



PhD Symposium

Department of English Language and Literature  
Division of Literature & Culture  
National and Kapodistrian University of Athens  
Saturday, 18 October 2025 | 09:00-14:00

Amphitheatre of the Library of the School of Philosophy  
Zografou University Campus, Athens

Kazuo Ishiguro

J.M.  
Coetzee

Anne Waldman

Leonora Carrington

David Mitchell

Dublin University Magazine

Jonathan Coe

James Chatto

## PROGRAMME

- 09:00-09:20** Arrival coffee
- 09:20-09:30** Welcome Address  
Evi Mitsi  
Head of the Department of English Language & Literature
- 09:30-10:45** Panel 1: Art as transgressive political gesture  
Chair: Spyros Papastamos
- Despoina Tantsiopoulou** | All the Students Are Clones: Humanities, Trauma and the Foucauldian Carceral in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*  
**Sevi Kriara** | A Decolonial Choreography: Migration in Motion in J.M. Coetzee's *Jesus* Trilogy  
**Caterina Stamou** | Experimental Writing as Reparative Reading: Crafting a Genealogy
- 10:50-11:40** Panel 2: Liminal subjectivities  
Chair: Anna Louri
- Lina Katsorchi** | Posthuman Atlas: Subjectivity and Narrative in David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas*  
**Elena Georgiou** | Aging as Transformation in Leonora Carrington's *The Hearing Trumpet*
- 11:40-12:10** Snack Break
- 12:10-13:25** Panel 3: National identities and persisting stereotypes: (re)constructions and representations  
Chair: Sophia Giannousiou
- Mathildi Pyrli** | Revolutionary or criminal? The figure of the Klepht and the reverberations of the Greek Revolution in the Irish press, 1846-1857  
**Maria Pouliasi** | "We Were Corfiots by an Act of Will": *The Greek for Love* by James Chatto  
**Alexandra Liakopoulou** | Clinging to Remain: Jonathan Coe's Vision of a Divided Nation in *Middle England*
- 13:25-13:35** Reflections from recent graduates of the PhD Programme Anglophone Literature and Culture
- 13:35-13:45** Closing Remarks  
Kostas Blatanis

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Organizing Committee: Dr Kostas Blatanis and Dr Angelos Evangelou

## ABSTRACTS

(in alphabetical order)

Elena Georgiou

### Aging as Transformation in Leonora Carrington's *The Hearing Trumpet*

Old age, perceived as an inevitable condition that can only lead to the decline of the corporeal and spiritual self, interrupts the spatial and temporal flow of a predominantly American modernism by unsettling its notion of a fixed identity, which is achieved through the subject's relation to a youthful imagery. While across modernism, the female body is subject to scrutiny when young, rendered visible as long as it serves a purpose within a culture of production and consumption, it is eventually dismissed as soon as it no longer fits into a representational economy, ending up relegated to a state of invisibility. This cultural and by extension archival invisibility is reinforced by the stereotypical depictions of older women, whose subjectivity is rarely acknowledged beyond the margins and is thus excluded from occupying a central position within literary or artistic work. Leonora Carrington's *The Hearing Trumpet* subverts conventional perceptions of aging by placing an older woman at the center of the narrative, unsettling stereotypes that confine old age to a liminal space of representation. Her protagonist's liminality, which exists only in images of disintegration and decline in modern society, becomes a state of resistance that disrupts a linear temporality and reimagines old age as a space of radical subjectivity. Carrington's depiction of the aging self-foregrounds the vulnerability of modern subjectivity and destabilizes the fixed notion of identity. Articulated as transformative in its entirety, both internally and externally, the novel negates the ways through which the process of aging is perceived in society, in order to reshape it altogether and give voice to an otherwise neglected human experience, in an artistic and literary framework. My aim is to examine the ways through which representations of old age were reshaped across modernist and avant-garde writing and art through a focus on modernist women writers and artists. By situating Carrington's novel alongside the works of Mina Loy, Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven and Jean Rhys, I argue that their depictions of aging reshape cultural perceptions of identity and reclaim aging as a political space, reimagined through new experimental forms. Their works challenge modernism's privileging of youth and productivity by expanding our understanding of identity as a process of constant and never-ending transformation.

Lina Katsorchi

Posthuman Atlas: Subjectivity and Narrative in David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas*

This presentation reflects the fourth chapter of my doctoral dissertation whose central aim is to pursue a posthuman ethics that defies capitalist exploitation and promotes interdependence and unprivileged multiplicity as the basis for social relations. My dissertation adopts a posthuman feminist perspective in analysing contemporary works of speculative dystopian Anglophone fiction. It pays attention to the development of posthuman subjectivity across mediums and examines the function of narrative as a means of asserting the posthuman self while simultaneously bridging the gap between the self and others. The chapter this presentation is based upon analyses the Matryoshka doll-like narrative of David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas*. Owing to its unique structure, Mitchell's novel makes it possible to derive conclusions about literature, subjectivity, the posthuman, and the connection between them. Narrative constitutes a fictional space for subject development, recollection, reconstruction, and reflection, thereby exposing the multiplicity that underlines subjectivity, conceptualising it as an entity that is non-linear and fluid, caught in an ongoing process of becoming across mediums. Subjectivity has been dependent on narratives for as long as humankind has been creating them, therefore it has always been mediated, relational, and rhizomatic. Reality itself is mediated by fiction, so in the end, nothing is truly fixed or essential. This complementary and indeed interchangeable relationship between art and life is aligned with the proposition that "we have always been posthuman". Thus, accordingly, on account of its structure of multiple narratives and characters that blend in each other in the same manner that narrative blends into reality, *Cloud Atlas* constitutes a work of posthuman literature *par excellence*.

Sevi Kriara

### A Decolonial Choreography: Migration in Motion in J.M. Coetzee's *Jesus* Trilogy

This presentation discusses J.M. Coetzee's *Jesus* trilogy to engage the decolonial politics and aesthetics that foreground migration as a multifaceted condition and reconceptualize the figure of the migrant to allow for a different understanding of movement across borders, geographies and temporalities. Drawing on decolonial thinkers like Edward Said, Sylvia Wynter, and Tendayi Achiume among others, I argue that Coetzee's trilogy suggests an alternative reading of migration, considering it a potentially enabling condition that encourages individuals to reclaim their sovereign power in a neocolonial society that divides them into humans and sub-humans. At the same time, I wish to create a dialogue between decolonial theory and performance studies, taking into account how David – the young protagonist in the trilogy – manages to challenge and subvert the discursive, sociopolitical and aesthetic regimes of the hostile place he enters by becoming a dancer. Through David's narrative, the identity of the migrant and that of the artist merge into one, showcasing that even when individuals are placed on the sub-human end, they can still voice their personal archives to recount the experience of their dystopian journey across the ocean; through David's passion for dance, the trauma of migration is reframed as both an individual and a shared narrative, as dance becomes the liberating force that articulates subaltern histories through a corporeal language. By contemplating dance theories and practices developed by Ann Cooper Albright, Anya Peterson Royce, and Akram Khan among other dance theorists and choreographers, I wish to approach contemporary dance as an autobiographical and storytelling device that challenges aesthetic norms and, by extension, subverts the politics of exploitation to empower marginalized identities by reclaiming their bodies and flesh. Following arguments regarding the “politicality” of art (Vujanovic), the purpose of this presentation is to methodologically cast light on the interconnection between contemporary literature and dance, in order to discover their decolonial potentiality and, ultimately, rather than misrepresent the migrant as a burden, to re-evaluate the idea of social and political equality as essentially problematic.

Alexandra Liakopoulou

Clinging to Remain: Jonathan Coe's Vision of a Divided Nation in *Middle England*

The main argument of my thesis is that although Brexit is an event of historical proportions, the Brexit novel finds it difficult to resist a factional logic, thus failing to imagine and create the conditions for the creation of a culturally “contaminated”, “heterogeneous” and “impure” society. Instead, it persists in imperial divisions of “us” and “them”, “Remainers” and “Leavers”, “natives” and “immigrants”, “metropole” and “periphery” without suggesting the possibility of alternative subjectivities. The presentation draws on the first chapter which explores the depiction of the Leave-Remain perspectives regarding the Brexit referendum as well as the way in which certain novels negotiate their differences at a narrative level. More specifically, I examine whose voice is heard and whether a kind of polyphony is created or they are rendered monophonic and biased. In this light, I view Jonathan Coe's *Middle England* (2018) as a novel that adopts a clear ideological stance in favor of Remain, marginalizing the Leave side. Here, I will focus on specific characters from the novel and argue that while Remainers are portrayed in a more nuanced way and emerge as round characters, Leavers tend to be represented one-dimensionally, often reduced to stereotypes of xenophobia, racism and narrow-mindedness. At the same time, on a narrative level, the novel reinforces the Remain side through a third person limited narration with a focus primarily on the Remainers' perspective. As a result, the reader experiences the world through their own eyes as they only have access to their own feelings, thoughts and lived experience. In the end, it seems that the insistence of this novel on favoring the Remain side does not constitute a break with the imperial logic of divisions.

Maria Pouliasi

“We Were Corfiots by an Act of Will”: *The Greek for Love* by James Chatto

James Chatto's book *The Greek for Love* (2005) narrates the years he and his wife spent in the mountain village of Loutses in northern Corfu during the early 1980s. Although published in the twenty-first century, the memoir reflects a period from the twentieth century, recounting the couple's experience of renovating an old house, raising a family, and coping with the tragic death of their younger son. Corfu is presented not simply as a backdrop but as a transformative force: restoring their house gave Chatto purpose after his father's death, while later writing provided a way of coping with grief. In this respect, his account recalls the works of Lawrence and Gerald Durrell, who likewise portrayed the island as a catalyst for personal growth and self-discovery. Chatto laments the harmful effects of tourism on the island's traditions and landscape, yet his own relationship to it was ambivalent. He profited directly by working as a travel agent renting out local houses to visitors, while he and his wife also gained recognition and income through two books about their Corfiot experiences, recalling, again, Gerald Durrell, who likewise denounced the negative impact of tourism on the island while at the same time benefiting from his books about Corfu. Although Chatto tries to be balanced, *The Greek for Love* nonetheless perpetuates enduring stereotypes, idealising Corfu's beauty, portraying villagers as stoically resilient, and distinguishing the couple from tourists. Ultimately, the book shows how such clichés persist, even when filtered through personal loss and reflection.

Mathildi Pyrli

**Revolutionary or Criminal? The Figure of the Klepht and the Reverberations of the Greek Revolution in the Irish Press, 1846-1857.**

An 1882 article in the Irish weekly *The Meath Herald and Cavan Advertiser* attacks the Land League, an Irish political organization aiming at the abolishment of landlordism in Ireland, and treats its members as rapacious banditti: the doings of the Greek brigands, the author exclaims, pale in comparison to the exploits of the League. By 1882, principally due to the 1870 Dilessi massacre affair, the Greek brigands held a well-established although dreadful reputation in the British press. “Greek brigand” had become a byword for cruelty, savagery, and backwardness. Perceived as the mirror of a lawless and misgoverned state and, perhaps, as the dominant representative specimen of the Greek nation and its character, the “Greek brigand” embodied all that opposed the Victorian cult of progress – morally, socially, culturally. However, during the 1840s and the Greek kingdom’s infancy, the Klepht as a wild, free-spirited albeit marauding figure still retained in British texts some measure of Romantic revolutionary appeal. It is in the Klepht’s quality of revolutionary –sometimes bordering the criminal– that the paper will explore the uses of the figure in mid-nineteenth century Irish press. Under examination are six Greek-themed short stories published in the pro-Union Protestant *Dublin University Magazine* between 1846 and 1849, that is, within the context of the Great Famine, civil unrest, and mounting calls for the repeal of the Union with Britain. Placed during or shortly after the Greek Revolution, the stories feature the sacrifices and tragedies of an armed strife led by an independence-aspiring nation. If the traumatic Greek paradigm and the galaxy of wild patriots and lawless brigands rising from the stories were meant as a warning for the *DUM* reader, these are counteracted by the memoirs of William Smith O’Brien’s visit in Greece, published in the Irish nationalist weekly *The Nation*. A prominent pro-Repeal Irish politician, O’Brien draws parallels between the Greek and Irish social and political condition and projects the Klephtic chieftains as the authors of Greek independence.



Caterina Stamou

### Experimental Writing as Reparative Reading: Crafting a Genealogy

My presentation will address questions of methodology that pertain to the crafting of a reparative genealogy in my doctoral thesis. My doctoral research looks at integrative works by American experimental poets in order to offer new readings of lesser known literary texts and to suggest a lineage for the concept and practice of repair that responds to the necessities of the present. Throughout my presentation, I will look at the work of prolific Outrider poet and performer Anne Waldman, whose vast understudied practice exemplifies feminist vision, acts of recuperation, antiimperialist poetics and a cross-cultural relationality while looking at destruction and grief. My questions regarding methodology will concern the contextualization of her work within the wider framework of American experimental poetics and its cross-cultural echo through community-building, translocal poetry networks and publishing initiatives as well as direct actions of solidarity. Drawing from Ammiel Alcalay's methodology and taking into consideration the comparative analysis that I wish to develop in my doctoral research later on, I am interested in addressing questions of methodology that grapple with such an interdisciplinary approach and ask how American experimental writing lineages can be linked with the context of Greece through hidden aesthetic, affective and political implications.

Despoina Tantsiopoulou

*All the Students Are Clones: Humanities, Trauma and the Foucauldian Carceral in Kazuo Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go*

In his 2005 novel *Never Let Me Go*, Kazuo Ishiguro creates a boarding school, Hailsham, which seems to be offering its students a superb curriculum mostly filled by the Arts and Humanities. The truth is later revealed: the students are clones, raised to undergo organ harvesting procedures called “donations” to eliminate human deaths from diseases made preventable through the new technology. The use of the Humanities in the curriculum proves to be a soul-searching tool: ironically, the clones’ artistic and academic endeavors verify their humanity. The school is both a refuge from the outside world or other similar inhumane cloning institutions, and a prison, since leaving its grounds before they “graduation” is prohibited. The multiplicity of roles Hailsham plays echoes Michel Foucault’s idea of the *carceral archipelago*. In *Discipline and Punish*, he shows that abnormality is penalized through a series of social structures and institutions that dictate social norms and punish deviations. Hailsham embodies the point of convergence of these institutions – family, healthcare, penal system – and showcases the all-encompassing role of education in bringing them together. I argue the Arts and Humanities in the Hailsham curriculum aim to underline the failure of the educational system that bases itself on mere teaching, but not practical application, of the lessons learnt through humanistic subjects, illuminating the dangers of present educational systems in which the use of the Humanities is limited to creating copies of students, clones themselves, instead of individuals capable of criticizing the values and ideas instilled in them.

