



## FOREWORD

Isabelle ALFANDARY, Marc PORÉE

This special issue on 'Illimited Numbers' was put together by the research team '19-21' (formerly Vortex), one of the five teams that form the laboratory PRISMES (4398) based at the Sorbonne Nouvelle in Paris. Both its former and present name feel like a predestination. Previously concerned with the stillness at the heart of the modernistic Vortex, our lot is now cast with the numbers 19, 20 and 21, standing for nineteenth-, twentieth-, and twenty-first century literature(s) in English.

Numbers and the numbersome occupied us for two to three years, as part and parcel of a 'quinquennial' project, coming after an exploration of 'mistakes and errors', and our collective effort was rounded off by a *Journée d'Étude* in September 2018, for which we were joined by colleagues from outside Paris III.

Our joint effort has now been converted to an online publication thanks to the generous hospitality of Philippe Romanski. A thousand thanks to the General Editor of *Cercles*.

That this special issue comes out in a plague year, at a time when (big) numbers are the narrative, is of course tragically topical – and, needless to say, completely unpremeditated.

Discussing numbers in such a grim sanitary context, however, need not be all doom and gloom. Indeed, against benchmarking, governance by numbers and other global means of "charter'd" calculation, literary works, by Blake and others, make a stand. And a wondrously illimited one at that.