



Faculté des langues  
et cultures étrangères  
Pôle Humanités



DAULAT RAM COLLEGE, DELHI UNIVERSITY AND  
CRINI LABORATORY-EA 1162  
NANTES UNIVERSITÉ PRESENT



AN INTERNATIONAL  
CONFERENCE ON

# CONVALESCENCE

IN 19TH & 20TH CENTURY

## ANGLOPHONE LITERATURE

Will Be Held On

**Thursday- Friday**  
26-27 June, 2025

**online & offline mode**  
Offline at la Faculté des Langues et  
Cultures Etrangères, Nantes  
Université (FRANCE) & online  
at Daulat Ram College, Delhi  
University (INDIA)

### KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



**Dr. Hosanna Krienke**

Assistant Instructional Professor,  
Honors College  
University of Wyoming



**Prof. Talia Schaffer**

Professor of English  
Queens College,  
City University of New York (CUNY),

### email

[convalescencelit2025@gmail.com](mailto:convalescencelit2025@gmail.com)

Conveners: Leslie de Bont, Deepshikha Mahanta  
Bortamuly, Aude Petit-Marquis, Sanna Melin Schyllert,  
Violina Borah



Scan for the CFP

# *Convalescence in 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Anglophone Literature*

*26-27 June 2025*

*CRIM, Nantes Université  
&  
Daulat Ram College, University of Delhi*

*Organisers:*

*Leslie de Bont*

*Deepshikha Mahanta Bortamuly*

*Sanna Melin Schyllert*

*Violina Borah*

*Aude Petit-Marquis*

## Concept Note

Convalescence usually refers to the “gradual recovery of health and strength after illness<sup>1</sup>”. Krienke (2021)<sup>2</sup> and Ménager (2020)<sup>3</sup> showed that even if the theme of convalescence plays a significant role in 19th- and 20th-century literature, reflecting the changing societal attitudes towards health, the human body, and the mind, it still remains a “neglected historical [and cultural] paradigm” (Krienke 149). Whether in a Victorian sickroom or in a sanatorium, with a change of air or with antibiotics, the psychological and physiological journeys towards recovery provide rich ground for exploring themes of vulnerability, resilience, and transformation. Charles Dickens, Elizabeth Gaskell, George Eliot, Winifred Holtby, Ernest Hemingway, Claude McKay, L. P. Hartley, Sylvia Plath, Audre Lorde and Anita Desai have all woven narratives around these themes, offering insights into the social structures and subjective experiences of health and ill health.

While medical humanities and body studies have often focused on disease, trauma and illness on the one hand, and on empirical medicine and professional care on the other, this symposium aims to delve deeply into the intricate portrayals of convalescence in 19th- and 20th-century literature, exploring how these narratives convey the evolving representations and experiences of care and recovery, and complicate the social metaphors and categories sometimes associated with illnesses (Sontag 1978)<sup>4</sup> and poor health. While it does “not necessarily portend complete recovery” (Krienke 2), convalescence in literature is—unlike the climactic diseases, accidents or crises—a paradoxically uneventful yet dramatic period of time that often brings a sense of liminality and uncertainty in character development and plot progression. By reevaluating both canonical and marginalised texts, and by examining how they engaged with their historical contexts, we hope to analyse how culture, class, race, and gender shaped various narratives of convalescence highlighting the diverse ways in which different authors and genres approach this “network of shared experiences of uncertain health, lingering trauma, and new opportunities”

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<sup>1</sup> Oxford English Dictionary. Convalescence. Oxford English Dictionary. Oxford University Press, 2024. [https://www.oed.com/dictionary/convalescence\\_n?tab=meaning\\_and\\_use&tl=true](https://www.oed.com/dictionary/convalescence_n?tab=meaning_and_use&tl=true)

<sup>2</sup> Krienke, Hosanna. *Convalescence in the Nineteenth-Century Novel: The Afterlife of Victorian Illness*. Cambridge Studies in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021.

<sup>3</sup> Ménager, Daniel. *Convalescences : La littérature au repos*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2020.

<sup>4</sup> Sontag, Susan. *Illness as Metaphor*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1978. See also Woolf, Virginia. “On Being Ill,” *The Criterion* 4, no. 1 (January 1926): 32-45.

(Krienke 8). Schaffer has shown that in 19th-century novels, fictional care communities often offer “a temporal respite as well as a social haven, a space outside of political, productive, or practical needs<sup>5</sup>” (534). How do these literary depictions of convalescent care compare with 20th-century fiction, particularly given the modernist preoccupation with speed that Enda Duffy demonstrates in *The Speed Handbook* (2009)? What does it mean to convalesce in a society that moves ever faster and how is convalescence rendered in (post)modernist fiction? And while Fifield has demonstrated that “sickness is where [Virginia] Woolf’s modernism emerges<sup>6</sup>” (87) and that her writing was an ambiguous “rehabilitative practice” (76), what roles do reading and writing play in the experience of convalescence?

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<sup>5</sup> Schaffer, Thalia, “Care Communities: Ethics, Fictions, Temporalities,” *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 113, no. 3 (July 2019): 521-42.

<sup>6</sup> Fifield, Peter. *Modernism and Physical Illness: Sick Books*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2020.

# Convalescence in 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Anglophone Literature Time Grid

Registration link for attending the conference online: <https://forms.gle/Rcr9Z5WDbhqw3yLG7>

Please note that Nantes is 3 hours ½ behind Delhi.  
If unsure, [please check your time zone here](#).

All talks will be broadcasted on Zoom.

## Day 1 – 26<sup>th</sup> June

*Welcome address* 9.00-9.15am Nantes – 12.30-12.45pm Delhi

### Session 1: The 19<sup>th</sup> century

**Chair: Dr. Aude PETIT-MARQUIS**

9.15-10.00am Nantes

12.45-1.30pm Delhi

Avril TYNAN	The Liminal Body in Convalescence
Beatrice FUGA [online]	The Convalescent Muse: Elizabeth Siddal's Recovered Verse

*(Short break – 30 minutes)*

### Session 2: Convalescence across the centuries

**Chair: Dr. Sanna SCHYLLERT**

10.30-11.45am Nantes

2.00-3.15pm Delhi

Ananya PUNYATOYA	Recovery in Repetition: Negotiating Temporalities in Women's Convalescence Narratives
Eva M. PÉREZ- RODRÍGUEZ	George Eliot's "The Lifted Veil" and Ian McEwan's <i>The Children Act</i> : Transfusions, Convalescence and Ethics 150 Years Apart
Eptisum LASKAR [online]	Healing Beyond Humanity: Non-human Care and Ecological Convalescence in Anglophone Literature

*(Short break – 15 minutes)*

### Session 3: The early 20<sup>th</sup> century and the modernists (1) [online]

**Chair: Dr. Leslie de BONT**

12.00-12.45pm Nantes

3.30-4.15pm Delhi

Sruthi VENKATESWARAN	Death by Convalescence: The Recovering Body and Ideology in Detective Fiction
Denis LEROY	The Convalescence of Spanish Flu Patients in American Fictions: An Indirect Representation of the 1918 Pandemic

*(Long break – 1h15)*

### Session 4: The early 20<sup>th</sup> century and the modernists (2) [online]

**Chair: Dr Sanna SCHYLLERT**

2.00-2.45pm Nantes

5.30-6.15pm Delhi

Apala DAS	H.D.'s <i>Helen in Egypt</i> as a Convalescent Epic
Alejandro NADAL- RUIZ	Convalescence, Trauma, and the Empowering Potential of Solitary Reflection in Jean Rhys's Modernist Novels

*(Short break – 15 minutes)*

### Session 5: Nonfiction

**Chair : Dr. Leslie de BONT**

3.00-3.45pm Nantes

6.30-7.15pm Delhi

Marion LETELLIER	Animals and Convalescence in 19th- and 20th-Century Anglophone Literature: a 'Zoopoetical' Approach
Maëlle NAGOT [online]	'Shut in on all sides by infirmities': the Daily Work of Convalescence in the Diaries of Katherine Mansfield and Louisa May Alcott

*(Short break – 15 minutes)*

**Keynote: Dr. Hosanna KRIENKE** 4.00-5.00pm Nantes – 7.30-8.30pm Delhi

**Chair : Dr. Aude PETIT-MARQUIS**

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## Day 2 – 27<sup>th</sup> June [online]

**Introductory session** 9.00-9.15am Nantes – 12.30-12.45pm Delhi

### Session 1: 19<sup>th</sup> century

**Chair: Prof. Meetu KHOSLA**

9.15-10.30am Nantes

12.45-2.00pm Delhi

Anne KORFMACHER	“[H]er mind had lost its elasticity” – The Resilience of Caregiving in Elizabeth Gaskell’s <i>North and South</i>
Harini PATOWARY DAS	Healing through Isolation: Rereading Brontë’s <i>Wuthering Heights</i> as a 19th-Century Narrative of Convalescence
Adivi BASU	‘Herbal Convalescence’ through Spirituality in Medical Literature: A Departure from Colonial Healthcare Systems in India

(Short break – 30 minutes)

### Session 2: Nonfiction

**Chair: Dr. Violina BORAH**

11.00-12.15pm Nantes

2.30-3.45pm Delhi

Ahana MAITRA	Bengalis’ “Paschim”: Convalescence and Identity-Formation in Late-Nineteenth and Early-Twentieth Century Bengal
Krushna DANDE	An Attack of Anamnesis: Sickness and Recovery in the Letters of Philip K Dick’s <i>Exegesis</i>
Olga SZMIDT	“Attack of Vertigo and Nausea”. Subjectivity and Convalescence in Joan Didion’s Essays

## Parallel session 2: The Mid-20<sup>th</sup> century

**Chair: Prof. Deepshikha MAHANTA BORTAMULY**

11.00-12.15pm Nantes

2.30-3.45pm Delhi

Marta MIQUEL-BALDELLOU	'Then came the languid monotony of convalescence': Intertextualities in Victorian and Neo-Victorian Gothic Narratives of Illness
Vedika KAUSHAL	A Modernist Convalescence in <i>The Little Black Box</i> by Shakuntala Shrinagesh: Exploring Aesthetics of Illness and Isolation in early Indian English Fiction
Hongliang ZHOU	The Art of Recovery: Exploring Convalescence in the Novels of Eileen Chang

(Long break – 1h30)

## Session 3: The Late 20<sup>th</sup> century

**Chair: Dr. Swetha ANTONY**

1.45-3.00pm Nantes

5.15-6.30pm Delhi

Emmanuel ROLLIN	Convalescence and psychological growth in J. Fowles's <i>The Magus</i>
Mohammad BAGHER SHABAMPOUR	Convalescence in Ian McEwan's <i>The Child in Time</i> Spatial and Temporal Dimensions
Jacob WILKENFELD	The Writer as Patient: Convalescence in Philip Roth's <i>The Anatomy Lesson</i>

(Short break – 30 minutes)

**Keynote: Prof. Talia SCHAFFER** 3.30-4.30pm Nantes – 7.00-8.00pm Delhi

**Chair: Prof. Anjana SHARMA**

**Valedictory session**

4.30-5.00pm Nantes – 8.00-8.30pm Delhi

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# **Convalescence in 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Anglophone Literature**

## **Detailed Schedule with Abstracts**

### **Day 1: 26-6-2025**

#### **Day 1 Inaugural Session**

9.00- 9.15am Nantes

12.30-12.45pm Delhi

*Welcome address*

#### **Day 1 Session 1: 19<sup>th</sup> Century**

9.15-10.00am Nantes

12.45pm-1.30pm Delhi

**Chair: Dr. Aude PETIT-MARQUIS**

#### **Day 1 Session 1 Paper 1**

**Paper title: The Liminal Body in Convalescence**

**Name: Dr. Avril TYNAN**

**Abstract:** Convalescence is a common theme in works of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century art. In works by Helene Schjerfbeck, Gwen John, Alvar Cawén and James Tissot, the artists depict convalescing subjects arranged in (often enormous) chairs. I propose in this paper that, just as there is an assumed hierarchy between illness and health, so the chair and the seated position of its occupant helps us to gauge the curious in-between state of the convalescent. Absent from these works is the euphoric sense of rebirth that was common to literary works of the same era, including Charles Baudelaire's *The Painter of Modern Life* (1863) and Graeme Mercer Adam and Agnes Ethelwyn Wetherald's *An Algonquin Maiden* (1887).

While the ambiguity of the subject's intermittent positioning on the chair leaves open the door for a childlike resurrection, it is haunted by the potential for degeneration and regression. Contributing both to conversations around the entanglements of health and illness and to the

experiential possibilities of visual art to critically interrogate existing understandings and structures of healthcare, this article engages with convalescence as it both reflects and precipitates questions of ambiguity and indeterminacy. At stake is a more ambivalent understanding of convalescence that may help to provide valid terminology for the sense of precarity and uncertainty felt by those who are no longer ill but not quite yet well. While it is certainly true that modern social and medical institutions lack the funds and the staff to enact leisurely policies of convalescence, contemplating the experiential uncertainty and precarity of wellbeing may nonetheless inform our understanding of the complexities of illness and health today.

### **Bionote:**

**Avril TYNAN** is a Research Council of Finland Fellow (2023–27) at the University of Turku and editor of *Storyworlds: A Journal of Narrative Studies*. She has previously held research positions at the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities in Essen, Germany and the Turku Institute for Advanced Studies. Her current project, *Narratives of Recovery*, takes a critical perspective on the role and representation of illness and recovery in contemporary literature. She has published widely on the ethics and aesthetics of illness and disability, dementia, trauma and old age in francophone, anglophone and other literatures.

## **Day 1 Session 1 Paper 2**

### **Paper title: The Convalescent Muse: Elizabeth Siddal's Recovered Verse**

#### **Name: Dr. Beatrice FUGA**

**Abstract:** Forever engraved on the collective memory as the forlorn and melancholic Ophelia of John Everett Millais's painting (1851-52), Elizabeth Siddal is one of the most fascinating figures of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Yet, if her sitting for Millais secured her career as a model, it equally proved to be the beginning of her end. After posing for hours in a bathtub, she contracted pneumonia, a lingering sickness that did not leave her despite long periods of convalescence, and contributed to her idealisation as a frail, haunting Pre-Raphaelite 'stunner'. However, Siddal was not merely a muse, nor is she solely to be remembered for her tempestuous relation with Dante Gabriel Rossetti: she was also an active member of the Brotherhood, one whose poetic work has been long overlooked. In this paper, I propose to look at her poetic production as a reflection of her afflictions (both physical and psychological), but also as a means to reclaim her agency, in contrast with her modelling, where she often posed as an 'aestheticized corpse'.<sup>7</sup> Surely, the Victorian fascination with death influenced her own perception of health and fragility, as testified by the frequent evocation of death in her poems; yet, her poetic voice is all but frail, and reveals that her eternal, almost ethereal sickness does not entail a state of resignation or naïveté. I will show how Siddal's verse becomes the remedy to her husband's neglect, and to the general lack of recognition of a woman's craft, and argue that her poems are the place where she ceases to be the mythologised muse and fully recovers her status as a real woman and a poet in her own right.

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<sup>7</sup> Trowbridge, Serena. *My Lady's Soul. The Poems of Elizabeth Eleanor Siddal*, Victorian Secrets, 2018.

**Bionote:**

**Beatrice FUGA** holds a PhD in English Studies from the Université Sorbonne Nouvelle, where she teaches English literature and translation. In her thesis, she explored the role of translation in early modern European cultural and political interactions through the prism of the Italian novella. She is the co-editor of the upcoming *Moralising the Italian Marvellous in Early Modern England* (with Alessandra Petrina; Routledge, 2025). She recently started a new research project on the circulation of medical texts, with particular attention to the cultural representation of love, melancholy and hysteria from the sixteenth century onwards. She also fosters an everlasting passion for the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (and Sisterhood) and the Victorian period, which fuelled her master's dissertations on the work of Oscar Wilde.

(Short break – 30 minutes)

**Day 1 Session 2: Convalescence across the centuries**

10.30-11.45am Nantes      2.00-3.15pm Delhi

**Chair: Dr. Sanna SCHYLLERT**

**Day 1 Session 2 Paper 1**

**Paper title: Recovery in Repetition: Negotiating Temporalities in Women's Convalescence Narratives**

**Name: Ananya PUNYATOYA**

**Abstract:** Convalescence, as a period of gradual recovery, disrupts normative temporalities. It is inextricably linked to repetition—the cycles of physical, emotional, and psychological recuperation that resist linear progression and redefine time. Kierkegaard conceptualizes repetition as what must be lost to be found again. Beauvoir reframes this as sacrificial repetition which becomes a temporality for freedom—one must be able to repeat or retake their autonomy continuously toward an open future. This is fundamental to the experience of being a woman. To bolster this idea the female body also often has to abide by the laws of cyclical repetition and I argue this repetition also manifests in the processes of convalescence. This paper explores how crip time—the flexible, nonlinear experience of time often shaped by illness and disability—redefines recovery as an iterative process rather than a linear trajectory and examines the gendered dimensions of convalescence with a focus on how female subjects navigate this liminal space of recovery. Drawing on texts such as Elizabeth Gaskell's *Ruth* (1853) and Virginia Woolf's "On Being Ill" (1926), alongside narratives from the margins like Audre Lorde's *The Cancer Journals* (1980), I explore how these works position convalescence as a site of both personal transformation and social critique. This paper interrogates convalescence as it intersects with gender, class, and race, uncovering how the restrictive norms of Victorian domesticity and modernist alienation shaped representations of care and recovery. I argue that while 19th-century

depictions of convalescence often romanticized care as a moral duty tied to domestic femininity, modernist texts disrupted these conventions, framing illness and recovery as opportunities for introspection, creative expression, and resistance against normative productivity. This comparative analysis also considers the material and temporal aspects of convalescence—the sickroom as a gendered space, the symbolic weight of convalescent aids, and the ‘time out of time’ experienced during prolonged recovery.

Building on Veena Das’s concept of “everyday affliction” in *Affliction* (2014), this paper examines how women across different historical periods navigated the varied temporalities of sickness and recovery in their everyday lives. By analysing how the notion of convalescence across contexts, this study reveals that repetition lies at the core of these experiences, creating a fluid transgression between illness as an event and an everyday affliction and convalescence as a respite from the everyday. This analysis posits repetition in convalescence as not merely a return to the same but a reworking of identity and relationality, where healing becomes an ongoing, iterative process rather than a definitive endpoint. Ultimately, this re-evaluation of literary narratives underscores the evolving ways in which convalescence engages with broader questions of identity, care, and adaptation in an ever-accelerating modern world.

#### **Bionote:**

**Ananya PUNYATOYA** is a PhD student at the Centre for English Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. She works on illness narratives, solidarities and care communities.

### **Day 1 Session 2 Paper 2**

**Paper Title: George Eliot’s “The Lifted Veil” and Ian McEwan’s *The Children Act*: Transfusions, Convalescence and Ethics 150 Years Apart**

**Name: Dr. Eva M. PÉREZ-RODRÍGUEZ**

**Abstract:** The ending of George Eliot’s novella “The Lifted Veil” revolves around the consequences of a blood transfusion on a convalescing patient who becomes the object of a medical experiment. At the height of the Victorian period this plot twist, together with the motif of clairvoyance, an ability which one of the characters possesses, served Eliot as the perfect excuse to explore issues of scientific exploration, the absence of narrative and moral causality, and the nature of moral responsibility. That the convalescing recipient of a transfusion is a morally questionable female character also invites a discussion on the role of certain gender features in Eliot’s work. Convalescence and a blood transfusion likewise drive much of the narrative conflict of Ian McEwan’s *The Children Act*. The main character’s refusal to be transfused on religious grounds opens up a wide range of ethical, legal, and for the individuals involved with him, personal and emotional repercussions which McEwan explores with his accustomed narrative virtuosity. The judge as God – similar to the formulation of the author as God in other novels of his – resolves the fate of patients, not just the protagonist, who convalesce as a result of contemporary medical and judiciary practices which do not always have a positive outcome. My paper analyses the similarities and differences of transfusions and convalescence in these two works, which I take as illustrations of the ethical and scientific debates around the authors in their respective historical contexts. In addition, both Eliot and McEwan utilise

transfusion and convalescence as the means to explore omniscience and / or omnipotence, either as a character or as a narrator, and ultimately, concerning the authors themselves.

**Bionote:**

**Eva M. PÉREZ-RODRÍGUEZ** teaches English literature at Universitat de les Illes Balears (Spain). She holds an MPhil (Bradford) and a PhD in English Philology (Oviedo). After working on the radical writings of William Godwin, particularly his *Memoirs of Mary Wollstonecraft*, her research focused on contemporary British fiction related to World War II. This resulted in her volume *How the Second World War is Depicted by British Novelists since 1990* (Edwin Mellen, 2012). She has also published on popular romance, psychogeographical fiction, and the prevalence of various eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British authors (Defoe, Scott, etc.) in contemporary culture and society.

**Day 1 Session 2 Paper 3**

**Paper Title: Healing Beyond Humanity: Non-human Care and Ecological Convalescence in Anglophone Literature**

**Name: Eptisum LASKAR**

**Abstract:** This paper investigates how non-human entities - plants, animals, and the natural environment - emerge as central agents of care in convalescence narratives across 19th and 20th century Anglophone literature. By shifting the caregiving role away from humans, these texts reveal a profound entanglement between ecological systems and individual recovery. Engaging with posthumanist theories, particularly Donna Haraway's concept of "companion species" and Bruno Latour's Actor-Network Theory, the research reinterprets convalescence as a process mediated by human and non-human interdependencies. Through key literary works, such as Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden*, Charles Dickens's *Bleak House*, and Virginia Woolf's *To The Lighthouse*, the paper explores how spaces and beings outside human society- gardens, animals, rural retreats, and natural landscapes-actively participate in restoring the physical and emotional health of convalescent characters. This paper challenges anthropocentric recovery narratives and foregrounds ecological and multi-species interdependencies in healing. This fresh perspective not only critiques industrial and colonial exploitation of nature but also anticipates contemporary discussions about ecological health and environmental care. These representations reveal how literature engages with enduring questions of interconnection, vulnerability, and recovery, offering transformative insights into the ethics of care.

**Bionote:**

**Eptisum LASKAR** is a PhD scholar in English at Aliah University. She holds a Master's degree in English Literature from Diamond Harbour Women's University and a Bachelor's degree from Calcutta University. Her research interests include Environmental Humanities, Memory Studies, Food Studies, Postcolonial Studies, Popular Culture, and Social Poetry. Eptisum has presented her work at various national and international conferences, engaging with interdisciplinary approaches to literature and culture. Beyond academia, she is an avid reader, writer, and artist,

passionate about exploring the intersections of language, identity, and ecological thought. Committed to meaningful scholarly contributions, she continues to expand her critical practice through research and creative expression.

*(Short break – 15 minutes)*

### **Day 1 Session 3: The Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century/Modernists**

12.00-12.45pm Nantes      3.30pm-4.15pm Delhi

**Chair: Dr. Leslie de BONT**

#### **Day 1 Session 3 Paper 1**

**Paper Title: Death by Convalescence: The Recovering Body and Ideology in Detective Fiction**

**Name: Sruthi VENKATESWARAN**

Detective fiction is a genre of constant action, and is also a logical, rational genre, where everything within the world of the novel happens for a reason, with little room for superfluity. Keeping this understanding of the genre in mind, in this paper, I attempt to examine the representation of convalescence in two works of 20th century Anglophone detective fiction – *The Night of Fear* (1931) by Moray Dalton, and *The Black Spectacles* (1939) by John Dickson Carr. I argue that in these novels, far from being moments of healing and recovery, periods of convalescence function as times of increased vulnerability and mortal danger. In both the novels listed above, characters who have been injured but who are since on the road to recovery, are killed before they can reveal crucial pieces of information. This is in keeping with the desire of the genre for constant progression, and minimal digression, transforming convalescence into a period of anxiety and activity. In this paper, I would like to argue that the fundamental paradox of the period of recovery transforming into a period of increased vulnerability is a reflection of the ideological premises of the genre. Drawing on the works of Alison Light and Stephen Knight, I posit that detective fiction, as a conservative and capitalist genre, values productive bodies over passive, recovering ones. Within this framework, the “corpse-as-text” (Gill Plain) has more significance than the convalescent, non-productive body. Additionally, I would like to suggest that convalescence functions within the genre not as a “temporal respite” (Talia Schaffer) but as a moment of narrative progression, as a device that propels the plot forward.

#### **Bionote:**

**Sruthi VENKATESWARAN** is a second-year PhD student at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India. She is particularly interested in thinking about detective fiction, genre, and form, and her doctoral work examines how the form of the letter interacts with and influences the genre of detective fiction.

## Day 1 Session 3 Paper 2

### **Paper Title: The Convalescence of Spanish Flu Patients in American Fictions: An Indirect Representation of the 1918 Pandemic**

**Name: Denis LEROY**

**Abstract:** The 1918 influenza pandemic has been widely studied from medical and historical perspectives yet it remains a neglected literary and cultural subject (Crosby, Outka, Belling, Sontag). Among the reasons behind this oblivion is the difficulty of putting into words or images the inner effects of illness on the individual (Hawkins, Belling, Jurecic). As such, a representation of the edges (of what comes before, after and around the medical crisis) is often one of the privileged means to portray the illness itself (Frank). Indeed, most of the few American novels giving some stage to the 1918 influenza pandemic do so by what could be called indirect representations of the illness. Times of convalescence are thus given pride of place in these fictions. They are not presented in opposition to illness but often as its continuation so that representing convalescence becomes a means to represent the illness itself, to outline the extent of its devastating powers. Embracing convalescence as a focal point for the representation of illness and sanitary crises entails possibilities for analeptic representation and thematizes the literary difficulties that come with the writing of pain, suffering and loss. Convalescence will in this case be understood as an extension of the influenza epidemic that allows a representation beyond its most acute phases and its direct consequences. Fictions of the influenza epidemic thus emphasize this often forgotten moment (Ménager 10) that points towards the end of a medical crisis while perhaps paradoxically making its representation possible. The pitfall in representing sickness through its outcome however – and an often positive one as the notion implies – is that it might tend to tone down the intensity of the illness and tie in with the traditional triumphalist view that growth comes after a struggle against illness.

#### **Bionote:**

**Denis LEROY** is a 28 years old third-year PhD student in American literature. He specializes in 20th and 21st representations of the 1918 influenza epidemics in fictions. He passed the Agrégation in 2021 and studied at the Ecole Normale Supérieure de Lyon before obtaining a PhD scholarship in 2022 under the supervision of Madame Pascale Antolin at CLIMAS. He has been teaching for the past four years at Lyon 3 University, CPGE classes in Lyon and Université Bordeaux Montaigne. He presented a talk at the AFEA Congress last May on the representation of the therapeutic relationship in two Spanish flu novels, wrote a review for *Transatlantica* and has two accepted articles and another talk planned for the end of 2025.

*(Long break – 1h15)*

## Day 1 Session 4: The Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century/Modernists (2)

2.00-2.45pm Nantes

5.30-6.15pm Delhi

**Chair: Dr Sanna SCHYLLERT**

### Day 1 Session 4 Paper 1

**Paper title: H. D.'s *Helen in Egypt* as a Convalescent Epic**

**Name: Dr. Apala DAS**

**Abstract:** Can one actively convalesce or is convalescence something that happens to one? This paper examines the modernist poet H. D.'s (Hilda Doolittle) later works, particularly her late epic *Helen in Egypt*, to show that in H. D.'s late phase, an acknowledgement of her own need for care went hand in hand with an active engagement with personal and poetic self-discipline. The relevance of convalescence in H. D.'s life was multi-faceted; being raised in a Moravian family with multiple siblings, H. D.'s early life was marked by alienation from family, emotional neglect, and what could be summatively called the "mother wound." In her ensuing life, after having suffered multiple losses and war trauma, she began consulting Freud in the 1930s at the age of 47. *Helen in Egypt*, H. D.'s mindfully crafted revisionary epic published in 1961 is a convalescent work in many ways. Although it showcases H. D.'s life-long poetic career, her earlier imagistic ellipses lend themselves in this poem to more restful prosaic stretches of self-revelation, leading to a unique hybridity in lyrical self-expression. At the same time, in continuation with her earlier works, *Helen in Egypt* is a solipsistic retelling of a populous epic. However, Egypt also becomes the ground and space of solitary retreat in the poem for Helen's healing. Finally, *Helen in Egypt* marks the culmination of H. D.'s life-long negotiation with literary and personal askesis or self-discipline. In this paper, I close-read the transformation of the "crystal" metaphor in *Helen in Egypt* to show that H. D.'s late epic is indeed a revisionary ascetical poem containing temporal (and perhaps even transcendental) dimensions of convalescence or "time out of time."

#### **Bionote:**

**Dr. Apala DAS** is Assistant Professor in the Department of English Language and Literature, Bilkent University, Ankara, Turkey. She specializes in global 20th century literatures, poetry and poetics, and post secularism. Her work has appeared in *The Wallace Stevens Journal*, *the Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, and *the Bloomsbury Philosophy Library's Aesthetics and Politics in the Global South*.

## Day 1 Session 4 Paper 2

### Paper Title: Convalescence, Trauma, and the Empowering Potential of Solitary Reflection in Jean Rhys's Modernist Novels

**Name: Dr. Alejandro NADAL-RUIZ**

**Abstract:** The representation of trauma and recovery is a major concern in Jean Rhys's fiction. Her female protagonists have often been viewed as vulnerable and passive victims trapped in a state of negative inertia. Deeply affected by a complex trauma rooted in alienation, these characters choose to retreat into isolation as a means of escaping the challenges posed by a dismissive male-dominated society. Their voluntary lockdowns in rundown hotel rooms involve long periods of convalescence during which they engage in memory retrieval and reconstruct significant moments from their past. This paper examines some key passages that foreground the psychological journeys of Rhys's women during their recovery phase in her modernist novels, with a particular emphasis on *Good Morning, Midnight* (1939). The primary aim of this analysis is to interpret these analepses as evidence of a potentially empowering endeavour by Rhys's heroines to overcome their emotional paralysis through a deeper understanding of their trauma. Their solitude is thus framed as an opportunity to fathom the events central to their trauma and transform these fragmented experiences into a shareable narrative. Rhys's depiction of their backward journeys, which is modelled on her own biography, is examined in light of Jenny Edkins' concept of "trauma time" (2003, 2006), which addresses how the storytelling of trauma necessarily entails a distortion of chronological time and the ideologies it signifies. In this context, the use of analepsis is read as a subversive strategy that allows both Rhys and her women to manipulate the traditional flow of time, in a way writing back against oppressive systems like patriarchy or colonialism. Ultimately, this paper sheds light on the intersections of gender, trauma, and the narrative strategies of healing in Rhys's work, framing her heroines as navigating the liminal space of convalescence with a paradoxical blend of fragility and resilience.

#### **Bionote:**

**Alejandro NADAL-RUIZ** is an early career scholar and Assistant Teacher at the University of Zaragoza (Spain). In March 2024, he defended his PhD thesis on trauma and the limit-case testimony in Jean Rhys's modernist novels. He has published several articles on the therapeutic function of literature and the depiction of relational identities in contemporary Anglophone narratives. His main lines of research comprise memory and trauma studies, autobiography, and the representation of ethnic minorities in the literature of the so-called transmodern paradigm.

*(Short break – 15 minutes)*

## **Day 1 Session 5: Nonfiction**

3.00-3.45pm Nantes

6.30-7.15pm Delhi

**Chair : Dr. Leslie de BONT**

### **Day 1 Session 5 Paper 1**

**Paper title: Animals and Convalescence in 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Anglophone Literature: a 'Zoopoetical' Approach**

**Name: Dr. Marion LETELLIER**

**Abstract:** Convalescence is usually thought of as a possibly challenging parenthesis, a moment during which a person may seek the comfort of company, but not necessarily among their human fellows. What has been the role of animals, especially pets, in periods of convalescence ? I would like to propose a little time-traveling to see if, in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century English literature, pets have been described as companions who have brought wellbeing to humans in periods of convalescence. This presentation will combine a historical and sociological approach in order to understand how animals (such as cats and dogs especially) have entered the domestic sphere, therefore becoming companions able to alleviate human throes. We will look for such examples in English literature as well as in the biographies of authors and discuss the complexity of understanding such articulation. Indeed, for a very long time, animals have been used as (moral) receptacles and not perceived as autonomous living beings. The birth and development of ethology in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century means a scientific shift from which stems a cultural shift. We therefore witness a change, perceptible in literature, regarding the role of animals regarding convalescence and, more broadly, therapy. Did we truly have to wait for the 20<sup>th</sup> century, or were there precursors, traces of animals enhancing human wellbeing, in literature before?

#### **Bionote:**

**Marion LETELLIER** worked on the impact of translating the reappropriation of emotions in Jeanette Winterson's work over the course of her PhD in literature and translation studies. She was a lecturer at the University of Nottingham (UK) for two years and she is currently part of the CRINI laboratory (EA 1162). She teaches English at the Faculty of Psychology and at the Faculty of Sport Sciences in Nantes University. She is also engaged in the cause of animal welfare and combines different passions – literature, animals and history – through exploring Literature and Animal Studies.

## Day 1 Session 5 Paper 2

### **Paper Title: ‘Shut in on all sides by infirmities’: the Daily Work of Convalescence in the Diaries of Katherine Mansfield and Louisa May Alcott**

**Name: Maëlle NAGOT**

**Abstract:** Bringing together scholarship on life-writing, illness, and gender, this paper explores Louisa May Alcott and Katherine Mansfield’s use of the diary genre as a form of writing which chronicles the daily—and difficult—work of convalescence, when illness forbids more profitable creative endeavors. The personal narratives that these writers unfold not only exacerbate the repetitive rhythms, frustrations, and hindrances that characterize recovery, but also highlight the incompatibility of diaristic and literary writing, as the diary becomes the repository of impeded demiurgic energies.

As a genre centered on the singularity of each passing day, the journal appears particularly well suited to record the quotidian activities of the convalescent writer, as she heeds injunctions to slowness and minimal exertion. And yet, under Katherine Mansfield and Louisa May Alcott’s pens, diaries become iterative texts that constantly loop back on themselves, precluding any conception of convalescent time as linear and progressive. Both authors write irregularly, often telegraphically, with a propensity to retrospective annotations and intra-textual echoes. The unsettling of calendar boundaries shatters the fragile balance promised by restorative everyday routines. The notebooks thus inscribe the ups and downs of the path to recovery in a chaotic, palimpsestic way, upsetting the legibility of the process as a whole. Moreover, because the diary is represented as peripheral to Alcott and Mansfield’s literary enterprise, it comes to crystallize the tension between the competing impulses of the convalescent woman writer—the need to rest being endlessly jeopardized by the need to work. The parsimonious spending of energy required to recuperate clashes with the volcanic impetus that admittedly drives both Alcott and Mansfield’s fictional oeuvre. As a result, the diary acquires a liminal status, as writing that is not true writing, or work that is not real work, but a transitional space between rehabilitation and literary creation.

#### **Bionote:**

**Maëlle NAGOT** is a first-year PhD student in English and American Literature at Université Paris Cité and the University of Surrey. Her master’s dissertation, investigating the dissolution of the self in the diary and letters of Alice James, gave rise to a 2022 graduate conference paper entitled ‘Impersonality as Resistance in Alice James’s Diary’ and delivered at the University of Oxford. Her current research examines the ways in which impersonality, understood as the multiplication, erosion, or erasure of the ‘I,’ intersects with experiences of illness and spatial displacement in the journals of Louisa May Alcott, Alice James, and Katherine Mansfield.

*(Short break – 15 minutes)*

## Plenary Session 1

8.00-9.00am Wyoming    4.00-5.00pm Nantes    7.30-8.30pm Delhi

**Chair: Dr. Aude PETIT-MARQUIS**

**Dr. Hosanna KRIENKE**

### **Recovering Convalescence: Rehabilitation Practices Past and Present**

Convalescence seems to be making a comeback. When I first began to research convalescence, the term itself felt antiquated, its practices unfamiliar and mostly forgotten. However, since the COVID-19 pandemic, many medically-minded thinkers have turned their attention to the practices and expectations surrounding physical recovery. The aftermath of illness is emerging as a potent space ripe for theorization, as indicated by the physician Gavin Francis' book *Recovery: The Lost Art of Convalescence* (2022), journalist Ed Yong's years-long investigation of long Covid for *The Atlantic*, even the existence of this conference itself. This talk provides an overview of such emerging trends in order to ask: What does it mean to recover convalescence as a paradigm and as a practice? How do nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century practices diverge from the recent uses of this word, and what can we learn today from Victorian thinkers in exploring post-acute care? Along the way, my goal is also to investigate the ways that historicist and literary research can play a powerful role in shaping what is thinkable in our own era.

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# Convalescence in 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Anglophone Literature

27-06-2025

## Day 2

### Day 2 Introductory Session

9.00-9.15am Nantes

12.30-12.45pm Delhi

### Day 2 Session 1: 19<sup>th</sup> Century

9.15-10.30am Nantes

12.45-2.00pm Delhi

**Chair: Prof. Meetu Khosla**

### Day 2 Session 1 Paper 1

**Paper Title: “[H]er mind had lost its elasticity” – The Resilience of Caregiving in Elizabeth Gaskell’s *North and South***

**Name: Dr. Anne KORFMACHER**

**Abstract:** Margaret Hale, the heroine of Elizabeth Gaskell’s *North and South* (1854-5), is characterised at the beginning of the novel by “glances that spoke of [...] boundless hope in the future” (Gaskell 17) and a ready-caregiving for neighbours in need, including rheumatic “Old Simon” and “Mary Domville’s little crippled boy” (Gaskell 41). Moving to the industrial town Milton, she is soon confronted with a reality in which her caregiving is intensified and focussed on close friends and family members. Assisting her parents and her friend Bessy during periods of prolonged ill health, uncertainty, and eventually death, Margaret embodies the feminine ideal of the Victorian middle-class “angel” in the house (Patmore; Gaskell 250) who provides domestic care out of a sense of familial and Christian duty (Schaffer). In particular, Margaret cares for her invalid mother, whose weak disposition and history of exaggerating moments of ill health before her fatal illness compound the uncertainty of her sickroom, leading to moments of false hope for convalescence among her caregivers. Responding to the symposium’s aim of exploring narrative representations and experiences of care and recovery, this paper delves into the portrayal of resilience in the context of Victorian caregiving by tracing Margaret’s ability to cope and adapt over the course of the novel. Manifesting as ‘elasticity of mind’ in texts of the

nineteenth-century (cf. Young), resilience describes the “capacity for doing well under adversity” and the “positive adaptation in the context of risk” (Masten 9). Despite the caring responsibilities Margaret takes on, she “proves to be quite resilient” (Hoydis 332) by using a variety of coping strategies to successfully adapt to her changing circumstances, including an extended period of rest by the sea. Ultimately, Margaret’s endurance and bouncing back reveal that resilience, a prerequisite for caregiving, is a limited resource that itself requires periods of convalescence – “an opportunity for reflection, leisure, and expanded sympathies” (Krienke 2) – to recover.

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#### **Bionote:**

**Dr Anne KORFMACHER** has been a postdoctoral researcher at University of Graz in Austria since 2024, prior to which she was a PhD scholarship holder at the a.r.t.e.s. Graduate School for the Humanities Cologne, Germany. Her research and teaching area is English literature and culture from the 18th to the 21st century. This paper is part of her current research project interested in the narrative manifestation of resilience in anglophone prose fiction from the nineteenth century to the present. She has previously published on the topics of gender, fan cultures, and podcasting, including the first monograph on fan podcast genres called *Fan Podcasts: Rewatch, Recap, Review* (2024).

## **Day 2 Session 1 Paper 2**

**Paper Title: Healing through Isolation: Rereading Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* as a 19th-Century Narrative of Convalescence**

**Name: Dr. Harini PATOWARY DAS**

**Abstract:** Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* (1847) is a 19th century fiction read as a gothic romance or a psychological narrative of passion and revenge. In an attempt to reread the novel in the light of Victorian ideals of healing through isolation, solitude, and connection with nature, it has been revealed that Brontë’s work embodies a nuanced portrayal of recovery of the characters from emotional and physical traumas, where healing is intimately tied to the settings, narrative

structure, and the critical interpersonal relationship of the characters. The Victorian era witnessed a growing emphasis on convalescence as a restorative process that demanded time, retreat, and communion with nature. However, in *Wuthering Heights*, Brontë interweaves these ideals with gothic and romantic traditions, where isolation acts both as a site for recovery and also a catalyst for destructive introspection. Nature is treated both as a therapeutic as well as destructive force in the recovery of the characters as the wild and untamed moors which stands as a metaphor for Cathy and Heathcliff's unrestrained passion and desire for freedom fails to pacify their emotional struggles. The study also examines the role of introspection and isolation as an intrinsic part of the healing process as reflected in Lockwood's convalescence and Nelly's recounting of the events. This dual-layered narration used by the author allows both characters and readers to engage in a cyclical process of trauma processing and emotional recovery and her understanding of convalescence as a complex, often incomplete journey. By situating *Wuthering Heights* within the broader framework of 19th-century cultural and literary discourses on healing, this paper tries to study the novel's deeper engagement with themes of recovery and human struggle with trauma, redemption and self-discovery.

#### **Bionote:**

**Dr. Harini PATOWARY DAS** is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English at Lakhimpur Commerce College, (Assam) India. She holds a Ph.D. in The Study of the Growth of Environmental Imagination in Children's Literature in English in India. Her academic interests include gender studies, nature studies, indigenous literature, and film studies. She is also a member of the English Language Teachers' Association of India (ELTAI).

### **Day 2 Session 1 Paper 3**

**Paper title: Viewing 'Herbal Convalescence' through Spirituality in Medical Literature: A Departure from Colonial Healthcare Systems in India**

**Name: Aditi BASU**

**Abstract:** 'Herbal convalescence' or recovery through herbal remedies has been the part and parcel of ancient Indian medical science, the *Ayurveda* and Yoga. By using the term 'herbal', I refer to the absence of modern chemical drugs towards healing and recovery. However, it was during the British colonial period, spanning between the eighteenth and the twentieth centuries, that *Ayurveda's* significance began to decline with the British using it as a political weapon to demean Indian culture as unscientific while dubbing the Anglophonic medical science as the modernised and the most suited for curing widespread pandemics. Ironically, this narrative had another side: there were many European scholars who were totally moved by the scientific methods of *Ayurveda* and Yoga and wrote several literary texts in their own languages that were later translated to English. Some of them were Garcia D'Orta from Portugal (*Conversations on the Simples, Drugs and Medicinal Substances of India*- 1563), John Ovington (*A Voyage to Suratt, In the Year, 1689*) and John Fryer (*A New Account of East-India and Persia*- 1698) from England and Max Müller (Germany) who were deeply influenced by ancient Indian healing systems. While explaining Yogic postures, they also analysed the associated spirituality of

realising oneself as a part of the Supreme Soul which were explained in their texts. Therefore, in my research, I analyse the Anglophonic literature's role in bringing out the essence of the Indian convalescence system in the colonial era which created a divide amongst the Europeans: the ones who supported Western medicine and the others who considered the Indian healing system superior to the Western one.

**Bionote:**

**Aditi BASU** is an India-based independent researcher. She holds her Master's in Political Science and Diploma in International Law and Governance from the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR). She has written various articles on world affairs, where her research interests focus mainly on Indian Foreign Policy, International Relations, Feminist Power Politics, Soft Power Diplomacy and Climate Diplomacy. Ms. Basu has presented her research papers in conferences and workshops in Austria, the USA, Bulgaria, Canada, France, the U.K., Serbia, Croatia, Portugal, Germany, Thailand, Spain, the Netherlands, New Zealand and South Africa.

*(Short break – 30 minutes)*

**Day 2 Session 2: Non-Fiction**

11.00-12.15pm Nantes

2.30-3.45pm Delhi

**Chair: Dr. Violina BORAH**

**Day 2 Session 2 Paper 1**

**Paper title: Bengalis' "Paschim": Convalescence and Identity-Formation in Late-Nineteenth and Early-Twentieth Century Bengal**

**Name: Ahana MAITRA**

**Abstract:** Even as confidence in the purported benefits of the “magic mountains” was waning among the European population, physicians and concerned family members continued recommending a “change of air” to members of the Bengali elite; sending them very often, from around the second half of the nineteenth century, to a set of sites in the Chotangapur and Santhal Parganas administrative divisions—collectively referred to as “Paschim” [“West”]—on the western margins of the Bengal Presidency. But, even as periodicals like *Swasthya* were running features on the suitability of these sites as health stations, the *Annual Reports for the Sanitary Commissioner of Bengal* suggested that the region was far from “healthy”—in 1900, Palamau and Bhagalpur, had, in fact, some of the highest cholera death rates in the country, with the region also having consistently seen high mortality rates from small pox and fever in the preceding decade. Why, then, was “Paschim” attractive to the elite Bengali convalescent? Situating contemporary memoirs such as Surendranath Banerjee's *A Nation in Making*,

periodical literature, accounts of excursions in university and college magazines, travel guides like *Travel in India; City, Shrine and Sea Beach*, and advertisements, particularly by the Bengal-Nagpur Railway Company in the context of archival evidence and interviews conducted with second and third generation Bengali owners of property in the region, I will try to lay out, why irrespective of any real medical benefit, the Bengali elite were keen to incorporate convalescing in “Paschim” into their leisure and recreation repertoire. I will trace how “Paschim” came to enable and represent patienthoods and modes of ailing that proved to be a “solution” on multiple fronts for the Bengali elite, who on the one hand were eager to distinguish themselves from the “targets” of the oppressive public health measures undertaken by the colonial administration in the wake of epidemic outbreaks; and on the other were in search of a “healthful” contrast to the increasingly crowded, and thus, competitive and emasculating space of Calcutta, and how, thus, convalescing became entangled with matters of identity-formation.

**Bionote:**

**Ahana MAITRA** is a PhD candidate at the Department of English, Jadavpur University, Her research focuses on the history of the Bengali elite’s emergence and the role of print cultures in such identity-formation.

**Day 2 Session 2 Paper 2**

**Paper title: An Attack of Anamnesis: Sickness and Recovery in the Letters of Philip K Dick's *Exegesis***

**Name: Krushna DANDE**

**Abstract:** In 1974, the science fiction author Philip K Dick began experiencing a series of visionary episodes. Dick believed these were communications from extraterrestrial intelligences that were revealing to him the illusory nature of reality. He spent the remainder of his life grappling with the ramifications of these visions in the form of thousands of pages of writing. In the pages of this labyrinthine work called the *Exegesis*, Dick elaborates a highly idiosyncratic form of Christian Gnostic theology where the real world has been replaced by an ersatz prison world. Much of the *Exegesis* consists of a body of correspondence where he attempted to explain to his friends the nature of his visions. These letters often have the form of one who is sick writing letters to one who is healthy. Dick, suffering from anamnesis, writes to those who remain outside of this experience, and he devotes much time to attempting to understand the physical and psychic changes he is undergoing. I argue that Dick’s experience ought to be placed in the context of convalescence, with its ambiguous time of recovery and alienation from the common course of life. This paper proposes to treat the correspondence published within his *Exegesis* as a literary document of a self-directed convalescence of an extremely unusual type, characterised by fervent activity rather than rest and relaxation. This paper will attempt to read these letters as Dick’s attempts to narrate this ambiguous place between his arrested recovery and his visionary rereading of the world. Its approach will be informed by both the linguistic aspect of science fictional worldbuilding and the study of conspiratorial and mystical accounts of reality.

**Bionote:**

**Krushna DANDE** is a PhD scholar at the Centre for English Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University. His writings have been published in the collection *Horror Fiction in the Global South* published by Bloomsbury India and the SFRA Review. His work has been presented at international conferences in Kolkata, Lisbon, and London. His current research follows the relationship between science fiction, conspiracy theory, and magic.

**Day 2 Session 2 Paper 3****Paper Title: “Attack of Vertigo and Nausea”. Subjectivity and Convalescence in Joan Didion’s Essays**

**Name: Dr. Olga SZMIDT**

**Abstract:** The presentation proposes a comprehensive reading and critical analysis of two of Joan Didion’s volumes of essays (*Slouching Towards Bethlehem*, 1968, and *White Album*, 1979) in the double interpretative framework. The first is the creation of the self in these essays and textual expression of subjectivity. I would propose to focus the analysis on how Didion understands herself and her position in the late 60s and early 70s through her essays – using them as a tool of self-reflection, but also as a certain testimony of the times. “Most of us live less theatrically, but remain the survivors of a peculiar and inward time” – she writes in *Morning After Sixties*. I would propose to interpret her essays as a tool of not only subjective transformation, but also as a method of reaching the condition of convalescence. “If I was to work again at all, it would be necessary for me to come to terms with disorder” – she states when describing her decision to go to San Francisco in 1967. In this respect, her writing is not a medium protecting her from the tremble of the outside crisis, but rather facing it in a complex manner, including personal volatility. The second framework of my interpretation would be, therefore, the experience of illness and convalescence as well as the metaphors of these conditions used by Didion. I would propose to interpret her description of the 60s as a time of social and cultural illness and crisis not in terms of unambiguously critical point of view, but as an expression of experience of a complex, sometimes painful and distressing, bodily process of individual and national transformation. Including her doctor’s notes in one of the essays seems like a transgressive gesture in the journalist’s work, but it also emphasizes the memory of her strained condition. In this way, I would like to interpret her essays as a powerful account of the experience of crisis, in which illness and metaphors of illness play a key role. Through the essays, the subject faces the illnesses of the times and emerges from them. This seems to be the designed possible outcome of the 1960s in her essays: not the fall of the counterculture, but America’s shifted position as a convalescent painfully aware of their recent illness.

**Bionote:**

**Olga SZMIDT** is Assistant Professor at the Chair of Contemporary Criticism, Jagiellonian University in Kraków. Currently she works on a project focused on the passive resistance in literature after the Global Financial Crisis of 2008. Her interests include literary theory, modern philosophy of the self, world literature and literary criticism. She is author of two monographs (*Korespondent Witkacy*, 2014; *Autentyczność: stan krytyczny*, 2019), collection of essays and

articles (*Odkrywanie Ameryki*, 2018), and co-editor of volume (*Face in Trouble: From Physiognomics to Facebook*, 2017). Apart from working at the university, she is an active literary and TV critic.

## **Day 2 Session 2 Parallel Session: Mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century**

11.00-12.15am Nantes      2.30-3.45pm Delhi

**Chair: Prof. Deepshikha MAHANTA BORTAMULY**

### **Day 2 Session 2 Parallel Session Paper 1**

**Paper title: ‘Then came the languid monotony of convalescence’: Intertextualities in Victorian and Neo-Victorian Gothic Narratives of Illness**

**Name: Dr. Marta MIQUEL-BALDELLOU**

**Abstract:** According to Hosanna Krienke (2021), convalescence in the nineteenth-century was considered an extended period of rest and recuperation which was characterised by liminality and uncertainty. The prolongation of convalescent time involved that, in literary depictions of convalescence, its intrinsic protracted uncertainty was reflected in the process of novel-reading itself, thus allowing readers to share the narrator’s process of illness and recuperation. George Eliot’s novella *The Lifted Veil* (1859), Daphne du Maurier’s *My Cousin Rachel* (1951) and Susan Hill’s *The Woman in Black* (1983) are Victorian and Neo-Victorian narratives which present manifest intertextualities among them, insofar as they are all first-person narratives in which an aging man unveils his memories about a period of illness and convalescence that befell him in his youth, along with his relationship with a woman, by whom he felt attracted and repelled, and who arises as a literal and metaphorical cause of his illness. This presentation aims to approach Eliot’s *The Lifted Veil*, Du Maurier’s *My Cousin Rachel*, and Hill’s *The Woman in Black* as narratives of illness and convalescence, with a particular emphasis on analysing their intertextualities with the purpose of delineating an evolution of the dynamics of illness and convalescence from Victorian to Neo-Victorian narratives. As theoretical frameworks, the works of Susan Sontag, Ann Jurecic, Kaethe Weingarten, and Arthur Frank will be employed in order to delineate a poetics of illness and convalescence displayed in these three narratives. In particular, drawing on Susan Sontag’s notion of illness as metaphor—as she underlines the connections often established between illness and fight, alien invasion, and even demonic possession—scholars like Ann Jurecic put forward the narrative potential of metaphors in illness narratives, insofar as metaphors provide a narrative framework in order to engage with the suffering of others (2012, 91). From a narratological perspective, Kaethe Weingarten (2001) makes use of diverse classificatory schemas to approach narratives of illness and convalescence, such as Seymour Chapman’s three concepts of narrative coherence, closure, and interdependence; Arthur Frank’s classification of illness stories (1995) as restitution, chaos, and quest narratives; and, Kenneth Gergen’s categorisation of illness stories (1994) as stability, progressive, and regressive narratives. Finally, Arthur Frank’s groundbreaking notions (2014)

about the role of humanities in therapeutic practice include significant concepts in illness and convalescence narratives, such as recurring tensions (between illness and disease, patient and ill person, medical history and an ill person's story, and treatment and care), dynamogenic effects (like excitements, efforts, and ideas), and the stages of narrative therapeutics (like prompting, enhancing, and appreciating). This presentation will focus on the subjective description of the processes of male illness and convalescence on behalf of homodiegetic male narrators, the metaphor of illness through the dynamics of fascination and repulsion toward an ambivalent fallen woman, and illness in connection with the process of aging, since the male narrators in these narratives recollect their memories of illness and convalescence from their perspective as aging men.

#### **Bionote:**

**Marta MIQUEL-BALDELLOU** works as a Postdoctoral Researcher at the Centre of Literatures and Cultures in English of the University of Lleida (Catalonia, Spain). She holds an International PhD in Comparative Literature, a Master's Degree in Women's Studies, Gender and Citizenship, a Master's Degree in Linguistic Mediation, a Postgraduate Degree in Literary Studies and Digital Literature with a Specialisation in Literary Theory and Comparative Literature, and a Postgraduate Degree in Literary Translation. She also holds a BA in English Philology with a final thesis on literature. Her field of research revolves around comparative literature, Gothic fiction, aging, gender, and film studies. She is currently taking part in a government-funded project on aging and creativity. Her research papers have been published in academic journals like *The ESSE Messenger*, *Frontiers in Narrative Studies*, *The Edgar Allan Poe Review*, and *Age, Culture, Humanities*, and books edited by Rodopi/Brill, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Peter Lang, Palgrave Macmillan, and Routledge.

### **Day 2 Session 2 Parallel Session Paper 2**

**Paper title: A Modernist Convalescence in *The Little Black Box* by Shakuntala Shrinagesh: Exploring Aesthetics of Illness and Isolation in early Indian English Fiction**

**Name: Vedika KAUSHAL**

**Abstract:** *The Little Black Box* (1955) by Shakuntala Shrinagesh is a canonically marginal text written during the early stage of the novel's development in 20th century India. A reflective stream-of-consciousness narrative, it documents the brief life of its protagonist Sarala, who is hospitalised in the hill country of Northern India and voluntarily estranged from her family while awaiting her impending death. My paper argues that Shrinagesh employs the condition of Sarala's convalescence to foreground her engagement with modernist form and aesthetics of isolation, self-alienation and a spatio-temporal defamiliarization. It implicates modernism within Sarala's documentation of her illness (Fifield 2020) while its murky premise and strain posit her as an unreliable narrator, limited to the measured space of her bed and incumbent upon the care provided by her nurse, or 'the Woman', as she is addressed throughout the novel. Her relationship with her nurse and doctor become the only vestigial connections to her life even as they engage with her on a purely transactional basis. I further explore Shrinagesh's choice to

withdraw from the realist form to capture the fractal nature of Sarala's 'everydayness', that remains entrenched in strict medical routines and schedules and effectuate a visual, aural and spatial encroachment of her being. Ulka Anjaria has suggested that the early Indian English novel repeatedly integrated and fused with alternative aesthetic and thematic choices besides the dominant form of realism (2012:5-6). I argue that Shrinagesh's use of convalescence can be read as a form-al choice to engage with modernism's preoccupation with 'the event' vs 'the ordinary' (Olson 2009), and to explore individual space and recovery in a dominantly patriarchal society. It becomes exemplary of a rare and intimate study of (convalescent) introspection against the disruption of 20th century Indian family structures of care, custodianship and privacy within the early modern novel.

#### **Bionote:**

**Vedika KAUSHAL** is a doctoral researcher at the Shiv Nadar Institution of Eminence. Her research is concerned with the fields of Indian English literature and modernist studies and explores the rise of the modern Indian English novel between the time frame of 1930-60s. She aims to re-approach the topic of Indian modernisms and modernity by looking at the modern Indian city, local cosmopolitanisms, changing family and community structures against the creation of individual identity, with a focus on marginal and peripheral 20<sup>th</sup> century narratives.

### **Day 2 Session 2 Parallel Session paper 3**

**Paper title: The Art of Recovery: Exploring Convalescence in the Novels of Eileen Chang**

**Name: Dr. Hongliang ZHOU**

**Abstract:** Eileen Chang, born in 1920 in Shanghai, is renowned for her nuanced portrayals of love, marriage, and family in the context of a rapidly changing society. Her works often explore the lives of women caught between tradition and modernity, and her characters frequently grapple with issues of identity, power, and vulnerability. This research aims to investigate the theme of convalescence in 20th-century Chinese literature, with a specific focus on the works of Eileen Chang. Through a detailed case study of *Love in a Fallen City* and *The Rouge of the North*, it examines how Chang's convalescence narratives intersect with historical and cultural contexts, particularly in relation to modernity, gender, and identity; analyzes the intersection of convalescence with themes of memory, nostalgia, and loss in Chang's works, and explores how Chang portrays the physical, psychological, and social dimensions of recovery, reflecting the complexities of individual and collective experiences during a period of profound change.

The 20th century was a time of immense transformation, marked by political upheaval, social reform, and rapid modernization. These changes had a profound impact on the way individuals experienced health, illness, and recovery. While much attention has been paid to the portrayal of disease and trauma in Chinese literature, the theme of convalescence has received less scholarly focus. Yet, convalescence offers a rich and under-explored area for analysis, particularly in its ability to reflect the complexities of individual and collective experiences during times of transition. Through a close examination of Chang's works, this research will also contribute to

ongoing discussions in the field of medical humanities, particularly in relation to the representation of illness and recovery in literature. By exploring the unique ways in which Chang portrays convalescence, this study will offer a fresh perspective on the role of literature in shaping our understanding of health and healing.

**Bionote:**

**Dr. Hongliang ZHOU** is a lecturer at the School of Literature and Journalism, Changsha University of Science & Technology, and a graduate supervisor for the Theater and Film Arts program. He earned his doctoral degree from the School of Media and International Culture at Zhejiang University and has served as a visiting scholar at the Department of Theatre, Ohio State University, in the United States. He has participated in academic conferences and delivered research presentations at universities in countries including the UK, the USA, Japan, Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, Portugal, Poland, Serbia, Turkey, Singapore, Malaysia, and Australia. As an accomplished playwright and performance broker, he has also been involved in performance instruction. His accolades include the 2017 Hibiscus Flower Award at the 5th China-ASEAN International Theatre Festival and the Outstanding Play Award at the 9th China Campus Theatre Festival in 2024. He concurrently serves as a young editorial board member for the *Journal of Hebei University* (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition) and the *Journal of University of Science and Technology Beijing* (Social Sciences Edition). Dr. Zhou is also an outstanding contracted author with Huazhong University of Science and Technology Press and a special contributor to *Readers' Digest*, with some of his works translated into English and Thai for international publication.

(Long break – 1h30)

### **Day 2 Session 3: The Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

1.45-3.00pm Nantes

5.15-6.30pm Delhi

**Chair: Dr. Swetha ANTONY**

### **Day 2 Session 3 Paper 1**

**Paper title: Convalescence and psychological growth in J. Fowles's *The Magus***

**Name: Emmanuel ROLLIN**

**Abstract:** This article will focus on J. Fowles's novel *The Magus*. Our intent is to focus on psychological ill health and vulnerability to show how they can be overcome. We will posit that the main character's development is first seen as hindered as an echo of the postmodern deconstruction and uncertainty. This process is also at stake in a narrative that also threatens the linearity of the plot and the assertiveness of a first-person narrator whose control is constantly questioned and subverted. But thanks to the act of writing, mainly seen through the experience of

the Bildungsroman, the narrator will undergo a climactic and reflexive process leading to a convalescence, a recovery and a transformation that might be a way out of the postmodern crisis. Partly based on the theories of the Swiss psychiatrist Jung, as confessed by Fowles himself, this novel deals with the psychological illness of the main character, Nicholas, and the behavioural patterns he puts into practice, contributing as a result to denying his self and to be inauthentic. According to Jung, these patterns must be considered as the masks that one wears and that are called personas. They correspond to the different roles one plays, consciously or not, depending on the situation and which thus cause a fragmentation and perversion of the authentic self. At the time of the events narrated chronologically, Nicholas shows himself unable to comprehend the process and the understanding of what was being played. His being unconscious of it is gradually amended by the multi-faceted approach on the act of writing, from deconstruction to reconstruction. Hence, convalescence is therefore the process that has enabled a reflexivity leading to this novel seen as a mirror effect in which the act of writing itself is a definite sign of a growing awareness and of a psychological transformation.

#### **Bionote:**

**Emmanuel ROLLIN** is a third-year PhD student. His thesis questions how Fowles' writing fits into a perspective of postmodern deconstruction where the figure of God is put in the background. It studies this vacant place and its impact on the author, the character and the reader. It also considers Fowles' writing as proposing a reconstruction after the postmodern crisis. His research interests are: deconstruction, freedom, authenticity.

### **Day 2 Session 3 Paper 2**

#### **Paper title: Convalescence in Ian McEwan's *The Child in Time* Spatial and Temporal Dimensions**

**Name: Dr. Mohammad BAGHER SHABANPOUR**

**Abstract:** This paper explores the theme of recovery in Ian McEwan's *The Child in Time* (1987), examining the spatial and temporal aspects of healing after the traumatic loss of a child. Through its examination of convalescence in natural settings, urban spaces, and via mobility in the novel, this study analyzes how different settings affect the physical and emotional healing processes of the protagonist, Stephen Lewis, and other characters. This research investigates convalescence as a transitional phase through the lens of Michel Foucault's concept of heterotopia and Julia Kristeva's theories of liminality and disrupted temporality. Foucault's concept of heterotopia offers a framework to understand the convalescent spaces in the novel as alternative environments that function under different norms, promoting healing and reflection. Kristeva's concept of liminal time provides insights into how recovery periods create time out of time, a state where everyday perceptions of time are suspended. Stephan's journey, along with others, through grief and healing is marked by disrupted perceptions of time and space, embodying states of liminality and heterotopia. This paper attempts to show that convalescence is a complex, multi-layered concept in the novel, which helps to bring out the deeper cultural and

psychological significance of convalescence. This study further helps to understand how modern fiction represents the crossing of trauma, recovery, and the passage of time.

#### **Bionote:**

**Dr. Mohammad BAGHER SHABANPOUR** is the assistant professor of the English Department at the University of Tehran, Iran, specializing in (Post)Modern Fiction, Space, Epistemology, and World Literatures. He holds a Ph.D. with a dissertation on “A Harveyian Study of Space in Ian McEwan's Novels.” Dr. Shabanpour has published several scholarly articles. He teaches literary theory and criticism and world literatures at the University of Tehran and is a member of Fringe Urban Narratives and The Association for Literary Urban Studies (ALUS). Dr. Shabanpour has presented his research on various aspects of literature and space at international conferences.

### **Day 2 Session 3 Paper 3**

**Paper title:** The Writer as Patient: Convalescence in Philip Roth's *The Anatomy Lesson*

**Name:** Jacob WILKENFELD

**Abstract:** Philip Roth's 1983 novel *The Anatomy Lesson* offers a darkly comic commentary on the connections between creativity and suffering. While narratives of convalescence often portray illness and recovery as sites of transformation—either personal or artistic—Roth subverts this framework through Nathan Zuckerman, a novelist debilitated by inexplicable chronic pain and bereft of inspiration. Zuckerman's physical condition, which is ambiguously psychosomatic, and his existential malaise both mock the notion of suffering as generative, challenging any Romantic ideal of pain as the wellspring of art. Instead, the novel positions writing not as reparative but as compulsive—a process as inescapable and self-destructive as Zuckerman's physical ailments. Roth's ironic treatment of art's reparative potential is reflected in Zuckerman's oscillation between futile attempts to reclaim creative vitality and his absurd plan to become a doctor, trading the “pain” of writing for the presumed nobility of physical healing. Zuckerman's motivation, however, is as self-centered as it is altruistic; he fantasizes about medicine not only as a meaningful calling but as a way to cure his own chronic pain and achieve the personal salvation that art has failed to provide. Yet Zuckerman's failure to articulate a coherent sense of purpose—whether as artist, healer, or patient—renders his convalescence a form of stasis rather than growth. The novel critiques not only the reparative myths surrounding artistic creation but also the cultural pressures to imbue suffering with meaning. My presentation will show that, by juxtaposing Zuckerman's physical pain with his creative bankruptcy, *The Anatomy Lesson* reframes the relationship between convalescence and creativity. Rather than offering catharsis or renewal, Roth presents art as a chronic condition: relentless, recursive, and ultimately as unrelenting as the pain it seeks to process.

**Bionote:**

**Jacob WILKENFELD** is a PhD candidate in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at Northwestern University and an Associate Professor in the English Department at Harold Washington College (one of the City Colleges of Chicago). His research examines ways in which modernity and cultural hybridity have been thematized in nineteenth and twentieth-century writings of Latin America, particularly in literary expressions of diasporic and immigrant communities. He is also interested in comparative approaches to the literary and film cultures of Latin America and South Asia. His most recent publication was an essay on the poetics of 'absorption' in Whitman's 1860 *Leaves of Grass*, in *The Oxford Handbook of Walt Whitman*, out earlier this year. His essay on Mira Nair's *Salaam Bombay!* is forthcoming in *A Handbook of Indian Indie Cinema* (Routledge).

(Short break – 30 minutes)

**Plenary Session 2**

New York 9.30-10.30am

3.30-4.30pm Nantes

7.00-8.00pm Delhi

**Chair: Prof. Anajan SHARMA**

**Prof. Talia SCHAFFER**

**A Singular Person: Grace, Care, and Convalescence in Jane Eyre**

When we consider convalescence in nineteenth-century British novels, Jane Eyre's Bertha Mason rarely comes to mind; incarceration or enslavement seem like more appropriate metaphors. Yet Bertha is impaired, her condition fluctuates, and she has a caregiver, Grace Poole. In this talk, I ask what happens if we consider Bertha as a member of a care relation with Grace Poole, and what happens if we read her long inhabitation of Thornfield in terms of the ongoing temporality of convalescence. What might such a framework mean for Bertha's – and Grace's – personhood, what kind of agency or emotions might the women express, and what might their mutual care reveal about the larger structures of this novel?

**Valedictory Session**

4.30-5.00pm Nantes

8.00-8.30pm Delhi

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