

Paper proposal

Beyond the hearing line. Utopian modalities and the right to be Deaf

As the CfP for the Summer School points out, "one of the most striking and unique features of the human mind is its capacity to represent realities that transcend its immediate time and space, by engaging complex symbolic systems, most notably language". Along history, the understanding of the languages which could work in this sense excluded expressively the use of signed languages, reaching its most radical rejection in the so-called Milan Congress, in 1855. 25 years before, during the *Deaf Golden Age*, John J. Flournoy and William W. Turner exchanged letters discussing Flournoy's wish of creating a Deaf Commonwealth, claiming for the Deaf peoples the right to "transcend their immediate time and space". Samuel Porter, the American Annals of the Deaf editor at this time, decided to ask both to publish such letters since he thought the topic was of relevance to the community. More Deaf relevant figures became inspired to contribute to the discussion, namely Edmund Booth who brought pertinent perspectives concerning the consequences of a mostly hearing offspring. The desire for the creation of a Deaf Commonwealth is a recurrent utopian projection of Sign Language Peoples. The longing for a place where Sign Language is all around, where Deaf have full accessibility has guided narratives that the community has created. The notion of a Deaf city, state or country sometimes appear in poems, prose, movies and other artistic manifestations of the Deaf that are now under cultural analysis by this on-going research. This dream was to be transformed into a novel 131 years later, in 1986, by Douglas Bullard as he wrote *Islay* – a novel that fits into the category of Deaf Literature as well as under the utopian genre.

Applicant Information

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Brief Bio

Cristina Gil is a third year PhD Student in Culture Studies. She holds a Master on Deaf Communities, Education and Signed Languages from the University of Barcelona (2010) and holds a bachelor degree in Translation and Interpretation of Portuguese Sign Language from the School of Higher Education of Setúbal (2007). Cristina is now a FCT fellowship holder and her research line at the Research Centre for Communication and Culture is Cognition and Translatability. Her work intersects Deaf Studies, Utopian Studies and Culture Studies in her research of the utopian concept present in Sign Language Peoples.