

43.º Encontro da Associação Portuguesa de Estudos Anglo-americanos

Universidade Católica Portuguesa, Lisboa

1-3 June 2023

Culture(s) of the Self

'The time in which there was such a thing as the Other is over', announced recently Byung-Chul Han (2016). The philosopher argues that the age-old 'negativity of the Other' is now receding in favor of the positivity and proliferation of the Same. Indeed, the disputes resulting in what has come to be known as cancel culture seem to suggest a fear of dissension, an inclination to reduce experience to watchwords, and a reluctance to engage with otherness [in thought, feeling, or experience] in a meaningful and critical way.

It seems uncontroversial that the self is arguably one of the greatest, if not the most formidable, preoccupation of the 21st century. While the reflection on, and around, 'identity' and 'the self' is, of course, not new – Augustine's *Confessions* (AD 397-400) comes to mind –, one might argue that it was the intellectual and technological events of the last two centuries that brought about what might be described as the vertigo of the self. In different but conflating ways, currents of thought, scientific experiments and practices, political theories, everyday conventions and perceptions have coincided in placing the self at the forefront of debates: Romanticism, psychoanalysis, theory of relativity, (neo)liberalism, the rise of popular culture, the ever growing suspicion towards intellectuals and hierarchies, the breaking down of the distinctions between the public and private spheres, as well as the upsurge of the age of pundits, of my-opinion-is-better-than-your-fact, and the contemporary 'confessional society' (Bauman 2011, 84), etc. all seem to have led, and to point, to a centrality of the self in present-day debates and struggles.

Despite the fact that intellectual (and political) movements such as post-structuralism and post-colonialism have been pivotal in questioning the integrity of the self, drawing attention to its heterogeneity, incompleteness, and instability (Hall 1987, Rushdie 1997 and 2013, among others), the idea of the 'true' self endures as a lingering, and productive, construct, in the arts, religions, in the socioeconomic and political arena, as one that needs to be discussed.

Because '[i]n constructing an identity, one draws, among other things, on the kinds of person available in one's society' (Appiah 2005, 21), this conference will be a locus to question the ways in which selves are socially and aesthetically constructed and/or deployed, and to discuss the situatedness of the debates around the self and identity, in the understanding that, as Salman Rushdie famously put it, 'human beings do not perceive things whole; we are not gods but wounded creatures, cracked lenses, capable only of fractured perceptions. Partial beings, in all senses of that phrase. Meaning is a shaky edifice we build out of scraps, dogmas, childhood injuries, newspaper articles, chance remarks, old films, small victories, people hated, people loved; perhaps it is because our sense of what is the case is constructed from such inadequate materials that we defend it so fiercely, even to the death' (Rushdie 2010 [1991], 12).

Topics

Topics welcomed include, but are not limited to:

- the invention of the 'I' in literature: life writing, autoethnography, autobiography, memoirs, journals, autofiction, etc.;
- the construction of the self in language, literature, tv, and the arts;
- the self in visual culture: from self-portraiture to the selfie;
- 'I post, therefore I exist' – the cultural life of the self(-exposure) in social media;
- the self and its avatars in the production of knowledge [science, gaming, entertainment, etc.];
- (neo)liberalism and self-reliance as a cultural topos;
- post-structuralism and the instability of the self;
- the politics of the 'I', the 'I' in politics;
- ecologies of the self;
- performing the self: social rituals and restrictions;
- fluid selves and emerging identities;
- mobility, globalization, and self-translation;
- selves in conflict: aggression, violence, and trauma;
- rethinking the ethics of the self;
- self and environment;
- the cult of the self: self-centeredness, narcissism, egocentrism;
- self-care and well-being;
- self-determination, cultural rights, and cancel culture;
- self-reflexivity in critical thought: challenges and aporias.

Papers and panel proposals in the following fields of knowledge are welcome: Literary Studies, Cultural Studies, Post-colonial Studies, Food Studies, Migration Studies, Performance, Film and Theatre Studies, Gender Studies, Translation Studies, Subaltern Studies, Globalization Studies, Film Studies, Linguistics, Discourse Analysis, Language Teaching and Methodology, etc.

Confirmed Keynote Speakers

Eva C. **Karpinski** (York University | Toronto)
Luísa **Leal de Faria** (Universidade Católica Portuguesa)
and
Angela **McRobbie** (Goldsmiths, University of London)

Practicalities

The working languages of the conference are English and Portuguese. Speakers should prepare for a 20-minute presentation followed by Q&A. Please send a 250-word abstract, as well as a brief biographical note (100 words) to cecc.fch@ucp.pt by **March 31, 2023**.

Proposals should list the paper title, name, institutional affiliation, and contact details. Notification of abstract acceptance or rejection will take place by **April 16, 2023**.

After having been accepted, participants will be asked to register at the conference and provide some personal details to that purpose, on the CECC website: <https://fch.lisboa.ucp.pt/cecc>.

Fees:

Early bird

APEAA members (by **April 30**): €80

Other Participants – €120

Students (ID required) – €30

After **April 30** but no later than **May 15**:

APEAA members – €120

Participants –€180

Students (ID required) – €50

The registration fee includes coffee breaks, plus lunches on Thursday and Friday, as well as conference materials.

Scientific Committee

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Organizing Committee

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