

SAES – Nancy – 30 mai au 2 juin 2024

**Atelier 05 : SEAC (Société d'Études Anglaises Contemporaines)  
La Nouvelle de langue anglaise (*Journal of the Short Story in English*)**

**Responsables de l'atelier**

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**Résumés et biographies**

SESSION 1 : JEUDI 30 MAI 13h30-16h30

Modératrice : Vanessa Guignery (ENS de Lyon, Présidente de la SEAC)

- **13h30 Xavier LE BRUN (Université d'Angers) : "Of Moths and Motor Cars: Spatial Setup and Vital Circulation in Two Essays by Virginia Woolf"**

Building up on previous discussions of the spatial dimension of Virginia Woolf's shorter texts (Le Brun, "'From different books we must ask different qualities': The Essay as Public or Private Space in the Yale Review and Common Reader versions of Virginia Woolf's 'How Should One Read a Book?'" , *E-rea* 20.2 [2023]), this paper aims at highlighting the function of two of Woolf's essays as "textual spaces" designed, not simply to be read, but to receive and host their reader. "The Death of the Moth" and "Evening over Sussex: Reflections in a Motor Car," both published for the first time in the posthumous collection *The Death of the Moth and Other Essays* (1942), make use of similar strategies in order to foreground the connection between an unidentified narrative voice and its implied addressee, coexisting within the carefully crafted chronotope of the essay.

Whether they accompany the narrative voice on board a motor car speeding past a beautiful landscape ("Evening over Sussex") or keep her company in her study while she observes the minute drama of an insect's agony ("The Death of the Moth"), the reader of Woolf's essays is made to feel as if they occupied a definite position within the spatial setup of the text. Woolf's aim in doing so is to create the conditions for a genuine encounter between subjectivities; it is to "convey what one saw now [...] so that another person could share it" (*DoM* 8). In this respect, the essays' thematic insistence on a circulation of "energy" between living beings is matched by their concern with eliciting closeness through stylistics, as well as their adopting the configuration of private spaces, fit for an intersubjective exchange.

Both essays also conjoin – and illuminate each other – in their implicit definition of life as movement and dialogue, as fragmentation rather than perpetuation, to the extent that the vital principle may even assimilate the "death of the individual" (10).

### **Biographical note**

Xavier Le Brun is a Lecturer at the University of Angers and a member of the CIRPaLL (Centre Interdisciplinaire de Recherche sur les Patrimoines en Lettres et Langues). He specialises in modernist literature, short forms, self and interiority in the modernist period, and the interactions between philosophy and literature. He has published articles about Virginia Woolf and Malcolm Lowry in peer-reviewed journals such as *Études britanniques contemporaines* and *Image [ & ] Narrative*, and is associate editor of the *Journal of the Short Story in English*.

- **14h00 Florence MARIE (Université de Pau et les Pays de l'Adour) : "Bypassing Generic Frontiers; Displacing the Reader: *The Apple Is Bitten Again* (1934) by Olive Moore"**

*The Apple Is Bitten Again (Self-Portrait)* was the last book published by Olive Moore, an obscure modernist author, whose work was retrieved from oblivion twenty years ago or so. To the best of my knowledge, the text has been commented only once, by Sophie Cavey. In the first chapter of her unpublished doctoral thesis, Sophie Cavey focuses on the ideological approach which was Olive Moore's when the latter defined the role of "the creative artist" in this non-fictional work, a role which entailed crossing boundaries and transgressing so as to forge a unique path. For my part, I would like to focus on the form of the text, using as a spur a quotation (in Italian) which can be found in the text: "*Who makes a book does less than nothing if the book made does not remake the genre*" (Metastasio, quoted p. 380).

In spite of her misogynist and essentialist views on women, one of Olive Moore's aims—as a creative artist—was to denounce the international frontiers that prevented peace (p. 351), to rail against the social and conventional boundaries that stifled cultural life in London (pp. 380-385) and to go beyond the sense of limitation (p. 391) which weighed on talented woman. She did not, however, simply speak about crossing boundaries; she applied this rallying cry to her writing practice. Thus she produced a text in which the "porosity of general frontiers" is put forward. She mixed lowbrow and highbrow culture (popular sayings, aphorisms on cooking, etc. can be found side by side with quotes from Stendhal's notebooks; references to Leonardo Da Vinci, etc...); several languages (English, French and Italian—sometimes in the same sentence); several genres: a poem (p. 371); a literary essay on D. H. Lawrence (*Further Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine*)—which is not, however, the only example of transtextuality to be found in the text—as well as the elaboration of an idiosyncratic philosophical project. Most of the time she relied on aphorisms. According to Derrida, who stresses "the aphorism's independence and its interdependence" (thus the notion of a stable frontier is both asserted and debunked at the same time), this form enables movement. Following suit, Maebh Long shows how this form encourages "thinking archipelagically", shifting in value systems, avoiding static frontiers and triggering off fluidity. This is not without consequence for the reader, whose certainties are shaken and who feels displaced—at least momentarily—and invited as a result to be an active participant.

### **Biographical note**

Florence Marie is Senior Lecturer in English Studies at the University of Pau & les Pays de l'Adour (E2S UPPA). She is a member of ALTER. She defended her thesis on J.C. Powys in 2003 and since then she has published articles on his first eight novels and on other modernist writers (with special interest in Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage*). She is the editor of a volume of *Rives* entitled *Le fou-cet autre, mon frère* (L'Harmattan, 2012), one of the contributors to *Féminisme et prostitution dans l'Angleterre du XIXÈME siècle: la croisade de Josephine Butler* (ed. by Frédéric Regard, ENS Éditions, 2014) and the co-editor of *Le genre, effet de mode ou concept pertinent?* (Peter Lang, 2016) and *L'incarnation artistique : mises en scènes littéraires* (L'Harmattan, 2021).

- **14h30 Katia MARCELLIN (Université de Perpignan Via Domitia) : “Mapping the Borders of Language in Jon McGregor’s *Lean Fall Stand* (2021)”**

Jon McGregor’s latest novel, *Lean Fall Stand* (2021), explores the limits of representation through a foreclosing of language itself. The story begins in a borderless place, Antarctica, an unclaimed continent devoted to international scientific cooperation and the characters are engaged in the difficult task of mapping a seemingly uniform landscape constantly shifting under the extreme climate conditions. In the opening pages, the characters try, through radio communications, to overcome the distance separating them from one another as they are caught into a storm. Their failure to maintain contact is the first step in the novel’s exploration of the frontiers that restrict communication between its characters, as we discover in the following sections that one member of the expedition, Robert, has suffered a stroke resulting in aphasia. Ironically, this tightening of borders takes place precisely when the narrative structure of the novel becomes unbound, as the suspenseful tone of the Antarctica exploration turns towards the intimate story of Robert and his wife’s attempts to overcome his disability.

My contention is that McGregor’s investigation of the limits of language and representation takes place through his use of complex forms of metonymy as both a device that materialises the main character’s aphasia and a means to overcome it. Therefore, this paper will attempt, through a discussion of Jakobson and Lodge’s works, to show how the metonymic deletion of certain words due to aphasia—“tomorrow” becomes “Tom” (166)—conversely “solicit our perception of singularities” (Ganteau 145) and directs our attention towards it. These amputated words invite us to envision the plurality of meanings behind them and to explore what lies behind the boundaries of Robert’s hindered language (“Tom” might also stand for “Thomas”, the member of the expedition who died in the storm), the frontier between silence and language thus becoming the space where experiences of extreme vulnerability can materialize themselves.

### ***Biographical note***

Katia Marcellin is currently working as an ATER at Université de Perpignan Via Domitia. In December 2022, she defended her thesis entitled “Writing Emptiness : Performative Metalepsis and the Expression of Trauma in Six Contemporary British Novels (*Toby’s Room* by Pat Barker, *Skin Lane* by Neil Bartlett, *Even the Dogs* by Jon McGregor, *Anatomy of a Soldier* by Harry Parker, *The Accidental* by Ali Smith and *The Night Watch* by Sarah Waters)”, under the supervision of Pr. Jean-Michel Ganteau (UPVM3). Her work focused on the political and ethical reconfigurations brought about by the stylistic trope of metalepsis in contemporary trauma narratives. She is currently turning her attention towards the ethical aspects of metonymic representation and how it can reconfigure literary realism.

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**15h00 Pause**

- **15h30 Lea SINOIMERI (Université du Littoral, Côte d’Opale): “Arts of confinement’: From Samuel Beckett’s Post-war Short Stories to Claire-Louise Bennett’s *Pond* (2015)”**

Initially conceived of as a theatre piece, the twenty short texts that compose Claire-Louise Bennett’s debut collection *Pond* (2015) sit uneasily in a borderless zone between the short story collection, the fragmentary novel and the dramatic soliloquy of an unnamed female narrator who

conducts a secluded existence in a remote village on the west coast of Ireland. The collection has been described as an “immersive experience” and as a recording of the workings of a “mind in motion” and its innovative linguistic and narrative strategies associated to a trend of “new modernism” in Irish literature.

Answering the call of the organisers of the workshop to explore the “paradoxical nature of the border as a line which marks a separation but can nevertheless be crossed”, this paper would like to scrutinise the various forms of physical and spatial confinement in Bennett’s book in a dialogue with Samuel Beckett’s poetics and politics of confinement. The topographical disorientation and vagueness of both settings and characters alike, coupled to the solitary experience and to the confined spaces represented in *Pond* recall Beckett’s engagement with confined space in his postwar short fiction (“The End”, “The Expelled”, “First Love” and “The Calmative”) as well as in his theatre of the 1960s, notably *Happy Days*, and ask for a critical analysis of the resurgence of an aesthetics of confinement in Bennett’s work.

If physical confinement seems to become a central concern in both Beckett’s post-war texts and in Bennett’s “posthuman times” writing, how do their respective aesthetics and politics of confinement resonate with and differ from each other? If Beckett famously stated to be concerned with that “zone of being that has always been set aside by artists as something unusable – something by definition incompatible with art”, and Bennett wishes to unsettle “anthropocentric parochialism” in her writing, what new forms of embodied materiality do these two authors explore? How do Beckett’s confined bodies in his short stories differ from the embodied experience of Bennett’s solitary characters? How does Winnie’s hallucinated everyday routine resonate with the surreal emergence of objects in the everyday life of the unnamed narrator of *Pond*? While attempting to answer these questions, this paper will aim at showing that the various physical, geographical and literary borders featured in *Pond* point beyond themselves to spaces of narrative wanderings and to liminal zones between seen and unseen, past and present and between inner and outer experience, calling for new forms of connectedness and communality between physical selves and animate and inanimate environments.

### **Biographical note**

Lea Sinoimeri is Senior Lecturer in Anglophone Studies at ULCO, Université du Littoral, Côte d’Opale. Her research interests lie in Irish Studies, particularly in the Irish literature of the 20th and 21st centuries, in comparative literature, and in intercultural and intermedial studies. Her PhD thesis was an investigation of Samuel Beckett’s bilingual and intermedial aesthetics. She has published several articles on Samuel Beckett and other modernist and contemporary authors with a focus on multilingualism, liminality and aurality. Her recent research draws together her interest in literary and intercultural studies analysing the relationship between language, memory and migration in contemporary literature in English.

- **16h Héloïse LECOMTE (ENS de Lyon) : “Moving through Borders: Ghosts of the Troubles in Jan Carson’s Works”**

The novels and short stories of northern Irish writer Jan Carson appear to be haunted by the spectre of the Troubles. From the beginning of her novel *The Fire Starters* (2019), she questions the common assumption that “The Troubles are over now” (7), blurring any clearly-established limit between past and present. Drawing on the metaphorical significance of the border that separates and yet still binds together Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, Carson’s works also constantly cross the line between socio-political realism and magical realism, which she describes as a “key to talk about difficult things in a way that makes them more accessible and approachable” (in Barros del-Río 2023).

Her darkly comedic elegies, *The Last Resort* (2021) and *The Raptures* (2022), prominently feature the ghosts of deceased children in order to commemorate national tragedies. "A figure of undecidability", the ghost (as defined by Esther Peeren and María del Pilar Blanco in *The Spectralities Reader* 2013, 34) blurs the limits between past and present, dream (or delusion) and reality by seemingly crossing the border between life and death. As such, it epitomises the persistence of the conflict in living memory. Furthermore, Carson's work also crosses generic borders by challenging the separation between the short story and the novel: while *The Last Resort* is branded as a collection of short stories, each of its ten chapters tells a piece of the same story from a different perspective. The ensemble thus forms a chorus-like exploration of post-Troubles life which complicates the generic classification of the work.

In the light of spectrality studies, this paper analyses the ways in which Carson's (ghost) stories movingly (re)define the heritage of the Troubles. I contend that the ghost as a figure of memory and disturbance leads to the multiplication of porous borders, which characterises her poetics of emotion.

### **Biographical note**

Héloïse Lecomte completed her PhD in 2021 and teaches at the ENS de Lyon. Her research and publications focus on the poetics and politics of mourning in contemporary British and Irish fiction and life-writing and their interactions with the poetic elegy or visual arts. Together with Alice Borrego, Esther Peeren and Gero Guttzeit, she has been spearheading the transdisciplinary seminar "Invisible Lives Silent Voices" since 2021.

## SESSION 2 : VENDREDI 31 MAI 9h00-10h30

Modérateur : Xavier Le Brun (Université d'Angers, *The Journal of the Short Story in English*)

- **9h00 Valentine LACOSTE (Université Sorbonne Nouvelle): "E.M. Forster's 'The Obelisk' (1939): A Passage Out of Normative Masculinity"**

"It appeared on a noticeboard, 'To the Obelisk and Landslip', and an arrow pointed to a gap in the crumbly cliff". The topography of E.M. Forster's short story 'The Obelisk' (1939) delimits a narrative space fitted to an embodied expression of border erosion and land displacement. Written and discarded by its author in the 1930s, this piece belongs to a larger body of unpublished short stories, found after Forster's death in his room at Cambridge, and compiled posthumously in the seldom critically discussed collection *The Life to Come and Other Stories* (1972).

Considering the renewed critical attention that Forster's work has received with the advent of queer studies, it seems paradoxical that there should be but one critical reading of this explicitly homosexual text to date. In a 2010 article, Béatrice Bijon offers an insightful account of the narrative space of this short story as a privileged conduit for queer expression — however without any in-depth discussion of the central role of the diegetic *place* within which the story deploys its queer modality.

This paper thus offers to build on Bijon's reading of 'The Obelisk' by investigating, through the lens of Michel Foucault's heterotopia, the active participation of the landscape — subjected to border erections and erosions — in the story's construction. In turn, I want to argue that such an erosion of the landscape contaminates the textual space: by Forster's own account, his short stories were "written to excite [himself]". The crumbling landscape thus becomes a mirror for the liberating potential inherent to the very form of the short story. My analysis of 'The Obelisk' seeks

to articulate a new understanding of the Forsterian short story as a “passage out” of normative masculinity.

### **Biographical note**

Valentine Lacoste is a contractual PhD candidate in Modernist Literature at Université Sorbonne-Nouvelle. Her research, supervised by Professor Catherine Lanone, specialises in Literary Food Studies. Her PhD investigates the sense of taste and the poetics of foodmatter in E. M. Forster and Virginia Woolf. Prior to that, she completed a master’s degree in English Literature at the Sorbonne-Nouvelle and the University of Cambridge, for which she received first class honours. Her master’s dissertation offered a reading of E.M. Forster’s short stories from a gender studies perspective.

- **9h30 Diane GAGNERET (Université Claude Bernard Lyon 1): “From Borderline to Borderland Stories: Will Self’s *The Quantity Theory of Insanity* (1991)”**

Will Self’s (in)famously “transgressive fictions” (Finney 2001) offer various manifestations of his deep interest in and consistent engagement with the in-between. While his regular use of the novella form, or the title of his second short story collection, *Grey Area* (1994), do provide further evidence of this, his debut collection already features liminality as a central material, motif and method. *The Quantity Theory of Insanity* (1991) explores a vast range of borderline states and spaces, relentlessly blurring the lines between landscape and mindscape and complicating conventional mappings of knowledge and experience.

Both Self’s focus on “threshold states” (Drewery 2011) such as madness and mourning in each individual story, and his border-crossing praxis in the cycle as a whole, seem to epitomise recent critical statements that “the short story can be considered the liminal genre *par excellence*” (Achilles & Bergmann 2015). In-depth examinations of liminality, in a form so long conceptualised as a middle or mediating ground between a constellation of others, have however tended to focus predominantly on short fiction by women (Drewery ; Krueger 2014). Self’s liminal poetics/politics overwhelmingly unfold at the seminal intersection between gender and genre, shedding more light on relatively uncharted fictional crossings between masculinity and madness, and continuously breaching the boundaries of “hegemonic masculinity” (Connell 2005).

Drawing on the field of border theory, this paper explores Self’s subversive strategies of *b/ordering* (Krasteva 2015) as enacted by the passage from borderline to borderland stories – from an exploration of liminal spaces *in* the short story to the examination of the short story itself – and the short story cycle – *as* a liminal space open to reconfigurations of genre and gender.

### **Biographical note**

Diane Gagneret completed a PhD in English literature at the École Normale Supérieure de Lyon in 2019. She is a member of IHRIM (Institut d’Histoire des Représentations et des Idées dans les Modernités) and teaches medical and scientific English at the Université Claude Bernard Lyon 1. Her research, drawing on the field of border studies and a corpus of works by Jenny Diski, Janet Frame, Sarah Kane, Ian McEwan, Anthony Neilson and Will Self, focuses on the ways in which representations of madness challenge the borders of genre and gender in contemporary English novels, plays and short stories.

- **10h00 Stéphanie MAERTEN (Université d'Artois): "From Scientific Utopia to Grotesque Dystopia: Hubris and Hybrids in Joyce Carol Oates's 'The Experimental Subject' (2018)"**

Because it is situated on the border of science and literature, the "two cultures" that can only be cautiously brought together, scientific utopia arouses the reader's interest and fascination by challenging the categories of illusion and plausibility. Joyce Carol Oates's "The Experimental Subject," published in 2018, is the story of the fictional realization of a most disconcerting scientific utopia: the creation of a human-chimp hybrid. Oates describes with a clinical coldness, tinged with irony, the details of this experiment, which, however grotesque, is no less plausible. The utopian project then quickly takes a dystopian turn. Yet, onto the dehumanizing language of science, a more humanistic discourse is progressively grafted that takes the story in an unexpected direction and leads the reader to envision another form of utopia that is equally destabilizing. Oates pushes to the extreme the excesses present in the latent state within a utopian project whose verisimilitude represents the main danger. To do so, she readily transgresses ethical and moral limits, as well as generic and aesthetic ones.

**Biographical note**

Stéphanie Maerten is an *agrégée* teacher of English and an independent scholar who lectures at Artois University. She has written articles on Willa Cather's *My Ántonia*, Joyce Carol Oates's *Mudwoman* and on the short fiction of several women authors such as Oates, Cather, Sarah Orne Jewett and Mary E. Wilkins Freeman. She is interested in women studies and in the development of the short story genre.

**SESSION 3 : SAMEDI 1 JUIN 9h00-12h**

Modérateur : Gerald Preher (Université d'Artois, *The Journal of the Short Story in English*)

- **9h00 Maxime PETIT (Université de Toulouse) : "Crossing Geographical and Historical Boundaries in E.M. Forster's 'Albergo Empedocle' (1903)"**

Forster's short story "Albergo Empedocle" opens with an ironic description of the Peaslake party – a group of tourists embodying the spirit of the so-called "mobility era" – "flying over Europe for two months" and finding comfort in "the delight of continual custom-house examinations" (Forster 1972, 11). The short story thus downplays what Bridget Chalk has defined as the "biopolitical apparatus surrounding national identity in mobility" (Chalk 5), which is granted more importance in other texts by Forster such as "Anything to declare?" (Forster 1980, 255). In parallel, contemporary mobility is lamented, at least by the sentimental Mildred, who expresses her contempt for the "modern horrors of railways and Cook's tours" (Forster 1972, 15). As the party progresses towards Girgenti, the trope of geographical migration is replaced by the theme of "the transmigration of souls", prompted by the mention of presocratic philosophers Empedocles and Pythagoras (Forster 1972, 15). From that moment on, the rhythm of the party's tour slackens and the text focuses on the crossing of historical boundaries and Harold's realization that he has "lived in Acragas before". Along with this realization comes the one that he "loved very differently" and "better, too" (Forster 1972, 25), an element that has led critics to interpret the story as "a cryptic allegory about the modern world's refusal to accept homosexual love" (Summers 272).

This paper aims at studying the impact of the crossing of both geographical and historical boundaries in 'Albergo Empedocle'. On the one hand, the trip to Italy is reminiscent of *Maurice* and Lasker Jones's advice to Maurice to move to either France or Italy, where homosexuality was legal at the time. On the other, the story's conflation of historical periods is reminiscent of other short stories by Forster in which modern characters embrace Hellenistic life and renounce modern life altogether. In this way, the short story explores forms of queer mobility that question normative discourses on sexuality.

### **Biographical note**

Maxime Petit is a Ph.D. student working under the supervision of Prof. Laurent Quero Mellet at Université Toulouse 2 Jean Jaurès. His research focuses on narratives of the criminalisation of male homosexuality in British literature and film. He is also Professeur Agrégé at Université Toulouse 1 Capitole where he teaches English for Specific Purposes.

- **9h30 Frédérique SPILL (Université de Picardie Jules Verne) : "On the Way Up 'The Hill' (1922): Faulkner's Poetic Beginnings as a Fiction Writer"**

William Faulkner wrote about 125 short stories between 1919 and 1962. "The Hill" is the second fictional sketch he ever published: it first appeared in the March 10, 1922 issue of *The Mississippian*, in which Faulkner's first piece, "Landing in Luck," had also been published two and a half years earlier. "The Hill" can be read like a prose poem dividing into five stanzas or paragraphs. It certainly constituted a transitory moment for Faulkner, who, then a twenty-five year-old would-be writer, was still haunted by the nymphs and fauns of Romantic poetry and by the hope that he too might become a poet. But the sketch also contains traces that foreshadow key elements of Faulkner's apocryphal Yoknapatawpha County. The text is brief and based on minimalist action: an unnamed man climbs up a hill in the springtime at sunset. "From the hilltop," he looks out over a calm valley; there, for a short time, he forgets his daily concern with finding work and food; he finally slowly walks down back to the valley. As there's no actual plot in "The Hill," the text mostly consists in descriptions of the landscape through which the man walks and rests for a moment, and in evocations of the thoughts the place and moment arouse in his mind. Yet, read closely, which this paper hopes to do, "The Hill" can be construed as an entrance gate into Faulkner's unmistakable writing style. Several Faulkner novels, for instance *As I Lay Dying* and *Light in August*, will repeat with multiple variations the original scene(ry) of "The Hill," involving a character contemplating a spreading valley from the top of a hill—from a vantage point that allows him to embrace, from an unusual distance, the world to which he belongs.

The aim of this paper is to spot and comment on the aspects that are already typically Faulknerian in "The Hill" and to demonstrate how this early sketch represents a remarkable step toward further heights. We will do so through close readings, while entering in a dialogue with French Faulknerian Michel Gresset's 1974 reading of the sketch for *The Southern Literary Journal*.

### **Biographical note**

Frédérique Spill is Professor of American literature at the University of Picardy-Jules Verne in Amiens, France, where she is also head of the research group UR UPJV 4295 CORPUS. She is the author of *Inventing Benjy: William Faulkner's Most Splendid Creative Leap* (UP of Mississippi, 2024). She coedited *The Wagon Moves: New Essays on As I Lay Dying*, published in 2018 (Cycnos), as well as the spring 2018 issue of *The Faulkner Journal*. She has also published articles in French and in English on varied contemporary American authors including Flannery O'Connor, Cormac McCarthy, Robert Penn Warren, Jonathan Safran Foer, Nicole Krauss, Willa Cather, Russell Banks, Philip Roth, Toni Morrison, Elizabeth Spencer and Ron Rash. *The Radiance of Small Things in Ron*



*Rash's Writing* was published by South Carolina Press in 2019. She coedited a special issue of *The Journal of the Short Story in English* (#74) devoted to the short stories of Ron Rash (2021). She's part of the editorial boards of *JSSE*, of *The Faulkner Journal* and of *RFEA*.

- **10h00 Myrto PETSOTA (Université Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3) : "Geopoetic Satire in Will Self's *Walking to Hollywood* (2010): Re-writing the Borders of Modernity"**

In his 2018 talk, "Living between Fact and Fiction," Will Self located his work on the border between literary genres. His oeuvre intertwines satire, criticism, journalism, and literature to reshape perceptions of British society (Matthews 12). In *Walking to Hollywood*, Self's narrative crosses physical borders from Los Angeles to Yorkshire, mirroring the internal journey of the protagonist. The book is, to a certain extent, a reflection on the complex relationship between selfhood, fiction, and reality, where autofiction helps articulate emotional truths and confront both personal and cultural crises (Davies).

Yet the surreal, disorienting oscillations between reality and fiction do more than reflect the ambiguity of those borders. For Self, delirium, hallucination, and obsession are all manifestations of modernity in individuals. Though occasionally perplexing, the writer's strategy remains clear: to transform symptoms of mental decompensation into literary tropes recasting "pathology" as social illness. His peripatetic meditation continues his psychogeographical goal of opposing capitalism's alienating regularity and crossing Western ideological borders, while the hybrid fictional-nonfictional and intermedial form (Self experiments here with the inclusion of black and white photography in the book) underscores the necessity of new ways of inhabiting the world.

This paper argues that *Walking to Hollywood* embodies geopoetics, using satire to redefine modern culture and consciousness. The literal crossing of geographical borders, along with the self-conscious cross-cultural narrative, aligns with the geopoetic ideal of intellectual nomadism. *Walking to Hollywood's* obsessive and delirious narrator offers Self an astonishing success for an almost impossible challenge: to reconcile in the same work a self-irony as merciless as his social satire. The book ends with an exhaustion of the humour that has carried the character up to this point. In this story, it is the satirical gaze itself that is questioned, and the reader is invited to keep his guard up, always questioning the lucidity of the satire as well as its scope. *Walking to Hollywood* almost reads as an invitation to extend beyond the borders of the novel to create alternative cultural spaces.

### ***Biographical note***

Myrto Petsota has taught languages, literature, and translation in secondary and higher education for over a decade. She completed a Ph.D. on Italo Calvino at the University of Edinburgh in 2012. In 2022 she obtained a doctoral contract for a second Ph.D. at Paul Valéry University Montpellier 3. The core hypothesis of her current research is that built on the ruined landscape of progress, the novelistic knowledge of contemporary British fiction probes the anthropological deadlock of humankind in the age of neoliberalism and outlines a new humanist project through new satirical forms, which go against the theoretical claims of posthumanism.

**10h30 Pause**

- **11h00 Julie DEPRIESTER (Université d'Artois) : "Probing the Artistic and Aesthetic Borders in John Fowles's 'The Ebony Tower' (1974)"**

The novella "The Ebony Tower" opens the only collection of short stories by John Fowles. In different ways, it plays with the notion of borders. Although the English protagonist, David Williams, crosses the physical border represented by the Channel to meet an old painter in his French retreat, the story certainly probes the question of borders in a deeper manner. More than a French *manoir*, Coëtminais seems to be more mythical than real, and this is an exploration of the frontiers between the arts that is proposed. John Fowles seems to question whether there exists such a thing as a border in art. Indeed, as Fowles confronts the old painter, Henry Breasley, with the young art critic and abstract painter, the whole point of the story revolves around the idea of transgression and aesthetics: is David going to cross the border between representative and abstract painting, and thus between creativity and morality?

Beyond that, the novella explores the porosity of the borders between works of art, be they pictorial or literary, through the intermediality and intertextuality "The Ebony Tower" proposes. Parallels can be drawn between painting and writing, as references to paintings abound, but also with literary works. The short story is presented as a modern rewriting of "Eliduc", the lai of Marie de France, whose translation can be found juxtaposed with the story. But the mention of *The Magus*, one of his earlier novels inside the story demands to consider how much the short story is a variation on his other works.

**Biographical note**

Julie Depriester is an *agrégée* teacher in *classes préparatoires aux grandes écoles*. She has just finished her PhD thesis on the themes of escape, confrontation with the other and self-discovery in the works of John Fowles. She has also published articles on Fowles's *A Maggot*, *Mantissa* and *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. Another on Somerset Maugham's *Cakes and Ale* will be published next year.

- **11h30 Emilie HEUDE (Université de Picardie Jules Verne) : "The Borders Between Short Story and Novel: Joyce Carol Oates' 'Curly Red' (2003) and My Life as a Rat (2019)"**

Joyce Carol Oates first published the short story "Curly Red" in *Harper's Magazine* in 2003, and soon reprinted it in the collection *I Am No One You Know* in 2004. The plight of the young main character, who was expelled from her family after speaking out about a crime committed by her brothers, was developed years later into a novel called *My Life as a Rat* (2019).

This paper will examine the way Oates' lifelong endeavor to bear witness finds a striking expression in the development of this story, which is centered around the moral dilemma between family allegiances and ethical obligations to tell the truth, with the risk, for the main character, of becoming the destructive stranger in the family structure. The confession of the twelve-year-old girl pushes her outside the home and leads her to ponder on the chain of events with flashbacks and flashforwards that also interrogate the dynamics of the "post," that is to say what came after her admission that her brothers killed a black teenager. The expansion from a short story to a novel allows for an exploration of the physical and psychological wounds suffered by the girl throughout the years as she bears the scars of her testimony. Other narrative strategies, such as the fluctuating points of view which do appear sporadically in "Curly Red," also show how the author gives voice to a character who is also trying to bear witness for herself while reflecting the hybrid reconstruction of her wounded self. The girl has crossed the border of family loyalty and

finds herself rejected both physically and emotionally as she is sent into exile and deprived of the love of her close ones.

Through the ethical question that is at the heart of the girl's story, Oates also explores the ethics of alterity. The scar that marks her character's body symbolizes this crossing of two elements, both external and internal. The novel allows for a dynamic exploration of the hybridity that is born out of a contact between the outside and the inside, which is also echoed in the incorporation of the short story into the novel as well as in the interesting dedication to Oates' friend Elaine Showalter, who was disowned by her family after a marriage they did not accept. This assimilation reflects a literary and ontological project based on active coexistence—the border between real life and fiction. Oates' work combines a study of the many ways in which separation and alienation dictate our lives, while also using the openness and fluidity of the literary forms as a means of bringing together. "Curly Red" does end with a bitter statement: "none of that sorry crap figures here. None of the rest of my life figures here." However, even if it is the verb "figure" that is used here, we can extend it to its nominal form which then recalls the shape of the mark left by the scar that is thoroughly studied in *My Life as a Rat* up to its very last paragraphs: "Now, you must move on. Your old, wounded life, the perverse pride in your scarred face, you must surrender" (402). The past and the pain are about to be left behind as she prepares to move on after the necessary initiative of writing her story. The movement in and out of fiction and the writing across genres mirror the porosity of the borders of the self.

The purpose of this paper is therefore to study the interplay between the expulsion of the girl and the expansion of the story by analyzing the numerous displacements that follow the initial transgression. By expanding the borders of the short story, Joyce Carol Oates testifies to the complexities of family dynamics and bears witness to an American society that keeps being scarred by patriarchal and racial outbursts of violence. However, the novel is also the territory where Oates offers her character the possibility of a happier ending, which should also be considered.

**Biographical note**

Emilie Heude is an English teacher and a PhD student (Université de Picardie Jules Verne) in American literature. Her thesis is entitled "Writing the Self and Creating the Other in Joyce Carol Oates' work since *Blonde* (2000)".

