CIVIS
BLENDED
INTENSIVE
PROGRAMME

Aix-Marseille Université
National and Kapodistrian University of Athens
University of Bucharest
Sapienza Università di Roma
Stockholms Universität
University of Glasgow
Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen

In/Transitive Modernities: Dis/continuities and Cultural Transformation

Department of English Language and Literature
National and Kapodistrian University of Athens
Stamatina Dimakopoulou (NKUA) and Anne Reynes-Delobel (AMU)

Co-founders and principal organisers

of

*Transitive Modernities*

an interdisciplinary, cross-cultural and cross-national, research-based, pedagogy-oriented, inclusive project

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National and Kapodistrian University of Athens
Welcome!

This Blended Intensive Programme explores transcultural connections and divides across Europe, the Mediterranean, Africa and the American continent from the 20th to the 21st century.

Focusing on cultural transfers, encounters, and circulations, this course explores trans-European and transcultural connections and divides across Europe, the Mediterranean, Africa, and the American continent from the 20th to the 21st century. Reflecting the research concerns of the teaching team, the course will focus on diverse social experiences, forms, and media, spanning literature, film, the visual arts, and creative practice at large. We will examine experiences of [un]belonging, the formation of identity and memory, mobility, [un]rootedness, and the sense of place. With a view to expanding our core concept of ‘in/transitive modernities’ both theoretically and methodologically, the course will take as its main axis the concept of ‘home’ considered from the joint perspectives of transnationalism, diaspora, and dispossession. We will work with recent theoretical paradigms in fields such as feminism, border and migration studies, decolonial thought, public humanities, and posthumanism, in order to examine how literature, art, and theory expose values that are unsustainable and/or naturalised, engage with social challenges and lead us towards reconfigured forms of praxis.

Main topics addressed:

- Modern/modernist genealogies and avant-garde practices
- Exile, migration, borders
- Mobility, transnational and transcultural trajectories
- Marginality, otherness, exclusion, citizenship
- Racialization
- Counter-publics
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Attendees are expected to:

- participate fully in the program
- attend all lectures and activities
- complete assigned readings
- submit coursework (for MA students who will be transferring credits)

ASSESSMENT

In addition to the requirements listed above, MA students who will be transferring credits are expected to also submit either:

A Research Essay (circa 2,500) on a topic of their choice which will be approved and co-supervised by two seminar convenors. The topic should be either drawn from ideas and concepts covered in the seminars, and/or the case studies that will be discussed in the webinars. Students are welcome to work on a case study of their own choice.

OR

A Concept Essay (Circa 1,000 words) and a Creative Project

Your concept essay should be a reflective piece on a concept/ theme that you probe critically in an in-depth and very focused manner with reference to a very specific and markedly circumscribed example; your concept essay may be focusing entirely on your concept.

Your Creative Project may be a podcast, a video, a series of photographs, an interview, any form of documentation of a current event or project that interests you and is related to the themes of course. Your piece will be supplemented by a reflective piece (like an artist's statement) where you will be documenting and reflecting on the creative process, artists, cultural practitioners that have been an influence and/or inspiration, the making of your piece, the concepts, theoretical ideas, writers, thinkers, artists that were examined in the programme and you drew from.

Students who will choose the concept essay and the creative project, visit the creativecritical.net initiative.
LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will work on a range of cultural forms and media, spanning literature, film and the visual arts.

They will be trained to work with a range of analytical tools and conceptual vocabularies in order to conduct close critical analysis.

They will strengthen and/or be exposed to interdisciplinary perspectives in a comparative critical studies context.

They will deepen their knowledge and enhance their critical perspectives on modern and modernist legacies and continuities.

They will familiarise themselves and/or deepen their knowledge of transnational dialogues and transfers across different cultural, socio-political, geographical and historical contexts.
Introduction and Overview

Stamatina Dimakopoulou (NKUA) and Anne Reynes-Delobel (AMU)

On Homesickness

Isabella Pezzini (Sapienza University of Rome)

The aim of this lecture is to reflect on certain figures, discourses and cultural strategies of passions that can be articulated with the changing configurations of the concept of 'home'. A special place is obviously occupied by nostalgia, which, as is well known, is a modern passion, since it was linguistically 'invented' by the Swiss Johannes Hofer (1688) to refer to the state of physical malaise that affected soldiers forced to leave their homeland for service. Over the centuries, nostalgia has migrated into different spheres, being recognised both as a passion of space, the 'pain of distance from a place' that can only be cured by physical return, and as an emotional frustration linked to temporality, in particular to the irreversibility of past time, the impossibility of frequenting it again, as well as dissatisfaction with the present. A chameleon-like passion, it traverses modernity, an era of desired or forced migrations, nourishes the imagination not always in a dysphoric way.

Mobility and Transnationalism

in Early 20th Century Swedish Artworld

Andrea Kollnitz and Jessica Sjöholm Skrubbe (Stockholm University)
This seminar aims at raising a discussion on how art, artists, aesthetic movements and expressions may be affected and transformed as well as theoretically analysed through aspects of mobility, travelling, cultural transfer and transnational networks. Based on both of our ongoing research projects we will present concrete case studies and discuss these questions based on your readings and reflections.

Jessica Sjöholm Skrubbe:

Drawing on a case study from my research project *Swedish artists en route* I will elaborate on modernist artists from the Scandinavian semi-periphery of the European art world and explore how their experiences of travelling beyond the European borders were represented in images and writing. The discussion pays attention to mobility as a gendered practice that produced the artist’s modern subject position and to the ‘soft power’ of European colonialism exercised through cultural representations. It explores the tensions between gendered and geopolitical hierarchies, producing ambivalent enunciative positionalities.

Andrea Kollnitz:

As part of my research project *Surrealism in Sweden 1930-2000: between Presence and Absence*, I will discuss the activities of Swedish surrealists in the 1930s in relation to their inter-Nordic collaborations, their connections and interactions from a presupposed peripheral position with the agents of surrealism in the consecrated centre of Paris, the role of cities and regions as stations and steppingstones in the dissemination of surrealism and its relation to national identity as well as internationalization and universalist values.


27 February- 3 March (17:00-19:00 CET)

**READING WEEK** (optional drop-in sessions with the organising team)
The seminar will study emerging transmodern places and sites such as self-organizing shelter communities and homeless/migrant shelters that trouble the concepts of home and community and challenge the hegemonic figure of the citizen as the par excellence subject of rights. Taking off from Étienne Balibar’s “What are the Excluded Excluded from?” and “Towards Co-Citizenship” in *Equaliberty*, Nikos Pilos’s video-documentaries, “The Refuge” and “Hotel Yadizi” (see https://nikospilos.com) and Toni Morrison’s essay, “Home,” the seminar will examine decolonial forms of inhabitancy that transgress the limits of the racial assemblage and resist the neoliberal politics that tries to control and police the mobility of peoples while dispossessing them. We will examine contemporary forms of inhabitancy that develop from within the web of crosscultural relations and the reciprocities that arise, such as contemporary maroon communities that are formed as part of a world of relations and associations beyond and post the ethnocentric and racialising agendas of the organic community of the nation. Vulnerable and tentative as these forms of tidal inhabitancy are, the texts that the seminar will examine, represent home as inextricably linked to homelessness, dispossession and expropriation, and thus as everyone’s right to one.


Despite being praised by some well-known Modernist African-American artists, such as Langston Hughes, Claude McKay’s bestseller *Home to Harlem* has not really made it into the mainstream of African American literature. This is mainly due to the accusations of sensationalism, primitivism, pandering after a white audience (akin to Carl Van Vechten’s infamously titled *Nigger Heaven*) and idealizing a type of hypermasculinity. And yet, with a heightened sensitivity to the interrelations of race, class, gender, and sexuality, and a renewed sense of Black internationalism and a Black diaspora, I think we may fruitfully re-read this depiction of lower-class life and its relation to white and dominant US culture. An entry point is the notion of home: As in the beginning of the novel, it may at first be perceived as return, but as we continue reading, it becomes possible to regard it also in a diasporic framework as future-oriented, as a search for a somewhat utopian place that we should try to characterize further. The idea of a search for a home would also provide a rationale for the loosely organized plot – but then what is meant by ‘home’?

**Primary Text:**
Claude MacKay’s *Home to Harlem* (1928) [available to buy on googleplay and kindle]

**Secondary Sources:**

Trudier Harris, “Introduction: Home in African American Literature: Difficult to Define, Challenging to Claim,” “Conclusion: While We’re in This Place . . . ” in *Depictions of Home in African American Literature* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books) 2021


In Claire Denis’s *Beau travail* (1999) we encounter a potentially ‘Modernist’ style, the loose use of Herman Melville’s *Billy Budd*, individuals sliding into desire, violence and altered states of mind. The film is full of things and people slipping their moorings and drifting away, as if over the seascapes that recur in the film itself. Simultaneously languorous and seething, *Beau travail* offers an ‘intense, singular narrative’ (Raymond Williams in the course description) in which to consider connection, transfer and circulation. Connection, transfer and circulation can of course be understood as (dis)continuity and change in/transitive Modernities. Indeed, as an unconventional, experimental film - but made at the end of the twentieth century and not formally attached to a particular manifesto or group – *Beau travail* usefully animates debate about the scope and usefulness of the terms Modernist and post- or neo-avant-garde. To what extent, for instance, is it useful or possible to describe *Beau travail* and work by other living filmmakers as ‘Modernist’ or ‘(neo-)avant-garde’? However, *Beau travail* also pulsates with ‘connection’, ‘transfer’ and ‘circulation’ in human terms. Largely unspoken, these dynamics offer rich opportunities for close readings of a ‘difficult’ film in relation to a range of topics including sexual and military jealousy, post-colonial and indigenous bodies, solitude and homoeroticism, and the pull between national/formal structures (e.g. the French Foreign Legion and Republican ideals) and the irreducible plurality and energy of individual human desires and subjectivities (connecting to queer theory and the disruption of a ‘continuum’ between assumed ‘essence’ and identity).

In the seminar we will also discuss the textured style and crafting of *Beau travail*, which offer stimulating debate in relation to the senses (‘haptic’ cinema, after Laura Marks on ‘the skin’ of film), sound, composition and cinematography. For this session students are warmly invited to consider the film in relation to the conceptual topics dealt with in other parts of the course (e.g. about Modernism, gender, race and colonialism), with which there exist potentially strong opportunities for testing not only readings of the film but also the ways in which theory can or should (not) be used.

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Thursday 30 March 17:00-19:00 CET

On Chantal Akerman’s No Home Movie (2015):
Raluca Bibiri (University of Bucharest)

Thursday 6 April (17:00-19:00 CET)

Home as “temptation and impossibility”:
Stephanos Stephanides, a poet of home?:
Angelos Evangelou (National and Kapodistrian University of Athens)

In tracing the crosscurrents between the poetic, the cultural and the political, the seminar aims to contribute to the critical discussions of home through the writings of Cypriot author, poet, documentary film-maker and retired Professor of English and Comparative Literature Stephanos Stephanides. It is through writing, Stephanides reminds us, that we make sense of ourselves as we oscillate between times and places both real and imagined, emphasizing the literary and the poetic as modes of expression undetachable from the existential and the ontological. The very formation of one’s national identity is “seized in poetic turns” (2008: 3), a process wrapped in the very transformation of space into place, the making of home, and the articulation of one’s sense of self and belonging. Stephanides’s subversive reading of home as “radical rupture” (2008: 9) is crucial for the acknowledgement of the need for home – home as a temptation of a possibility – and the necessity of being warned about its “elusive transience” and “fugacity” (1) and, perhaps, danger. Through a close reading of some of Stephanides’s memoir fiction and critical writing, students will have the opportunity to reflect upon the concept of home as this gap between temptation and impossibility.
Stephanides, Stephanos. *The Wind under My Lips* (To Rodakió, 2018) (Extracts)


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**Thursday 13 April 17:00-19:00 CET**

**At the Crossings: Contemporary Metamorphoses of Egyptian Prose Poetry of the 1990s**

Stéphane Baquey (*Aix Marseille University*)

A generation of poets that appeared in Egypt in the 1990s renewed their link to the place beyond imposed ideologies as they were continuing the development of prose poetry as an Arabic modernist poetic genre. Among them are Yasser Abdellatif, Hoda Hussein, Iman Mersal, Ahmed Yamani. Nearly thirty years later, most of them have travelled across continents, generic boundaries, media regimes and political events. Their telling of the place will be investigated through an anthropological and cognitive poetics in order to describe their liminal discursive landscapes. Is home the last illusion they have had to forsake in their crossings?


**Secondary Sources:**


CIVIS BIP Course Requirements

It is essential that you read assigned readings and that you come prepared, and bring your questions and ideas. All seminar material can be accessed on the CIVIS moodle platform at https://moodle.civis.eu/login/index.php

WEBINARS

The lectures will be 90 minutes to 2 hours long, with an emphasis on methodological questions, research tools, and case studies. The virtual part will be running from 9 February to 6 April 2023. It will comprise ten 2 hour-long thematic sessions in which the teaching staff will introduce key concepts and questions related to case studies, followed by a discussion. Throughout the online and on-site course, students will engage with the core readings on the learning hub. The hub will also be used to share reading experiences and responses, and creative work in progress.

Time: 17:00 - 19:00 CET

Attendees are expected to:

- participate fully in the program
- attend all lectures and activities
- complete assigned readings
- submit coursework (for MA students who will be transferring credits)

* Essential resources and further reading are downloadable from the e-class moodle platform

Stamatina Dimakopoulou teaches US literature and culture at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. She has been Fulbright Visiting Scholar at New York University and has guest-lectured at Paris-Nanterre. With a background in comparative literature and publications in transatlantic dialogues across literature and the visual arts, she is currently working on a manuscript on home/lessness. She is a founding member and co-editor of the peer-reviewed e-journal, *Synthesis, an Anglophone Journal of Comparative Literary Studies*. With Anne Reynes-Delobel, she has launched *Transitive Modernities*, under the auspices of CIVIS, the European Civic University. She also participates in the CIVIS projects, *CARE-Care, Agency, Repair, Engagement in Alternative Modern(c)ities, and PostRacial Trans-Modernities*. With Vassilis Vlastaras and Electra Stampoulou (Athens School of Fine Arts), she co-devised the Tyvek Project (practice-based workshops on James Merrill’s *Self-Portrait in Tyvek™ Windbreaker* and the *New York Spanner* (1978-1980), followed by an exhibition.

Anne Reynes-Delobel (PhD. Dr. habil) is Associate Professor of American Literature at Aix-Marseille University. She has published widely on American modernisms and the international avant-gardes, and more specifically on their transatlantic circulation in the interwar period. She is the current president of The Kay Boyle Society (an ALA and SSAWAA affiliate) and a co-founder of the Banjo Society-ClaudeMcKay (AMU). She also participates in the CIVIS project on PostRacial Trans-Modernities and the BIP project CARE.
On Homesickness

Isabella Pezzini is Professor of Semiotics at the Department of Sociology and Communication, Sapienza Università di Roma. She serves on the board of Versus, Quaderni di Studi Semiotici, E/C/, Rivista on-line dell'Associazione Italiana Semiotici. She focuses on contemporary forms of expression, audio-visual language, consumerism and the imaginary, and strategies in efficacity. Publications include: Le passioni del lettore, Saggi di semiotica del testo; Semiotic Efficacy and the Effectiveness of the Text, Trailer, spot, siti, banner. Le forme brevi della comunicazione audiovisiva, Scene del consumo. D allo shopping al museo, Il testo galeotto. La lettura come pratica efficace, Immagini quotidiane, Sociosemiotica visuale.

Mobility and Transnationalism in the Early 20th Century Swedish Artworld

Andrea Kollnitz is Associate Professor of Art History and director of Studies for advanced level in Art History at Stockholm University. Her research focuses on art and nationalism, art and fashion discourses, the Nordic avant-garde, connections between fashion and art during modernism. She is co-editor of Fashion and Modernism (Bloomsbury 2018), and A Cultural History of the Avant-Garde in the Nordic Countries. Vol 2 (Brill, 2019). She is currently working on a monograph about the Surrealist artist Leonor Fini, and is co-editor of Fashion, Performance and Performativity (Bloomsbury 2021).

Jessica Sjöholm Skrubbe is Associate Professor in Art History at Stockholm University. She participated in the Transnational Perspectives on Women’s Art, Feminism and Curating (Leverhume Trust). She is editor of Konsthistorisk tidskrift/ Journal of Art History; Advisory Board member for the Feminist legacy in Art Museums (Norwegian Research Council). Publications include: (Ed.) Curating Differently: Feminisms, Exhibitions, and Curatorial Spaces, and Nell Walden, Der Sturm, and the Collaborative Cultures of Modern Art. Her project “Swedish artists en route: Mobility, transnationalism and artistic practices in the early 20th century” was supported by Landskrona museum, Åke Wibergs stiftelse and Magnus Bergvalls Stiftelse.
Tidal Inhabitancy:
Home, Community and the Right to Belong

Mina Karavanta is an Associate Professor of Theory, Comparative Literary and Cultural Studies, and Global English Literatures, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. She co-edited *Interculturality and Gender* and *Edward Said and Jacques Derrida: Reconstellating Humanism and the Global Hybrid* and published in journals such as *boundary 2, Callaloo, Feminist Review, Modern Fiction Studies, Symposia*. She has participated in *Travelling Concepts (ATHENA)* and *Behind the Looking-Glass (AHRC)*. She is co-founder and co-editor of *Synthesis: An Anglophone Journal of Comparative Literary Studies*. She has given invited talks in the US, Europe, the Caribbean and Australia. She has launched the CIVIS project, *PostRacial Trans-Modernities* and participates in the BIP project CARE.

Claude McKay, Home to Harlem (1928)

Astrid Franke is Professor for American Literature and Culture at Tübingen University. She is the author of *Keys to Controversies: Stereotypes in Modern American Novels* (1999) and *Pursue the Illusion: Problems of Public Poetry in America* (2010) as well as articles on popular culture, poetry and injustice, and the contemporary American novel. She is a principal investigator in the interdisciplinary Collaborative Research Center Threatened Orders with a project on the resilience of the racial order in the US. She also participates in the CIVIS project on *PostRacial Trans-Modernities*.

Modernity Unmoored: Claire Denis’s Beau travail (1999)

Stephen Forcer is a Professor of French at the University of Glasgow. His publications include *Modernist Song: The Poetry of Tristan Tzara* (Legenda 2006) and *Dada as Text, Thought and Theory* (Legenda 2015), which was shortlisted for the 20016 Gapper Book Prize. In 2020-2021 he was a co-investigator on an AHRC research grant into the use of comedy and other performing arts in tackling sexual and gender-based violence, supported by NGOs in Sierra Leone and South Africa. He also participates in the CIVIS project on *PostRacial Trans-Modernities*. 
On Chantal Akerman’s *No Home Movie* (2015)

Raluca Bibiri is an Associate Professor of Film and Women’s Studies at the Center of Excellence in Image Studies, University of Bucharest. She has authored two books on the concept of femininity in philosophy, psychoanalysis, culture, and the arts. Her ongoing research projects focus on intersectional posthumanist methodologies exploring social exclusion and institutionalized forms of knowledge and power. She is actively involved in the exchange between academia and society as a documentary filmmaker, reflecting on the instrumentality of the historical archives for the production of new forms of knowledge about the past, through a wider, more inclusive perspective.

Home as “temptation and impossibility”: Stephanos Stephanides, a poet of home?

Angelos Evangelou is Assistant Professor in the Department of English Language and Literature, at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. Since 2010, he was Lecturer in the Department of Comparative Literature of the University of Kent. His research focuses on the border between madness and reason. Publications include Philosophizing Madness from Nietzsche to Derrida (2017) and articles in academic journals. Since 2015 he is a Fellow of the British Higher Education Academy, and is an Honorary member of staff of the Department of Comparative Literature, University of Kent. He also participates in the CIVIS project on PostRacial Trans-Modernities and the BIP project Care.

Crossings: Contemporary Metamorphoses of Egyptian Prose Poetry of the 1990s

Stéphane Baquey is a poetry critic and an Associate Professor in Modern Literature at Aix-Marseille University. He is the author of the preface to Kiril Kadiiski’s *Poèmes* (2006), published jointly by L’Esprit des Péninsules and Kliment Oхridski University of Sofia. For the last five years, his research has known a new inflection towards a poetics of the place telling in an ecopoetics perspective.
‘Transitive Modernities: Dialogues and Crossings’ federates student and academics from the following CIVIS universities

Aix-Marseille Université
National and Kapodistrian University of Athens
University of Bucharest
Sapienza Università di Roma
Stockholms Universitet
Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen
University of Glasgow

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