemporary Arctic fiction.

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### **“The bones lay inert, mocking’: Archaeological Anxieties in Sarah Moss’s *Cold Earth*”**

**Meeria Vesala**, Åbo Akademi University, Finland

Kevin Greene has argued that “an interest in origins may be a very early aspect of human consciousness,” continuing that “the possibility that the phenomenon of death led to reflections on afterlife or rebirth amongst early prehistoric peoples is suggested by burial sites” (9). Indeed, origins, consciousness, death, peoples past, and burial site are all thematic keywords that can be applied to the study of Sarah Moss’s *Cold Earth* (2009). In the novel, a group of young archaeologists travels to the Arctic, aiming to find out what happened to the lost Viking settlements in Greenland but, rather than a reflection on the life of the peoples past, the narrative – I argue – is an expedition into the anxieties of the archaeologists themselves.

My paper shows that the very act of excavating human remains provokes various psychological processes (memories, emotions, and neuroses) in the archaeologists engaged in the work, and that the physical and laborious act of digging is habitually contrasted with processing mental trauma. An archaeological site that can conceal, hide, and bury *things* is a notable spatial metaphor in contemporary fiction, and in *Cold Earth* this metaphor is extended and magnified. The Freudian, analogous relationship between the memory of a place and that of a person is significant not only because the analogy allows us to understand places and minds in terms of build-up material and layers, but also because it gives history a vertical dimension that seems to be grounded in location. Similarly, Foucault understood archaeology as an abstract means through which to compare discourses, and

emphasized that in archaeological analysis “comparison is always limited and regional” (157). Focusing on material discovering and immaterial uncovering, my paper asserts that to discuss the palimpsestic nature of the mind, which archaeological excavations in literature are particularly good at exemplifying, we must turn our attention to the ground below.

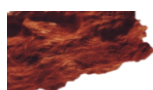
**Meeria Vesala** is a Ph.D. Candidate in English Literature at Åbo Akademi University in Finland. She researches the relationship between literature, place, and identity. Her work explores fictional worlds and ideas, literary geography and archaeology, contemporary African American writing, philosophy, and literary criticism. Vesala is the Bibliography Editor and Board Member of the Association for Literary Urban Studies (ALUS), the Group Leader of the Literature and Language Theme Group (Langnet), and the Book Club Leader in the League of Finnish American Societies (SAM).

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### **“In the direction of the bizarre’: Black Utopia and Non-Linear Space in Colson Whitehead’s *The Underground Railroad*”**

**Johannes Riquet**, Tampere University, Finland

This paper discusses the titular underground in Colson Whitehead’s 2016 novel *The Underground Railroad* as a space of black utopia (cf. Zamalin 2019). In the nineteenth century, the underground railroad was a common metaphor for the secret network of helpers, routes, and hiding places that helped slaves escape from South to North. In Whitehead’s novel, this network becomes a literal railroad built underground that figures black nation building, an analogue to the white nation building through the railroad in the American West (cf. White 2012). However, as Darcy A. Zabel argues (2004), for this very reason African American writers had to reinvent the railroad to challenge its association with white American history and resignify it as a figure of African American empowerment.



As I argue, *The Underground Railroad*'s reinvention of American railway imaginaries goes hand in hand with a rejection of Western conventions of utopia. Alex Zamalin writes that "the . . . rational teleology that had long been a staple of Western utopia was given a different take in the black tradition. Utopia in black became . . . defined by unfinished conversations, unresolved debates, critical problematics, which resisted easy resolution" (20). Indeed, Whitehead's utopian vision rejects the rational models of white utopias by portraying a railway network that is weird, incomprehensible, and fantastical; that rejects Newtonian space-time and linear visions of progress. This novel's spatial imaginary extends to its narrative structure: just as the protagonist's journey is interrupted multiple times and zigzags through America, the narrative jumps between different spaces and times. Finally, the novel's disorienting underground geography asserts the centrality of community as the totality of the network transcends the knowledge of any individual participating in it. Ultimately, then, I argue that *The Underground Railroad* reinvents the spatial, narrative, and social structure of the American railroad – taking it, in the words of the novel, "in the direction of the bizarre" (92).

**Johannes Riquet** is Professor of English Literature at Tampere University (Finland). He is the author of *The Aesthetics of Island Space: Perception, Ideology, Geopoetics* (OUP, 2019) and the co-editor of *Spatial Modernities: Geography, Narrative, Imaginaries* (Routledge, 2018) as well as *Imaging Identity: Text, Mediality and Contemporary Visual Culture* (Palgrave, 2019). He is currently working on a monograph on interrupted railway journeys in British and American literature and visual culture (forthcoming with Manchester UP), a special issue of the journal *Transtext(e)s Transcultures* 跨文本跨文化 on migration in world cinema, and two books connected to the Mediated Arctic Geographies project (Academy of Finland, 2019-2023), of which he is the PI. Johannes Riquet's research interests include spatiality, literary and cultural geography, mobility and migration, diaspora, ecocriticism, phenomenology, and visual culture.

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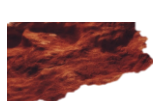
### **The Underground as Margin 1 and 2 (Margins research group)**

#### **"'I was engulfed in labyrinths of trouble': Concealed Identities and Spaces in Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders*"**

**Federica Cairo**, University of Calabria, Italy

*The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders* was written by Daniel Defoe, already well-known as the author of *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), and published for the first time in 1722. Its eponymous protagonist, as the author emphasises from the very beginning of the novel, embodies the perfect example of an existence of darkness and concealment lived in the underworld, on the margins of society. In fact, as Defoe highlights in the novel's subtitle, Moll Flanders was "[...] Twelve Year a Whore, five times a Wife (whereof once to her own Brother), Twelve Year a Thief, Eight Year a Transported Felon in Virginia." Prostitution, incest, robberies, felony and deportation mark Moll's destiny, condemning her to a life below the surface of London's society up until her repentance. A fate that the main character shares with the book itself. In fact, the novel experienced what scholar Ian Watt defines as an "underground existence" (1967: 109), living below the surface of the literary canon only to re-emerge two centuries after its publication. The aim of this work is to analyse the intricate relationship existing among identities, spaces and marginality in Daniel Defoe's 1722 novel.

**Federica Cairo** graduated in Modern Languages and Literatures (Master's Degree) in 2022 with a dissertation in English Literature entitled "'Each picture told a story': spazi, identità e visività da Frances Burney alle sorelle Brontë". In 2021 she was awarded a grant to attend the Summer Course 'Virginia



Woolf's *Women* offered by Literature Cambridge. She contributed with an essay to the volume *Calabrian Voices. Diaspora Stories from the Younger Generations*, published in 2022 and co-edited by Steven J. Sacco, Professor Emeritus of French and Italian at San Diego State University and by Doctor Alessandra De Marco. She is a member of the Editorial Board of the online journal *Margins Marges Margini*. In 2022, she also contributed to the Inaugural Symposium of the said journal with a presentation called "I saw him dexterously tear a narrow slip from the margin": Identity, Marginality and Visuality from Frances Burney to the Brontës". In September 2022 she received the Youth America Award by the Italy-USA Foundation.

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### **"John Gay and the Aesthetics of the Underground"**

**Giuseppe Capalbo**, University of Rome "Tor Vergata"/ University of Calabria, Italy

This paper aims at exploring John Gay's literary representation(s) of London's underground spaces: specifically, it will focus on *Trivia, Or, the Art of Walking the Streets of London* (1716) and *The Beggar's Opera* (1728). Both texts – rather than building a centripetal image of the capital – delve into the margins of London, by presenting its inhabitants of loose morals and informing the reader/audience on "how to walk clean by Day, and safe by Night" (2003, 41). In line with the consistent body of scholarship which sought to analyse the interrelation between space and genre/period conventions (e.g. Morton Braund 2007; Brant and Whyman 2009), this paper seeks to read Gay's underworld as a marginal space which, despite increasing the feeling of vulnerability, questions the city's centralising symbolical powers. In order to do so, I will draw on the concept of 'peripherality' (Ameel et al. 2015), according to which the margin is to be considered a space of radical openness (hooks 1989) that cannot be reduced to "any structured or bounded formulation of centers and peripheries" (Crowley 2021, 208).

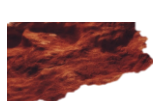
**Giuseppe Capalbo** is a Ph.D. student in English Literature at the University of Rome "Tor Vergata" (Italy). In 2019, he earned a Master's degree – cum laude – in Modern Languages and Literatures at the University of Calabria (Italy). In June 2022 he received a fellowship from the Warburg Institute (University of London, UK) to attend the course *Decoding the Renaissance: 500 Years of Codes and Ciphers*. He has conducted research on corporeality in contemporary Anglophone fiction at the Bodleian Library (University of Oxford, UK) and presented at national and international conferences. His research interests include representations of the body, fin-de-siècle literature and culture, gender, queer, and spatial literary studies.

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### **"When a Coma Gives a Second Chance. Irvine Welsh's Threshold People"**

**Carla Fusco**, University G. D'Annunzio Chieti-Pescara/University of Teramo, Italy

Underground culture has always established itself as an antagonist to the mainstream, especially since the youth movements of the Sixties. Later his influence extended to other new trends, also incorporating the Punk movement and multimedia, becoming indeed a counterculture. Irvine Welsh's narrative fits into this perspective, always aimed at describing the most marginal realities of the city suburbs, in particular Edinburgh, inhabited by a drifting humanity whose daily life is marked by illicit activities that doom its protagonists to be outsiders, without any possible redemption. In his second novel *Marabou Stork Nightmares*, published in 1995, Welsh brings marginality to an even more



extreme and unusual experimentation by telling the mental delirium of a hooligan in a coma in hospital following an attempted suicide. The reader follows the tortuous underground path of his subconscious where guilt and violence lurk. The purpose of my paper is to analyze the complex stream of consciousness of the protagonist, Roy Strang, through a hermeneutic process aimed at disambiguating the logic underlying his actions.

**Carla Fusco** got her PhD in English literature at the University G. D'Annunzio of Chieti-Pescara in 2003. She has taught English language and literature in several universities: Università per Stranieri of Siena, Università della Basilicata in Potenza, University of Macerata, University G. D'Annunzio of Chieti-Pescara. She currently teaches English language at the University G.D'Annunzio of Chieti as an adjunct lecturer. She has published many articles especially about Victorian and contemporary authors in Italian and international literary journals. In 2016 she published a monograph on Kazuo Ishiguro entitled: *Gli Inganni della memoria. Studio sulla narrativa di Kazuo Ishiguro*. Universitalia.

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### **“Into the Bowels of London: Underground as Margin of the Fantastic in Michael Moorcock’s *Mother London* and Peter Ackroyd’s *London Under*”**

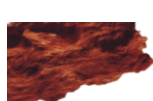
**C. Bruna Mancini**, University of Calabria, Italy

Around the turn of the last century, two novels celebrated the hidden, secret, forgotten memories, histories, narrations of the urban text(ure) of London, layers containing fantastic stories, legends, mysteries: Michael Moorcock’s *Mother London* (1988) and Peter Ackroyd’s *London Under* (2012).

Between the two there are even more subterranean connections, but above all there is London and its spatial marginalities. Under London, into its womb and its brain, a vibrant babel of lost, unknown voices flow. London is a mother and a stepmother, a lover and a monster. Under its surface there is a fantastic, hallucinating universe, an uncanny network of labyrinthine paths and fragments below the thresholds at which visibility begins. Ackroyd writes: “Tread carefully over the pavements of London for you are treading on skin, a skein of stone that covers rivers and labyrinths, tunnels and chambers, streams and caverns, pipes and cables, springs and passages, crypts and sewers”.

**C. Bruna Mancini** is Associate Professor of English Literature at the University of Calabria. She is interested in translation studies, media studies, gender studies, and cultural studies. She published essays on Shakespeare, the contemporary rewritings of the Shakespearian texts, eighteenth-century women writing, fantastic cinema and literature, gothic, monstrosity, city and narration, space and place. In 2005, she published *Sguardi su Londra. Immagini di una città mostruosa* (Liguori). She edited and translated into Italian *The Mercenary Lover* by Eliza Haywood (Liguori, 2003) and *Angelica, or, Quixote in Petticoats* by Charlotte Lennox (Liguori, 2006). In 2009 she co-edited (with Romolo Runcini), *Universi del fantastico. Per una definizione di genere* (Napoli, ESI) and in 2015 she published the translation of *The Shelter/Il rifugio* by Caryl Phillips (Napoli, Liguori). In 2020 she published *Spazi del Femminile nelle letterature e culture di lingua inglese tra Settecento e Ottocento* (Mimesis) and co-edited *Declinazioni del fantastico. La prospettiva critica di Romolo Runcini e l’opera di Edgar Allan Poe* (Liguori), *Millennium Ballard* (Morlacchi), *Migrazioni. Percorsi interdisciplinari* (Mimesis). She also co-edited (with David Punter) the book *Space(s) of the Fantastic. A 21st Century Manifesto* (Routledge, 2020). She is co-director of the series “Margini” for the Publishing House Mimesis and co-directs with Elisabetta Marino and Robert T. Tally Jr. the online journal *Margins Marges Margini*.

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## **“Underground Lives: Slaves and Factory Workers in Frances Trollope’s Novels”**

**Elisabetta Marino**, University of Rome “Tor Vergata”, Italy

Better known for being the mother of the famous Victorian novelist, Frances Milton Trollope is nowadays relegated to a footnote in most literary anthologies, rather than holding a prominent position within the main narrative. Nonetheless, in the time-span between 1832 and 1856, she published 114 acclaimed works, including novels, travelogues, verse dramas, poems, and shorter pieces of fiction, which bear witness to her unfaltering commitment to social justice and human dignity, while documenting her remarkably transnational experience.

By focusing mainly on *The Life and Adventures of Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw; or Scenes on the Mississippi* (1836), written after her sojourn in America, and *The Life and Adventures of Michael Armstrong, the Factory Boy*, released three years later, this paper sets out to explore the underground lives of slaves and British factory workers, who shared similar forms of bondage, marginalization, and personal degradation.

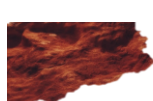
**Elisabetta Marino** is Associate Professor English literature at the University of Rome “Tor Vergata”. She is the author of four monographs: a volume on the figure of Tamerlane in British and American literature (2000); an introduction to British Bangladeshi literature (2005); a study on the relationship between Mary Shelley and Italy (2011); an analysis of the Romantic dramas on a mythological subject (2016). In 2006 she published the first Italian translation of poems by Maria Mazziotti Gillan. Between 2001 and 2022 she has edited/co-edited eleven collections of essays (three more are forthcoming) and a Special Forum of *Journal of Transnational American Studies* (2012). She has recently co-edited a special issue of *De-Genere. Journal of Postcolonial, Literary and Gender Studies* (March, 2022), and she is currently acting as guest editor for a special issue of *Journal of American Studies of Turkey (JAST)* focused on Italian American material culture (to be released in 2023).

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## **“Written ‘By another hand’: The Hidden/Censored World of Women Writers through Elizabeth Montague’s *Dialogues of the Dead*”**

**Carla Tempestoso**, University of Calabria, Italy

The *Dialogues of the Dead* were published by George Lyttelton (1709-1773) in May 1760. In the collection, made up of twenty-eight prose satires, the underworld is the realm of the supernatural world of the dead, and both literal and figurative darkness because the last three dialogues, announced as being "by another hand," were the first writing by Elizabeth Montagu (1718-1800) to be published in print. In the 1760s and 1770s Montagu found literary and intellectual fame as the so-called ‘Queen of the Bluestockings’, an informal sociable grouping of female and male writers and critics. Publication—becoming an author—was a significant event in her history, an important boundary crossing from the literary underground to the official literary world. The examination of Montagu's first publication focuses on the debate she undertook with other writers in her circle, especially Elizabeth Carter and Sarah Scott, on the question of being publically acknowledged as a writer, a condition she termed being "an author in form," especially with regard to contemporary notions of female propriety and status. The context of this proposal is both the rise of the professional writer, figured as an independent, commercially-oriented originator of his or her own intellectual property, and the analysis of Montagu's underworld dialogues among dead characters of the *Dialogues of the Dead* whose satirical observations reflect the marginal subject position Montague herself



inhabits as a socially-mobile and wealthy woman who is also an author.

**Carla Tempestoso** is currently a research fellow in English Literature at the University of Calabria. She is working on the Italian translations of the Bluestocking Circle's writers by adopting both a literary and a digital perspective. She is editor-in-chief of "*Margins*", a multilingual WordPress open access journal promoted by the Department of Humanities (University of Calabria) that focuses on literary, linguistic and cultural Studies. Her interdisciplinary research interests include Anglo/Caribbean Studies, Migration Studies, Digital Humanities and she is the author of a number of journal papers and books in the fields.

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### **Romantic Rewritings of the Cave Myth**

#### **"The Cave in the Artist's Romantic Narratives: the Platonic Myth of the Cave and Novalis' Blue Flower in George Sand, Melville and Hawthorne"**

**Bernard Franco**, Sorbonne University, France

In his novel, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, the founder of the artist's novel genre, Novalis expresses the profound union of art and life through the famous image of the blue flower. The blue flower, which designates both Heinrich's artistic and amorous accomplishment, is seen by the protagonist at the bottom of a cave, which is, obviously, an inverted rewriting of the Platonic myth of the cave. The cave is not a place of illusion but of truth. This double image of the blue flower and the cave are taken up again in different narrations of the artist: in George Sand, Consuelo goes to look for Albert in a cave, replaying the myth of Orpheus; in Melville, it is a small white flower, symbol of eternity, which associates aesthetic achievement not in life but in death; Hawthorne for his part retains the second phase of Plato's allegory, that of the transmission of the artist's training, which is also played out in a cave. In all cases, the world of the shade and the cave form paradoxically the romantic image par excellence of the revelation of the mystery of the art.

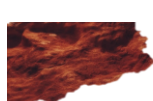
**Bernard Franco** is Professor of Comparative Literature at Sorbonne University. For four years, he was head of the Department of French and Comparative Literature at Paris-Sorbonne University Abu Dhabi, and for five years at Paris-Sorbonne University. He was Vice President in charge of international relations of the French Society of General and Comparative Literature and President of the European Society of Comparative Literature. His work focuses on Romantic movements, theories of tragedy, the artist novel, and the relationship between literature and aesthetics. He is in particular the author of *Le Despotisme du goût. Débats sur le modèle tragique en France, 1797-1814* (Wallstein, 2006) and of *La Littérature comparée. Histoire, domaines, méthodes* (Arman Colin, 2016).

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#### **"The Fall in the Darkness : a Necessary Step in the Construction of an Enlightened Spirit"**

**Chloé Meynent**, independent scholar

"Ce bandit, comme s'il grandissait sous l'affront,  
Seul dans ces profondeurs que la ruine encombre,  
Regarda fixement la caverne de l'ombre" - *La fin de Satan*, Victor Hugo



In the unfinished volume of poetry, *La fin de Satan*, Victor Hugo begins his amazing epic poem with the fall of the most beautiful angel of paradise. From the highest top of the sky to the deepest abyss of the underground, we understand the danger of the misunderstanding, of the ignorance of truth. The disappearance of light and the spread of darkness open up a space of fiction that is, in the same time, a moment of revelation and a necessary step for redemption, forgiveness and rebirth .

**Chloé Meynent** holds an *agrégation* in Modern Literature. She is a teacher in a secondary school of the Val d'Oise. Her research, that focuses on the 19th century, refers to the structure of French short novels and fantastic in literature.

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### **“A Mine, not a Cave: Novalis’ Narrative Subversion of Plato’s Metaphysics”**

**Florence Schnebelen**, Université Polytechnique des Hauts-de-France, France

In one of the most iconic romantic novels, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, Novalis sets part of his narrative in a mine. More than just a setting, the mine forms a key episode, which encapsulates Novalis’ conceptions regarding both metaphysics and literature. This mine episode opens up a space of fiction (as it is an embedded narrative) that is altogether a time of revelation. As such, it is an allegory, and it can be read as a reversal of Plato’s allegory of the cave, where the cave appears to be the realm of illusion rather than that of truth. The depths of the mine correspond in Novalis’ novel with the realm of truth, identity and poetry, understood as the most authentic relation to the world and to morals. This paper addresses the means and stakes of this romantic rewriting of Plato’s philosophical views as a complete subversion, which helps shaping romanticism’s most decisive claims on both ethical and aesthetic matters.

**Florence Schnebelen**, doctor of Sorbonne University, is ATER (teaching fellow) in General and Comparative Literature at the University of Hauts-de-France (France). She has taught comparative literature and literary theory at Sorbonne University and Geneva University, as well as in Mulhouse and Versailles Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines. Her research, that focuses on the turn of the 19th century, combines literature, philosophy, and the history of sciences. Her thesis, entitled *Romantic Experiences. Configurations of Experience in the Emerging Romanticism, from Goethe to Byron*, reassesses the foundations of identity and romantic aesthetics in order to analyze their critical reconstructions.

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