



BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

ESSE Conference

31st August - 4th September 2026
Santiago de Compostela, Galicia, Spain



ASOCIACIÓN ESPAÑOLA DE ESTUDIOS
ANGLO-NORTEAMERICANOS
aedean



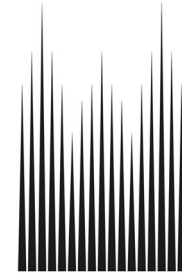
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Eco-RefugLit

- Research Group *Applied Linguistics to the Teaching and Learning of English, Translation and Textual Design* – LAEAITDT (GI-1762). Xunta de Galicia, ED431B 2024/09.
- Research Group *Discourse & Identity* – D&I (GI-1924). Xunta de Galicia, ED431C2023/15.
- Research Group *Variation, Linguistic Change and Grammaticalization* – VLCG (GI- 1383).
- Research Project *English in Social Media. Theoretical and Applied Perspectives*. Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities, EICTI 2021, co-funded by the European Union, (PID2021-122267NB-I00).
- Research Project *Posthuman Intersections in Irish and Galician Literatures*. Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities, AEI and ERDF 'A Way of Making Europe', (PID2022-136251NB-I00).
- Research Project *Eco-Refugees: Borders and (Non-)Human Mobility in Literature in English* (Eco-RefugLit: PID2024-157339NB-I00, MICIU/AEI/10.13039/ 501100011033 / FEDER, EU).



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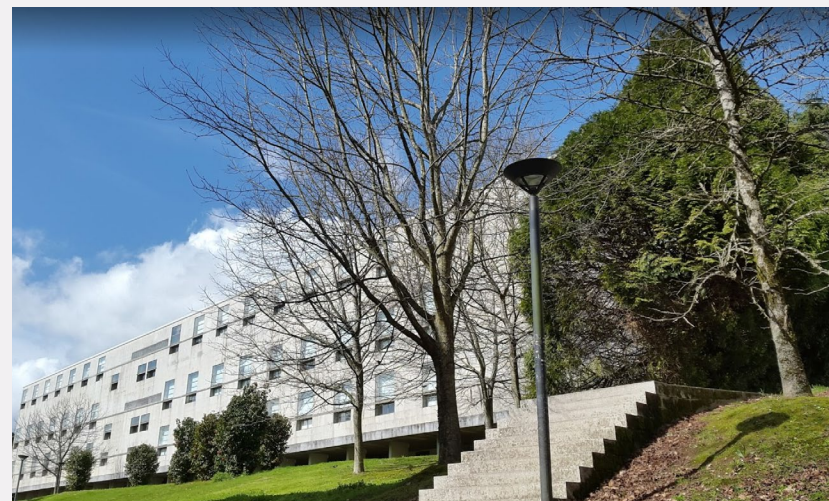


Venue

Welcome to Santiago de Compostela, a city that seamlessly blends history, culture and scholarly tradition. The 2026 ESSE Conference will be held on the North Campus of the University of Santiago de Compostela (USC), with the [Faculty of Philology](#) serving as the central hub of the event. Located just steps away from the [Faculty of Communication Sciences](#) and the renowned [Auditorio de Galicia](#), the venue offers a dynamic setting that reflects the spirit of knowledge and cultural exchange.

The Faculty of Philology is just a kilometre away on foot from Santiago's historic centre, a [UNESCO World Heritage Site](#) renowned as the endpoint of the Camino de Santiago. This short and pleasant walk leads to a historic setting where you can wander through narrow cobblestone streets, admire impressive medieval architecture, and soak in a vibrant atmosphere steeped in tradition. This unique environment invites participants to complement their academic activities with opportunities for exploration and discovery.

Attendees will find the venue easy to navigate, with clear signage and maps available to guide you. We invite you to explore the campus's green spaces, which offer a tranquil retreat from the bustling energy of the historic centre. For a glimpse of what awaits, our [website](#) features a gallery of images showcasing the Faculty of Philology, the surrounding campus, and the [Auditorio de Galicia](#).

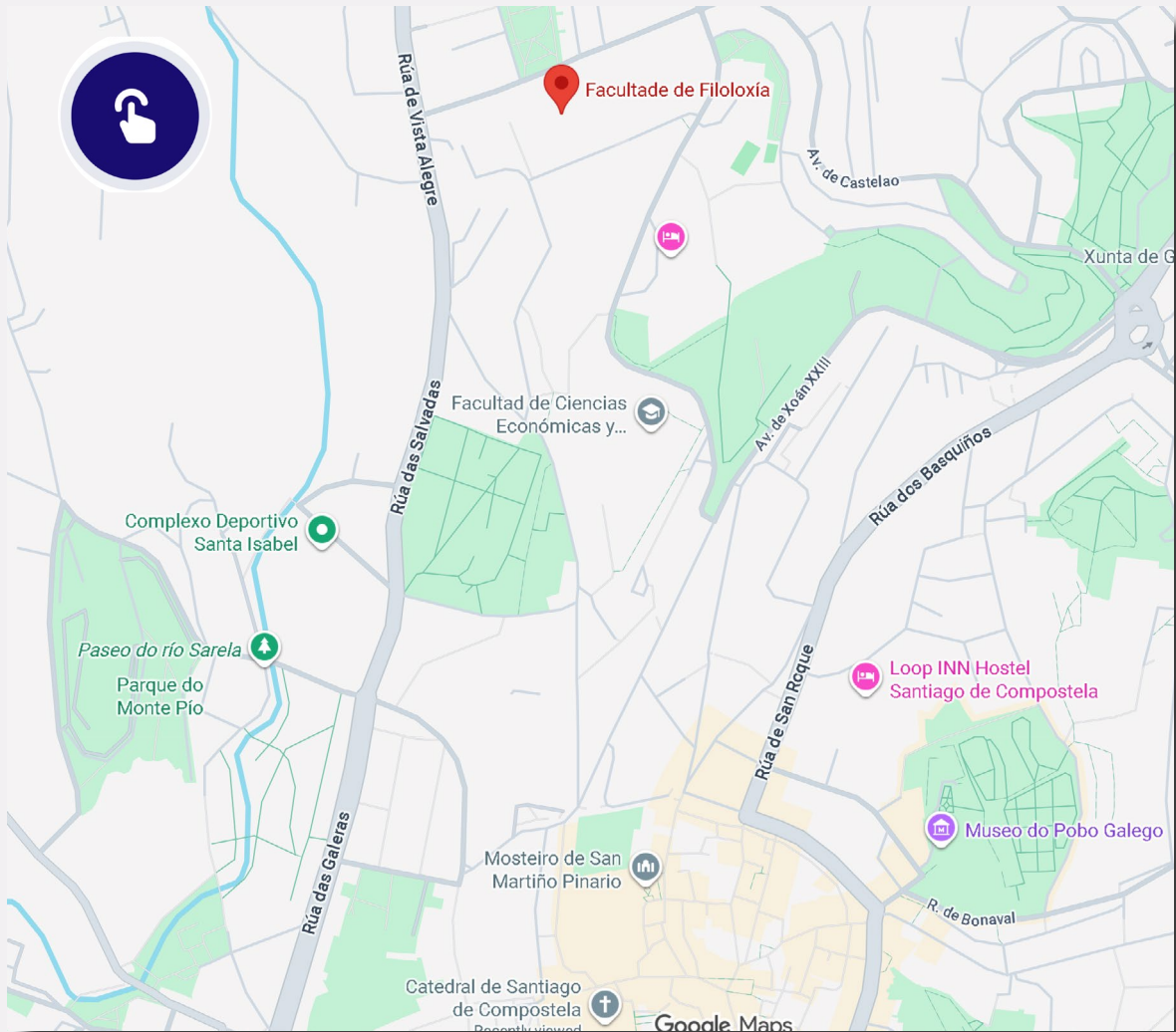


DISTANCE FROM VENUE TO

Santiago de Compostela-Rosalía de Castro Airport: 13 km (bus 6A will take you directly to the train/coach station).

Train and coach station: 3.1 km (45 minutes on foot; alternatively, buses C4 and C2 will take you to the Faculty of Philology in approximately 20 minutes).

- Cathedral (Praza do Obradoiro): 1.3 km (approx. 18 minutes on foot).
- Hostal dos Reis Católicos: 1.3 km (approx. 18 minutes on foot).
- Alameda Park: 1.7 km (approx. 25 minutes on foot).
- Praza de Galicia: 1.8 km (approx. 26 on foot).
- Pazo de San Lourenzo: 2.1 km (28 minutes on foot)





WHERE TO EAT

Coffee breaks are included in the conference registration and will be provided at no additional cost. Please note that lunch is not included.

There are several catering options at or next to the venue, all of which offer a wide range of hot meals, sandwiches and snacks at affordable prices:

- **Faculty of Philology – Cafeteria (venue building).** The cafeteria serves two-course menus for €8.50 (dessert and drinks included), as well as hot meals, sandwiches and snacks.

- **Faculty of Communication – Cafeteria (next to the venue building).** The cafeteria serves two-course menus for €8.50 (dessert and drinks included), as well as hot meals, sandwiches and snacks.

- **Burgo das Naci3ns – Cafeteria (next to the venue building).** The cafeteria serves two-course menus for €8.50 (dessert and drinks included), as well as hot meals, sandwiches and snacks.

- **Big Bar Theory (next to the venue building).** This bar offers mostly burgers, sandwiches, wraps, nuggets and salads.

- **NH Obradoiro Hotel – Restaurant (750 m from the venue building).** This restaurant offers more elaborate dishes for those who prefer to eat à la carte.

Participants will find numerous restaurants in Santiago offering traditional local cuisine, with options to accommodate a variety of tastes (please check [this link](#)).



GALA DINNER

The gala dinner will take place at the Hostal dos Reis Católicos, a building commissioned by the Catholic Monarchs in 1501 as a hospital for pilgrims. Dining in its magnificent hall offers a unique experience in what is considered the oldest hotel in Spain. More information about the building can be found [here](#).

In addition to a three-course menu (drinks included), there will be a concert and a bilingual poetry reading (in Galician and English) by the Irish poet **Keith Payne**, the Galician writer **Yolanda Castaño**, and the Galician musician **Su Garrido Pombo**. The dinner has an additional cost of 66€ per person.

OPENING COCKTAIL

The opening cocktail will take place at the [Pazo de San Lourenzo de Trasouto](#), a historic manor house located behind the lush oak grove of San Lourenzo. Commissioned in the 13th century by Martín Arias, Bishop of Zamora, the *pazo* has been a Franciscan monastery for 500 years, until it was transformed into a palace in the 19th century. The magnificent gardens and 17th-century cloister will host our opening cocktail.

IMPORTANT: Please note that although the building and gardens are wheelchair-accessible, the toilets are not adapted for wheelchair accessibility. If you require special assistance of any kind and are planning to attend the welcome cocktail, send us an email at esse2026@usc.es



FREE WALKING TOUR

We offer walking tours through Santiago de Compostela's Old Town, one of the most beautiful and best-preserved historic cities in Europe.

The city boasts numerous monumental squares, each with its own personality—from the grandeur of Obradoiro and A Quintana to the intimacy of hidden gems such as Praza dos Gatos or Praza das Campás de San Xoán. Wandering through Santiago's historic quarter is like entering a stone labyrinth full of surprises: from the stately arcaded streets lined with palaces and churches, such as Rúa do Vilar and Rúa Nova, to the secluded, narrow lanes hidden from the casual visitor, such as Salsepodes or Entrerrúas.



GUIDED TOUR OF THE CATHEDRAL AND THE CATHEDRAL ROOFS

The Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela is not only the premier example of Romanesque art in Spain but also the historic endpoint for the Camino de Santiago or Way of Saint James. For hundreds of years, these paths have led Christian pilgrims to the Apostle's tomb. Beyond its religious significance, the cathedral is the foundational point for the monumental city of Santiago de Compostela, recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1985.

Over the course of the week, ESSE participants will have the opportunity to experience both the peace and seclusion of the cathedral and spectacular views of the city from the cathedral rooftops. The guided tour of the roofs takes you through the archbishop's palace and the tribune, climbing 140 steps to walk along the rooftops and visit the *Torre da Carraca* ('Ratchet Tower') for unbeatable views of Santiago de Compostela. The visit lasts approximately 60 minutes.

IMPORTANT: please note that the cathedral roofs are not wheelchair-accessible



POST-CONFERENCE TRIPS

For those participants wishing to extend their stay in Santiago, we offer a couple of post-conference excursions:



Full-day trip to Costa da Morte ('Coast of Death'). The area is thus nicknamed from the many shipwrecks which have taken place over the centuries, including that of the Spanish Armada. More information about the area [here](#).

Tour starts: 09.00 a.m. (Faculty of Philology, USC)
Tour finishes: approx. 6.30-7 p.m. (Faculty of Philology, USC)

What's included: expert guide in English, superior coach

What's excluded: lunch

Price: €55



Full-day trip to Ribeira Sacra ('Sacred Riverbank'). Named after the settlement of monasteries on the banks of the rivers Sil and Miño, this area features spectacular landscapes and viewpoints. More information about the area [here](#).

Tour starts: 09.00 a.m. (Faculty of Philology, USC)
Tour finishes: approx. 7-7.30 p.m. (Faculty of Philology, USC)

What's included: expert guide in English, superior coach,

boat trip

What's excluded: lunch

Price: €80





Academic Programme Outline

Monday, 31st August 2026

12.00-19.30	Registration																			
12.30-13.30	Conference Opening and Award Ceremony Room: Salón de Actos																			
13.30-14.30	Plenary Lecture 1. Karen Corrigan (Newcastle University, UK) Chair: Paloma Núñez-Pertejo Room: Salón de Actos																			
14.30-16.00	Lunch Break																			
16.00-18.00	S3 1/4 <i>D08</i>	S4 1/2 <i>D09</i>	S5 1/3 <i>D03</i>	S6 1/3 <i>D04</i>	S11 1/3 <i>D11</i>	S13 1/4 <i>D10</i>	S17 1/1 <i>D14</i>	S20 1/2 <i>D05</i>	S21 1/2 <i>C04</i>	S26 1/4 <i>C07</i>	S33 1/2 <i>C05</i>	S34 1/3 <i>C09</i>	S36 1/2 <i>C06</i>	S42 1/2 <i>C01</i>	S43 1/2 <i>C10</i>	S53 1/4 <i>C08</i>	S64 1/2 <i>C11</i>	S67 1/2 <i>C12</i>	S68 1/3 <i>C03</i>	RT <i>C02</i>
18.00-18.30	Coffee Break																			
18.30-19.30	PL4 Room: Salón de Graos Katerina Kitsi-Mitakou (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece) Chair: Vassiliki Markidou							PL6 Room: C11 María Losada-Friend (University Pablo de Olavide, Spain) Chair: Alberto Lázaro							PL12 Room: C12 Hartmut Stöckl (Salzburg University, Austria) Chair: Hermine Penz					
20.30	Welcome Reception (Pazo de San Lourenzo de Trasouto)																			

Tuesday, 1st September 2026

8.30-19.00	Registration																					
9.00-11.00	S3 2/4 <i>D08</i>	S5 2/3 <i>D03</i>	S6 2/3 <i>D04</i>	S11 2/3 <i>D11</i>	S13 2/4 <i>D10</i>	S15 1/1 <i>D06</i>	S20 2/2 <i>D05</i>	S21 2/2 <i>C04</i>	S26 2/4 <i>C07</i>	S30 1/3 <i>C05</i>	S34 2/3 <i>C09</i>	S36 2/2 <i>C06</i>	S37 1/5 <i>C11</i>	S42 2/2 <i>C02</i>	S43 2/2 <i>C10</i>	S52 1/4 <i>C01</i>	S53 2/4 <i>C08</i>	S63 1/5 <i>C12</i>	S64 2/2 <i>C03</i>	DS <i>LIT1</i> <i>B13</i>	DS <i>CAS1</i> <i>B03</i>	
11.00-11.30	Coffee Break																					
11.30-12.30	Plenary Lecture 2. A. L. Kennedy (Writer and performer) Chair: Jorge Sacido-Romero Room: Salón de Actos																					
12.30-13.30	ESSE General Assembly Room: Salón de Actos																					
13.30-15.30	Lunch Break																					
15.30-16.30	PL3 Room: Salón de Graos Ovidiu Ivancu (Vilnius University, Lithuania) Chair: Davide Castiglione					PL7 Room: C10 Minna Nevala (University of Helsinki, Finland) Chair: Jason Finch					PL8 Room: C11 Natália Pikli (Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary) Chair: Kinga Földvály					PL15 Room: C12 Titela Vilceanu (University of Craiova, Romania) Chair: Ignacio Palacios						
16.30-17.00	Coffee Break																					
17.00-19.00	S3 3/4 <i>D08</i>	S4 2/2 <i>D09</i>	S5 3/3 <i>D03</i>	S6 3/3 <i>D04</i>	S11 3/3 <i>D11</i>	S13 3/4 <i>D10</i>	S26 3/4 <i>C07</i>	S30 2/3 <i>C06</i>	S33 2/2 <i>C05</i>	S34 3/3 <i>C09</i>	S37 2/5 <i>C11</i>	S52 2/4 <i>C01</i>	S53 3/4 <i>C08</i>	S63 2/5 <i>C12</i>	S67 2/2 <i>C10</i>	RT3 <i>C02</i>	DS <i>LIT2</i> <i>B13</i>	DS <i>ELL1</i> <i>B10</i>				

Thursday, 3rd September 2026

9.00-19.30	Registration																			
9.30-11.30	S2 1/3 <i>D10</i>	S8 4/4 <i>D11</i>	S10 1/4 <i>D08</i>	S18 1/2 <i>D09</i>	S19 1/2 <i>D03</i>	S22 2/4 <i>C08</i>	S23 1/4 <i>C11</i>	S25 1/3 <i>C12</i>	S27 1/2 <i>C07</i>	S31 4/4 <i>C10</i>	S32 2/3 <i>C09</i>	S35 1/3 <i>C01</i>	S44 1/3 <i>C04</i>	S47 1/1 <i>D04</i>	S56 2/2 <i>C03</i>	S59 1/3 <i>C05</i>	S69 1/3 <i>C06</i>	RT2 <i>C02</i>		
11.30-12.00	Coffee Break																			
12.00-13.00	Plenary Lecture 3. Jop Nyman (University of Eastern Finland, Finland) Chair: Laura Lojo-Rodríguez Room: Salón de Actos																			
13.00-15.00	Lunch Break																			
15.00-17.00	S1 1/2 <i>D11</i>	S2 2/3 <i>D10</i>	S9 1/2 <i>D07</i>	S10 2/4 <i>D08</i>	S18 2/2 <i>D09</i>	S22 3/4 <i>C08</i>	S23 2/4 <i>C11</i>	S24 3/4 <i>C09</i>	S25 2/3 <i>C12</i>	S27 2/2 <i>C07</i>	S32 3/3 <i>C01</i>	S35 2/3 <i>C02</i>	S44 2/3 <i>C04</i>	S46 1/2 <i>D06</i>	S48 1/2 <i>D05</i>	S51 1/3 <i>C10</i>	S58 1/3 <i>C03</i>	S59 2/3 <i>C05</i>	S66 1/2 <i>D04</i>	S69 2/3 <i>C06</i>
17.00-17.30	Coffee Break																			
17.30-19.30	S2 3/3 <i>D10</i>	S9 2/2 <i>D07</i>	S10 3/4 <i>D08</i>	S22 4/4 <i>C08</i>	S23 3/4 <i>C11</i>	S24 4/4 <i>C09</i>	S25 3/3 <i>C12</i>	S29 1/2 <i>C01</i>	S35 3/3 <i>C02</i>	S44 3/3 <i>C04</i>	S46 2/2 <i>D06</i>	S48 2/2 <i>D05</i>	S51 2/3 <i>C10</i>	S58 2/3 <i>C03</i>	S59 3/3 <i>C05</i>	S65 1/1 <i>D14</i>	S66 2/2 <i>D04</i>	S69 3/3 <i>C06</i>		

Friday, 4th September 2026

9.00-12.30	Registration										
9.30-11.30	S1 2/2 D11	S10 4/4 D08	S19 2/2 D03	S23 4/4 C11	S29 2/2 C01	S38 1/1 C04	S39 1/1 C05	S45 1/1 C06	S51 3/3 C10	S58 3/3 C03	RT4 C02
11.30-12.00	Coffee Break										
12.00-13.00	PL5. Room: Salón de Graos Livia Kortvelyessy (Pavol Jozef Šafárik University, Slovakia) Chair: Lachlan Mackenzie			PL11. Room: C10 Sofia Rüdiger (Freie Universität Berlin, Germany) Chair: Paloma Núñez			PL13. Room: C11 Lieven Vandelanotte (University of Namur & KU Leuven, Belgium) Chair: Lieven Buysse			PL14. Room: C12 Irena Vassileva (New Bulgarian University in Sofia, Bulgaria) Chair: Ludmilla Kostova	
13.00-13.30	Closing Ceremony Room: Salón de Actos										





Plenary Lectures



“Smoothed” and “Polished” Syllables: “Verbal Hygiene” in the Age of Swift and Sheridan

Karen P. Corrigan (Newcastle University, United Kingdom)

Chair: Paloma Núñez Pertejo

This presentation explores Jonathan Swift’s and his godson, Thomas Sheridan’s attempts to apply ‘verbal hygiene’ (Cameron 1995) practices to Irish-English dialects, described by Amador-Moreno (forthcoming) and Ruano-García (forthcoming) as “other Englishes”. It will also assess their success by exploring the language attitudes of teenagers currently being educated in Northern Irish schools. Swift describes his own schooling as “...Confinement...to nouns and Verbs” (1708). Sheridan was similarly confined at Westminster. Their public school educations offered both writers unique insights into how language can be “meddled” with (Cameron 1995: vi). Swift and Sheridan were from families in dire financial straits, travelling back and forth between England and Ireland. This perspective gave each a keen sense of how language is “always upon the flux” (Swift 1726). They were also acutely aware of which languages and dialects held prestige and which were in need of “smoothing” and “polishing” (Swift 1798). It is no surprise therefore that Sheridan became a major proponent of the elocution movement or that Swift’s famous *Proposal* (1712) is dedicated to ‘verbal hygiene’ (1712). To what extent did their labours bear fruit, though? I explore this question by examining interviews with newcomer and local teenagers in contemporary Armagh, where Swift penned *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726). They are living in a much more linguistically diverse city than Swift could have imagined. These demolinguistic changes are dividends of the Peace Process, accelerating inward investment and trade (O’Hearn 2000 and Invest NI 2022). New EU legislation enacted in the 2000s and the asylum crisis of the last decade (NISRA 2021; Russell 2016) likewise increased immigration, bringing not only Lithuanian, Polish and Portuguese but also Arabic and Asian languages with interesting consequences from a ‘verbal hygiene’ perspective (Corrigan 2020).





Karen Corrigan

Karen Corrigan is an Honorary Member of the Royal Irish Academy and Professor of Linguistics and English Language at Newcastle University, UK. She has also held a number of visiting positions, most recently as Distinguished Visiting Professor, University of Kyoto (2025). She has research interests in corpus creation, digitization and open science leading to *Creating and Digitizing Language Corpora, Volume 1: Synchronic Databases* (2007, Palgrave, co-edited with J.C. Beal & H.L. Moisl); *Creating and Digitizing Language Corpora, Volume 2: Diachronic Databases* (2007, Palgrave, co-edited with J.C. Beal & H.L. Moisl); *Creating and Digitizing Language Corpora, Volume 3: Databases for Public Engagement* (2016, Palgrave, co-edited with A. Mearns). Her most recent projects, though, have focused on two themes with particular reference to the languages and dialects of Ireland: (i) Language, migration and identity; (ii) Contact, change and variation. This research has been published internationally in journals such as *Language and Society*, *English Language and Linguistics* and *English World-Wide*. She is author of the monographs *Irish English, Volume 1: Northern Ireland* (Edinburgh University Press, 2010) and *Linguistic Communities and Migratory Processes: Newcomers Acquiring Sociolinguistic Variation in Northern Ireland* (de Gruyter Mouton, 2021).





The Revolution Will Be Inflatable (Short Fiction in an Age of Tactical Frivolity)

A. L. Kennedy (Writer and performer)

Chair: Jorge Sacido Romero

As publishing institutions convulse and editing expertise collapses, the appetite for short fiction and what it offers has not diminished. Readers are simply less well served. Academia farms creative writers for profit and distorts the novel in a PhD research project and yet short fiction still finds a home in university courses, still tests authors to bring all they can to literary prose. As perhaps the ultimate test of a prose writer, the short story creates an intimate, deeply physical, empathetic relationship between reader and writer. In a chaotic cultural context, overlooked and devalued by commercial publishing, sidelined by awards and reviewers, short stories remain a guide to the persistence of imagination and creation - and a memory of factors essential to democracy.





A. L. Kennedy

A.L. Kennedy was born in Dundee. She lived for almost 30 years in Glasgow and now stays in various places. She has won a variety of UK and international book awards, including a Lannan Award, the Costa Prize, The Heinrich Heine Preis, the Austrian State Prize for Literature, the Honorary Prize of the Austrian Book Trade, the Somerset Maugham Award and the John Llewellyn Rees Prize. She has twice been included on the Granta Best of Young British Novelists list. She has written 10 novels, 8 short story collections, 3 books of non-fiction and 4 books for children. She is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and a member of the Akademie der Kunst. She also writes for the stage, screen, TV and has created an extensive body of radio work including documentaries, monologues, dramas and essays. She also performs occasionally in one person shows and as a stand-up comic.





Borders, Borderscapes, and Global African Writing: Reading Aboulela, Mahjoub, and Gurnah

Jopi Nyman (University of Eastern Finland, Finland)

Chair: Laura Lojo Rodríguez

Borders, as Leutloff-Grandits and Wille (2024, 12) claim, are complex and multi-level phenomena generated by processes and encounters involving diverse actors and objects, bodies and forms of knowledge. This revised understanding of borders sees them not only as obstacles and lines of separation but as dynamic sites characterized by various encounters and bordering processes (Newman 2007; Wille et al. 2024). Such a view plays a major role in the recent cultural turn in border studies that has opened up new ways of analysing cultural texts and practices in the context(s) generated by concrete geopolitical, cultural, ethnic, and other borders frequently associated with migration and global mobility (see Konrad and Amilhat Szary 2024). This cultural turn is particularly relevant for the emergence of literary border studies, a field that investigates the multiple roles and functions of different forms of border(s) in fictional and other texts (see Schimanski and Wolfe 2017; Korte and Lojo-Rodríguez 2019; Schimanski and Nyman 2021; Nyman, Schimanski, and Zamorano Llena 2024). Rather than understanding borders and border-crossings as metaphors, such work emphasizes a situational and contextual approach to borders and border phenomena: images and narratives are means to mediate and problematize borders in different public and private contexts, ‘making visible the experience of those who live with and cross borders, especially ethnic and cultural minorities and migrants’ (Nyman and Schimanski 2021: 2). Literary border studies focuses on borders as porous and fuzzy, as well as on processes of bordering, that is, the constant and active making (and unmaking) of borders (see Nyman 2024, 2025, forthcoming). This occurs frequently in spaces known as borderscapes – “zones of varied and differentiated encounters” (Rajaram and Grundy-Warr 2007: xxx) – that extend beyond the border and function as sites of encounters generating new affiliations and identities, understood as belonging and becoming by the border theorist Chiara Brambilla (2015). In other words, migrants and other mobile subjects travel with borders, entering into and creating new spaces.



This lecture addresses the role of borders and borderscapes in contemporary African writing where encounters and border-crossings are often placed in global contexts to challenge fixed ideas about borders as containers and nation-based readings. Works by mobile African writers such as Leila Aboulela (Sudan/UK), Jamal Mahjoub (Sudan/UK/Europe), and Abdulrazak Gurnah (Tanzania/UK), often located in spaces far from their protagonists' place of origin, voice issues of migration, mobility, and displacement associated with border crossings and global journeying. Such works carve out new identities in various borderscapes where opposed views and ideologies, as well as histories and memories, are negotiated to overcome the often disruptive effects of bordering processes. In their critique of both geopolitical and cultural borders and their maintenance, these fictions continue the process of globalizing the African novel by replacing its often postcolonial or decolonial domestic focus with a probing of global and transnational bordering processes (see Dominic 2009; Hallemeier 2024). As my readings of Aboulela's *The Kindness of Enemies* (2015), Mahjoub's *The Fugitives* (2020), and Gurnah's *Gravel Heart* (2016) suggest, their imaginings of global mobility, encounters, and both concrete and textual crossings in(to) various border spaces and borderscapes, are interventions that challenge conventional understandings of cultures as separated by borders and reveal their historical and contemporary entanglements. In so doing they reveal how borders and borderscapes are varied and operate at various levels in literary and other texts, generating belongings and becomings.

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Jopi Nyman

Jopi Nyman is Professor of English (since 2007) at the Philosophical Faculty, University of Eastern Finland, Joensuu Campus, and Director of UEF's Borders, Mobilities, and Cultural Encounters Research Community. He completed his MA (1992), Lic. Phil. (1993), and PhD degrees (1996) in English at the University of Joensuu, and has also a Postgraduate Diploma in Cultural Studies: History and Theory (University of East London, 1995) and a second doctoral degree (DSocSc) in Sociology (University of Joensuu, 2005). He has been a British Council Fellow at the University of East London (1994–95) and Visiting Professor at the University of Leeds (2013), and taught at various universities through the ERASMUS scheme. He is currently President of MESEA: Multi-Ethnic Studies: Europe and the Americas (2022–), has previously served as the President of the Nordic Association of American Studies and in various other roles in the academic community. He is an invited member of the European Academy of Sciences and Arts.

Jopi Nyman has published extensively on questions of national and cultural identity in Anglophone literatures. His most recent books include the coedited collections *Temporalities and Subjectivities in Migration Literature in Europe* (Lexington Books, 2024), *Border Images, Border Narratives: The Political Aesthetics of Boundaries and Crossings* (Manchester UP, 2021), *Palimpsests in Ethnic and Postcolonial Literature and Culture: Surfacing Histories* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), and *Mobile Identities: Race, Ethnicity, and Borders in Contemporary Literature and Culture* (CSP, 2020), and the monographs *Engagements with Hybridity in Literature: An Introduction* (Routledge, 2024; with Joel Kuortti and Mehdi Ghasemi), *Equine Fictions: Human–Horse Relationships in Twenty-First Century Writing* (CSP, 2019) and *Displacement, Memory, and Travel in Contemporary Migrant Writing* (Brill, 2017). Recent articles have been published in *Journal of Borderlands Studies*, *Literary Geographies*, and *Postcolonial Text*, and in several edited collections. His current research interests centre upon border narratives, transcultural literatures, and literary animals.





Parallel Lectures



PL1. After Literature: The Post-Literary Condition, Creative Criticism and the Question of the Common

James Corby (University of Malta, Malta)

This paper reflects on the condition of the post-literary: a cultural formation in which aesthetic modes of expression – narrative, affect and performance – permeate everyday life, even as literature itself has lost its institutional coherence and critical centrality. The focus is on how certain textual and discursive events disrupt dominant modes of circulation and unsettle the subject's position within them. These moments are not defined by formal innovation or aesthetic radicalism, but by a capacity to stage ethical address, affective disturbance or relational difficulty. In contrast to the certainties of ideological critique or the aesthetics of rupture, such moments work through hesitation, implication and the suspension of interpretive ease. Within this context, forms of creative criticism – neither fully literary nor conventionally academic – have emerged as one space in which these tensions are explored. In the midst of saturation and aestheticisation, such texts may be recognised not by what they assert but by how they expose the contingency of being-with-others and invite a different stance within it.

Day: 2 September. 12.00-13.00



PL2. Audiovisual Translation and Accessibility: New Languages, New Forms of Linguistic and Cultural Transfer

Elena Di Giovanni (University of Macerata, Italy)

Since the adoption of the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities between 2006 and 2008, the demand for and provision of accessibility to cultural heritage, entertainment, and audiovisual media has increased significantly worldwide. Today, ensuring linguistic and cultural access involves utilizing strategies and offering texts that speak the languages of all individuals, including those with disabilities. Over the past two decades, there has been a remarkable emergence of new codes and translation strategies designed to accommodate a broad spectrum of disabilities. These range from intersemiotic translations for individuals who are blind and those with intellectual impairments, to the development of international guidelines for Easy to Read texts and simplified subtitles. As a result, the landscape of accessibility is now richer than ever before.



This lecture aims to trace the historical evolution of linguistic and cultural accessibility for people with disabilities while also reflecting on current trends, requirements and applications. I will explore audio description for the blind, subtitles for the deaf, sign languages, Easy to Read texts, and augmentative and alternative communication (AAC), highlighting their reception as it is currently monitored through national and international surveys. The ultimate goal of this lecture is to provide a comprehensive overview of the linguistic and cultural richness that stems from the increasing provision of accessibility for all.

Day: 2 September, 12.00-13.00

PL3. Shifting Boundaries: Posthumanism and the Reimagining of Human Identity in Literature

Ovidiu Ivancu (Vilnius University, Lithuania)

This lecture proposes to explore how posthumanist literary discourse redefines human identity by challenging anthropocentric boundaries and embracing hybrid, interconnected modes of existence. Posthumanism, as both a critique and extension of humanist thought, destabilizes fixed notions of the human subject, offering a transformative lens through which literature interrogates identity, agency, and relationality in an era shaped by ecological crisis and technological evolution. By focusing on key literary texts and theoretical frameworks, this study examines how posthumanist narratives decenter the human to foreground the entanglement of humans with non-human entities, systems, and environments.

The analysis begins with the philosophical underpinnings of posthumanism, drawing on thinkers such as Donna Haraway, Rosi Braidotti, and N. Katherine Hayles. These theorists provide a foundation for understanding posthumanist literature as a site where ontological boundaries between human and non-human are porous and constantly negotiated. The lecture then examines literary works such as Margaret Atwood – *The Handmaid's Tale*, Kazuo Ishiguro – *An Artist of the Floating World*, Mary Shelley – *Frankenstein*, Philip K. Dick – *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, and Aldous Huxley – *Brave New World* which depict shifting identities in response to ecological degradation, biotechnological advancements, and socio-political upheavals. Through these texts, the study highlights how posthumanist literature critiques anthropocentric ideals while envisioning alternative modes of existence that embrace hybridity and relationality.

Moreover, this lecture situates posthumanist literature within a global framework by exploring its intersections with non-Western epistemologies. By addressing the critique of colonial modernity embedded in humanist traditions, it demonstrates how posthumanist narratives foster ethical frameworks that prioritize interconnectedness over hierarchical separations between humans and their



environments. Ultimately, this lecture argues that posthumanist literature is not merely speculative but profoundly transformative in its capacity to reimagine human identity amidst planetary crises. By shifting boundaries and embracing relationality, posthumanist narratives offer critical insights into the evolving nature of humanity's role within more-than-human worlds. This lecture contributes to ongoing discussions in literary studies by emphasizing the importance of posthumanism as a framework for understanding contemporary challenges to identity and ethics in literature.

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Day: 1 September. 15.30-16.30



PL4. Memefying the English Canon: Literature Interacting with Contemporary Politics

Katerina Kitsi-Mitakou (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece)

This talk aims to explore how the English literary canon has been appropriated in popular culture and the new media as a tool for political commentary. More specifically, it will focus on the cult of memes, a novel form of surrealist or pop art of the new



millennium and an essential mode of communication for a generation of digital natives or a new challenge for digital immigrants that entered the digital sphere later in life. Memes borrowing from literature may combine quotations from written source texts with still frames from their cinematic retellings or images from their artistic reimaginings, or customizable templates, constituting in that sense palimpsests loaded with layers of meaning. While literature provides instantly recognizable language, imagery, and themes that carry cultural weight, it enables the creators of these cameo adaptations to interlace humor and critique with minimal explanation. Shakespearean dramas, for instance, Romantic irony, Victorian heroes, or dystopian settings are juxtaposed to modern political issues or scandals, heartless industrial capitalism, authoritarianism, surveillance, and political spin. Adapted, revised, repurposed, or even misquoted literature that appears in memes addresses an audience which may or may not be familiar with the text itself and invites them to draw the connecting links between then and now, literature and present-day politics. As palimpsests of disparate texts, memes may initiate innovative connections, imaginative re-contextualizations, or new (mis)understandings of literature and/or politics, while also ensuring unlimited afterlives for the literary canon.

Day: 31 August, 18.30-19.30



PL5. On the Typology of Onomatopoeia: Sound Events and Their Onomatopoeic Patterns

Lívía Körtvélyessy (Pavol Jozef Šafárik University, Košice, Slovakia)

Onomatopoeia is a special class of lexical units which deviates from the non-iconic words in its semiotic, phonetic, morphological, word-formation, syntactic, semantic, and sociopragmatic characteristics. In my talk, I will examine the extent of similarities between onomatopoeia representing seventeen different sound events in a sample of 88 languages that cover six macroareas: Africa, Australia, Euroasia, North America, Papunesia, and South America. Since onomatopoeia is an iconic image, one might expect a high degree of cross-linguistic similarity. Blasi et al. (2016: 10818) maintain that “a careful statistical examination of words from nearly two-thirds of the world’s languages reveals that unrelated languages very often use (or avoid) the same sounds for specific referents.” Universal phonesthemes thus should contribute to the cross-linguistic similarity of onomatopoeic words. So, we may expect that, for example, impacts will be universally represented by plosives, high-pitched sounds by high front vowels, etc. Nevertheless, there are factors that work in the opposite direction. First, there is a certain degree of arbitrariness, which contributes to the varying forms of onomatopoeic words across different languages. Then, there are speaker-inherent factors, such as hearing sensitivity and imitation skills, and also factors related to the imitated sound event, e.g., diversity of the manifestations of a sound source, environment of the sound event, etc.



The evaluation parameters employed in my research include the number of syllables; syllabic structure; realization of the onset, nucleus, and coda; presence/absence of iconic reduplication and its type; presence/absence of vocalic/consonantal lengthening. These variables are used to identify generalized *onomatopoeic patterns* indicating the general cross-linguistic tendency in the formation of onomatopoeias for a specific sound event. Each symbol in the pattern is a generalization of the sounds occurring, respectively, at the onset, nucleus, and coda, based on a simple count. Hence, each pattern is an idealized model of onomatopoeias for a given sound event. For example, the pattern for ‘heartbeat’ ${}^1\text{CVC} \{[t]-[u]-[k]\} R^F; L^\emptyset$ reads as follows: a typical onomatopoeia for the sound event ‘heartbeat’ is monosyllabic, with the syllabic structure CVC. The onset is typically represented by [t], nucleus by [u] and coda by [k]. A typical onomatopoeia for this sound event is fully reduplicated, with no element lengthened.

My analysis has shown that there are evident universal tendencies characterizing onomatopoeias: monosyllabicity; CVC syllable structure (it prevails in 14 out of 17 patterns); and full iconic reduplication. In addition, the lengthening of a vowel and/or consonant appears to be in complementary distributions with iconic reduplication. In my talk I will provide an analysis of the examined patterns both from the global and macro-areal points of view, I will comment on significant deviations from the global patterns, and identify universal phonesthemes in the onset and coda positions.

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Day: 4 September, 12.00-13.00



PL6. New Perspectives on Travel Literature: Emotionology and Women Travelling at the Outbreak of the Spanish Civil War

María Losada-Friend (University Pablo de Olavide, Spain)

Emotionology as an academic discipline (Peter and Carol Stearns, 1985, William Raddy 2001, Barbara Rosenwein 2016) proves an adequate tool when analysing travel literature. The registration of affections, passions, or feelings allows the reconstruction of context and experience, examining the meaningful expressions and effects of basic emotions to understand communities. Sentient replicas to events, images, or attitudes capture signs of humanity, trigger reflections, question ideas and motivate



reponses. Travel testimonies under this key, especially those written in dramatic times, enhance the literary and cultural value of foreign eyes contemplating national characters.

Classic and well-known studies on the accounts of the Spanish Civil War (Cunnigham 1986, Rodríguez Celada 2007, Galván 2012, Lázaro 2019, Usandizaga 2000, Insausti 2010, Díaz Nosty 2022) have solidly examined the numerous testimonies by English, Irish and American authors supporting the Republican side versus those defending Nationalists' sympathies. However, as Probst Solomon pointed out in 2007, more research on the writings of the years right before the conflict, needs to be done.

Under the critical framework of Emotionology, different travelling accounts written by women recording the years before the Spanish Civil War and published in 1937 will be analysed; among them: *And then the Storm* by Monica Maginnis, an Irish-American Ursuline; *Storm over Spain* by the Irish-Londoner journalist Mairin Mitchell; or *Spanish Prelude* by American journalist and novelist Jenny Ballou. Their emotions in retrospection recall daily life in Spain as the conflict started and significantly uncover different biased portraits of the national tragedy.

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Day: 31 August, 18.30-19.30



PL7. From the Glamorous White Plague to the Grim COVID-19: On the News Representation of People During Pandemics

Minna Nevala (University of Helsinki, Finland)

As public discussion continues and develops throughout pandemics like the tuberculosis and COVID-19, and the possible aftermath of the health crisis, different discursive strategies for making sense of the crisis and the parties involved in it are likely to emerge. By studying public discourse we are able to see how pandemics have created social circumstances for not only changing social behaviour but also linguistic behaviour, both in the distant and in the more recent past. Linked to the *Language Crises* project (2023–2027), this paper focuses on the ways in which specific people and groups are talked about in public discussions that relate to tuberculosis (1850–1900), Spanish Flu (1918–19) and COVID-19 (2019–20). In these discussions, people are often categorised on the basis of positive and negative values, beliefs, or practices into disparate sociocultural groups (cf. Moscovici 1984; van Leeuwen 2008). Giving attributes to the self and others (labelling) concerns the interactional and societal context, which involves the concept of intergroup evaluation (see Nevala 2019). This lecture concentrates, firstly, on prevalent social marginalisation processes that show in language use through linguistic evaluation. Secondly, the paper discusses how individuals and groups are described according to the prevalent social ideals during pandemic outbreaks from the late 19th to the early 21st century. The data for the study come from newspapers in the *Illustrated London News Historical Archive*, *The British Newspaper Archive*, the *Times Digital Archive* and the *Coronavirus Corpus*. The texts have been searched for attributes used to refer to people affected by pandemics in the news. The paper concludes by discussing how the social representation of, for example, pandemic victims in the newspapers clearly reflects the way in which they have been set aside as a group that possessed both ‘attractive’ qualities, as well as less desirable properties, which both have made them outsiders in the ‘normal’ and ‘healthy’ society. In so doing, the media have been using language as a tool for social polarisation.

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Day: 1 September, 15.30–16.30



PL8. “Why Shakespeare?” Scholars and Playwrights Serving 21st-century Communities

Natália Pikli (Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary)

The lecture addresses general concerns regarding the Humanities in the 21st century by focusing on a specific field that has always been part of English studies: Shakespeare. In a media- and AI-saturated world, many voices claim that the Humanities, and especially such old-fashioned research interests like ‘Shakespeare’, are becoming useless and can no longer offer valid answers to today’s issues. I claim the contrary by focusing on several distinct areas where Shakespeare studies have been proven to remain useful and progressive. First, some examples will demonstrate that scholarly research and scholars’ methodologies are adapted successfully to this ‘brave new world’ by combining digital tools and hands-on physical, material research, arriving at new finds, often rewriting fossilized false myths in connection with Shakespeare. These examples also attest to a flexibility of thinking, which is not only a cornerstone of science and progress but also supports a mindset that is beneficial to debate and thus, to a more democratic way of thinking in societies. Second, I will talk about the need to re-claim the usefulness of university education for the benefit of wider communities. Teaching Shakespeare in small groups (seminars of ca. 15) fosters critical thinking, creativity, safe debates and the sort of ‘engaged pleasure’ that is essential for learning and long-term memory, while encouraging person-to-person communication in a world where ChatGPT, AI and digital tools threaten with alienation, affecting people’s mental health. Third, I will outline how Shakespeare studies are beneficial in fields more directly related to mental health. School drama groups may help teenagers and young people fight depression, lack of commitment, and other after-effects of the COVID pandemic and the digital world. Furthermore, there are wonderful results for ‘Shakespeare’ and Shakespeare scholars helping prison inmates or military veterans to re-adjust themselves to society and fight traumatic experiences. Finally, since I come from a region where ‘Shakespeare’ has become part of emerging national identities since the 19th century, therefore, theatrical performances of his plays have often been political statements, I will address the issue why and how Shakespeare productions become a ‘case in point’ in our present-day theatres and societies, and what role Shakespeare scholars may play in this field.

Day: 1 September, 15.30–16.30





PL9. “Not as innocent as they seem”: English Textbooks and their Ideological Entanglement in Neoliberal Reality

Marzanna Pogorzelska (University of Opole, Poland)

The proposed presentation is based on the author’s long-standing research on the critical analysis of educational materials for English language learning. Viewing textbooks as cultural products, the presentation examines their hidden curriculum — the underlying values and norms they convey — which are deeply entangled in the socio-political context shaped by neoliberal ideology. The presentation will demonstrate how English textbooks, often perceived as neutral and “innocent,” in fact subtly transmit neoliberal assumptions, presenting them as elements of common sense or as unquestionable “truths.” The first part will explore the discursive construction of the world of work, characterized by notions of self-branding, work as self-fulfillment, and the need for constant flexibility. The second part will address the representation of consumerism, illustrating how textbooks naturalize consumption, foster new desires, and equate consumption with happiness — closely aligning with the narratives found in representations of work, particularly in promoting individualism, personal responsibility, mobility, and risk-taking. The third part will examine the “vanilla” content of textbooks — bland and non-engaging materials that, by excluding or trivializing controversial topics, support neoconservative values. It will highlight the absence or oversimplification of issues such as, for example, poverty, racism, colonialism, and non-heteronormativity. Finally, the presentation will analyze how environmental threats — one of the most urgent global issues — are framed. It will show how textbooks promote a neoliberal discourse that depoliticizes environmental problems and shifts blame and responsibility onto individuals. The presentation is grounded in critical applied linguistics, with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as the principal methodological framework.

The presentation will invite reflection on how language education can either reinforce dominant hegemonic systems or become a site of critical consciousness and social transformation. Ultimately, the presentation will advocate for more socially responsible language education — one that is aware of global inequities, fosters critical citizenship, and empowers learners to question taken-for-granted “truths” rather than merely reproduce them.

Day: 2 September, 12.00-13.00





PL10. Material Intimacies in British Interwar Literature

Christine Reynier (Paul-Valéry University, Montpellier 3, France)

This talk means to focus on the early (short) fiction of three British interwar writers: Virginia Woolf, Winifred Holtby and Sylvia Townsend Warner. A choice of texts will be read as stories about intimacy, that is, as narratives ‘about both oneself and others [...] set within zones of familiarity and comfort’ (Berlant 1998, 281), what could be called, focusing on the spaces of intimacy, ‘zones of interiority’. A closer reading of these texts will extend the meaning of the relational quality of intimacy beyond what partakes of human relations and of the self, and reveal both the personal *and* impersonal relational quality of intimacy. Intimacy in these texts will thus be shown to extend beyond the private sphere so as to encompass not so much the socio-political world (Högberg 2020) as a space of shared materiality.

Intimacy will thus read as a third space, connected not only with interiority but with exteriority and materiality. Such a renewed approach of intimacy as material intimacy/ies, based on theories that range from phenomenology to New Materialist theories, Material Engagement Theory and ecocriticism, should shed a new light on the canonical fiction of the modernist writer Woolf is said to be as well as reveal the potentialities of oft-neglected novels of the same period, by Holtby and Warner who are not regarded as modernists. The connecting link between the chosen texts will appear as we explore the various forms of material intimacies favoured by these writers, and develop the concept of ‘quiescence’ and how it compares with Kalaidjian’s concept of ‘rest’ (2020).

The engagement of intimacy with the mind and with matter may lead us to bring additional nuances to the knowledge of modernism, long defined as ‘an art of cities’ (Bradbury 1976) but whose environmental and ecological concerns have recently begun to be explored (Alt 2010, Sultzbach 2016, McCarthy 2015, Rubenstein and Neuman 2020, Diaper 2021, 2023) and still need to be expanded. The study of material intimacy/ies and their similar representation and conceptualisation within the early fiction of Woolf, Holtby, and Warner should further help us to reconsider the boundaries of modernism, explore its margins and question their very name, i.e. deal with interwar literature differently.

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Day: 2 September, 12.00-13.00



PL11. Semiotics of Overindulgence: Language and Spectacle in Online Food Performances

Sofia Rüdiger (Freie Universität Berlin, Germany)

Food-related content is abundant in the digital sphere, ranging from restaurant reviews and culinary forums to recipes and pictures in social media posts (see, e.g., Tovaes & Gordon 2021 for an overview). Online, food has truly transcended its role as nourishment and become a source of entertainment across platforms. While some formats focus on the competitive nature of cooking or instructional value, a distinct subset centers on excessive consumption – what can be termed ‘feasts of spectacle’. These include eating shows (*mukbang*), cheat day vlogs, food challenges, and excessive cooking shows. This talk explores the discursive dimensions of English-language food videos that celebrate overindulgence. Drawing on corpus-based discourse analysis and digital linguistic ethnography of 400 video artifacts, I examine how ‘carnavalesque food videos’ construct eating as entertainment and food as a spectacle. In this presentation, I highlight how language (e.g., pronouns, extreme case formulations), physical eating processes (e.g., chewing and swallowing), and visuals (e.g., arrangement of food items, use of utensils) are deployed to create narratives of indulgence, negotiate identities, and foster online communities. I focus on findings from the study’s eating show and excessive cooking show components, with a particular emphasis on identity construction, food portrayal, and community building. Finally, I reflect on how these insights deepen our understanding of food performances in computer-mediated interaction and digitally mediated publics and intimacy.



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Day: 4 September 12.00-13.00



PL12. “Been there, done that?": Multimodal Argument Reconstruction Based on the Evidence of Corpus Annotation

Hartmut Stöckl (Salzburg University, Austria)

Notions of text-connectedness, i.e., cohesion and coherence were soon adopted for the study of multimodal text (see Bateman 2014). One area where such multimodal coherence building (Stöckl/Pflaeging, 2022) comes in especially useful is argumentation in public discourse. Work there has raised questions about how to effectively reconstruct multimodal arguments in the first place (Stöckl/Tseronis, 2024). Within the variety of approaches available (Stöckl, 2024), Jean Wageman’s Argument Type Identification Procedure (Wagemans, 2023) has attracted quite some attention lately. It suggests a heuristic procedure for reconstructing arguments that scrutinizes the propositional-logical form of the argument and its semantic substance. The model can easily accommodate visual images and their propositional content (Wagemans, in print). Using a corpus of 97 graphically outstanding and award-winning travel/leisure ads of worldwide distribution from 2016–2022 (Lürzer’s Archive), the presentation will explore the ways in which large images and minimal text are coherently related to each other in an argumentative persuasive genre. The analyses are based on annotations for visual grammar, visual structures and meaning operations, multimodal cohesive ties, and image-integration into the argument.

Pertinent questions are asked about the types of cohesive ties, how these ties cue intermodal semantic relations, and in what way rhetorical operations are instrumental in building persuasive arguments etc. The approach distinguishes between explicit non-redundancy signals and implicit, less overt cohesive ties. This helps model multimodal discourse structure. It also marshals ideas from multimodal argumentation (Stöckl/Tseronis, 2024), especially regarding argument form, argument substance and argument lever (Wagemans, 2023). Overall, the approach allows insights into how multimodal coherence is conducive to argument building in advertising. The results show quantitatively verifiable patterns of multimodal linking. The study pursues a dual purpose: It aims to make statements about genre-typical ways of building coherence and to ponder the value of corpus annotation work.



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Day: 31 August, 18.30–19.30



PL13. “Every day I am subjected to images and text”: Towards a Grammar of Internet Memes

Lieven Vandelanotte (University of Namur & KU Leuven, Belgium)

It’s difficult to imagine the internet today – and social media platforms especially – without internet memes. Building on humorous forms of indirectness or incongruity, they parcel up often emotional messages in more impactful ways than just words, and allow communicators to bring across viewpoints and elicit responses quickly. This talk wants to show ways in which English itself is changed, its grammar extended, by internet meme culture. Images used in memes are not illustrations of text, but become structural components, making the forms of English adjust to the emerging multimodal rules of meme grammar.

The talk builds on construction grammar, as a contemporary theory of linguistic structure, but also on analyses of humour, viewpoint, reported speech, figurative language use and image-text relationships, and as such it should have broad appeal for colleagues interested in rhetoric, communication, discourse analysis, semiotics and literary studies. Given the central position of English in online forms of communication, it also bears general relevance for the future of English studies.

Day: 4 September, 12.00–13.00





PL14. Academic Integrity in the Post-Plagiarism Era

Irena Vassileva (New Bulgarian University in Sofia, Bulgaria)

The proposed lecture explores the evolving landscape of academic integrity in an era where traditional plagiarism is no longer the sole concern. With the rise of AI-generated content, contract cheating, and advanced paraphrasing tools, the boundaries of academic misconduct have become increasingly complex. The analysis is based on a review of current studies and institutional policies about AI use in academic settings, focusing on: academic integrity, plagiarism concerns, equity and access, and bias and misinformation. Besides, it considers stakeholder surveys distributed among students (*How are they using AI? What do they think is ethical?*), lecturers (*Where do they draw the line?*) and administrators (*What policies are in place? Is there a necessity for developing new policies / laws?*) carried out in Bulgaria in order to elicit critical issues and possible measures that need to be implemented to promote responsible use of AI in academia.

By analyzing universities' Codes of Ethics, this study also explores whether and how institutions are transitioning from a punitive model toward one that emphasizes education, ethical development, and fostering a culture of integrity. The talk highlights strategies such as promoting authentic and reliable assessments, encouraging critical thinking, and integrating digital literacy into the curriculum. Special attention is paid to the (mis)use of English as the medium of instruction and criterion of assessment in cases of students and scholars, who are non-native speakers and tend to resort to unfair means in their academic production in English due to pressure to submit assignments, respectively publish internationally, paired with lack of confidence in their knowledge of the language.

In the realm of academic publishing, the lecture addresses the growing concerns around paper mills, unethical authorship practices, and the misuse of AI in manuscript generation. A key focus is on authorship in the era of AI—where questions arise about how to appropriately credit human and non-human contributions, ensure transparency, and maintain accountability in scholarly writing. As generative tools become more sophisticated, redefining authorship criteria and disclosure norms is critical for maintaining trust in published research.

Finally, the lecture emphasizes the need for collaborative efforts among educators, students, publishers, and technology developers to uphold the values of honesty, responsibility, and fairness in a rapidly changing academic environment.

Day: 4 September, 12.00-13.00





PL15. Reclaiming the Human in Digital Literary Translation. Beyond Stylistic Metrics

Titela Vilceanu (University of Craiova, Romania)

Digital technologies are increasingly shaping the translation environment, the intersection of algorithmic tools, stylistic nuance and ethical responsibility becoming critical. This lecture explores how advances in digital stylistics, corpus-based methodologies and machine translation technologies are transforming our understanding of literary translation evaluation. The main aim is to examine how computational tools can contribute to reveal stylistic fingerprints across several translations of the same original text, while also raising awareness about authorship, aesthetic value and agency (notably, Youdale 2020, Cipriani 2023, Li & Corbett 2025). However, technological affordances come with ethical responsibilities. Grounded in the digital ethics framework of Floridi (2023) and the practical concerns outlined by Moniz and Parra Escartín (2023), the lecture advocates for a human-centric interpretive model of digital translation research, resisting both algorithmic determinism and nostalgic purism. By integrating cognitive insights (notably, Jakobsen and Mesa-Lao 2017) and empirical research findings (Ji and Oakes 2019), this lecture envisages literary translation as an active, creative and ethically charged terrain rather than as a passive site of automation. The analysis of the compiled corpus (several translations of Salman Rushdie's "Midnight's Children" into Romanian) showcases the translator's interpretive agency in partnering with digital tools (Desjardins et al. 2021), as well as the stylistic textures that resist quantification. Therefore, the paper steers attention toward responsible innovation (Moorkens et al. 2018, Hadley et al. 2022): a future where digital tools serve high quality literary translation, without silencing its aesthetic qualities.

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Day: 1 September, 15.30-16.30





Round Tables



RT1. Late Style, Late Times: Literary Study at the End

Simon Swift (University of Geneva, Switzerland)

K. Allison Hammer (Southern Illinois University, United States)

Alexander Regier (Rice University, United States)

Camila Querino (University of Lisbon, Portugal)

Matthew Scully (University of Lausanne, Switzerland)

This roundtable seeks to open a conversation about new stylistic forms that its participants have noticed in a variety of fields of contemporary cultural production. *Auteur* figures such as Yo Yo Ma in his recent recital of Schumann's cello concerto, and Pedro Almodóvar in his latest film *The Room Next Door* appear to be abandoning grandiose performative gestures and the production of works on a large scale in favour of quieter, looser aesthetic forms that draw their audiences into circles of quiet reflection and intimacy, and that embrace imperfection and mistake. The roundtable will understand this discernible pattern as a form of "late style" that models a structure of feeling that fits an historical moment which bears the weight of an intensely pressurized feeling of finitude and fragility – environmental, political and cultural. As literary and cultural scholars know, the feel of a "late style" is not new, but can be traced as a recurrent motif across Romantic and post-Romantic literary history, perhaps even before.

The aim of the roundtable will be twofold: first, to describe this "structure of feeling" or cultural logic of late late capitalism, and then to reflect on how our scholarship as literary historians and close readers might help us to make sense of it. Each of our five participants will take one example of a work that is recognizable as embodying "late style" and describe it in a ten-minute presentation, before opening up a dialogue with the audience. Two of those works will be from contemporary cultural production, while the other three will be from Romantic, Modernist and Contemporary literature. In comparing these examples of late style to one another, the aim will be both to think about what our examples from literary history can teach us about contemporary forms of late style, and how those contemporary forms can cast a productive glance back on that history. The late style we have identified differs from accounts offered by Theodor Adorno and others, and it also doesn't seem amenable to being understood according to some of the binary forms of interpretation that have shaped recent conversations about method in literary study (reparative/suspicious, social/anti-social). At once deeply introspective but also social, inviting its audiences into friendship and advertising its weakness or lack of control over its acts of representation, the form of late style we aim to describe blends introspection with friendship and converse, while appearing levelling or horizontal in the ways in which it interpellates its



audiences. We aim to explore how it raises important questions about finitude, performativity, care and environment in ways that feel at once novel, but also resonant with figures from literary history including John Keats, Virginia Woolf and Seamus Heaney.

Day: 31 August, 16.00-18.00



RT2. Reading Transnational Literature in English: Theoretical and Methodological Issues

Isabel Carrera Suárez (University of Oviedo, Spain)

Jasmina Lukic (Central European University, Vienna)

Rita Monticelli (Alma Mater Studiorum. Università di Bologna, Italy)

Francesco Cattani (Alma Mater Studiorum. Università di Bologna, Italy)

Adelina Sánchez Espinosa (University of Granada, Spain)

This panel is convened to discuss theoretical and methodological issues regarding the research and interpretation of contemporary transnational literatures in English within the European continent, in the framework of European transnational writing. The panel participants are scholars who collaborate in the project *EUTERPE: European Literatures and Gender from a Transnational Perspective*, a Marie Skłodowska–Curie Actions – Doctoral Network programme, supported by the European Union’s Horizon Europe research and innovation programme, together with a UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Research Grant. The proposed panel is based on their research within this project. EUTERPE aims to offer an innovative approach to rethinking European cultural production in the light of the complex social and political negotiations that are shaping European spaces and identities at present; it does so by bringing together gender and transnational perspectives within an interdisciplinary approach to literary and cultural studies. The concept of transnational is differently approached not only within various disciplines, but also within literary studies and gender studies (Jay 2010, 2021; Lukic et al 2019; Sapiro 2020). The project’s interdisciplinary expertise has fuelled a collaborative exploration of various approaches to transnationalism in literary studies with an emphasis on transculturation, multilingualism, multiple identities produced by migration, and diverse forms of translation that are inherent in the transnational perspective. Transnational literature is seen as a large body of literature dealing with such issues.

For this panel, the participants will be focusing mainly on authors who are currently living and writing in the UK or elsewhere



in Europe but using English as their literary medium. The panel intends to discuss the complexities of taxonomy (what makes a text be recognized as “transnational”); the main themes, motives and narrative techniques, as well as the role of gender in representative texts of contemporary transnational authors. The question of gender is approached as an overarching axis in the discussion, bringing together the diversity of other related issues. It is explored at the level of language as well as at the level of narrative, contributing to a more general debate on the significance of a transnational perspective for feminist literary criticism.

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Day: 3 September, 9.30-11.30



RT3. Texts and Contexts: Teaching English and American Studies in Times of Challenges and Crises

Roberta Maierhofer (Center for Inter-American Studies, University of Graz, Austria)

Teresa Requena Pelegri (University of Barcelona, Spain)

Hermine Penz (University of Graz, Austria)

Vicky Macleroy (Centre for Language, Culture and Learning, Goldsmiths, University of London, United Kingdom)

Rémi Dignonnet (Laboratoire ECLLA, Université Jean Monnet, St. Etienne, France)



The aim of this roundtable is to discuss how political, social, and cultural challenges currently determining our lives as individuals and as a society are addressed and incorporated in our teaching and research of English and American Studies. Addressing these challenges from very specific research positions, Teresa Requena Pelegri will discuss intersectional concerns and aspects of vulnerability from her work in Masculinity Studies. Hermine Penz will focus on climate crises and environmental issues from an ecolinguistics position. Based on her expertise in language, literacy, and creative practices, Vicky Macleroy will suggest transformative pedagogy, learner agency, and activist citizenship as a response to current challenges. As a cognitive linguist, Rémi Digonnet will discuss the power of metaphors in determining and influencing our perception of the world.

Our times are marked by various conflicts and antagonisms arising from challenging circumstances: climate change, war, inequality, poverty, hunger, pandemics, political authoritarian structures, as well as economic crises. The problems faced today are conceived of in different ways: as unexpected tragedies, as predictable outcomes of past behaviour, as the result of systematic and structural processes, or as the consequence of individual actions or even chance. Sometimes these conceptions overlap, inform each other, and create a sense of transparency, but mostly they produce conflicting and competing interpretations of the current situation. Is a crisis a challenge or even an opportunity for change? Conflict is the consequence of the highly complex way our societies are organized, but it is also the consequence of political inaction and irresponsibility, which allow tensions to spiral out of control. If legitimate grievances are addressed promptly and adequately, could conflicts be prevented before they become a dangerous threat to social cohesion? But what about grievances that do not seem to possess any sort of legitimacy – grievances based on conspiracy theories or pseudo-historical claims to the territory of another sovereign state? In order to resolve a conflict, its basis must be understood. Also, the challenge that any conflict brings is that a return to the status quo ante is often made impossible in the wake of such confrontations.

In teaching and research in English and American Studies, these contexts play an important role that need to be discussed not only as a dialogue between the past and the present, but as citizens in our roles as teachers supporting the democratic ideal where silence is not an alternative. Therefore, this round table will identify the contexts and suggest creative transformation processes to meet the various challenges faced within the field of English and American Studies.

Day: 1 September, 17.00-19.00





RT4. Already Posthuman: Artificial and Natural Intelligences in the Literary Future Now

Francisco Collado-Rodríguez (University of Zaragoza, Spain)

Miriam Fernández Santiago (University of Granada, Spain)

Alexandra Glavanakov (Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, Bulgaria)

Begoña Simal González (University of A Coruña, Spain)

Drawing mainly on posthumanist theory, but also on media studies and popular culture, cognitive science, cybernetics, and the history of science fiction and film since the 1960s, this proposal for a round table interrogates fundamental issues in contemporary fiction. Its main aim is to understand the role AI plays about the future and its impact on present social values and popular hysteria via literary representations. The four contributors are interested in addressing and, when possible, answering some of the most important questions arising from the impact AI is already having in our lives and from the literary and cultural responses to it. When and why did Artificial Intelligence start? How has culture, especially fiction, reacted to it since its inception? How is it affected or affects us on political issues related to race and class? How does it fit in and interact with the always-evolving notion of the human?

Prof. Francisco Collado-Rodríguez (University of Zaragoza) will initiate the discussion by centering on the definition, origins, sociopolitical threats, and opportunities of postmodernist and contemporary narrative representations of AI and its development in popular and current culture. Prof. Miriam Fernández (University of Granada) will address the aesthetic implications of AI literary representations that move beyond the postmodernist paradigm into the sublimity of fantasy and hyperrealism. Subsequently, Prof. Begoña Simal-González (University of A Coruña) will examine the historical entanglements of racialization and the posthuman imagination, focusing on the cybernetic mythology around Asians, which crystallized in the form of “techno-orientalism” but is mutating with the advent of the current and popular definition of AI. To put an end to the introductory discussion, Prof. Alexandra Glavanakova (Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”) will address the notion of “Machine imagination” by investigating the role of artificial intelligence in reshaping the boundaries of creativity through the lens of technosymbiosis (K. Hayles 2023) – the entangled cognitive and aesthetic relationship between human and machine. Among the main issues we expect to clarify by addressing the above-mentioned questions, stand the misleadingly metaphorical term of “Artificial Intelligence” and its political and racial implications, the transhuman vs the dystopic cultural representations of AI, the ways co-creative dynamics between humans and AI reconfigure cultural production and aesthetic turn, and the meaning of creativity in the digital age.



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Day: 4 September 9.30-11.30



Seminars





S1.- Global English/es in a Globalised World – Challenges, Opportunities and the Applicability of New Paradigms for ELT

“The rise of English as a global language has led scholars to call for a paradigm shift in the field of English language teaching (ELT) to match the new sociolinguistic landscape of the twenty-first century.” (Rose et al., 2021, p. 157). Over the last two decades, this issue has been addressed in a considerable body of research encompassing the interrelated fields of English as a Lingua Franca (Jenkins, 2007; Jenkins et al., 2017; Murata, 2023; Seidlhofer, 2011), English as an International Language (Alsagoff et al., 2012; Matsuda, 2012; McKay & Brown, 2016), World Englishes (Kachru et al., 2006; Kirkpatrick, 2007; 2020; Melchers et al., 2019; Nelson et al., 2020), and Global Englishes (Baker et al., 2024; Galloway, 2017; Galloway & Rose, 2015). Nevertheless, the issue still promotes further debates and triggers new research which challenges “ELT’s monolithic and normative preference for Standard English (SE)” (Kohn, 2022, p. 119) and tests the applicability of new paradigms aiming to transform English pedagogy (Saraceni & Bayyurt, 2021). Such transformation may take place at the level of educational policies, curriculum development, coursebooks and materials, testing and assessment, to name a few areas.

The seminar addresses the need to explore new theoretical perspectives and the latest developments currently evolving around the topic of Global English/es and its conception in language teaching and learning. The seminar thus welcomes papers examining innovations in the field, reviews and empirical studies. We appreciate classroom-based research, in particular, embracing English as a lingua franca (ELF), English as an International Language (EIL), World Englishes (WE), or Global Englishes (GE) perspectives and reflecting the plurilingual and pluricultural dimensions of the 21st-century language education. Possible topics might also dwell on translanguaging, mediation, multilingualism/plurilingualism, and other paradigms reflecting the multivocality of ELT, also in CLIL and EMI contexts, in the still-evolving 21st-century classroom.

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Session #1

3 September, 15:00–17:00

English as a Multilingual Franca (EMF): Implementing an ELF-based Approach in Dutch Secondary Education

Mili Gabrovšek Sanders (University of Amsterdam & Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences, Netherlands)

Catherine van Beuningen (University of Amsterdam & Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences, Netherlands)

Sible Andringa (University of Amsterdam, Netherlands)



As English is nowadays primarily used as a lingua franca and multilingual non-native speakers constitute the majority of its users (see Walker et al., 2021), it is important for English language teaching to reflect this linguistic reality. However, most learning materials used in modern ELT reinforce the discrepancy between the classroom and real-life use of English as they focus on native British or American English and adhere to a monolingual orientation without acknowledging or exploiting students' existing language knowledge (e.g., Caleffi, 2016; Rose & Galloway, 2019). ELT textbooks used in secondary education in the Netherlands appear to be no exception (Gabrovšek Sanders et al., 2026).

To address this issue, we took Jenkins' (2015) concept of English as a multilingual franca (EMF) and compiled a set of theory-informed design principles for incorporating EMF in the classroom contexts. These principles are rooted in pedagogies aiming to enhance learners' ELF competence (Kohn, 2015, 2018), as well as in pedagogies that foster learners' multilingual competence, namely pedagogical translanguaging (e.g., Cenoz & Gorter, 2021), language awareness (e.g., Frijns et al., 2018; Svalberg, 2016), and affirming pedagogies (e.g., Veerman et al., 2025). Together with practice-based input (a textbook analysis, a teacher survey [N=110], and teacher interviews [N=19]), these theoretical principles served as the foundation for co-designing EMF-oriented teaching and learning materials with eight secondary English teachers in a previous study. The current study examines the EMF approach's first implementation cycle in which a group of teachers (N=10) teaching lower forms learners (12–15 yr) in the Netherlands applied the approach in their classrooms. The main aim of this study is to examine the EMF approach's local viability (see McKenney & Reeves, 2019), detailing teacher experience regarding the approach's practicality, usability, and flexibility, as well as its role in supporting student learning and engagement. Data collection instruments include teacher feedback logs, observations of implementation, and teacher interviews. This presentation will highlight the EMF design principles for teaching and learning materials, including the pedagogies and competences that underpin them, as well as preliminary results from the implementation of the EMF approach.

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The Role(s) of English in a LOTE Classroom – A Bosnian-Herzegovinian Case Study

Željka Babić (University of Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Drawing on de Swaan's (2001) positioning of English as the 'hyper-central language' within his pyramid-like organigram and Piller's (2016, 25) assertion that "English monolingualism undergirds contemporary ways of seeing multilingualism," the presentation explores the role(s) of English in Bosnian-Herzegovinian (B&H) LOTE (Learning and Teaching Languages Other Than English) academic CLT (Chinese Language Teaching) classrooms. Specifically, the presentation argues that beyond the general roles of the lingua franca (EFL) and the medium of instruction (EMI), which have been addressed and established in previous research



(García, 2014; Sifakis & Tsantila, 2018; Macaro et al, 2018; Liu et al, 2025; Lu et al, 2025), the dominant role that English assumes in such classrooms is that of a connector and/or mediator between cultures, languages and worldviews.

Drawing on research with students and teachers in the B&H academic LOTE CLT classrooms, the presentation will focus on the various roles English plays in the process of language teaching and learning. The research group consists of students of Chinese as a foreign language (all native Serbian speakers) and CLT instructors (native Chinese speakers) who use English as the medium of instruction in their foreign language classes. By conducting quantitative cross-sectional research from a sociocultural perspective using instruments such as questionnaires adapted from Dang (2014) and one-to-one conferences, the presentation will aim to address the following hypotheses: using English as an EMI can lead to issues resulting directly from incongruences within the linguistic, social, cultural, etc., systems; attitudes of students and teachers towards the use of English change with increasing L2 proficiency; the advantages of using English in specific learning environments outweigh the disadvantages. Lastly, the presentation will address instances of translanguaging (García, 2014; García & Kleyn, 2014) in intramural settings.

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Global Englishes in Primary ELT Textbooks: A Critical Analysis

Vi Thanh Son (University of Gothenburg, Sweden)

The global spread of English as a lingua franca has led to increasing linguistic diversity, challenging traditional English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) pedagogies centered on British and American norms. In Sweden, the revised English syllabus for primary education emphasizes pupils' understanding of social and cultural phenomena in contexts where English is used. Despite these policy ambitions, teaching materials often continue to privilege "Inner Circle" varieties. This study aims to examine how English varieties and linguistic diversity are represented in primary English language teaching (ELT) textbooks in Sweden through the following research questions: (1) Which English varieties and nationalities are represented in the selected textbooks? (2) To what extent do the teaching materials acknowledge pupils' own linguistic repertoires as resources for learning?

The study adopts a qualitative textbook analysis combining critical text analysis and interpretive content analysis. The material consists of two recently revised ELT textbooks for Swedish primary education (Years 4–6). Data analysis examines three main dimensions: (1) the nationalities and linguistic positioning of main characters, (2) the English varieties represented, and (3) the distribution of spoken language across activities and texts. A qualitative coding scheme was developed to categorize varieties of English and cultural references, while word counts of character dialogue were used to identify patterns in linguistic representation. The analysis also considers whether pupils' multilingual repertoires are explicitly included as pedagogical resources.

The findings indicate a clear dominance of Inner Circle varieties in both character representation and linguistic models presented to pupils. Although some broader cultural contexts are included, English is still largely framed through a limited set of national varieties, and pupils' multilingual repertoires are rarely positioned as learning resources. This reveals a tension between curriculum goals promoting diverse English use and the continued reproduction of standard language ideologies in teaching materials. Pedagogically, the results highlight the importance of teachers critically engaging with textbooks and supplementing



them with materials that reflect diverse English varieties and learners' linguistic repertoires, thereby supporting awareness of Global Englishes and the development of intercultural communicative competence in today's linguistically diverse world.

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Plurilingual and Pluricultural Potential of the 21st-Century Language Classroom (PLUPOT)

Eva Skopečková (University of West Bohemia, Czech Republic)

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In 2003, Henry Widdowson highlighted the paradoxical situation in foreign language teaching: while teachers strive to develop their learners' target language(s), they often ignore that their learners come to class already equipped with at least one (native) language. Simply put, if bi- or plurilingualism is to be defined as two or more "languages in contact in the individual, conventional language teaching procedures are designed to stifle rather than promote it" (2003, p. 150). Over twenty years later, many teachers remain unsure how to help learners relate the languages in their repertoire. The presentation explores the issue in the context of teaching English as a foreign language and its role as a global language in selected Central European countries.

The presentation will focus on the results of a pilot research project entitled *Plurilingual and pluricultural potential of the 21st-century*



language classroom (PLUPOT). It aims to explore the basic question: to what extent are lower-secondary EFL teachers familiar with plurilingual and pluricultural approaches, and which plurilingual and pluricultural techniques and strategies do they employ? The project is realised in the Czech Republic (three universities and three regions – Charles University Prague, Masaryk University in Brno, and the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen) and in Hungary (the University of Pécs). In the pilot stage, data were collected through structured observation (ELT lessons in lower-secondary schools; 12 ELT teachers) and semi-structured interviews (ELT teachers), which will be analysed qualitatively, employing thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and quantitatively. The pilot study will present preliminary findings and outline the coding scheme and design, complemented by a detailed manual based on previous research in the field (Zerzová, 2012; Skopečková, 2024), which will serve as the basis for further research focusing on the gradual development of both plurilingual and pluricultural competence in the 21st-century ELT context.

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Session #2

4 September, 9:30–11:30

The Wrong Comparison Cycle: A Conceptual Model of Intrapersonal Benchmarking and L2 Avoidance

Koren Maor (Connect – Experiential Spoken Language Education Initiative, Israel)

Second language acquisition research has extensively examined interlanguage development (Selinker), affective variables (Krashen), and willingness to communicate (MacIntyre). While these frameworks address developmental and emotional dimensions of L2 learning, the specific role of intrapersonal benchmarking during L2 production remains under-theorized. This paper introduces the concept of the Inter-Language Gap (ILG), defined as the perceived distance between automatized L1 competence and emerging



L2 competence. Although objective proficiency differences are developmentally expected, the learner's perception of this gap may trigger what is termed the Wrong Comparison Cycle—an automatic benchmarking of L2 performance against fully developed L1 fluency.

This paper proposes a conceptual model explaining how unconscious L1 benchmarking contributes to L2 avoidance. It asks: (1) How does intrapersonal comparison influence learners' willingness to speak? and (2) How might pedagogical design mitigate its inhibitory effects? The model is developed through a conceptual synthesis of SLA literature combined with reflective analysis derived from extensive applied spoken-language practice across diverse learner populations. The framework is informed by multi-year field implementation across diverse spoken-language educational contexts involving thousands of L2 learners of varying ages. The analysis consists of a theoretical model construction supported by recurring observational patterns identified in applied practice.

The paper proposes the Wrong Comparison Cycle as a metacognitive mechanism driving L2 avoidance. It further argues that incidental learning—embedding language use within meaningful, low-stakes activities—reduces benchmarking salience and supports sustainable spoken development. The model offers a complementary lens to existing SLA paradigms and invites future empirical investigation.

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Bridging the Pragmatic Gap: Iterative Design of an Educational Card Game for Diverse ESL Cohorts

Jonathan Marquez (Independent Researcher)

Traditional English Language Teaching (ELT) often prioritises grammatical accuracy over pragmatic competence. However, failing to master social nuances and contextual meanings can lead to social isolation and communication breakdowns (Mahfoodh, 2024).



This is particularly critical for non-native speakers, including migrants, refugees, and healthcare professionals, who face significant socio-cultural barriers.

This proposal highlights the continuous research and development of “Mind You!” (Marquez et al., 2019), an educational card game designed to provide a foundational framework for practising English pragmatic markers (Aijmer & Simon-Vandenberg, 2011) in the classroom. Grounded in social constructivism (Piaget, 2002) and situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991), the game requires players to formulate sentences within hypothetical social narratives that frame the interactions between rounds.

Following an iterative design methodology, the research explores how core mechanics can be adapted for specific cohorts by modifying card content. The game has been playtested with various groups in Australia, including ESL learners, nursing students (Marquez & Penman, 2021), and migrants (Marquez & Penman, 2025) of diverse nationalities and ages.

Data from video recordings, semi-structured interviews, and surveys were processed via thematic analysis to evaluate how visual design and mechanics engage learners with pragmatic markers. Findings from these trials demonstrate that shifting focus from rote learning to gamified pragmatics empowers speakers to thrive in academic and professional environments.

By sharing these results, this work invites engagement with the conference community to identify further cohorts, such as those in business, science or higher education that would benefit from future iterations, ultimately advocating for a more inclusive ELT paradigm.

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Mediation in the AI Era: Designing a Fully-Mediated Programme in ELT

Edward Andrea Sheldon (“Gabriele D’Annunzio” University of Chieti-Pescara, Italy)

The CEFR Companion Volume (2020) revised the background knowledge about language teaching and assessment. It introduced ‘Mediation’ as a highly important communicative mode focusing on human-centred and action-based strategies in order to teach languages while creating a common space to collaborate and communicate ‘to construct new meaning’ (Council of Europe, 2020). Two years later, the rapid emergence of AI technologies has raised new questions about how these human-centred mediation strategies operate in a world where machines increasingly provide solutions to everyday and professional enquiries (Jeon, Lee, 2023). Still, mediation plays a fundamental role in ELT settings, especially international classrooms dealing with World or Global Englishes as a sociolinguistic negotiator (Lee et al., 2025); it is in this context that AI could fill the gaps to design a fully-mediated programme for these classrooms (Moorhouse, Wong, 2025).

Furthermore, given that Artificial Intelligence has changed the teaching techniques in ELT, how could mediation be applied to international ELT classrooms with AI technologies? This paper offers the preliminary results of my research, which intends to assess the extent to which mediation remains an important communicative mode within ELT practices when integrated with AI. To this end, teaching techniques and strategies to be used in these contexts will be examined through the design-based research (DBR) approach (Bell et al., 2013). It implies iterative cycles of analysis, design, implementation, and evaluation, during which AI-supported mediation is tested and collected in classroom contexts, and the teaching model is progressively refined, employing cross-cycle comparison, to establish validated design principles for AI-mediated ELT. Moreover, to understand the perception of AI tools, qualitative data is fundamental – through surveys and interpretation of patterns, the model is further refined. In this perspective, mediation fits as a design principle prompting the question, ‘Is AI the key tool to mediate ELT students’ linguistic differences?’

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S2.- Academic and Professional Cultures in English for Specific Purposes (ESP)

Regardless of whether we view disciplinary and professional groups as academic tribes, discourse communities, or specialized communities, culture remains a significant component characterizing these groups. When questioning culture, ESP may adopt national culture and small culture perspectives, such as disciplinary and professional cultures, and imbricate questions of discourse, skills, technology and frameworks. The relationship between discourse and culture is complex: just as culture informs specialized languages, language plays a part in the formation of professional cultures. Similarly, the interface between academic and professional sectors, when explored through skills-based curriculum design, has driven universities to align more closely with market needs through extended internships and a rethinking of the theory-practice divide. These changes respond to



evolving digital environments and technologies, and they raise critical questions: How do we prepare students for jobs that don't yet exist? What literacies should we teach and assess? For instance, the rise of AI has significantly transformed both academic and professional landscapes. As noted in the 2024 Work Trend Index Report, over 75% of employees use AI for tasks ranging from research and writing to coding and communication. Yet large language models (LLMs) may either fail to grasp, or inadvertently shape, emerging specificities within disciplinary cultures, including the analytic and output-related distinctions between the hard and soft sciences. Another currently developing field in which culture is central is sustainability. As sustainability gains importance across global sectors, it is crucial to examine how different cultures integrate sustainable practices. Such integration may vary according to scale, context and sector, making sustainability culture-specific.

This seminar invites reflections on how professional and disciplinary cultures are studied and taught—through ethnography, intercultural rhetoric, sociological and discursive approaches, or through the prism of enculturation and professional socialization—and how contemporary and future processes and conjunctures are reshaping cultural competence in diverse fields.

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Session #1

3 September, 9:30–11:30

Introduction

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William Kelleher (Rennes 2 University, France)



Evgueniya Lyu (University Grenoble Alpes, France)
Caroline Peynaud (University Grenoble Alpes, France)

Awareness and Dexterity in Academic Style and Professional Business Cultures

Roxanne B. Doerr (University of Brescia, Italy)

As general culture can help understand specialized cultures (Lyu, Peynaud & Stojković, 2025), business cultures and languages are shaped by dimensions such as nationality, personality and profession. Such narrowing runs parallel to the ongoing specialization in English language teaching, learning and university curriculum design. In fact, English for Scientific and Professional Purposes (ESPP, Zanola 2023), English for Research Publication Purposes (ERPP, Englander & Corcoran, 2019; Flowerdew & Habibie, 2022), and English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP) are becoming increasingly prominent. In this more customized context, business undergraduates and graduates are ideally positioned to elaborate the theory and practice of their studies. They do this by learning, using and blending academic discourse and disciplinary discourse when they read and write research papers, dissertations and proposals for research articles and projects.

The English that emerges from this process is an unconscious merging of acquired domain-specific business and academic discourse with the personal-national culture of origin (Clyne, 1993) through which they are filtered. Stylistics (Solly, 2016) and corpus stylistics (Jeffries & McIntyre, 2010) may detect and observe these idiosyncratic features but remain decidedly understudied. This entails a two-fold disadvantage for students positioned between academia and the workplace. On the one hand, research has still not revealed how to make academic writing less opaque and more appealing to students' future mentors. As things stand, the highly specialized sources of knowledge and tested skills students have gained from their recent connections to academia are left behind and lost. On the other hand, students who intend to pursue an academic career in business and economics often receive negative feedback due to culture-related divergences in their academic style (Kapp, Albertyn, & Frick, 2011) compared to that accepted by international journals and publishers (Doerr, 2023a; 2023b).

The present study, therefore, draws on the author's updated ACASTYLE ECO subcorpus of published articles (2012-2025) to provide insight into common stylistic errors that could teach students practical ways to self-proofread and dexterously understand and re-align their academic style in accordance with the workplace and the international scientific community.

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From Galleries to Screens: The Evolution of Curators' Professional Culture in Digital Museum Spaces

Agnès Ganet (Paris Cité University, France)

Natalie Kübler (Paris Cité University, France)

Johns (1994) argues that 'culture' in the context of languages for specific purposes can be understood as behavior, which manifests itself as conventionalized ways of acting and communicating. Consequently, written and spoken specialized discourses function as cultural artifacts of specific communities and manifest as discursive genres (*ibid.*). However, the notion of 'culture' is polysemous and can also designate artistic productions circulating within society (Geertz, 1973). Such objects are exhibited in museums, conceptualized as 'cultural spaces' (Bennett, 1995). With the growth of museums and galleries, texts about artworks have become relevant to study (Swales, 2016), as they are 'vehicles of cultural and educational outreach' (*ibid.*).

As in many domains, new genres have emerged in the museum landscape (Mida, 2015). To adapt to the digital environment and attract wider audiences, museums increasingly produce YouTube videos (Gladysheva et al., 2014). Exhibition curators, often researchers, now take on the role of YouTubers to present the exhibitions they curate.



As a ‘cultural space of participation’ (Müller et al., 2013), YouTube encourages new behaviors and professional practices. It, thus, functions as an extension of the museum’s role as a cultural space and may give rise to new forms of culture, understood here as behavior. YouTube videos, therefore, serve as cultural artifacts conveying both disciplinary culture (exhibition content) and professional culture (curatorial behaviors and practices), providing educational content while showcasing museum activities.

To study these specialized ‘cultural artifacts,’ we had to create our own corpus, as is often the case with such specialized corpora (Kübler, 2014). Adopting a corpus-driven approach (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001) and a comparative perspective drawn from the Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (Partington, 2006 p. 260), we investigate how both types of culture are transmitted. Specifically, we examine how curators identify themselves in videos (e.g., *My name is; I’m the curator of*), refer to their professional activity (e.g., *we wanted to show*), and multimodally situate themselves by acknowledging both the immediate space (e.g., *behind me*), and the Web space, as evidenced by multiple addresses to the audience (e.g., *you can see, if you look at*).

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The Language of AI-Assisted Authorship in Medical Research: Disciplinary Culture and Writing Practices

Carlotta Fiammenghi (University of Verona, Italy)

The diffusion of generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools is increasingly influencing ESP research into academic writing practices, discourse norms, disciplinary cultures, and the socialization of novice writers into specialized discourse communities. The examination of how AI is integrated into disciplinary writing necessarily intertwines with questions of authorship, integrity, epistemic responsibility, and pedagogical implications. This study addresses these questions with specific reference to medical research writing, by exploring how medical authors disclose their use of AI tools in published research articles, and by examining whether AI-assisted articles display distinctive lexico-grammatical features when compared with pre-AI academic writing. A corpus of 202 open-access (CC-BY NC) research articles published between 2023 and 2025 in journals belonging to the British Medical Journal (BMJ) family was compiled. All articles explicitly included a statement regarding AI use, which was manually coded for the AI tools mentioned, the stated purposes of use (grammar correction, paraphrasing, translation, ...), and the presence of accountability disclaimers. Then, the IMRaD sections of the articles were uploaded to SketchEngine and their lexico-grammatical features compared with established reference corpora of pre-AI academic writing (BAWE and the Cambridge Academic English corpus). Findings show that AI-related statements function primarily as mechanisms of professional and ethical positioning, reinforcing human authorship and accountability, while downplaying AI's creative contribution and occasionally framing AI use as linguistic support for non-native English writers. Corpus analyses reveal preferences for certain lexico-grammatical features typically associated with AI-generated language, such as increased use of evaluative adjectives (pivotal), adverbs (thoroughly), and specific verbs (delve); however, these patterns appear less pronounced than those reported in earlier studies. Overall, this suggests that experienced authors actively negotiate AI use to sustain established disciplinary and professional writing cultures. This can help inform present and future ESP pedagogies by shedding light on how emerging technologies are being incorporated into professional enculturation processes within specialized academic communities.

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Redefining Academic Positioning in the AI Era: A Corpus-Informed Analysis of Faculty Perspectives

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Gavin Stewart (UCD School of Biology and Environmental Science, Ireland)

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The academic world is undergoing a fundamental shift due to the rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI), altering not only pedagogical tools but the very nature of the professional environment. To navigate this transformation, institutions must understand how faculty are positioning themselves within this new landscape. It is not enough to support educators solely in technical teaching practices; we must also investigate the factors that influence their professional identities and their willingness to engage with these emerging technologies (Berg & Seeber, 2016; Fawns, 2022).

This ongoing study is one of three led by an interdisciplinary Research Group of ten faculty members interested in how academics across disciplines are experiencing, understanding, and responding to generative AI in their teaching and learning practices. It uses a multi-method approach to gather experiences from faculty in four different schools. We combine three complementary



data sources: an analysis of module descriptors to map current levels of AI integration (Thomas et al., 2025); faculty responses to a digital AI values board capturing concerns and perspectives; and finally, interviews with self-identified early adopters and hesitant observers (Ghimire et al., 2024). The research applies a corpus-informed approach to analyse the textual data from both the module descriptors and the interviews (Hyland, 2012; Curry et al., 2024).

Our goal is to uncover the factors driving both hesitancy and early adoption by analysing how these concepts are constructed in the discourse. We specifically look for school-specific nuances to determine whether these positions stem from strongly rooted disciplinary values (Swales, 2016).

Finally, this research aims to contribute practical, evidence-informed guidance for faculty development by generating actionable recommendations for supporting meaningful AI integration locally. The transferable findings will allow us to inform both immediate interventions and longer-term strategies for sustainable pedagogical development in an evolving technological landscape.

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Maritime Disciplinary Cultures and Maritime English in a Defense-Industrial Context: The Case of Navantia

Silvia Molina (Technical University of Madrid, Spain)



This paper provides an overview of the intersection between Maritime Disciplinary Cultures (MDCs) and Maritime English (ME) within the specialized context of high-technology shipbuilding and naval defense, exemplified by the global operations of



Navantia. It is a Spanish state-owned shipbuilding enterprise with a history dating back over 300 years. It is a strategic global leader in naval construction, specializing in the design, construction, and lifecycle support of surface vessels, submarines, and integrated defense systems.

The maritime domain is characterized by multifaceted MDCs, including organizational, ship-specific, and paramount Safety Culture (Carol-Dekker, 2018), all of which significantly influence seafarer identity, operational efficiency, and risk management. As the established lingua franca and a form of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) mandated by the IMO Model Course 3.17, ME serves as the critical communication platform that bridges the linguistic and cultural gaps inherent in multinational maritime workforces. A relevant distinction lies between spoken ME (SMCP), which is simplified for operational safety, and written ME (technical/legal), which is highly complex and specific to ensure contractual or technical precision.

Analysis of corporate communication (Bhatia, 2004; Djonov, 2007; Kathpalia 2022), such as Navantia's website and video from its Australian webpage reveals an internal disciplinary culture centered on interdisciplinary engineering solutions, digitalization, and Industry 4.0 technologies (e.g., Digital Twin and COEX). This high-stakes, technologically advanced environment, focused on naval defense and complex systems integration, necessitates not just generic ME proficiency, but highly specialized sub-genres tailored for technical precision in engineering, systems, and defense logistics.

The study concludes that the successful execution of complex, global naval programs by entities like Navantia depends critically on the integration of standardized ME communication with a deep, culturally-sensitive awareness of these underlying technical and disciplinary cultures, ensuring clarity, conciseness, and correctness in mission-critical communications.

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Session #2

3 September, 15:00–17:00

English for the Arts and Humanities: Insights into Subject-Specific Culture in EAP Course Design

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This paper seeks to contextualize current practices in the teaching of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) for students whose primary fields of study lie in the arts and humanities. The analysis is situated within the rapidly expanding field of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) in French higher education, particularly within universities and engineering schools where such instruction has grown significantly since the 1970s. Over the past fifty years, this domain has evolved into an identifiable field in its own right, now commonly referred to as “languages for specialists of other disciplines” (LANSOD). These other disciplines, with their own subject-specific cultures, shared values and professional references, are, therefore, distinct from literature and modern language programs and encompass all the other scientific fields that structure higher education. Yet, despite its institutional consolidation, LANSOD teaching still faces a fundamental, unresolved challenge: how to define and operationalize learners’ subject-specific needs as disciplinary cultures, epistemologies, and communicative practices differ widely—from the arts and humanities to the social sciences, health professions, and STEM. This paper questions the ambiguity surrounding what “subject-specific” knowledge and skills actually entail for LANSOD course design and teaching in the fields of the arts and humanities. It first addresses the question of LANSOD learners’ language needs (e.g., specific communicative norms and conventions, media and genres), examining how these needs influence decisions regarding the prioritization of core knowledge, linguistic and communicative skills within EAP course design. Then, the discussion turns to the concept of language proficiency, considering it in relation to institutional expectations and the increasing emphasis on students’ professional integration. Challenging the assumption that students require proficiency in so-called “General English,” the argument reconsiders the notions of need, proficiency, and relevance in LANSOD contexts. On this basis, the paper discusses the opportunity to consider a shift away from systems that certify individual students’ skills towards models that accredit EAP courses themselves, thereby recognizing the situated, subject-specific nature of language learning outcomes. Finally, the paper presents a preliminary review of research on EAP within the arts and humanities, drawing on publications that have appeared over the past thirty years in the French journal *ASp* and in the *ESP Journal*.



Cultures and Small Cultures through the Lens of Human Factors: Applications in the Education of Medical Students and Communicators

Vanessa Marcella (University of Calabria, Italy)

Sergio Pizziconi (University of Calabria, Italy)

Recent sociological, sociolinguistic, and rhetorical research has called for a rethinking of the concept of *culture*, moving away from broad, national models toward more situated and dynamic understandings (Matsuda & Atkinson, 2008). In particular, the notion of *small cultures* highlights the need for fine-grained analytical tools capable of capturing cultural practices as they emerge within specific academic, professional, and educational contexts and even specific communicative situations.

This paper proposes the Human Factors (HF) framework as a productive lens for analyzing culture in professional training environments. Originally developed in the field of aviation and space operations and technologies, HF offers a multidisciplinary approach to understanding how individuals interact with systems, technologies, environments, and other actors in complex workplaces. Drawing on Brennan and Oeppen's (2022) application of HF to medical settings, the study adopts the SHELL model, which maps professional activity around the operator (*Liveware*) in interaction with other individuals (*Liveware*), tools (*Hardware*), physical context (*Environment*), and rules and practices, either institutionalized or more often not written (*Software*) (Salas & Maurino, 2010; CASA, 2022).

The framework is applied to two ESP classroom contexts involving medical students and communication students, two groups whose professional identities are strongly shaped by communicative practices. The study explores how these learners conceptualize and negotiate the meaning of culture within their respective domains, and how *small cultures* emerge through interaction, task performance, and professional socialization.

By integrating HF with small culture theory (Atkinson, 2004), the paper argues for a more operational and context-sensitive approach to culture in ESP and professional education, with implications for curriculum design, communication training, and interdisciplinary pedagogy.

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ESP Development Through the Projects – Good Practices, Challenges, and Perspectives

Joanna Kic-Drgas (Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, Poland)

Dragana Bozic (J. J. Strossmayer University of Osijek, Croatia)

Ferit Kilickaya (Burdur Mehmet Akif Ersoy University, Türkiye)

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is a branch of the English language teaching discipline that is centered around training the linguistic and communicative capacity for the prospective professionals or occupationals (Basturkmen, 2025). Starfield and Hafner (2025) noted that ESP learning is shaped by the discursive practices and communicative conventions of specific professional communities. In recent years, ESP education has been subjected to the increasing challenge of harmonizing the national level of educational standards and the practical level of competencies required in global professional settings. Developments in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and digital technologies across various industries have underlined the importance of preparing learners for technologically advanced and globally integrated workplaces (Ngo & Hastie, 2025; Smirnova, 2025; Tian & Wang, 2025). These developments not only reshape professional communication, but also pedagogical practices and the ESP teacher. On these grounds, the current study highlights that international project-based collaboration serves as a pedagogical framework for developing AI-empowered ESP competence. In particular, such cross-national collaboration allows the partner teachers to develop, trial, and officially adopt AI-supported pedagogical scenarios, which may include AI-assisted genre analysis, automated commenting tools, and AI-facilitated professional communication practices based on identified workplace needs across the partner ESP countries. The investigation of modern AI utilisation patterns in education and business settings relies on mixed-methods research conducted among ESP instructors and labour market stakeholders in Poland, Türkiye, and Croatia. By incorporating perspectives from academic practitioners and industry stakeholders, the research explicitly addresses the



intersection between academic culture (curricular standards, assessment traditions, disciplinary conventions) and professional culture (workplace communication practices, technological expectations, performance-oriented competencies). This study results from a joint EU project 2024-1-IT02-KA220-HED-000244375 The integrated framework of AILEM project: AI-Infused Language Education: Empowering teachers through Multilingual MOOC Training. The findings present convergences as well as discrepancies between institutional expectations and the professional practices in the real world. The discussion considers the shift from theory-led approaches to practices-led approaches in ESP and the implication this has for curriculum design and pedagogical innovation in the age of AI.

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Academic and Professional Cultures in ESP: A Needs-Based Account of Disciplinary Enculturation

Meriem Hadjemi (University of Oran, Algeria)

Beldjenna Amel (University of Oran, Algeria)

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) research has increasingly foregrounded the relationship between language use, disciplinary knowledge, and professional practice, viewing specialized communication as embedded within socially situated academic and occupational cultures and shaped by the norms of specific discourse communities (Swales, 1990; Hyland, 2004; Belcher, 2019). This study investigates how MA ESP students at the University of Oran 2 (Algeria) conceptualize and engage with disciplinary and professional cultures through their academic writing and classroom practices. Drawing on a classroom-based needs analysis approach, the research explores the relationship between learners' perceived communicative needs, their awareness of disciplinary conventions, and the pedagogical practices that support professional enculturation in ESP contexts. The study is guided by the following research question: How do MA ESP students understand and negotiate academic and professional cultures, and how



can needs analysis inform the design of ESP curricula that foster disciplinary enculturation and professional literacy? The analysis draws on data from a needs analysis questionnaire administered to postgraduate ESP students, together with an examination of classroom tasks involving research abstracts, methodological descriptions, and academic correspondence. The findings indicate that while students demonstrate increasing control over linguistic forms, they often experience difficulties in managing disciplinary stance, structuring arguments according to field-specific conventions, and projecting professional authority in academic writing. These results suggest that disciplinary culture is not acquired implicitly through exposure to academic texts alone, but requires explicit pedagogical mediation. The paper proposes a culture-sensitive ESP framework integrating genre-based instruction, explicit modelling of disciplinary discourse practices, and reflective engagement with professional norms. By highlighting the pedagogical value of needs analysis, the study argues that attention to academic and professional cultures can strengthen ESP curriculum design and support postgraduate students' integration into disciplinary communities.

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Virtual Exchange among University Students: Exploring European and US Penal Identity through English as a Lingua Franca

Lauren Haynes (University of Limoges, France)
Jean Jimenez (University of Calabria, Italy)
Judith Kepecs (University of Giessen, Germany)



This presentation reports on a virtual exchange (VE) pedagogical experience involving undergraduate and graduate students from three European universities in France, Germany, and Italy. Participants included law students in Germany and France as well as



Italian students of linguistic mediation, whose degree programme includes three law-related courses. A total of forty students worked collaboratively in mixed-nationality groups to explore and compare approaches to life imprisonment practices across legal systems in France, Germany, Italy, the UK, and the USA. English was used as a lingua franca (ELF) to mediate communication among participants (Seidlhofer, 2011).

Situated within an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) framework (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998), the project aimed to provide a disciplinary context in which students from different linguistic and academic backgrounds could engage with legal concepts while developing intercultural communicative competence. The exchange combined preparatory disciplinary input with synchronous online discussions and collaborative research tasks conducted in small groups, drawing on established models of VE (O'Dowd, 2018). Through these activities, students were encouraged to explain legal concepts, negotiate meaning and adapt their discourse to interlocutors with different educational backgrounds, linguistic repertoires and disciplinary cultures. At the end of the project, students were asked to complete a questionnaire reflecting on linguistic, cultural and communicative aspects of the experience as well as perceived learning outcomes.

Analysis of the questionnaire responses indicates that students experienced the VE as both challenging and rewarding. Differences in English proficiency and communicative styles were at times identified as obstacles, particularly when discussing complex legal concepts, yet these challenges also prompted strategies of accommodation and negotiation of meaning. Participants valued the opportunity to exchange perspectives on life without parole across national and academic contexts, which encouraged reflection on their own legal and cultural assumptions. While the use of English was at times perceived as demanding, many students reported increased confidence and awareness of their linguistic resources. Overall, the findings highlight the pedagogical potential of ELF-mediated exchanges for developing disciplinary communication and cultural competence in ESP contexts, and invite reflection on how to refine the design of future exchanges to build on strengths and more effectively address the linguistic, interactional and organisational challenges identified.

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Session #3

3 September, 17:30–19:30

Mischievous Scientists: Looking for Playfulness in Scientific Discourse**Laura Martin-Gomez (University of Toulouse, France)**

Research in English for Specific Purposes has shown how academic writing usually follows rigid norms, with slight variations depending on the disciplinary field. At first sight, these norms seem to imply a lack of space for the author's personality to show through the paper's style or discourse. Looking beyond the sociolinguistic and professional rules that academics have to abide by, our project is to study the place of playfulness in scientific academic discourse. As a first step, a literature review of existing research will help us define and identify different forms of playful scientific discourse. Thus, we will focus on different uses of humour or mischievous statements as the most obvious sign of unexpected playfulness in academic papers (Isani & Van der Yeught, 2023; Heard, 2014). Besides, we will dwell more specifically on the use of references to geek culture (Chandrasekaran, 2021; Goodman, 2005) – mostly science-fiction and fantasy transmedia universes – and try to determine whether there is a correlation between some references and the disciplinary field to which the paper belongs. Bridging the gap between fiction, popular culture and scientific culture, these references can both foster a greater sense of engagement or, on the contrary, alienate the reader and undermine credibility (Saber, 2024). Finally, this general overview will be complemented by a survey conducted among academics to start outlining whether professional identity (status, linguistic origin, disciplinary field, etc.) can affect the use of playful discourse. In other words, we question to what extent the use of playfulness in scientific papers reflects a specific professional socialization or disciplinary culture. Overall, this talk aims at laying the groundwork for a methodological analysis of playfulness in scientific papers.

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Communicating Science Through Research Group Presentation Videos

Tereza Guziurova (University of Ostrava, Czech Republic)

In recent years, the rise of digital technologies has gradually shifted scientific communication to online platforms, resulting in new ways of representing and disseminating scientific knowledge (Lorés & Diani, 2021). Researchers are now expected to present and promote their research, using various digital genres, such as research blogs, video abstracts, science podcasts, and social media posts. One of the newly emerging genres used by academic institutions to promote their research activities is the research group presentation video. Situated at the intersection of scholarly communication, public engagement, and institutional branding, these videos play a strategic role in recontextualizing academic knowledge for heterogeneous audiences. While reporting on the group's research projects and areas of interest, the objective of the genre is also to promote scientific culture and enhance the visibility of the institution it is associated with (Luzón, 2019).

The aim of the present paper is to examine a corpus of online videos used by research groups to communicate their activities and findings and engage the non-expert audience with this work. Firstly, it focuses on the generic structure of the videos, trying to identify rhetorical moves and steps (Swales, 1990; Bhatia, 1994). Furthermore, it aims to explore the construction of the researcher's credibility and authority, strategies of audience engagement and recontextualisation strategies tailoring scientific content for diverse audiences (Luzón, 2019). Drawing on a corpus of 25 research group videos across the sciences and humanities, the study adopts a multimodal discourse-analytic approach to examine how multimodal resources are used to recontextualize knowledge for a wide audience. All the videos are downloaded from the websites or YouTube channels of ten highly ranked universities and the Atlas.ti software is used for analysing genre structure and rhetorical and pragmatic strategies in the videos. The findings suggest that research group videos constitute a hybrid genre that blends features of academic discourse, popularisation, and promotional communication.

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S3.- Researching ESP Learning and Teaching in Europe: Evolutions and Current Trends

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has evolved from a subset of English Language Teaching (ELT) to an autonomous subfield of Applied Linguistics (Salmani-Nodoushan, 2020; Bošković & Šetka Čilić, 2022), focusing on preparing learners to use English in specific academic and professional contexts.

Research in ESP learning and teaching has also evolved in recent years. Recent studies have highlighted the importance of contextualizing needs analysis to address the unique demands of different industries and regions (Dou et al., 2023; Basturkmen, 2022). Teaching practices are now increasingly based on genre awareness to help learners navigate the discursive practices of their academic and/or professional field (Salmani-Nodoushan, 2020; Bošković & Šetka Čilić, 2022) and on corpus linguistics, as it provides insights into the lexical and grammatical patterns of specialized texts (Lipková, 2024). In addition, the fast-growing integration of technology such as corpus analysis software, online platforms, and, more recently, Artificial Intelligence (Ngo & Hastie, 2025) into ESP teaching now enables learners to engage with authentic materials and develop specialized language skills relevant to the academic and/or professional community of practice they seek to join more effectively (Chen et al., 2024; Marzuki, 2023).

Despite these evolutions, several questions remain unanswered: twenty years after Master's call for more empirical research to investigate ESP programmes' efficacy (Master, 2005), where do we stand? Similarly, have the calls for more research on ESP Teacher Education (Basturkmen, 2019; Blaj-Ward, 2014; Ding & Bruce, 2017) been answered yet? And has the need for tighter connections between ESP theory and pedagogical practice (Anthony, 2018; Belcher, 2009; Johns, 2013) been addressed? This seminar aims to bridge these gaps and address key issues by inviting authors to present current research on ESP learning and teaching from a variety of European contexts (and from further afield) at the intersection of the theoretical and practical dimensions of ESP.

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Session #1**31 August, 16:00–18:00****Whose Voice Is It Anyway? AI Speech, Identity, and the Cost of Personalization****Patrizia Anesa (University of Bergamo, Italy)**

Recent advances in neural text-to-speech (TTS) technologies have accelerated the use of synthetic voices in language education, particularly in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and immersive learning environments. Often framed as accessibility-enhancing and personalization-driven innovations, AI-generated voices are increasingly deployed to simulate professional interaction, scaffold listening comprehension, and individualize instruction (Kılıçkaya & Kic-Drgas, 2025; Reddy et al., 2023). However, their pedagogical integration raises ethical and sociolinguistic concerns that extend beyond technical performance.

This paper examines the paradox of personalized dehumanization, i.e. the tension whereby the same algorithmic features that enable tailored instruction—scalable voice synthesis, adjustable prosody, and accent customization—may also commodify vocal identity, attenuate relational pedagogies, and reproduce dominant linguistic norms. Thus, synthetic voice technologies are situated within broader debates on AI ethics, voice as a marker of identity, and algorithmic mediation (Bender et al., 2021; Floridi, 2023).

The discussion is grounded in a case study of an ESP-oriented extended-reality application integrating neural TTS to simulate workplace communication. While the platform demonstrates clear pedagogical affordances—such as exposure to diverse professional registers and scalable oral rehearsal—it also foregrounds ethical risks related to voice ownership, consent, representational bias, and the displacement of human presence.

The paper concludes by proposing a framework for the responsible deployment of TTS in language education, structured around different commitments, including transparency, human-centred pedagogy, cultural and linguistic plurality, data stewardship, and critical digital literacy. It argues that addressing the ethical implications of synthetic voices is essential if AI-mediated personalization is to enhance, rather than undermine, the human dimensions of language learning.



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University Instructors' Readiness for Teaching with Generative AI: An AI-TPACK-based Cluster Study From Europe

Imre Fekete (Budapest University of Economics and Business, Hungary)

Recent advances in generative artificial intelligence (genAI) research have brought about the need for empirically grounded models of teacher preparedness in higher education. Although university instructors actively experiment with genAI tools, research suggests that pedagogically meaningful integration remains uneven (Fekete, 2026; Folmeg et al., 2024). Drawing on the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge Framework (TPACK; Mishra & Koehler, 2006) and its AI-specific extension (AI-TPACK; Celik, 2023), this presentation builds on findings from a large-scale European questionnaire study (N=256) examining university instructors' AI literacy

Data were collected between February and June 2024 using a validated multi-dimensional instrument measuring TPACK, AI-TPACK, and AI literacy components, including Ethics, Willingness, Behavioural Intention, and Facilitating Conditions (Venkatesh et al., 2003). Descriptive analyses revealed consistently high ratings for pedagogical and content knowledge but substantially lower means for AI-TPACK, pointing towards a gap between general technological competence and AI-mediated pedagogical integration (Fekete, 2025; Schmidt & Strasser, 2022). Cluster analysis based on AI-TPACK dimensions identified three distinct instructor profiles: Beginner, Intermediate, and Advanced AI users.

Further regression analyses revealed cluster-specific development patterns. For beginner instructors, AI-TPACK development was strongly associated with integrated TPACK foundations and ethical awareness, while isolated content knowledge and technological pedagogical knowledge showed negative effects, suggesting difficulties in knowledge transfer (Celik, 2023; Fekete,



2026; Folmeg et al., 2024). Intermediate instructors' development was primarily driven by AI-specific pedagogical and content knowledge, alongside facilitating conditions and voluntariness, echoing earlier findings on the importance of institutional support (Redecker, 2017; Yurt & Kasarci, 2024). For advanced instructors, intrinsic motivation, pedagogical knowledge, and ethical reasoning played a central role, outlining a shift from skill acquisition toward reflective and sustainable integration.

While the study did not solely target ESP instructors, several implications can be transferred to ESP learning and teaching contexts, where language-mediated genAI tools, genre awareness, and professional communication are central. The identified profiles offer a framework for designing differentiated professional development and teacher education initiatives.

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Julia Mary Scilabra (Complutense University of Madrid, Spain)

Nava Maroto (Complutense University of Madrid, Spain)

This paper presents a pedagogical and research-oriented study on the use of an ad hoc GPT-based chatbot to support the acquisition and conceptual development of terminology among second-year telecommunications, data, and biomedical engineering students enrolled in an *English for Professional and Academic Communication* (EPAC) course. Although English is not their L1 and most students are Spanish native speakers, all participants have at least B2-level English proficiency.

The study is situated at the intersection of terminology studies, cognitive approaches to language learning, and artificial intelligence. It conceptualizes human–AI interaction as a form of semiotic and epistemic mediation through which learners identify, structure, and negotiate specialized knowledge in a second language. In this framework, the chatbot functions as an interactive interface that supports meaning-making, knowledge organization, and disciplinary enculturation.

The pedagogical design integrates four core activities: (1) terminology extraction from authentic engineering texts, (2) iterative definition refinement and contextualization, (3) collaborative glossary compilation, and (4) reflective discourse practices using specialized language. Students are encouraged to critically evaluate AI-generated outputs against authoritative sources, fostering conceptual accuracy, metalinguistic awareness, and responsible use of generative technologies.

Methodologically, the study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining pre- and post-intervention assessments of terminological knowledge with qualitative analysis of student-generated glossaries, reflective journals, and focus group data. The paper reports on patterns of learner engagement, epistemic positioning toward AI-generated content, and the role of AI in ESP development.

The contribution addresses current debates in English for Specific Purposes, terminology, and digital mediation, offering a theoretically informed and empirically grounded account of how large language models can reshape the cognitive and communicative ecology of professional language learning in engineering education.

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Session #2

1 September, 9:00–11:00

A Scoping Review on Teaching English for Legal Purposes

Carmenne Kalyaniwala (University of Lorraine, France)

Teaching English for Legal Purposes (ELP) is a highly specialised task that requires the teacher to possess the unique ability to engage with legal knowledge to teach language. Nevertheless, a recent survey conducted in France showed that most ELP teachers are neither specialists of the legal profession nor have they been trained in it (Boulton, Kalyaniwala & Lavissière, 2025). This raises questions about the intersection of language teaching and law, which will be explored in this paper.

A scoping review (or study) is an evidence-synthesis approach that is used to “determine the scope or coverage of a body of literature on a given topic and give a clear indication of the volume of literature and studies available as well as an overview (broad or detailed) of its focus” (Munn et al., 2018, p. 2). A five-stage scoping review framework proposed by Arksey and O’Malley (2005) has been adopted for this study with special focus on the themes that have emerged in the literature from Bhatia’s 1989 article to



2025 included. It is with this purpose that the following questions will be answered in this paper:

1. What has been the scope of interest of the empirical research that has focused on teaching English for Legal Purposes?
2. What are the general attributes of such research?
3. Do any trends emerge from a systematic study of empirical research that focuses on teaching ELP?

Adopting a rigorous approach that identifies transparent inclusion and exclusion criteria, 38 studies were selected for this review by using the PRISMA guidelines (Page et al., 2021). The final corpus is currently being subjected to thematic coding (Saldaña, 2021) based on:

- a) primary variables: the date of publication, author, place of publication;
- b) legal variables: legal jurisdiction (UK, US, Australia, etc.), type of legal instrument (contracts, constitution, etc.), targeted legal field (criminal law, civil law, etc.);
- c) pedagogical variables: population targeted, approach used, learner profile; and
- d) methodological variables: type of study, types of data, research design and data collection instruments.

The goal of this study is not to show how teachers are teaching nor to evaluate pedagogical methods, but rather to appreciate how the field of teaching English for Legal Purposes has evolved over 17 years, to identify what the knowledge content and language relationship looks like today, and consequently, provide a basis for anticipating the needs of tomorrow.

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Team-teaching in English for Legal Purposes

Halina Sieročka (University of Białystok, Poland)

As numerous scholars point out teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP), also English for Legal Purposes (ELP) poses many challenges the instructors have to face. Even though they might have significant experience in teaching and are familiar with academic texts and/or the skills involved, they might, from the outset, have far less subject-matter knowledge or have less conscious knowledge of a particular specialism than their students. Researchers cannot agree on how far ESP teachers' subject matter knowledge should extend. Some scholars believe that language teachers do not have to acquire specialist subject knowledge and the knowledge of the fundamental principles of the subject area will suffice, others remark quite vaguely that understanding the nature of the material of the ESP specialism is adequate. Moreover, some academics strongly believe that effective ESP instruction requires an interdisciplinary cooperation between language and subject specialists.

This presentation endeavours to provide some insights into interdisciplinary cooperation in teaching / learning English for Legal Purposes (ELP), team teaching in particular. Linguistic seminars provided for European judges and prosecutors, organised by the European Judicial Training Network (EJTN) for over fourteen years now, serve as a specific case background for the research. The study aimed to investigate how ELP instructors (both language and subject specialists) perceive this format of teaching Legal English. The research particularly addresses the questions of what their approach towards this mode of instruction is, what they like and dislike about it, and whether they find it more effective than classes with one instructor only. The study assumed both a quantitative and qualitative methodology encompassing a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. The author also hopes to shed some light on possible ways of effective co-operation between language and subject specialists, which would contribute to better language acquisition on the part of ELP learners.

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What Are they Clicking? Student Processing of US Supreme Court Opinions

Samia Tighilet (University of Toulouse, France)

Laura Hartwell (University of Toulouse, France)

This study on reading practices is part of an interdisciplinary project on the discourse structure modelling of United States Supreme Court opinions to further the teaching and learning of English for Specific Purposes. Lunderberg (1987) showed that reading strategy instruction can improve native speakers’ comprehension of legal texts. Skilled readers of legal texts also wisely choose time-saving resources (McKinney, 2012). For this study, the faces and computer screens of nine French-speaking students were recorded with Camtasia (TechSmith, 2025) while they completed the comprehension activity of an abridged opinion in English, a key legal genre. Participants performed a mean of 154 acts (minimum = 115, maximum = 230) in 31 minutes 30 seconds (minimum = 00:20:49, maximum = 00:43:15). Almost half of the time was spent consulting the opinion (46%), while one-third (34%) was dedicated to the questions. Referring to exterior online sources was performed by seven students for a total of 152 acts, representing 11% of the total time. An analysis of the results suggests three global strategies: 1. **‘text-focused processing’**, with exhaustive text reading; 2. **‘question-focused processing’**, which prioritizes question-text interaction; and 3. **‘resource consulting’**, which relies upon external web-based tools. Text-focused processing includes reading the one-page text as an initial task, completed by six participants with a mean reading time of 6 minutes and 12 seconds (minimum time = 00:05:22, maximum time = 00:07:55). Question-focused processes were diverse. Finally, resource-consulting strategies drew primarily upon lexical tools, including translating a Latin expression, which was not needed to answer any specific question. These observations, contextualised through statistical analysis of a larger population of 287 students, provide insights on teaching reading, student uses of exterior resources,



and reading evaluation. This study was funded by the ANR Lexhnology project and approved by the University of Toulouse ethics committee.

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Streamlining Access to Justice for Foreign Businesses: Perspectives in Teaching Legal Phraseology and Phraseotranslation

Edyta Wiekłowska (University of Rzeszów, Poland)

Practical application of research outcomes remains one of the core tenets of ESP studies (Salmani-Nodoushan 2020). It has been acknowledged that university curricula need to comply with the expectations of the linguistic market and graduates need both linguistic and field-specific knowledge in order to undertake relevant discursive practices (Lipková 2024), whether in a monolingual or multilingual environment, the latter requiring well-channelled ESP competence for effective specialised translation (Prieto Ramos 2024). This research investigates the area of specialist practice covering legal actions undertaken with the aim of registering branches of foreign companies in Poland. These acts in law require cooperation between the companies, judicial authorities and providers of linguistic services. Effective ESP training in this respect, also as part of legal translation competence, should involve examination of the given domain of the legal trade, relevant sociolinguistic factors, and recognition of a specific repertoire of linguistic resources, including sequential patterns (Biel 2023, Pontrandolfo 2023). Such a dedicated approach is aimed at profiling the teaching programmes and proposing methods of ESP instruction compliant with the very much favoured concepts of experiential teaching (Marczak 2018) and pedagogical approach (Hurtado Albir 2015). The focus is on phraseology and phraseotranslation. It was hypothesised that the research may contribute to systematization of the contextually delimited, usage-based repertoire of phraseological units, identification of alternations in the populations of synonymous phrases, and existing translation patterns. The operationalisation of the research involved preparation of a parallel corpus compiled from texts found on court files and statistical processing of the corpus data. The research findings confirmed that the translation



trade in the said area is significantly profiled for specific genres and sociolinguistic distinctions, which allows customisation of language instruction with regard to phraseology, and thus contributes to harmonisation of linguistic and legal services in the domain of foreign company registration.

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Session #3

1 September, 17:00–19:00

When to Introduce ESP in the EFL Curriculum? Questioning the Implicit Link between Language Specialisation and Linguistic Complexity

Cédric Sarre (Sorbonne University, France)

Previous research reports divergent views regarding the appropriate stage at which English for Specific Purposes (ESP) should be introduced within the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) curriculum. A number of scholars argue that learners should first



acquire a solid foundation in General English (GE), particularly its “common core” (Corder 1973), before engaging with specialised varieties of the language (Quirk et al. 1972; Coxhead & Nation 2001). From this perspective, instruction should focus on the most frequent and useful forms of the language before shifting to specialised domains aligned with learners’ specific needs (Coxhead & Nation 2001). Similarly, Xu and Liu (2015) go against the current trend towards more specialisation in language learning in higher education in China as they advocate maintaining GE courses, contending that students require adequate basic vocabulary and language skills before transitioning to ESP courses. In contrast, other researchers challenge the assumption that mastery of a common core is a prerequisite for the introduction of ESP, noting that empirical evidence does not support this claim (Hyland 2002).

From a pedagogical perspective, the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR; Council of Europe 2001) appears to make an implicit link between the specialised varieties of a language and linguistic complexity. An examination of its global scale descriptors reveals that specialised language use is absent at level B1, emerges at level B2 in the context of technical discussions, and becomes fully developed at level C1, where language is used flexibly for academic and professional purposes. This progression raises questions as to whether specialisation is possible below B2 level and whether effective communication in academic or professional contexts necessarily requires C1-level proficiency.

This paper aims to shed light on the relationship between textual specialisation and linguistic complexity. It reports on a small-scale exploratory study based on a corpus of Astrophysics texts, comprising three text types: research articles (published in peer-reviewed journals), “astrobites” (more accessible summaries of the same research published on the Astrobite website) and press releases (general presentation of the same research for a wider audience of non-experts). Using the Common Text Analysis Platform (TCAP), a tool which allows for “linguistic feature extraction for a wide range of complexity analyses” (Chen & Meurers 2016: 113), the study compares complexity across these text types to inform decisions about the timing of the introduction of ESP instruction in the EFL curriculum.

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The Impact of Metaphoric Awareness on EFL Learners' Reading Comprehension in an ESP Setting

Cumhur Berber (Balıkesir University, Türkiye)

Metaphor is a characteristic of language that facilitates the transmission of meaning in academic discourse (Charteris-Black, 2000) and a method that people use, either consciously or unconsciously, to express their ideas and emotions in daily language (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). In addition to metaphor's being widely prevalent in daily life, Cognitive Linguists (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Kövecses, 2002) claim that economics language is very metaphorical, and some experts have argued that metaphor should be a crucial component of an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) curriculum in the instruction of economics terminology (Boers, 2004; De los Ríos, 2007; Henderson, 2000). Taking this fact into account, the current study was started in a Turkish university's Administrative and Economy Sciences Faculty's ESP classroom and sought answers to explore the benefits of metaphoric awareness in EFL learners' reading comprehension and reveal their opinions regarding the benefits of metaphoric awareness. 53 tertiary-level undergraduate students enrolled in the mandatory Business English course participated in this quasi-experimental study. To increase their metaphorical awareness, a six-week teaching program was designed with particular tasks and exercises. The instruction included three hours every week for six weeks, during which the participants were encouraged to engage in a variety of activities and exercises that used economic metaphors. The participants took a reading comprehension pre- and post-test and completed a written interview that included five open-ended questions concerning the metaphoric awareness and the intervention itself. The findings indicated that the participants' reading comprehension significantly improved with metaphoric awareness improvement, and the majority of the participants expressed favourable opinions toward the benefits of raising metaphorical awareness in the written interview. Despite these favourable perspectives, the participants' negative thoughts were also brought out and assessed together with the classroom observations.

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Disciplinary Literacy in EMI Students and L1 Students Compared – Assessing Current Needs and Proposing Ways Forward

Jane Helen Johnson (University of Bologna, Italy)

Disciplinary Literacy (DL) has been defined as the ability to appropriately participate in the communicative practices of a discipline (Airey 2011, p. 3). It is thus evidence of successful academic discourse socialisation (Duff 2010). Familiarity with disciplinary discourse (Airey & Linder 2009) is relevant to all students, whatever the language of instruction. In English-taught programmes at tertiary level, disciplinary literacy overlaps with English for Specific Purposes (ESP), encompassing awareness of required genres and modalities, familiarity with argumentation, critique and application, and the ability to work with disciplinary texts and resources.

While DL studies of English-Medium Instruction (EMI) students are not new in ESP research (e.g. Dafouz 2025; Dafouz & López-Serrano 2026), few studies have directly compared the perceived disciplinary literacy of EMI students with that of peers on L1-taught courses. Addressing this gap, the aim of this study is to compare engineering students' self-reported awareness of, and preparedness for, disciplinary literacy requirements across EMI and L1 Italian degree courses at a central Italian university, and to examine whether any differences are more strongly associated with student background and degree cycle than with language of instruction.

A questionnaire was administered to participants in first- and second-cycle degree courses. Sixty-four students following EMI courses (including both non-Italian and domestic students) and 121 students following similar courses in their L1 completed the questionnaire. The factors explored—perceptions of oral and written performance, epistemic practices, classroom discourse participation, and working with disciplinary texts and resources—capture key dimensions of students' ability to structure and communicate disciplinary knowledge.

Findings indicate the extent to which students are aware of, and prepared for, disciplinary literacy demands, and highlight similarities and differences among international and domestic EMI students, and domestic L1 students. We hypothesise that disciplinary literacy awareness and preparedness are more affected by student background (domestic vs international) and degree cycle (first vs second) than by language of instruction. On this basis, the study proposes targeted measures to better support students' development of



discipline-related academic communication, including language-for-specific-purposes support where relevant.

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Virtual Student Exchange Programmes – Learning ESP across Nations

Lucia Abbamonte (University of Naples Parthenope, Italy)

The growing awareness of the need for specific intercultural skills has brought English for Specific Purposes (ESP) to the forefront of English language teaching (Bošković & Šetka Čilić, 2022). Being proactive in connecting different cultural perspectives can help students become effective communicators both in their academic field and in their future careers. With this in mind, at the University of Naples Parthenope (Italy), as part of a new three-year degree course – Organisation and Management of Human Resources (OMHR) – a team of lecturers has planned a series of interdisciplinary and intercultural activities, including a Virtual Student Exchange Programme (VSEP), in collaboration with the University of Florida (Warrington College of Business).

VSEPs have evolved both as a preparatory phase and as a free and inclusive alternative to traditional exchange programmes, easily connecting students from different national and socio-cultural backgrounds (e.g. low-income students - Whatley et al. 2024), in order to promote intercultural skills and critical thinking (Duffy et al. 2020). This virtual exchange method is intrinsically based on technology for distance learning and synchronous online teaching (apps, platforms, social media, etc.), which has undergone considerable development since the recent COVID-19 pandemic and whose affordances shape the messages it conveys, with a series of consequences for specific educational areas (Abbamonte 2025).



This OMHR activity (VSEP from 20 October to 9 November 2025) aimed to promote these skills in relation to some of the course content: *Rethinking leadership across cultures*. Therefore, through a Collaborative Online International Learning approach (COIL - Vahed, Rodriguez 2020), a clearly sequenced learning path was followed.

Thirty Italian students and forty-five students from Florida enrolled in the project and, after an initial individual icebreaker phase, analysed leadership dilemmas through intercultural dialogue. At the end, each group produced a podcast episode, which included reflections from both Italian and American perspectives. The presentation will discuss the emerging themes of ESP and the socio-cultural implications of this experiential COIL activity.

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Session #4

2 September, 9:00–11:00

Integrating Genre Theory and Digital Literacy in ESP Pedagogy: A Case Study for Early Career Researchers

Carmen Pérez-Llantada (University of Zaragoza, Spain)

Genre theory has long served as a helpful heuristic for aligning ESP instruction with the specific language and communicative



demands of learners' target discourse communities (Feak, 2011; Swales, 1990). This presentation reports on a blended learning course designed according to the core tenets of genre theory, specifically the constructs of 'genre awareness', 'inter-genre-ality', and 'genre repertoires' (Devitt, 2004; Swales, 1990). We explain how language, communication and digital skills (digital literacy) can be integrated into an ESP course in order to teach PhD students how to manage their professional genre repertoire effectively in digital media.

While the course focuses on Open Science and digital genres, it uses traditional academic genres that the students are familiar with (articles and abstracts) as a starting point to help them learn how to recontextualize and refocus the specialized content of these texts to successfully reach diverse audiences. The genres taught include professional science communication genres (e.g., impact statements, lay summaries and personal homepages), as well as genres for public engagement (e.g., personal blogs, microblogs, infographics and explainer videos). These genres are dedicated to outreach communication and dissemination in research projects, emphasizing the use of strategies for promoting scientific research in digital media for culturally diverse, multilingual publics. We describe the learning tasks the students undertook, evaluate the outcomes of their learning and discuss their reflections on using genre repertoires and digital (multimodal) resources and tools to create their digital fingerprints, increasing their visibility and impact on the Internet and engaging with diverse audiences by making content more accessible.

Ultimately, we advocate for further empirical investigation into the efficacy of ESP training that integrates language, communication and digital literacies. Such training is crucial in order to validate the innovative ESP pedagogical practices that have evolved to meet the demands of the digital transformation in scientific communication.

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Datasheets as ESP Genres: Translation and MT Use by Student-Engineers

Amélia Rus-Rucart (Cnam Paris, France)



This proposal contributes to a thematic panel on specialized genres, translation practices, and digital tools in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) teaching and learning in European higher education. It focuses on the *datasheet*, a key engineering genre that remains underexamined in ESP research. The study explores how student-engineers use translation, both with and without machine translation (MT), to understand English-language technical documents.

The research takes place in an apprenticeship-based engineering program at the Conservatoire national des arts et métiers (CNAM) and its engineering school, EICNAM. This alternance context is relevant because students regularly work with *datasheets* in both coursework and workplace tasks. The dataset includes authentic English *datasheets* and French translations produced by students under two conditions: unaided translation and MT-assisted translation.

Analysis draws on an evaluation grid developed by Toudic et al. (2014), which compares learner translations according to criteria such as terminological accuracy, syntactic restructuring, information condensation, cohesion, and genre-related conventions. The grid helps identify recurring strategies and difficulties linked to the specific constraints of *datasheet* translation.

The results show clear contrasts between the two translation modes. MT-assisted translations generally improve lexical accuracy and terminological consistency. Unaided translations vary more in quality but show greater interpretation, reformulation, and genre awareness, although they impose higher cognitive demands.

The paper discusses how translation and MT literacy can support ESP teaching for engineers. It argues that analytical tools such as the evaluation grid can foster critical engagement with MT output and a deeper understanding of professional genres. More broadly, the study contributes to ongoing discussions about how corpus-based and translation-informed approaches can strengthen links between ESP research, classroom practice, and workplace communication.

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Introducing Critical Thinking in the Business English Class: Action Research-based Reflections on a Pilot Course

Anca Pecican (Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Romania)

Critical thinking (CT) skills are paramount in both academic and professional lives of our ESP students. Current research on the development of CT skills in the second language classroom has made noticeable advancements. However, literature and experimental studies on merging teaching practices of language for specific purposes with CT development are still scarce. The aim of this presentation is to report on experimental research conducted at the Bucharest University of Economic Studies in Romania, focusing on identifying a path to effectively introduce CT skills in the Business English classroom. A cohort of 147 1st year undergraduates majoring in Economic Cybernetics at the mentioned university took part in a 14-week pilot course of English for business purposes with a CT approach.

The intervention followed the OECD model of CT teaching (Vincent-Lancrin, 2023) focusing on the inquiring and imagining stages. With the intent to foster students' CT attitude, teaching addressed such sub-skills as distinguishing between facts and claims, assessing evidence, identifying perspective and bias, as well as judging source credibility. Participants' upper-intermediate English language level allowed for the use of authentic texts and real-life sources of information.

A mixed-methods research design was employed in order to assess the results of the intervention from the perspective of the targeted CT skills development. Data collection relied on two sources, namely a pre- and post-test with tasks eliciting both quantitative and qualitative responses and the instructor's assessment of students' research projects involving CT. The quantitative results indicate that students' evaluation of proposed evidence and their disposition to challenge underlying assumptions improved at the



end of the intervention, but to a lesser degree than expected. Additionally, qualitative data suggest students' propensity towards attachment to one source of information and difficulties in imagining alternative, challenging views. Accordingly, the analysis draws pedagogical implications guiding further development of teaching practices combining ESP and CT.

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“It is without surprise that...”: Attitude Markers in L2 (Czech) Student and Expert Writing in Linguistics

Daniel Gerrard (Masaryk University, Czech Republic)

In academic writing, attitude markers express a writer's affective stance towards propositional content, conveying their personal evaluations and emotions. By assuming shared beliefs and responses to content, the writer may attempt to 'pull readers into a conspiracy of agreement', making it hard for them to challenge the writer's position (Hyland, 2005b, p. 180). Since attitude markers are relatively infrequent in written academic registers, they have tended to receive less scholarly attention than epistemic devices such as hedges and boosters, including in studies of doctoral-level writing. Further research is therefore crucial for understanding doctoral students' writing needs and providing appropriate support.

To address this gap, this contribution reports on a corpus study of attitude markers situated within a broader needs analysis of Czech doctoral students' academic writing. The aim is to investigate differences in the use of attitude markers across all rhetorical sections of 30 English-medium PhD theses written by Czech doctoral students and 30 published research articles written by Anglophone scholars. A corpus-based analysis of attitudinal adjectives, adverbs, verbs and nouns, expanding on Hyland (2005a), is carried out in Sketch Engine. Following earlier research on master's-level writing (Jančaříková, 2023), students may be expected to diverge from experts to some extent due to differences in their levels of expertise and linguacultural backgrounds. The findings should offer practical implications for future academic writing instruction targeted at doctoral students aiming for publication.

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S4.- Multidisciplinary Approaches to Multilingualism and Multiculturalism in Educational Contexts

Contemporary societies are marked by increasing complexity, much of which stems from the coexistence of individuals with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Educational institutions serve as critical spaces for social interaction and integration, particularly because school attendance is compulsory for children and adolescents in most countries. As a result, the role of educators has evolved significantly, requiring them to address and embrace this diversity in their teaching practices.

In such settings, the entire school community can benefit from the rich multilingual repertoires that students bring with them. It is the responsibility of educators to help create environments where all individuals are encouraged and supported to communicate using the languages available to them, fostering a climate in which linguistic and cultural diversity is both welcomed and valued.

This seminar focuses on multidisciplinary approaches to multilingualism and multiculturalism across all educational levels, exploring both theoretical frameworks and practical applications. Topics include, but are not limited to: multilingual education policies; teacher training for multilingual classrooms; challenges and needs in diverse learning environments; translanguaging in education; the role of multilingual families; linguistic and cultural diversity; hybridity and identity in school settings; student well-being in multilingual contexts (personal, social, and cognitive aspects); ethical considerations; the experiences of migrant and refugee students; and the status and support of minority languages.

CONVENORS:

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Session #1

31 August, 16:00–18:00



Embodied Translanguaging and Multimodal Communication in Multilingual University Preparatory Classrooms

Siavash Bakhtshirin (Istanbul Nişantaşı University, Türkiye)

Azra Nihan Eke (Istanbul Nişantaşı University, Türkiye)

In multilingual university preparatory classrooms, students bring diverse linguistic repertoires shaped by varied cultural and educational backgrounds. However, they often encounter pedagogical environments that privilege verbal proficiency in the target language, marginalizing other communicative resources. This study examines how A2-level learners in university ELT preparatory programs deploy embodied and multimodal resources, including gesture, mime, spatial positioning, facial expression, and visual representation, as legitimate translanguaging practices that enable communication, collaborative meaning-making, and peer support when verbal resources in English remain emergent.

Drawing on translanguaging theory (García & Wei, 2014) and multimodal communication frameworks (Kendon, 2004; McNeill, 2005), this research explores how multilingual students leverage their full communicative repertoires to bridge linguistic and cultural boundaries in classroom interaction. These embodied strategies function not as compensatory mechanisms for linguistic deficiency but as integral components of multilingual students' communicative competence, agency, and identity expression.

This exploratory mixed-methods study followed learners in two multilingual university preparatory classes over four weeks, using systematic classroom observation and stimulated recall interviews with six focal students. Data were collected through detailed observation of classroom interaction, focusing on how students employed embodied resources during collaborative tasks, peer explanations, vocabulary negotiation, and problem-solving activities. Interview data illuminated students' perceptions of their multimodal communicative strategies and experiences navigating multilingual classroom environments.

Findings reveal that embodied translanguaging enabled students to engage in perspective-taking, negotiate meaning across linguistic boundaries, construct hybrid communicative spaces where multiple semiotic resources were valued, and maintain agency as legitimate communicators. The study demonstrates that inclusive multilingual pedagogy must recognize and legitimize the full spectrum of students' communicative practices, challenging monolingual ideologies that devalue non-verbal expression. By foregrounding embodied communication as a translanguaging resource, this research contributes to understanding how teacher training and classroom practices can better support linguistic and cultural diversity, student well-being, and equitable participation in multilingual educational contexts.



Orthography as Culture: Cross-Linguistic Transfer in Multilingual Learners of L3 Turkish

Canan Deveci (Atatürk University, Türkiye)

This study examines how culturally shaped literacy practices and orthographic expectations influence the acquisition of L3 Turkish by multilingual African Francophone students enrolled in a preparatory program at Atatürk University in Türkiye. The participants are native speakers of French and several African tribal languages, have learned English as a second language, and are currently learning Turkish as a third language in an international educational environment. This multilingual configuration provides a unique lens through which to explore how diverse cultural and orthographic traditions mediate language learning across typologically distinct systems. The study investigates how learners' L1 French phonics-based literacy, L2 English deep orthography, and oral-based heritage languages interact with Turkish's transparent, agglutinative spelling system. Data come from a read-aloud task, a spontaneous picture-description task, and a brief literacy background questionnaire. The analysis concentrates on the patterns of grapheme–phoneme mapping, the segmentation and production of agglutinative suffixes, and the variations in pronunciation across different tasks. Preliminary observations indicate that students heavily depend on culturally internalized orthographic expectations: French-based vowel interpretations affect the reading of Turkish <o>, <ö>, and <e>; English-based expectations regarding silent letters result in under-articulation in fully transparent Turkish words; and oral-dominant literacy backgrounds are associated with difficulties in morphological segmentation. These findings suggest that orthography functions not only as a linguistic code but also as a cultural practice that shapes how learners expect written language to behave. By situating these learners' experiences within a multilingual university context, the study contributes to broader discussions on how linguistic and cultural diversity impact multilingual learners' outcomes. It highlights the need for educational settings to recognize culturally rooted literacy habits when supporting international students navigating new orthographic and morphological systems.

Worlds of Learning: English Across Realities

María de los Ángeles Díaz (University of Blas Pascal, Argentina)

This qualitative narrative research explores how sociocultural diversity shapes the English language teaching-learning process among fifth-year secondary students in two educational institutions with contrasting profiles in Apóstoles, Misiones, Argentina. The study addresses how students from different cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds bring distinct linguistic and cultural



repertoires to English learning, requiring differentiated pedagogical responses.

Through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and written experience accounts, student and teacher narratives were collected, revealing how diverse cultural contexts influence identity construction and engagement with English learning. Participants included students from both institutions and their English teachers.

Findings show profoundly different relationships with English across contexts. At Instituto Superior Cristo Rey (urban centre, middle-class), students arrive with cultural capital that validates language learning, access to technological resources, and family support networks that facilitate English acquisition. Students develop multiple strategies for accessing linguistic resources and view English as integrated into their cultural identity.

In contrast, at Instituto Santa Bárbara (peripheral neighbourhood, working-class), students navigate English learning from different cultural starting points. Narratives reveal limited technological access, distinct family language ideologies, and phrases like “I’m not cut out for English” that reflect how sociocultural contexts shape learner identities and confidence. These students require differentiated support to access learning opportunities.

Teachers develop culturally responsive adaptive strategies: a “pedagogy of consolidation” that builds on existing cultural resources in one context, and a “pedagogy of accompaniment” centred on validating diverse cultural backgrounds and building confidence in the other.

This research contributes to understanding how sociocultural diversity requires inclusive pedagogical approaches in multilingual educational settings. Rather than standardized instruction, effective teaching recognizes and values the diverse cultural and linguistic resources students bring, creating supportive environments where all learners can develop English language competence. The findings offer insights for teacher preparation in culturally and socioeconomically diverse contexts.

Negotiating Multilingualism in Polish Education: From Policy to Practice

Emilia Wąsikiewicz-Firlej (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poland)

The paper examines the ongoing transformation of the Polish education system from a predominantly monolingual environment toward an increasingly multilingual school setting. It maps the evolution of Polish language and education policies in response to



growing migration. By situating Poland's experience within broader Central European migration trends, the study identifies key challenges, gaps, and unmet needs in the governance of education. While national policy frameworks recognise diversity at the declarative level, their translation into school-level practice remains inconsistent and largely dependent on local interpretation.

Methodologically, the study employs a qualitative approach and combines a review of academic and policy literature, analysis of legal and strategic documents, and semi-structured interviews with teachers and school principals. The analysis draws on Ferguson's (2006) framework for examining language-in-education policy, which views policy as a process shaped by interpretation and implementation at different levels of the education system. This approach allows for exploring how national language policies are translated into school-level practices and how teachers and educational leaders respond to the realities of increasingly diverse student populations.

The analysis reveals that, despite a growing policy focus on integration, the scope and effectiveness of state measures remain limited. Persistent barriers include inadequate language support, education systems unresponsive to migrant needs, and fragmented institutional coordination. Although recent reforms have introduced more systematic guidance and financial support for migrant education – particularly following the large-scale arrival of refugees from Ukraine in 2022 – these measures remain unevenly implemented. Schools are better equipped to support Ukrainian pupils than those from other, non-Slavic backgrounds.

Overall, the findings suggest that Poland's integration framework is in transition, evolving from ad hoc responses toward more structured policy, yet its implementation continues to reproduce selective inclusivity within the education system.

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Session #2

1 September, 17:00–19:00

Pre-service Language Teachers' Beliefs on Plurilingualism in Secondary Education: Addressing Asturias and Galicia's Sociolinguistic Realities

Noelia M^a Galán-Rodríguez (University of A Coruña, Spain)
Covadonga Arroyo-García (University of Oviedo, Spain)



Óscar Alonso-Álvarez (University of Oviedo, Spain)
Roberto Avello-Rodríguez (University of Oviedo, Spain)

Led by the Council of Europe (2020), European language education has shifted significantly, with plurilingualism becoming a guiding principle that reshapes how linguistic competence is conceptualized and promoted. This transformation moves from a traditional understanding of multilingualism toward the concept of plurilingual competence. Likewise, research has demonstrated that teachers stand at the heart of linguistically inclusive education and can effectively challenge the monolingual mindsets that impede progress (Birello et al., 2021). Considering that sociolinguistic realities may influence the adaptation of plurilingualism in education and language teachers are one of the central driving forces in this regard, understanding teachers' beliefs is of utmost importance. However, despite the growing body of research on teachers' beliefs about plurilingualism, most studies have focused on in-service teachers. This has left pre-service teachers' cognition comparatively underexplored, particularly at the secondary level. This gap is important because beliefs are formed during teacher candidates' own schooling experiences, meaning that prospective teachers enter training programs with pre-existing conceptions that shape their future practice (Portolés and Martí 2020). Therefore, this study aims to analyse pre-service secondary education language teachers' beliefs about plurilingualism using a validated 45-item questionnaire, focusing on Master's students at University of A Coruña (Galicia) and University of Oviedo (Asturias). This research addresses a critical gap in understanding how pre-service beliefs are shaped by regional sociolinguistic contexts and language specialization, providing valuable knowledge to inform teacher education interventions. By examining belief formation at this stage, the study contributes to bridging the documented gap between plurilingual policy directives and classroom implementation realities in Spain's complex multilingual landscape.

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Teacher Language Ideologies and Teacher Well-being in the Era of Multilingualism: Between Resistance, Reflection and Agency

Hadrian Lankiewicz (Gdańsk University, Poland)

In this presentation I concentrate on the teacher beliefs or teacher language ideologies pertaining to language education in the era of multilingualism. The scope of the study is Polish language teachers whose comfort of cultural and linguistic homogeneity has been drastically changed by massive migration waves in recent years triggered by an influx of refugees from Ukraine which intensified with the break-out of the full scale war. Even if Ukrainians constitute the dominant part of the newcomers, they are only a portion of the more diversified linguistic landscape of Polish education (Lankiewicz, 2023). The so-called Polish economic boom lured also better life seekers, mostly from Asia, Africa and South America. Without much exaggeration within the last ten years Poland became a multicultural and multilingual country. Many of the newcomers and refugees arrived with children who had to be instantly incorporated by the Polish education system to secure schooling continuity. This new situation constituted a big challenge for Polish schools and in practical terms for teachers who had to redefine their classroom practices and possibly ideologies, which, in turn, affected their teacher identities. As articulated in many documents and brochures, Polish schools have successfully adapted to new circumstances, incorporating foreign children into the mainstream education. Part of the success was the result of teacher ingeniousness and initiatives (Szczepaniak-Kozak et al., 2023) and the reliance on the intercomprehension process (Gębal and Krzyżosiak, 2024), linguistic similarities between Polish and languages spoken by the majority of newcomers.

The aim of this presentation is to focus on language teachers to investigate whether and how they negotiate their identities in the fast-changing multilingual contexts with respect to “standard” language ideologies (dissecting languages into discrete entities, language correctness). The empirical part of research is based on a mixed-methods study of in-service language teachers (including teachers of Polish as a national and foreign language) on a primary, secondary and tertiary level of education. Parameters assumed for the study are: language ideologies (partly shaped by teacher education), emotions and teacher agency as manifested by their classroom behaviour and their practical knowledge, and how they translate into classroom language policy making in promoting multilingual classroom practices (Bernstein et al., 2023). Ultimately, I seek to find the evolution of understanding of what it means to be a language teacher in the era of internationalization of Polish education and the ever-present multilingualism.

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Multilingualism and Multimodal Literacy in the EFL Classroom

María Begoña Lasa Álvarez (University of A Coruña, Spain)

Across the world, there are numerous communities and regions that possess a rich cultural heritage, manifested in the coexistence of different languages. Moreover, due to the contemporary context of globalisation and increasing mobility of the population, many regions are receiving a growing number of migrants from developing or conflict-affected areas who maintain their linguistic and cultural distinctiveness. While maintaining one's linguistic and cultural identity is of significance to any individual, effective communication is essential for all forms of human social contact. One of the principal settings where people from different linguistic backgrounds develop social relationships is at school. This paper will focus on the particular case of Galicia, a Spanish region where two official languages coexist and diglossia occurs. In this regard, there are situations in which it is necessary to increase the number of teaching hours of Galician for children, while they are also acquiring a foreign language, mainly English.

This paper introduces a selection of activities developed with student teachers in the Degree in Early Childhood Education, such as multimodal storytelling (Gregori-Signes, 2014; Wessel-Powell, Kargin & Wohlwend, 2016). The task involves the utilisation of the same picture books, storytelling videos and songs in the three languages spoken in the early-years classroom. The effectiveness of this strategy lies in the fact that the student teachers need to activate their entire linguistic repertoire in order to perform the task. Similarly, when implementing these pedagogical activities with children, they are required to use all their linguistic knowledge to establish connections between the various languages spoken in the classroom, thereby fostering metalinguistic awareness from the earliest stages of education (Melogno, Pinto & Lauriola, 2022; Roehr-Brackin, 2025).

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Multilingualism in Schools: Translating Pupil-centered Recommendations into Everyday School Functioning

Anna Szczepaniak-Kozak (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poland)

Although multilingualism and cultural diversity have long characterized many societies, their significance in education has gained prominence only recently. This shift is driven by accelerating global economic integration and ongoing conflicts, which have contributed to rising numbers of economic migrants and refugees and, consequently, to increasingly linguistically and culturally diverse schools. Against this backdrop, this chapter investigates how findings and recommendations grounded in current theories of multilingual education and child development translate into everyday school practices. Specifically, we draw on recommendations developed within the MaMLiSE project (2021–2023) concerning the training of school personnel to enhance the educational experiences, development, and integration of children in multilingual educational settings. We emphasize the design of activities that acknowledge and value diverse linguistic backgrounds, the implementation of strategies to identify and address pupils' vulnerabilities, and the importance of home–school partnerships. Based on analyses of interviews with various categories of school personnel, including teachers and principals, we examine whether these recommendations are evident in Polish schools and, where they are, how they are translated into effective classroom or school practices. Our findings indicate that the recommendations are only partially visible on school grounds. While pupils' well-being is a central focus in schools, there is a systemic lack of classroom practices that draw on pupils' multilingual resources. Moreover, where effective practices do exist, they appear to result not from systemic support but rather from individual teacher agency and professional commitment to addressing these needs.





S5.- English as a Foreign Language for Students with Diverse Educational Needs – Challenges

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) for students with special/diversified/additional needs cannot be longer perceived as a marginal issue. An increasing number of EFL learners have diverse needs and at the same time want to be fully included in English language, literature and culture experience.

The International Research Group on EFL for Deaf and hard of Hearing learners (https://www.kul.pl/foundation-and-mission,art_79274.html) has been active for long to discuss and study diverse conditions facilitating these processes. First paper with a question: Is surdoglottodidactic (methodology of teaching and learning foreign languages to /by deaf and hard of hearing persons) possible? was published in 2003. First research book - *Wielojęzyczni* [Multilingual] - was published in 2013. In 2026 it is time to update and revise EFL teaching and learning to enrich it with new ideas. The aim of the seminar will be to share experiences of teaching and studying diverse contexts of EFL for people with diverse educational needs. We also aim to rethink past experiences and plan for future research and teaching strategies.

The questions we plan to discuss are the following: 1. What are the purposes, methodologies and strategies for teaching and learning foreign languages in diverse groups? 2. What kind of support is and should be available for EFL teachers and instructors working in diverse groups – both in teacher training programs and professional teacher development? 3. How is it possible to make EFL instruction accessible for diverse groups and what is the role of Universal Learning Design in this process? 4. EFL for learners with diverse educational needs and AI developments – how to use new tools?

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Session #1

31 August, 16:00–18:00

English as a Foreign Language for Hard-of-Hearing Learners in the Context of Lifelong and Lifewide Learning**Ewa Domagała-Zyśk (John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland)**

This presentation explores English as a foreign language education for hard-of-hearing learners within the framework of lifelong and lifewide learning. Adult learners represent a heterogeneous demographic with diverse educational backgrounds and professional experiences, engaging in formal education, professional development, and informal learning driven by personal growth objectives. Research indicates that 84% of adults aged 25-64 participate in some form of learning, with informal learning predominating (71%), particularly through digital resources. Adults demonstrate distinctive learning characteristics including substantial experiential knowledge, clearly articulated objectives, expectations for practical application, and pronounced needs for autonomy and flexibility due to professional and familial responsibilities.

Hard-of-hearing individuals constitute a distinct population with unique characteristics and requirements, increasingly establishing separate identities from those who identify as deaf or Deaf. Contemporary perspectives emphasize that hearing impairment should be conceptualized not as a deterministic condition but as one characteristic among many. The biopsychosocial model acknowledges that with appropriate accommodations and support systems, individuals with varying degrees of hearing loss can communicate effectively through spoken language. Functional capacity depends not exclusively on audiological parameters but also on technological assistance, personal motivation, and social support networks.

Effective pedagogical approaches for hard-of-hearing adult learners must incorporate problem-based learning, experiential methodologies, and academic mentoring that acknowledges existing knowledge and experience. Educational interventions should address barriers including diminished self-efficacy, technological limitations, and the need for inclusive environments that accommodate diverse communication modalities and respect the complex, fluid nature of hard-of-hearing identity within lifelong learning contexts. These issues will be discussed on the basis of the author's teaching experience in a group of hard-of-hearing university students.



Educational Policies on EFL Instruction for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Learners in Europe: Insights from the SIGN-EFL Project

Jitka Sedláčková (Masaryk University, Czech Republic)

Katharina Urbann (Humboldt University, Germany)

Diane Bedoin (University of Rouen Normandy, France)

The paper presents a new research and educational project, Supporting Inclusive Guidance for Teaching English as a Foreign Language to Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Students (SIGN-EFL), which aims to strengthen the role of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing (DHH) learners across Europe. Its objectives include assessing the current state of EFL instruction for DHH students in the participating countries (Czech Republic, France, Germany, Spain, and Sweden) and establishing a transnational network of EFL teachers in Deaf education to exchange and scale effective teaching practices that foster successful EFL learning for DHH students.

The second section of the paper reports preliminary findings from research mapping policies related to EFL instruction for DHH learners. Although DHH students are required to study EFL, the curricular foundations and their implementation have not been systematically documented. This study addresses that gap through a comprehensive analysis conducted by researchers and teachers, drawing on national expert consultations and policy document reviews across the participating countries. Data for the analysis were collected through interviews with national experts and examination of relevant policy documents.

Educational policy mapping seeks to clarify the broader framework shaping EFL instruction for DHH students at multiple levels (school, regional, and national). This scientific project is essential because policy decisions influence teacher training and curriculum development, which in turn affect classroom practices.

Digital Learning Material for Teaching of EFL to Sign Language Pupils Using Written English and their National Sign Language

Bente Prøybo (Statped, National Service for Special Needs Education, Norway)

Ragnhild Sveli (Statped, National Service for Special Needs Education, Norway)

Our presentation will show a newly developed online learning material for teaching of EFL to Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing (DHH)



pupils at level A1, A2 and B1. The educational material is developed in an Erasmus+ project with Sweden, Norway, Portugal and Italy as partners.

This resource fills a gap in education material of EFL for DHH in Europe, which has been very slim compared to the hearing world.

The main goal is to teach the pupils how to read and write English via instruction videos in their own National Sign Language. Using their first language to learn their second language – like hearing pupils do. We think this is a supporting method and a good tool for EFL teachers for teaching English to the DHH pupils.

Our written material is the same for all countries, built up around A1, A2 and B1. Here each level has about 5-7 chapters. All chapters focus on developing literacy skills through preparation for vocabulary, a text, reading comprehension, writing tasks for comprehension, grammar, grammar tasks and a choice of individual writing tasks at the end. These are all presented in the national sign language and written English. The national written and oral language is not used in the material. Even though this resource has no sound, it meets universal learning design, where all functionality is operable via keyboard control, and it has subtitles.

In addition to sign language, we aim to use good illustrations, photos and graphics, to support the pupils visually.

The seminar will allow us to show the material and explain our method of learning.

From Inclusion to Accessibility: EFL Teaching Practices for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Learners (LISA project)

Nuzha Moritz (University of Strasbourg, France)

Increasing linguistic, cultural, and educational diversity in today's classrooms poses significant challenges for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers. Among these challenges, the inclusion of deaf and hard-of-hearing students in mainstream education requires specific pedagogical adaptations and heightened teacher awareness. Although inclusive education and differentiated instruction are now central to educational policy, their practical implementation in EFL classrooms for learners with hearing loss remains insufficiently addressed in teacher education. This paper examines the competencies and criteria that are most relevant for English language teachers working with deaf and hard-of-hearing students. In an inclusive teaching context, EFL teachers are expected to implement different forms of differentiation, including the differentiation of learning processes, learning content, and instructional structures. Inclusion should not be understood merely as the physical presence of deaf and hard-of-hearing



learners in mainstream classrooms, but rather as the adoption of teaching practices that ensure full access to language input, meaningful participation, and social interaction. Particular attention is given to the specific challenges faced by deaf and hard-of-hearing students in learning English as a foreign language. These students encounter specific barriers in foreign language learning, such as limited access to oral input, phonological difficulties, and reduced classroom interaction. Many teachers report feeling unprepared to address these challenges due to a lack of training in inclusive and accessible EFL methodologies. The paper draws on the ongoing project *LISA – Language, Inclusion, Surdit , Accessibilit * (Language, Inclusion, Deafness, Accessibility), which aims to raise awareness among teachers and develop practical strategies for accessible language teaching. Through this project, various actions are being implemented to support teachers in adapting materials, classroom practices, and assessment methods. This contribution seeks to share these experiences, encourage professional exchange, and contribute to the validation and development of inclusive teaching skills for EFL educators working with students with diverse educational needs.

Inclusive EFL in Mixed DHH-Hearing Contexts: Implementing AI to Enhance Interactional Competence

Angela Sileo (San Raffaele Open University, Italy)

Teaching second/foreign languages to learners with special needs demands specialized strategies and, crucially, a modular methodology adaptable to mixed groups comprising users with diverse special needs. This approach ensures equitable access to linguistic competence, accommodating varying proficiency levels, cognitive demands, and communication modalities in inclusive education environments. Accordingly, this presentation examines a pilot EFL study conducted in an Italian university context with mixed Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing (DHH) and hearing students (Sileo 2026).

This experimentation implements a three-phase multi-component syllabus to develop reading skills (Phase 1), grammar and use of English (Phase 2), and interactional competence (Phase 3) – the latter featuring ChatGPT (GPT-4o) via WhatsApp for inclusive learning, enabling low-anxiety oral/written production without real-time overlap. By leveraging dialogue systems (DS) as non-judgmental conversational simulators (Bibauw et al. 2022; Zhai and Wibowo 2023), the research fosters interactional competence and accessibility, particularly bridging proficiency gaps: hearing students mostly self-assessed at B1/B2 (with few A2/C1), while DHH learners clustered at A1/A2 (one B2, two B1), confirming systemic EFL challenges for Deaf students (Domagała-Zy sk and Kontra 2016). A qualitative analysis of the syllabus addresses four research questions: initial reception (RQ1), novelty effect after the second interaction with the DS (RQ2) – as theorized by Fryer et al. (2017, 2019) –, perceived learning outcomes derived from



interacting with ChatGPT (RQ3), and overall methodology effectiveness (RQ4). Notably, participants had no prior ChatGPT/WhatsApp interactions, ensuring fresh-start exchanges.

Results show initial enthusiasm waning more among hearing than DHH students – validating the novelty effect, amplified by task demands – yet DS particularly aided anxious, lower-proficiency DHH learners by reducing embarrassment and supporting scaffolded practice. While some critiqued AI's formality/verbosity versus human authenticity, findings yielded mixed proficiency gains, underscoring DS potential for inclusive mixed-class pedagogy when multi-phased rather than standalone.

Designing AI-supported Multimodal Materials for Accessible EFL Learning in Contexts with Diverse Educational Needs

Paula Amoros-Marco (University of Alicante, Spain)

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching in diverse groups requires accessible methodologies to ensure inclusion and reduce barriers to participation and learning. In this context, students with diverse educational needs, particularly learners with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), may experience difficulties when materials depend on pragmatic inference and abstraction, which can limit both their understanding and engagement. This paper examines whether AI-supported multimodal materials, implemented as an adaptive digital story, can function as accessible EFL input by facilitating figurative language comprehension and enhancing reading comprehension. The study also explores learners' perceptions of multimodal digital input as an inclusive tool that can support language learning, which has implications for teacher-designed accessible materials. Based on convenience sampling, a sequential mixed-methods design was implemented with EFL learners diagnosed with ASD. The experimental group used a digital story combined with written text, paced audio narration, distinct character voices and AI-generated images, aligned with key narrative actions and figurative expressions. In contrast, the control group worked with the same narrative in a printed version. Quantitative data were collected through pre- and post-tests and analysed in SPSS, while qualitative data gathered from semi-structured interviews were discussed thematically. Findings show improvements in both groups, with higher gains in the experimental group, especially in reading comprehension. Qualitative data further revealed increased engagement and perceived accessibility of meaning, as learners relied on visual sequencing and adaptive textual cues to interpret figurative expressions in context. Taken together, these results suggest that AI-supported multimodal stories can contribute to accessible EFL instruction in diverse groups by lowering comprehension barriers and supporting understanding. As a result, multimodal digital input may be a practical didactic tool for inclusive classrooms, as it enables the design of materials that respond to diverse learner profiles.



Session #2

1 September, 9:00–11:00

Beyond Grammar: Finding Meaning**Marta Chomicz (Polish-Japanese Academy of Information Technology, Warsaw, Poland)**

This paper explores the development of written communication in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) among Deaf and hard-of-hearing (DHH) students. Drawing on qualitative analyses of authentic written texts produced by Polish secondary school learners, it examines how meaning is constructed when access to phonological input is limited.

The findings reveal that DHH students employ a range of adaptive strategies, including morphological approximations, lexical analogies, neologisms, and visual-semantic reasoning. These creative mechanisms demonstrate the learners' agency and determination to communicate, often transforming linguistic limitations into meaningful expression. Instead of viewing such deviations as errors, this study interprets them as alternative pathways to linguistic competence.

Pedagogically, the paper highlights the need for inclusive EFL instruction based on Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles and enhanced by multimodal and technological support. It argues that an emphasis on meaning-making rather than formal accuracy can empower DHH learners to engage more confidently with written English and to develop their own communicative voice.

Teaching English as a Foreign Language to Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing students with American Sign Language**Kristin Gross (University of Cologne, Germany)****Alina Gervers (Humboldt University, Germany)****Melanie Kellner (Vocational College for the Hearing Impaired in Essen, Germany)**

Background: Teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) to Deaf and hard-of-hearing (DHH) students presents significant challenges. This study explores the perspectives of DHH learners on their experiences in EFL classrooms. Methods: Adopting a



qualitative research design, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 17 former DHH students who had learned English at German schools for the DHH. Results: The findings reveal diverse language practices within EFL classrooms, largely shaped by individual teachers. Participants identified several key issues, including teachers' limited proficiency in foreign sign languages, the inconsistent use of German Sign Language (DGS) alongside spoken English, and the lack of Deaf cultural awareness and content in instruction. Moreover, the scarcity of interactive and participatory learning activities emerged as a major concern. The participants' experiences further indicated that both English and American Sign Language (ASL) functioned as foreign languages, particularly relevant for international communication and social media interaction. Discussion: The study highlights the need to integrate ASL into EFL instruction to better meet the linguistic and cultural needs of DHH students. Strengthening teacher training in ASL and establishing standardized approaches to EFL teaching are essential. By aligning pedagogical practices with students' linguistic realities and lived experiences, educators can create more inclusive and empowering learning environments that enhance language competence while affirming DHH students' identities and rights.

Teaching Legal English to a Hard-of-Hearing Law Student: AI-Supported Strategies for Inclusive EFL Instruction

Anna Podlewska (Medical University of Lublin, Poland)

This paper examines the teaching of Legal English to a hard-of-hearing law student preparing for the TOLES Advanced examination, with a focus on how AI-supported pedagogical strategies can enhance accessibility, autonomy, and disciplinary accuracy in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction. Legal English poses particular challenges for learners with hearing loss due to its high lexical density, complex syntactic structures, fast-paced oral input, and reliance on implicit pragmatic cues. These challenges are intensified in high-stakes exam preparation contexts, where precision and efficiency are essential.

Drawing on principles of surdoglottodidactics and Universal Design for Learning (UDL), the paper presents a practice-based case study integrating selected AI tools into a one-to-one EFL setting. Tools such as Gaston (for extracting and editing transcripts from legal video materials), Natural Reader and ElevenLabs (for customizable text-to-speech input), and NotebookLM (for organizing legal sources and generating structured summaries) were used to redesign core learning activities. Rather than compensating for hearing loss alone, these tools supported multimodal input, controlled pacing, and repeated exposure to specialized legal discourse.



The paper addresses three research questions: (1) how AI tools can mediate access to authentic Legal English materials for hard-of-hearing learners; (2) how AI-enhanced multimodality supports exam-oriented skills; and (3) what implications this has for EFL teacher training in diverse, discipline-specific contexts. Findings suggest that AI-assisted instruction not only increased comprehension and retention but also strengthened learner agency and metacognitive awareness.

The paper argues that AI, when embedded within a principled pedagogical framework, can function as an inclusive design tool rather than an assistive add-on. It concludes by outlining transferable strategies for EFL instructors working with diverse learners in professional and academic English settings, particularly in law-related domains.

Barriers and Breakthroughs: Challenges, Strategies, and Inclusive Solutions - A Deaf Student's Experience in English Philology

Marta Rudnicka (Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland)

The study of English philology presents considerable challenges for hearing students. However, for deaf students, those challenges are even more formidable as they refer to auditory input, phonetics, oral communication, and spoken interaction. This presentation explores the academic, linguistic, and social challenges faced by a deaf student who enrolled in an English philology program, and highlights effective strategies and inclusive solutions that were designed and implemented to support equitable learning.

Deaf students mastering foreign language skills often encounter barriers related to listening comprehension, pronunciation, classroom discussions, giving presentations and access to spoken lectures. These difficulties may be intensified by limited or no availability of solutions that guarantee inclusive education such as the assistance of sign language interpreters, sufficient captioning and teaching methods based on UDL (Universal Design for Learning). Additionally, the emphasis on phonology and spoken language competence in English philology can create a feeling of exclusion and academic disadvantage.

However, despite these challenges, deaf students demonstrate strong resilience and adaptability. This presentation demonstrates practical strategies and approaches, and proposes sustainable solutions based on UDL that were incorporated to enhance the deaf student's academic success. They included the use of visual learning methods, written materials, captioned multimedia content, assistive technologies as well as collaboration with a speech therapist. However, peer support, flexible assessment methods, and



increased awareness and specially tailored training for lecturers also played a crucial role in fostering an inclusive learning environment.

By sharing lived experiences and evidence-based practices, this presentation advocates for inclusive pedagogy in English philology. It emphasizes that linguistic competence should not be measured solely through auditory skills but through diverse modes of language understanding and expression. Promoting accessibility in language studies is essential for achieving educational equity and empowering deaf students to fully participate in academic and professional contexts.

Session #3

1 September, 17:00–19:00

English as a Foreign Language for Learners with Alzheimer's Disease: A Sign-Supported, Multimodal Teaching Experience

Beata Gulati (John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland)

Teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) to learners with Alzheimer's disease is a challenging and still rarely discussed area of inclusive education. People in the early stages of Alzheimer's often struggle with memory, concentration, and emotional security, which calls for teaching approaches that go beyond traditional language instruction. This paper presents my practice-based experience of teaching English to learners with Alzheimer's disease in a Daily Care Home in Poland.

Since 2021, I have been developing an original teaching program that combines English with Polish Sign Language (PJM) and American Sign Language (ASL). Sign languages, usually used in the education of Deaf and hard-of-hearing learners, are applied here in a different way: to stimulate cognitive activity, engage both brain hemispheres through movement and gesture, and support communication in an enjoyable and meaningful form. Learning takes place through routine, repetition, songs, movement, visual support, and play. Signs are introduced not only for learning purposes, but also as practical tools that learners may later use when spoken language becomes difficult, for example to express basic needs such as help or thank you.

Based on classroom observation and action research, the approach supports learners' engagement, social interaction, confidence, and sense of dignity. English classes become moments of shared activity, fun, and connection rather than tests of memory. The



paper also briefly reflects on the role of artificial intelligence as a supportive tool for teachers in preparing and adapting materials, while the learning process itself remains human-centered and relational.

Teaching English to learners with Alzheimer's can be understood as a meaningful educational and social practice that supports well-being and quality of life.

Multimodal Strategies for Supporting the Communication Skills of Deaf and Hard-of-hearing (DHH) Students in Education: Results of Empirical Research

Izabela Olszak (John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland)

Aleksandra Borowicz (John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland)

The development of language competencies constitutes a fundamental prerequisite for both educational attainment and social inclusion among deaf and hard-of-hearing (DHH) students. Restricted access to auditory input, heterogeneous language experiences, and the specific characteristics of cognitive processing in this population often result in persistent challenges in acquiring spoken language, expanding vocabulary, and developing effective communication skills. Consequently, there is an increasing need to identify and implement evidence-based pedagogical strategies that adequately address the distinct educational needs of DHH learners. The primary objective of the present study was to identify effective, research-informed strategies that support the development of communication competencies in DHH students at the primary school level, with particular emphasis on speaking skills, vocabulary acquisition, and overall language development. The study adopted a mixed-methods research design, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches, and involved a sample of 55 DHH students enrolled in grades 7–8. To ensure methodological rigor, data were collected through triangulation of research methods, including systematic classroom observations, student questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews conducted with teachers and specialist practitioners. The findings indicate that multimodal instructional strategies, particularly those integrating visual modalities, explicit visualization techniques, contextualized presentation of content, and structured peer collaboration, are especially effective in supporting language and communication development. Students frequently employed strategies such as paraphrasing, silent articulation attempts, the use of visual concept maps, and digital translation tools to facilitate comprehension and expression. Additionally, instructional practices aimed at enhancing communicative fluency, including feedback-oriented exercises supported by visual cues, were identified as playing a significant



role in language development. The analysis further revealed that the effectiveness and selection of strategies varied depending on the onset of hearing loss. Overall, the findings confirm that effective language education for students with hearing loss should be multifaceted, contextually grounded, and visually enriched. Such instruction should integrate elements of both form-focused and communicative approaches while fostering the development of metalinguistic awareness. The results of this study provide a valuable empirical foundation for the design of inclusive educational models that effectively promote communication skill development in students with hearing loss.

English Lessons as a Means of Developing Intercultural Competence of Children with Mild Intellectual Disabilities

Magdolna Nemes (University of Debrecen, Hungary)

In language teaching and learning, language teachers do not have to focus on just one thing. It is not enough to teach the grammar or increase the language learner's vocabulary. Students need to acquire what is known as cultural knowledge and metacommunication.

In today's globalizing world, intercultural knowledge of countries and the related intercultural competence have become particularly important. Through language learning, students gradually acquire what is known as cultural knowledge and metacommunication.

The topic of this paper is to explore opportunities for developing intercultural competence in the school education of students with mild intellectual disabilities. MID learners may come into contact with foreigners and thus with other cultures in the labour market and in everyday situations too. In the English lessons, students reflect on their own culture and language, recognizing its values, which shape their identity and can increase their self-esteem in society and at school (Sághy 1995). The point is made that children in other countries eat different foods, play different sports, and have different daily schedules.

In the second part of the paper, we discuss how to combine language teaching and developing intercultural competence within the framework of cooperation between ten Erasmus students at the University of Debrecen, Hungary and a segregated elementary school in the Eastern part of Hungary (2024-). The Spanish, Turkish and Kazakh students participating in the project were given topics with an intercultural perspective, which they worked on independently in relation to their own countries. The evaluation showed that the students' empathy skills had developed, their motivation to learn languages had increased, and they considered the lessons and presentations given to MID learners to be a success and an enjoyable experience. During the task, the participating students developed their communication skills, learned to appreciate the openness and interest of MID learners.



The Impact of Immersive Virtual Reality Environments on Lexico-Grammatical Patterns in EFL Writing among Learners with Dyslexia

Giulia Staggini (University of Milan, Italy)

Students with dyslexia often experience persistent challenges in foreign language learning that extend beyond reading and decoding, particularly in written language production (Kormos & Kontra, 2018). Research has shown that dyslexia affects not only vocabulary acquisition, but also the processes underlying sentence formulation, including lexical access, morphosyntactic encoding, fluency, and the integration of grammatical resources under cognitive load (Altmann et al., 2008; Casani et al., 2022). Even when lexical knowledge is available, dyslexic learners may produce written texts that are less fluent, less structurally stable, and more reliant on explicit organization, especially when tasks require the coordination of morphology, syntax, and discourse (Fallon & Katz, 2020). From a psycholinguistic perspective, writing in a second or foreign language places particularly high demands on learners with dyslexia, as it involves the simultaneous management of conceptual planning, grammatical encoding, and orthographic realization. Within this framework, fostering motivation, engagement, and cognitive support becomes a central concern of inclusive foreign language instruction. Vocabulary development, grammatical competence, and intercultural meaning-making are deeply interconnected processes (Lee, Ahn & Lee, 2022), and instructional designs that enhance contextualization while reducing cognitive overload may support dyslexic learners' writing processes more effectively. Recent research (Legault et al., 2019) suggests that immersive virtual learning environments (iVLEs) and Virtual Reality-based instruction can increase learner engagement, provide meaningful experiential contexts, and support memory and retention by anchoring language use to embodied and situated experiences. Such environments appear particularly promising within inclusive language education, as they combine multimodal input with experiential learning and reduced reliance on decontextualized text-based processing. Building on this body of work, the present study reports on an experimental online English course conducted at the University of Genoa involving 92 university EFL students with dyslexia and other Specific Learning Disorders. Participants were divided into an experimental group exposed to immersive and VR-based learning scenarios and a control group following a more traditional online instructional design developed according to principles of Universal Design for Learning. Previous quantitative analyses showed positive effects of iVLEs on learner motivation and vocabulary development (Staggini, 2025). The present study extends these findings through a qualitative lexico-grammatical analysis of learners' written texts, examining how iVLEs impact sentence organization, cohesion, and accessible meaning-making in writing.



Revisiting Inclusion in ELT Coursebooks: Accessibility and Representation in Contemporary Teaching Materials

Sara Corrizzato (University of Verona, Italy)

Sharon Hartle (University of Verona, Italy)

The growing emphasis on accessibility and inclusion in education calls for a re-evaluation of English Language Teaching (ELT) coursebooks, which play a crucial role in shaping classroom practices and learner identities. This paper presents the preliminary results of an ongoing project conducted at the University of Verona within the framework of initial teacher training for the secondary school. The study critically analyses a selection of ELT coursebooks currently used in Italian upper-secondary schools, focusing on the explicit and implicit representations of inclusion, diversity, and accessibility.

Through a combined qualitative and quantitative approach, the research investigates linguistic, visual and cultural dimensions of inclusivity, examining how materials address, or fail to address, the needs of learners with diverse educational profiles. Drawing on frameworks from inclusive education and critical discourse studies, the study explores how inclusivity is constructed, negotiated and constrained within educational materials, shedding light on the ideological underpinnings of representation and accessibility.

The findings reveal tensions between inclusive educational aims and the market-driven logic of coursebook design. However, this also provides us with emerging opportunities for Universal Design for Learning (UDL) applications in EFL contexts. Based on the UDL model, in conclusion, we propose a series of pedagogical guidelines for the development and adoption of more accessible and inclusive ELT materials. The overarching aim is to foster critical awareness among teachers and support equitable participation in English learning experiences. The proposed framework is intended to inform ELT material design practices, teacher education, and classroom implementation, promoting inclusive pedagogies that respond to diverse learner needs.

S6.- Creativity in Word-Formation

Creativity has been at the forefront of research in various areas of human activity because creative thinking is considered one of the key competencies of human beings (Ritter and Mostert, 2017). Since word-formation creativity manifests as a universal,



biologically preconditioned feature of human beings (see, e.g., D'Agostino, 1984), all language speakers can produce a new word. Regarding the field of word-formation, each new word, as a result of the deliberate cognitive activity of language users, manifests the fundamental characteristics of creativity: novelty, originality, appropriateness, and relevance. Moreover, new linguistic signs are useful and effective because they serve the communicative purposes of a speech community.

Views on word-formation creativity differ. One extreme position restricts it to total aberration from existing rules (Bergs, 2019). At the opposite extreme, creativity is identified with productivity (e.g., Chomsky, 1966, 1974). A less radical view maintains that creative formations—often attention-seeking words—are related to analogy (Hohenhaus, 1996) or less productive or marginal processes (e.g., Munat, 2007; Lieber, 2010; Arndt-Lappe et al., 2018). The deviation from productive rules and the violation of the universal properties of new coinages are emphasized by extra-grammatical morphology (e.g., Dressler, 2005; Mattiello, 2013) and extravagant morphology (Eitelmann and Haumann, 2022). Different from these approaches, Körtvélyessy, Štekauer, and Kačmár (2022) relate creativity to each word-formation act rather than to its product.

Therefore, the seminar aims to discuss primarily, but not exclusively, the following questions:

1. What is the influence of general creative potential on the creative performance manifested in coining new complex words?
2. What methods can be used for testing and evaluating creative potential and creative performance in word-formation?
3. What is the scope of word-formation creativity?
4. What is the relationship between word-formation creativity and productivity/analogy?
5. Is creativity a scalar concept?
6. How do sociolinguistic factors and the rise of social media impact word-formation creativity?

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Session #1

31 August, 16:00–18:00

Introduction

Pavol Štekauer (Pavol Jozef Šafárik University, Slovakia)

An opening of the seminar and a brief introduction to the scope of the topics to be presented and discussed in the seminar.



From Creativity to Productivity: When Figurative Blends Become Regular Splinters

Elisa Mattiello (University of Pisa, Italy)

This paper explores word-formation creativity as a scalar phenomenon by examining how highly creative lexical blends in contemporary English develop into productive splinters. Early blends such as *sheeple* (← *sheep* + *people*), *chillax* (← *chill* + *relax*), or *screenager* (← *screen* + *teenager*) function as one-off, attention-seeking coinages. Their interpretation relies on complex figurative operations – metaphor, metonymy, or hyperbole – that compress rich conceptual structure into a single lexical unit (Ruiz de Mendoza & Galera 2014). At this stage, creativity manifests through novelty, irregularity, and pragmatic impact rather than morphological regularity.

The study focuses on two symmetrical sets of evaluative splinters that originate from similarly creative blends but gradually acquire productivity. Negative splinters such as *-mageddon*, *-pocalypse*, and *-tastrophe*, derived from culturally salient source words (*Armageddon*, *apocalypse*, *catastrophe*), construe events as extreme disasters (e.g., *Carmageddon*, *Snowpocalypse*, *wish-tastrophe*), grounded in the conventionalized metaphor EVENTS ARE DISASTERS and reinforced by hyperbolic scalar maximization (Ruiz de Mendoza & Peña 2025). Positive splinters like *-licious*, *-rific*, and *-tastic*, emerging from *delicious*, *terrific*, and *fantastic*, develop into productive intensifiers encoding enthusiasm and affective involvement (e.g., *babelicious*, *splendorific*, *poptastic*). These splinters emerge through strengthening operations and metaphorical mechanisms, whereby INTENSITY IS EXCESS, often reflected in formal redundancy and iconicity (e.g., *fabulicious* ← *fabulous* + *delicious*). Rather than functioning as idiosyncratic expressive cases, such splinters develop schematic meanings that license recurrent attachment to a wide range of bases.

Drawing on corpus data from the *Corpus of Contemporary American English* (COCA) and the *News on the Web* (NOW) corpus, the paper demonstrates that both negative and positive splinters show increasing reuse, formal stabilization, and semantic bleaching. The findings support a scalar view of word-formation creativity (Beliaeva 2019), in which productivity emerges from repeated figurative exploitation, positioning blending as a key mechanism mediating between innovation and regularity in the English lexicon.

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When Words Are New: Comparing Human Intuition and AI Consistency

Michaela Hroteková (Comenius University Bratislava, Slovakia)

Esther Odilia Breuer (University of Cologne, Germany)

Neslihan Önder Özdemir (Bursa Uludağ University, Türkiye)

Humans assess new words by relying on the phonological, syntactic, and semantic structures stored inside their brains. However, without context, the structure might present a temporary ambiguity that requires reanalysis. Neural models, on the other hand, learn and assess by trial and error as they process thousands of words in parallel, rather than using recurring, time-dependent mechanisms, and lack non-linguistic contexts.

To compare human and neural analysis, we developed a set of 30 constructed words using three major wordformation strategies—affixation, blending, and compounding—and created them across a range of languages, including German, English, Portuguese, Greek, French, Polish, Estonian, Lithuanian, and Slovak. To examine the interpretive mechanisms underlying meaning assignment, we collected responses from human participants and 10 AI chatbots and compared agreement within and across groups.

The analysis revealed a consistent pattern: humans showed substantially greater variability and disagreement in selecting the most plausible meaning of the neologisms, regardless of the language in which the items were presented or the morphological process by which they were formed. In contrast, AI chatbots exhibited markedly more uniformity in their responses, suggesting a more substantial internal bias or a more convergent interpretive framework.

When combining the factors of participant group, language, and morphological process, no global interaction effects emerged, indicating that these variables did not jointly influence the distribution of answers. However, languagespecific analyses revealed that the significance of human–chatbot differences varied: in some languages, humans consistently diverged more from chatbot interpretations across all neologism types, whereas in others, certain wordformation processes produced smaller or nonsignificant differences.



Overall, the findings highlight important crosslinguistic and cognitive differences in how humans and artificial systems process emerging vocabulary, offering insights for lexicology, translation studies, and natural language processing.

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Defining Creativity in Word Formation: The Case of Latvian Agentive Nouns

Andra Kalnača (University of Latvia, Latvia)

Tatjana Pakalne (University of Latvia, Latvia)

The proposed study conceptualizes linguistic creativity as the use of conscious and unconscious linguistic and world knowledge to produce expressions that are different, appropriate and interpretable. In word formation, this means selecting a non-default route for encoding an intended meaning (Štekauer 2005) in a specific context or in decontextualized coinage, while ensuring interpretability. Creativity in word formation thus requires that formations remain grounded in the structural resources of the language, yet diverge from the most probable or predictable options in some definable way, such as:

- 1) *non-default naming strategies*: choosing morphological derivation or compounding instead of a 'default' descriptive syntactic construction or a less productive word-formation model over a more productive competitor, or a new word over an existing one;
- 2) *semantic innovation within a model*: using a word-formation model to express a meaning that is in some way different from its default semantic 'skeleton' (Lieber 2004, 2017) or its predictable (preferred) contextual specification; this may include unexpected metaphorical, metonymic extensions and pragmatically or stylistically marked uses;
- 3) *formal innovation*: extending a morphological pattern beyond its normal use, e.g., by applying a morphological operation to an atypical base or producing novel but comprehensible combinations.

Creativity, in this sense, is analytically distinct from both productivity and low frequency: productive models and even morphologically complex frequent word types may be used creatively, while regular infrequent formations may instantiate default, non-creative options. Measuring creativity in word formation, in the sense described above, thus requires, firstly, some way of quantifying the defaultness of a given naming strategy (statistically or experimentally) and, secondly, identifying semantic and formal innovation within the chosen strategy. Another aspect of interest is the space occupied by creativity, i.e.



between the default and predictable and the no longer interpretable. The proposed study investigates some of these questions using the Latvian agentive nouns as a test case. Latvian has several means of expressing agentive meaning, the most semantically regular and productive among derivational morphological means being the word-formation pattern V +-*tāj*-→N 'S'. The range of available strategies for expressing the 'S' meaning provides a potentially fertile ground for creativity studies. e.g., as shown by previous work (Kalnača, Pakalne 2024), the semantic 'skeletons' of non-lexicalized -*tāj*- nouns license contextual specification for a number of parameters, such as ANIMACY, SPECIALISATION, SEMANTIC ROLE, TYPE OF ACTION, some values being more 'default' than others; this can, in principle, be quantified based on corpus data, as an example of measuring 'semantic innovation within a model'. The analysis is based on contexts extracted from the National Corpora Collection.

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Session #2

1 September, 9:00–11:00



Creativity in Italian Lexical Blends: Borrowings, Hybridity, and Native Word Formations

Silvia Cacchiani (University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, Italy)

This paper offers a primarily qualitative analysis of lexical blending (Gries 2012) in contemporary Italian. My goal is threefold. First, to determine the variety and frequency of the creative techniques (Ronneberger-Sibold 2010) adopted in Italian blending. Second, to discuss the relative distribution of Anglicisms, calques, hybrids, and native word formations. Third, I am interested in determining whether any splinter is currently transitioning into a combining form (Mattiello 2022), and, for that matter, whether generalizations can be expressed about specific patterns (Booij 2010).

To that end, I have compiled a catalogue of around 400 blends – mainly occasionalisms – which were gathered from the *Italian Trends* (Herman *et al.* 2025) corpus, online pages with .it domain extensions, online databases of Italian new words and neologisms (e.g. Treccani's blog, Neologismi della Settimana n.d.), encyclopedias of Italian, semantico-encyclopaedic dictionaries and the relevant literature (e.g. Cacchiani 2011, 2015, Cacchiani & Le Donne 2025; Micheli 2022). All lemmas were annotated for date of first attestation, type of native/non-native word formation, SW types and output, phonetic transcription, creative technique, communication genre, definition, usage example (where present).

The data was studied with reference to degrees and types of linguistic creativity, focusing on phonological motivation and analogy on the one hand (Ronneberger-Sibold 2010; Mattiello 2017), and on semantic motivation (Panther and Radden 2011) on the other, including the sum of metaphorical and metonymic operations on various parts of the composite structure (Benczes 2006).

The results suggest that Italian exhibits a preference for semi-complete blends (*Italexit*.N_{PR} (/ita'leksit/ 'Italeave' (2016) < *Italia*.N_{PR} /i'talja/ 'Italy' + *exit*.N /'eksit/), though complete blends (*feltribalismo*.N (/fel.tri.ba'li.zmo/ (2006) < (Vittorio) *Feltri*.N_{PR} /'fel.tri/ + *tribalismo*.N /tri.ba'li.zmo/) and contour blends are also frequent (e.g., the calque *globesità*.N 'globesity' (/glo.be.zi'ta/ (2011) < *glob(ale)*.A /glo'ba.le/ 'global' + *obesità*.N /o.be.zi'ta/ 'obesity'). Hybrid blends and pseudo-Anglicisms are formed in Italian (e.g. *Vatileaks* or *Berlustrash*). Third, blended names of politicians appear to realize a pattern in politics and journalese, with a negative evaluative value (e.g. *Berlusconi*.N_{PR} /ber.lu'skɔt.ti/ (1998) < (Silvio) *Berlusco(n)i*.N_{PR} /ber.lu'sko.ni/ + (Fausto) *Ber(tin)otti*.N_{PR} /ber.ti'nɔt.ti/, i.e. Bertinotti's (unwitting) support of Berlusconi's opposition coalition parties in successfully overthrowing the then ruling government – of which Bertinotti's Communist party is the smallest party) and forming a new ruling coalition that excludes Bertinotti).



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Word-formation Creativity in English Teen Talk

Ignacio Palacios Martínez (University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain)

Teenagers and young people generally are regarded as being among the prime agents of language change (Eckert, 2003; Tagliamonte, 2016). Numerous studies have examined the changes that can be observed in their language use, which occur across all linguistic levels, from pronunciation and grammar to discourse (Stenström, Andersen & Hasund, 2002; Palacios Martínez, 2011; Tagliamonte, 2016; Groff, Hollington, Hurst-Harosh, Nassenstein, Nortier; Pash & Yannuar, 2022, to mention just a few). However, the role of



teenagers in the process of creative word formation has received comparatively little attention (Stenström et al. 2002; Bonsignori, 2015; Mattiello, 2017: 132-139; Palacios Martínez, 2018). This will be the main focus of the current paper, which draws on data from teenagers and general English corpora (COLT, LIC, MLE, BNC2014) as well as on social media.

Creativity in this study is conceived as a property of both the word-formation act and the resulting product or performance (Körtvélyessy, Štekauer & Kačmár 2022), considering not only the emergence of new forms but also the cognitive and communicative choices made by speakers when coining them. A formation is considered creative when it combines novelty and originality with communicative appropriateness and relevance to the peer-group context, and when it is created in a way that is not fully rule-governed but guided by analogical and extra-grammatical processes (Mattiello 2017).

A database was created in which various fields and tokens were identified, analysed, and grouped according to processes that have been associated with creativity in the literature:

(i) Extragrammatical morphology, that is, formations that do not follow the rules of morphological grammar, in that the processes through which they arise do not allow for the prediction of a regular output (Mattiello 2013: 1). Thus, I will consider instances that can be classified as shortenings/clippings, e.g. “It was brilliant I could watch *telly*” (COLT) and “alright mate come in a *sec*” (LIC), initialisms/abbreviations, e.g. “how could you not want to go there? *OMG* it’s Disneyland” (BNC2014), and blends, e.g. “we could buy some *brunch* stuff (BNC2014)” and “it had been a bit of a *bromance*” (BNC2014).

(ii) Extravagant morphology, where new words are created by speakers in order to be deliberately playful and attention-seeking, by bending general rules (Eitelmann & Haumann, 2022), e.g. “I wanna make *mega money*” (LIC), “he was *super* excited” (BNC2014); “that sounds *delish*” (BNC2014).

(iii) Creative semantic extensions and shifts (Traugott and Dasher, 2002) in which speakers give and extend new meanings to well-established words, e.g. “she is such a *sick* teacher she does all this” (BNC2014), or to lexical items from other languages, e.g. “We should have asked our money *guru* here” (BNC2014). The previous examples might be regarded as instances of neosemanticisms (Mattiello 2017).

(iv) Analogy-based formation (Hohenhaus, 1996; Mattiello 2017). A special group here corresponds to lexical items borrowed from other languages which young speakers adapt morphologically, e.g. “Have you *emojied* yourself yet?” (BNC2014).

Although the above processes of creativity are not exclusive to teenagers, and indeed can be observed in other age groups, they are most common in teen talk.



The reasons and motivations underlying these phenomena will also be addressed, looking at notions of group marking and in-group identity, plus the desire to exhibit one's linguistic originality, playfulness and humour.

The analysis and discussion of the data reveal the importance of sociolinguistic factors in the processes of creative word formation, and as such will enhance our understanding of teen talk.

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The Chicken-Egg Question of Creativity¹: Processes vs. Products

Aleksandra Bagasheva (Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, Bulgaria)

The research questions the presentation addresses are: i) Do the same criteria (dimensions and properties) apply for recognizing as creative traditional processes and products in word formation and ii) What accounts for the scalarity of word formation creativity within a family?

Linguists have identified blending as the most creative word-formation process (Gries 2012, Hamans 2011; Kjellander 2018, 2019; Renner 2015; etc.). This is predicated on a set of features: “not as rule-governed as other derivational processes; *more creative* than most derivational processes; usually involves *conscious effort* and *wordplay*, sometimes violating rigid morphological rules” (Gries 2012: 145) and low type productivity. Within compounding creativity is typically predicated on the basis of figurativity (Bauer 2018; Benczes 2006; Brdar 2017; etc.), no matter where it is located (in the constituents or in their incompatible combination or the product requires a figuratively extended interpretation).

Analyzing a set of Bulgarian compound, blending and affixation families, with both figurative and non-figurative members, it is hypothesized that the creativity of products and processes is not a uniformly cause-effect phenomenon and that the four points of entry into the creativity debate (coiner, process, product, interpreter) evoke different dimensions.

Единогушие [edinogušie, ‘single-neckness’, *the state of being stuffed up to the neck after looting*] < единодушие [edinodušie, one+soul+ie_{stative suffix}, *unanimity*] + гуша [guša, *neck*] is recognized as a “highly creative coinage” (Krumova-Cvetkova et al. 2013: 331). But it is either analogically formed on a base one of whose constituents is non-existent *душие [dušie, soul+ie_{stative suffix}] and is



functionally coerced in the sense of Audrig and Booij (2016) from a suppletive plural form of *човек* [čovek, *human*] or by sound-substitution as a result of word play. The inference is that not the process type but the unexpectedness of the combination of the concepts and their socially charged ironic overtones render the heightened creativity and that the salience from the recipient's perspective lies with product, not with process.

The analyses indicate that ambiguity (or multiplicity of possible interpretations) is a key causal factor in creativity perception (be it of the meaning of the whole, the nature of the relation among constituents or alternative possible processes leading to the same product).

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Note

¹ The current approach necessarily builds upon the understanding of word-formation creativity “as the ability of any speaker of a language to approach the naming act in a creative way by selecting one out of a number of possible ways of semiotic representation of an object to be named” (Körtvélyessy, Štekauer and Kačmár 2021: 1017, citing Štekauer 2005). This is taken to be point zero, so to speak, as a universal phenomenon for humans, and creativity of process, types and products results from augmentations of this creativity against highly frequent and fully entrenched products (and/or processes, types).

Exploring the Morphosemantic Properties of Abbreviated and Secreted Combining Forms in English through an Analysis of [X-*tainment*] and [X-*nomics*] Constructions

José A. Sánchez Fajardo (University of Alicante, Spain)

Jesús Fernández-Domínguez (University of Granada, Spain)

The combining forms (CFs) *-tainment* (e.g. *infotainment*) and *-nomics* (e.g. *Reaganomics*) both derive from full lexical words, show high productivity, and form analogical series (Bauer et al. 2013; Mattiello 2018, 2022). However, while *-tainment* is an abbreviated form that largely retains the meaning of *entertainment*, *-nomics* is a secreted form whose meaning has undergone semantic narrowing, i.e. from ‘economic principles’ to ‘domain-specific economic logic’. Being grounded in the interface between Construction Morphology and creativity (Booij 2010; Trousdale & Norde 2025), as well as data-driven approaches to neologism research (Lombard et al. 2024; Huang & Gao 2025), this study aims to conduct a dia-synchronic examination of the morphosemantic properties of abbreviated and secreted CFs in present-day English, focusing on the networks of [X-*tainment*] and [X-*nomics*] constructions. The study addresses the following research questions:

- (i) How do these constructional networks reveal qualitative (semantic abstraction) and quantitative (morphological productivity) differences between abbreviated and secreted forms?
- (ii) Do these differences shed light on the transitional continuum between abbreviation and secretion?
- (iii) Do the two networks display similar distributional patterns across registers?

The analysis draws on corpus data (e.g. NOW, COCA) to determine frequency and productivity measures and to annotate the semantic structures and pragmatic functions of [X-*tainment*] and [X-*nomics*] constructions. Google Books data further support a diachronic analysis of frequency and semantic change, which is then used to elaborate constructional schemas and networks,



and where special attention is given to constructional productivity and inheritance. Preliminary results indicate that *-nomics* is more productive due to greater semantic abstraction, with a less constrained [X-] slot, which enables more subschemas, broader pragmatic functions, and lower register specificity. Overall, while abbreviation and secretion share a common origin in splinter formation, they diverge semantically, aligning more closely with compounding and affixation, respectively.

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Session #3

1 September, 17:00–19:00

Starving for the Right Words: Euphemism and Word-Formation in Eating Disorder Discourse

Anna González Gasiorowska (University of Castilla-La Mancha, Spain)

This study examines the creation and use of euphemisms within online eating disorder (henceforth, ED) communities, focusing on



how linguistic innovation both reflects and shapes social dynamics surrounding these illnesses. The dataset includes lexical items drawn from public forums such as Reddit and Tumblr, including terms like *Ana*, *Mia*, *bonespo*, *wannarexia*, *drunkorexia*, *thinspo*, and *brolimia* among others. By analysing the formation and function of these expressions, the research explores how language creativity is employed to soften taboo, foster belonging, or, conversely, to stigmatize and exclude.

The theoretical foundation draws on Allan and Burrridge's (1991) X-phemism theory, which situates euphemism, orthophemism, and dysphemism as socially motivated strategies for negotiating taboo and moral sensitivity. Burrridge (2012) further informs this perspective by highlighting the evolutionary and cultural dimensions of euphemistic change, particularly in relation to illness and the body. From a morphological standpoint, insights from Plag (2003) and Bauer (1983) guide the analysis of word-formation processes such as clipping (*Ana*, *Mia*), blending (*drunkorexia*), and compounding (*thinspo*), emphasizing the linguistic creativity that supports these forms.

Methodologically, the study follows a corpus-informed discourse approach (Biber et al., 1998; McEnery & Hardie, 2012), combining frequency observation with close qualitative reading. Euphemisms are examined in their natural digital contexts to uncover how users construct, reproduce, and contest community norms through language.

Findings reveal that many expressions serve to create intimacy and shared identity within pro-ED communities, while others emerge from outsider discourse as mockery or moral distancing. Euphemism thus becomes a site of negotiation: between concealment and exposure, belonging and rejection, empathy and stigma. Ultimately, the research argues that euphemistic creativity in ED discourse provides insight into how language mediates social attitudes toward mental illness, revealing the subtle ways linguistic play can both connect and harm.

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Creativity in Politeness Expressions: Finding a New Attitude toward the Self

Akiko Nagano (University of Shizuoka, Japan)

Masaharu Shimada (University of Tsukuba, Japan)

The use of politeness plays a vital role in maintaining relationships with others (Brown & Levinson 1987). The prefixed noun *zi-ai* ‘self-love’ consists of reflexive prefix *zi-* ‘self-’ and noun *ai* ‘love.’ In mainstream Japanese, it is always used for politeness, constituting part of a ritualistic expression directed toward others:

(1) *go zi-ai nasatte kudasai*

HON self-love do.HON.CVB please

‘Please take care of yourself (honorific).’

However, it is beginning to occur in the self-directed *go...suru* construction:

(2) *go zi-ai suru hōhō*

HON self-love do method

‘how to take care of yourself (honorific)’

In (2), the speaker’s politeness strategy goes toward themselves, an interpretation that compositionally arises from the interaction between the reflexivity marked by *zi-* ‘self’ and the plain form of the light verb *suru* ‘do.’ This is precisely why the *go...suru* construction is avoided in the mainstream language. Note that the verb after *zi-ai* in (1) is the honorific form of *suru* ‘do,’ which ensures that “self-love” is linked to the listener.

As a further observation, the part [*go zi-ai*] can be clipped off from (2) and participate in word-formation:

(3) *go zi-ai guzzu*

HON self-love goods

‘goods for taking care of yourself (honorific)’

Nominal compounds such as (3) demand an explanation because *go zi-ai* inside has the same self-directed interpretation as (2) has. How is it possible, without the plain form *suru*?



Couched in Körtvélyessy et al.'s (2022) framework, this paper argues that novel constructions such as (2) and (3) are creative expressions that have an original value in linguistic communities where directing politeness toward oneself has long been regarded as a linguistic taboo. It is possible that the taboo-breaking forms have a huge psychological liberation effect, as if announcing the arrival of a new society or culture where the self is linguistically treated as equally and as carefully as others.

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Intentional and Unintentional Blends from a Creativity Perspective

Lina Inčiuraitė-Noreikienė (Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania)
Daiva Murmulaitytė (Institute of the Lithuanian Language, Lithuania)

This pilot study examines how speakers creatively invent new forms through blending. It is widely acknowledged that blends are new words coined by merging parts of existing words (e.g., *feisbučkis* ‘a virtual kiss on social networks’ < *feisbukas* ‘Facebook’ + *bučkis* ‘kiss’) or one complete word and part of another (e.g., *miaujiena* ‘news related to cats and their care’ < *miau* ‘meow’ + *naujiena* ‘news’, DLN) (cf. Mattiello 2013: 111). In Lithuanian, the phenomenon of blending has received some attention (cf. Brazaitytė 2025; Nemickienė & Navickaitė 2023; Aleksaitė 2021; Murmulaitytė 2018; Miliūnaitė 2014). While earlier research has focused mainly on structural aspects, this pilot study investigates indigenous blends in the Database of Lithuanian Neologisms (DLN) from the perspective of creative word formation. According to Ronneberger-Sibold (2012: 116), creative word formation does not only mean inventing completely new words that are not based on existing linguistic elements but also includes all processes that produce new lexemes outside the rules of regular word formation. The study conducts a qualitative analysis of the data, classifying the blends and identifying patterns that reflect speakers’ creative strategies. By investigating these formations, the research contributes to broader discussions of linguistic creativity, highlighting the expressive potential of creative word formation.

Blends are seen as instances of creative word formation. They can be based on native words (*čiulbingala* ‘singing nightingale’ < *čiulbėti* ‘sing’ + *lakštingala* ‘nightingale’), borrowed words (*tekstoranas* ‘a blog designed to introduce readers to the work of



professional kitchens and the food they prepare’ < *tekstas* ‘text’ + *restoranas* ‘restaurant’) and the source words may be mixed in their origin (*spurgeris* ‘a snack – a hybrid of a doughnut and a sandwich (burger)’ < *spurga* ‘doughnut’ + *burgeris* ‘burger’, *taufis* ‘a selfie created not for oneself but “for you”’ < *tau* ‘for you’ + *selfis* ‘selfie’). Some blends in Lithuanian are translated from other languages. An interesting case is *fantazariumas* ‘a virtual reality attraction allowing users to experience extraordinary sensations’ (e.g., oceans, mountains, or outer space), which emerged through the replacement of one international component with another (cf. Eng. *The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus*, Lith. *Daktaro Parnaso fantazariumas*, Rus. *Воображариум доктора Парнаса*).

In studying these blends, it is useful to distinguish between intentional and unintentional formations. Intentional blends are deliberately created to fulfil specific communicative or expressive functions and are usually contextually motivated. Conversely, unintentional blends, also referred to as speech-error blends, arise from production errors rather than deliberate coinage (cf. Gries 2004) and are typically occasional. Assigning a blend unambiguously to one of these categories sometimes requires examining the creator’s documented motivation. For example, the blend *batakovė* ‘an attachable boot shaft’ < *batas* ‘boot’ + *rankovė* ‘sleeve’ was coined in 2018 by an employee of the Lithuanian brand Kerė, to name a product designed for the cold season. In this case, the blend counts as creative, being both novel and meaningful. Novelty requires originality, not merely a predictable extension of existing patterns, while meaningfulness ensures that the blend serves a communicative function, is understandable and is valued by speakers rather than being random nonsense (cf. Ahmed & Feist, 2021: 2). In line with these criteria, the DLN contains several intentionally created yet opaque blends, such as *saugomija* ‘protected area’ < *saugoma teritorija*. In contrast, speech-error blends arise accidentally from “slips” of the tongue or hand and fall outside deliberate or communicatively motivated creativity, e.g., *sriubokėliai* < *burokėliai* (*sriuba*) ‘beetroot soup’. Intentional blends, however, are deliberately made, typically occur in clearly defined contexts and demonstrate creative use of language. By identifying their source words, researchers can study the structure and patterns of contemporary Lithuanian blending more systematically.

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S7.- The English Verb: Driving Syntax, Shaping Meaning and Framing Thought

Verbs are traditionally seen as the backbone of sentence structure, with their semantic requirements establishing syntactic relations between arguments. However, this fundamental role extends beyond clause-level relations, reaching into discourse, giving rise to various implicatures and shaping idiomatic use.

The proposed seminar welcomes contributions that explore the multifaceted nature of the English verb from a variety of linguistic perspectives. We encourage submissions covering topics related to English verbs, including but not limited to:

- **The verb as a structural link:** How verbs govern sentence structure, connect arguments, and shape syntactic configurations across languages.
- **Discourse and pragmatic perspectives:** How verbs structure discourse and trigger inferences and implicatures.
- **Verb semantics:** How verbs are analysed in semantics, for example in relation to grammatical (e.g., tense, aspect, modality) and lexical categories (e.g., meaning extensions).



- **Verbs as conceptual/cognitive tools:** How metaphor and other figurative language phenomena emerge from verbal structures.
- **Verbs as multimodal triggers:** How verbs align with the use of multimodal expressions (gestures, facial expressions, etc.) or how their meaning is expressed visually (e.g., in cartoons).
- **Verbs as pivotal elements in language acquisition:** How verbs may contribute to the acquisition of structural patterns and their meaning in both L1 and L2.
- **Cross-linguistic and typological perspectives:** How English and other languages categorize and structure verbs.

The seminar accepts theoretical and empirical studies that explore the properties of English verbs from multiple perspectives. Contributions from different linguistic frameworks such as, but not limited to, generative grammar, cognitive linguistics, functional approaches, construction grammar, corpus linguistics and (critical) discourse analysis are warmly welcome.

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Session #1

2 September, 9:00–11:00

Structural Influences of Metaphorical Verb Choices on the Conceptualization and Discourse of Energy in Physics

Peter Hull (Max Planck Institute for the Science of Light & Friedrich-Alexander University of Erlangen-Nürnberg, Germany)

Energy is a fundamental quantity encountered throughout modern physics and the subject of a rich diversity of conceptual metaphors which allow us to understand and communicate about it in terms of more familiar or relatable phenomena. Many such metaphors are encoded by verbs, as when energy *flows* like a liquid substance, is *converted* like a financial currency or is *liberated* like a human being. They are also highly productive, appearing across a wide range of science communication, learning and research contexts.



However, several aspects of communication via metaphor, such as the directedness of metaphorical mappings and the diversity of metaphorical interpretation, can influence how physical phenomena are understood, frame the discourse of and about physics, and thereby pose challenges in a field whose explicit goal is usually the objective and unambiguous interpretation of theory and experiment. Here, three such aspects of metaphorical verb use are explained and discussed in relation to straightforward examples accessible without specialist training in physics. The results of a series of in-depth interviews and a large-scale cross-linguistic (English and German) survey of active physicists are then used to (1) demonstrate that these aspects are evident in physicists' use of both languages and (2) raise discussion of pertinent distinctions in how they emerge in each. An increased understanding of this topic is highly relevant to conducting, teaching and learning both the physics of energy and the languages used to communicate it in the multilingual contexts found at many international universities and research institutes.

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Manifestation of Animal-to-Human Mappings: Gender in Human Agents with Verbs of Animal Movement and Sound Emission

Andrej Stopar (University of Ljubljana, Slovenia)
Gašper Ilc (University of Ljubljana, Slovenia)

Employing corpus-based methodology and drawing on data from English Web 2020 (enTenTen20), the study focuses on movement and sound emission verbs that prototypically select animal agents (e.g., *prowl*, *scamper*, *cluck*, *coo*). The analysis examines both the



gender distribution of human subjects co-occurring with these verbs and their broader semantic preferences and associations in line with current research in lexicology (Sinclair 1996, 2004; Stubbs 2001, 2007; Partington 2004; Hoey 2005). Taking these insights as a point of departure, the study then examines the role of metaphor as a cognitive basis for selectional preferences, in particular whether conceptual metaphors such as women are (small) furry animals, women are birds, and men are large furry animals (Lakoff & Johnson 1980; Kövecses 2005; Vasung 2020) are reflected in the selection of verbs associated with male and female human agents.

The results reveal that, by and large, there is little or no gender-based selectional preference when verbs foreground the mere physical characteristics of movement or sound emission. Nevertheless, in cases where agents exhibit or are perceived as exhibiting particular animal movements or sounds, some gender preferences can be observed, which align with entrenched metaphorical mappings, whereby such behaviours are interpreted in terms of gender roles, pointing to the persistence of gender stereotyping and sexualisation in contemporary language use (Caldas-Coulthard & Moon 2010; Lewis & Lupyan 2020; Caliskan et al. 2022). In addition, the analysis has revealed a cline from cases where movement or sound emission is expressed (e.g., *to strut across the stage*) to cases where the verbs acquire secondary meanings with a possible residual link to the original sense (e.g., *to strut (i.e. to show off) one's masculinity*) and eventually enter set expressions (e.g., *to strut one's stuff*). In the latter cases, the animal-to-human mappings are less pronounced and consequently more gender-neutral. Overall, the findings to some extent support the influence of animal-based conceptual metaphors on verb selection.

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The Semantics of Creative Verb Substitution in Idioms: A Contrastive Analysis of English, Japanese, and Korean

Carey Benom (Seinan Gakuin University, Japan)

Youngmin Oh (Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University, Japan)

This study investigates creative verb substitution in idioms in English, Japanese, and Korean, observing how such substitutions reshape canonical idiom semantics. Using an inductive, data-driven approach, we analyze 10,000+ manually verified variants extracted from TenTen corpora. Our analysis identifies four substitution types driving an idiom's conceptual restructuring:

1. **Anchored Substitutions** shift register, nuance, or referential specificity, retaining event construal, frame, and metaphor (e.g. *put the cart before the horse* → *harness the cart before the horse*).
2. **Construal-shifting Substitutions** modify internal conceptualization, such as force dynamics or dynamicity, without altering the metaphor or frame (e.g. → *throw the cart before the horse*; see Croft and Cruse 2004).
3. **Frame-restructuring Substitutions** alter causal alignment and participant configuration, e.g. shifting from a dynamic causative to a stative frame (e.g. → *the cart is before the horse*; see Fillmore 1982). Such shifts necessarily entail a change in perspective, and therefore also change construal.
4. **Metaphor-restructuring Substitutions** reconfigure source-target mappings or introduce new metaphors (e.g. → *argue the cart before the horse*; see Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 1999).

While all types appear in all three languages, preliminary contrastive results suggest that English exhibits high tolerance for verb substitution and semantic restructuring. Conversely, Japanese and Korean idioms favor stability, maintaining socially anchored



schemas. This difference is potentially attributable to the intersection of morphosyntactic typology—where the agglutinative complexity of Japanese and Korean verbs restricts ‚slot‘ productivity—and sociopragmatic orientation, where high-context communication favors the preservation of established linguistic schemas over one-off creative uses. We conclude that idiomatic „fixedness“ is an idiom-specific and context-dependent linguistic trait, but also that it is constrained by culturally distinct tolerances for variation. Overall, the substitution of verbs serves as a powerful tool for balancing creative reconceptualization with interpretability within constructional and cultural constraints.

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Non-canonical Syntax-Semantics Alignment in Setting-Subject Constructions? The Case of *See* in English

Aurélien Durou (CELISO, Bordeaux Montaigne University, France)

Christelle Lacassain (CELISO, Sorbonne University, France)

Perception verbs typically denote processes grounded in human experience. In prototypical clauses (e.g. *I saw you at the Stonewall*), such verbs frequently select a human grammatical subject, thereby construing the event from the perceiver's viewpoint.

In English, however, *see* and *witness* display a distinctive property: in what Langacker (1991) terms “setting-subject constructions”, they license inanimate subjects denoting spatial or temporal settings – *the countryside* in *The countryside saw nearly 90,000 uprisings last year* or *the 1920s* in *The 1920s saw the arrival of automobiles* – respectively.

This study investigates syntax-semantics alignment in setting-subject constructions with *see*, one of the two ‘perception’ verbs attested in this pattern, on the basis of corpus data. In these constructions, the alignment between syntactic function and semantic role is non-prototypical: the subject referent is neither an agent nor an experiencer, but a spatial or temporal frame. Moreover,



the construction abstracts away from the expression of a concrete perceptual experience anchored in a human perceiver, which is otherwise central to the lexical semantics of perception verbs.

A comparison between prototypical and non-prototypical configurations shows that, although setting-subject constructions depart from canonical agent-subject mappings, they remain semantically motivated. Locative or temporal subjects function as conceptual frames providing an initial point of access to the event, allowing for a global, situated construal rather than an experiencer-based one. This shift entails a redistribution of semantic roles and yields a more abstract verbal meaning: instead of a perceptual event, the construction profiles a stative process cognitively apprehended while maintaining continuity with prototypical uses.

Drawing on cognitive and functional approaches, the analysis argues that these constructions involve processes of abstraction and subjectification, encoding knowledge rather than perception – corresponding to what Talmy (2000) characterises as a “ceptive experience”. Finally, it is shown that setting-subject constructions obey discourse-pragmatic factors such as topicalisation, salience displacement and extended animacy hierarchy, rather than arbitrary syntactic alternations.

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Session #2

2 September, 15:00–17:00

“Is there something more going on than ongoingness?” Expanding the Semantic Profile of the English Progressive Construction

Margot Vancauwenbergh (University of Antwerp, Belgium)

In English grammars, the progressive construction is usually assigned one core meaning of ongoingness/duration (e.g. Bertinetto 2000). However, researchers have also noticed uses of [BE V-ing] which do not fully align with these aspectual semantics (e.g. Killie 2004; De Wit et al. 2020). An example is (1), from the Europarl corpus (Koehn 2005):

(1) this House is guilty of gross hypocrisy. What **were** MEPs **saying** about sustainable transport, please? Because [...] MEPs ignore it! (EP 08-03-10-020_148)

The main function of the progressive here does not seem to be the expression of (past) ongoingness. Rather, as I will argue, the progressive pulls the event into focus and further highlights that it runs counter to what the speaker deems proper or expected on the basis of current circumstances. These uses, which I call *unconventional* uses, are characterized by high degrees of emotional involvement of the speaker, intensification effects, and linguistically as well as extralinguistically striking contexts.

In traditional grammars, these uses are treated as pragmatic extensions of the core aspectual meaning, with the meaning of unconventionality arising solely through the construction's particular use in context. I argue, however, that the link between the progressive and unconventionality is much more systematic and stable, and that a unified semantic analysis for the progressive can be found which encompasses both its aspectual functions and those going beyond ongoingness. On the basis of a corpus sample of 200 interchangeable, minimally different pairings of progressives and non-progressives, I prove that the unconventionality potential of the English progressive is indeed significantly higher than that of its simple counterpart. A brief excursion to corpus data from other languages shows that English is not an isolated case. A more in-depth qualitative analysis of the data as well as a



study of existing semantic analyses of the construction (e.g. Goldsmith & Woisetschlaeger 1982; Langacker 2008) further helps to posit an expanded, not-solely-aspectual, semantic profile for the progressive.

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On the Acquisition of Adjectival Resultatives

Olga Borik (National University of Distance Education, Spain)

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The focus of this paper is on one specific construction: adjectival resultatives (henceforth ARs), attested in English (1a) but not in Spanish (1b):

(1) a. John *burnt the wood black*.

b. *Roberto *rompió la caja abierta*.

Roberto broke_{3SG.PAST} the box_{FEM.SG} open_{FEM.SG}

Intended: “Roberto broke the box open.”

There are theoretical claims (see Mateu & Rigau 2010; Folli and Harley 2020; also see Bruening 2018 for an overview) that ARs, together with verb particle, caused motion and double object constructions strongly correlate with Talmy’s (1985) distinction



between satellite-framed and verb-framed languages, based on the co-occurrence of manner verbs like *dance* and prepositional phrases denoting paths, like *into the hall*, into complex constructions like *dance into the hall*. If this is true, then the difference between English and Spanish in the availability of AR is rooted in the lexical properties of the motion verbs: according to Talmy's generalization, English verbs do not lexicalize the *path*-component, but Spanish verbs do (e.g., *subir* and *bajar* encode directionality of movement).

On the practical side, the AR constructions are highly characteristic of idiomatic English and are expected to be used by fairly advanced learners (levels B2–C2). However, ARs are not included in official curricula of English teaching programs, so no instructions are given to learners concerning the correct use and interpretation of this construction. We present an experimental investigation of the comprehension of the AR construction exemplified in (1a) by adult Spanish speakers learning English as an L2, comparing and contrasting it with the control group of English L1 speakers. Preliminary results indicate that simple lexical knowledge of a verb is not enough for L2 speakers to understand ARs, hence we conclude that structural differences play an important role in the acquisition of ARs by Spanish speakers.

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A Boy's Journey: Effects of Explicit and Implicit Instruction on Motion Event Reconceptualization in Advanced L2 English

Consuelo Pérez (Complutense University of Madrid, Spain)

This is a practitioner's study into how advanced learners of English can be instructed to reconceptualize conflated manner of motion in the L2. The form in question is conflated multi-segmental open path as understood by Talmy (2000), defined as an event where a figure moves from one point to different points in a motion event (Slobin, 1996; Talmy, 2000). The study rests on the cognitive typological framework with a special focus on SLA, language teaching and explicit vs. implicit remote instruction.



A significant amount of research shows that many learners do not acquire the lexicalization patterns for motion nor reconceptualized spatial relations in English. The reasons— in agreement with the current literature—are due to attentional and conceptual factors which show how the original mapping of semantic structures onto surface has consequences on emerging patterns of lexicalization and the narrative style of a second language (Slobin 1997; Jarvis, S. & Pavlenko, A. 2008; Treffers-Daller & Tidball, 2015; Pérez Benítez C. 2024). This study aimed to change this at the classroom level.

This transversal, semi-qualitative study used a fully digital methodological design and data collection process. It followed 72 students over a three-month period, from November 2023 to January 2024, and examined learners' acquisition of the conceptual notion of conflated manner of motion in the L2. The participants completed one of two remotely administered instructional sessions: an implicit condition or an explicit condition.

The analyses performed on the corpus pre-sessions showed uncannily similar results, establishing a stable baseline. Supported by current evidence on typological differences, the explicit instruction group outperformed the implicit group in most variables. By shedding light on conceptual differences between languages, research of this kind opens doors to other points of inquiry and discovery. Beyond grammar, second language learners must grasp abstract concepts like motion, event sequencing, focus, and how languages encode these ideas.

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S8.- Metaphor and Metonymy in Art, Music, Film, and Beyond

Metaphor and metonymy are fundamental cognitive mechanisms that shape meaning across languages, cultures, and diverse modes of expression. While their significance in verbal communication has been extensively analyzed, their role in non-verbal and multimodal discourse—including visual arts, music, film, digital media, and performance—remains a fertile ground for investigation. These cognitive processes operate beyond language, guiding perception and interpretation in ways that transcend traditional semiotic boundaries. This seminar aims to explore how metaphor and metonymy function as meaning-making devices within a variety of artistic and cultural contexts, ranging from classical and contemporary painting to cinematic storytelling, musical composition, and multimedia installations.

We invite scholars working within cognitive linguistics, semiotics, discourse analysis, media studies, and other relevant disciplines to examine the intricate ways in which metaphor and metonymy interact with sensory perception, cultural context, and audience reception in multimodal environments. Key questions include: How do visual and auditory metaphors shape our understanding of artistic works? In what ways do metonymic associations establish coherence in non-verbal narratives? How do these cognitive devices adapt across different media and genres? And how can cross-disciplinary approaches deepen our understanding of creativity and meaning construction? The seminar welcomes theoretical models, empirical case studies, and interdisciplinary research that bridge linguistic analysis with artistic practices. Potential topics may cover visual metaphor in painting and photography, musical metonymy in composition and performance, cinematic tropes driven by metaphorical and metonymic structures, and the interplay of these cognitive devices in digital and hybrid media. By bringing together researchers from diverse backgrounds, this seminar seeks to foster a dynamic exchange on the cross-domain applications of metaphor and metonymy. It aims to illuminate their cognitive



underpinnings and demonstrate their pivotal role in shaping human creativity, aesthetic experience, and communicative practices across artistic and cultural landscapes.

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Session #1: Metaphor & Metonymy in Visual Arts I: Painting and Sculpture

2 September, 9:00–11:00

A Cognitive-Semiotic Analysis of Picasso's *Guernica* (1937)

Robert Kiełtyka (University of Rzeszów, Poland)

Pablo Picasso's *Guernica* (1937) is one of the most well-known visual representations of war and civilian suffering in modern art. The painting has been widely discussed from art-historical, political, and philosophical perspectives (e.g. Chipp 1988; Clark 1997). However, it has rarely been analysed using a systematic cognitive-semiotic approach that explains how meaning is created through visual perception, cultural knowledge, inference, and conceptual structure. This paper aims to address this gap by applying the six-space model of meaning construction proposed by Brandt and Brandt (2005) to the interpretation of *Guernica*.

The analysis treats *Guernica* as a form of multimodal visual discourse in which meaning is distributed across six semiotic spaces: base, reference, presentation, virtual, relevance, and meaning space. The base and presentation spaces account for the immediate



visual impact of the painting, such as fragmented bodies, distorted faces, and the black-and-white colour scheme, which function as embodied and emotional cues (see Arnheim 1969). The reference space activates shared historical and cultural knowledge related to the Spanish Civil War, the bombing of Guernica, and Spanish cultural symbolism. The virtual space includes elements that are not shown directly but are inferred by the viewer, such as the bombing itself, the attackers, and the continuation of violence beyond the depicted scene. In the relevance space, these elements are organised into an evaluative perspective that highlights civilian suffering, injustice, and moral condemnation.

In the meaning space, more abstract conceptual patterns emerge, including metaphors such as WAR IS BODILY DESTRUCTION and SUFFERING IS FRAGMENTATION, which are consistent with insights from Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson 1980). The paper also focuses on the interaction between metonymy and metaphor, drawing on Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez & Galera Masegosa's (2014) concept of metaphonymy, according to which metonymic cues based on bodily experience guide and constrain metaphorical interpretation. Overall, the analysis shows that the six-space model offers a clear and effective framework for understanding *Guernica* as a cognitively and emotionally structured representation of war and collective trauma.

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Scenes of Wisdom Carved In Wood: A Cognitive Linguistic Perspective on Medieval English Proverbs in Misericords

Bożena Kochman-Haładyj (University of Rzeszów, Poland)

Marcin Kudła (University of Rzeszów, Poland)

Proverbs, as concise, conventionalized statements of folk wisdom, have long moved beyond purely oral and literary media to play a visible role in the visual arts. According to Mieder (2008: 5; 251–253), proverbs function as “verbal pictures” which lend



themselves to visual representation, making them ideal subjects for painters, printmakers, and illustrators who wish to comment on human behaviour and social norms. This intersection between proverb and image reveals the proverb's inherent pictorial potential – its ability to condense complex social wisdom into a scene that is both recognizable and didactic. Through visual translation, proverbial language acquires new layers of meaning and immediacy, allowing moral insight to be experienced not only through words but also through the act of looking.

A special place among the visual media into which proverbs found their way is occupied by foldable seats installed in choir stalls of Western European churches during the Middle Ages and early Renaissance (Kraus and Kraus 1975). On the underside of the seats were misericords, or carved ledges that allowed monks and clerics to support their bodies during long hours of prayer when the seats were turned up. The carvings covered a staggering variety of themes, ranging from biblical and mythical stories, to romances and folk wisdom, to depictions of nature and everyday life (Laird 1986).

The aim of the present paper is to compare the verbal and visual instantiations of English medieval and early modern proverbs. The data consist of twelve proverbs illustrated in fifty-one quotes recorded between the 12th and 16th centuries and in eighteen misericords in English, Dutch and French churches executed between the 14th and 16th centuries. Following Lemghari (2019: 41), we assume that a proverb involves a two-level mapping, consisting of the metonymy specific for generic and the level-form metaphor (cf. Radden and Kövecses 1999, Panther and Thornburg 1999, Kochman-Haładaj and Kiełtyka 2023). The analysis has shown that while all examples share the above patterns, each follows additional metonymies and/or metaphors. What is more, there are also cases where a visual or verbal manifestation of a proverb contains mappings absent from the other medium.

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The Role of Visual Metonymy in Compressing (Micro-)Events and Temporal Planes in Painting and Sculpture: Exemplified on Annunciation Scenes

Mario Brdar (University of Osijek, Croatia)

Rita Brdar-Szabó (Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary)

One of the most intriguing subgenres of Annunciation depictions is the so-called Pregnant Virgin, a type of statue popular in medieval Spain, particularly in Galicia, portraying Mary in an advanced stage of pregnancy at the very moment of the annunciation, which is, following the everyday logic, an anachronism. Because different events are presented simultaneously, an analysis in terms of conceptual blending may seem a natural choice (cf. Coulson and Oakley 2003). We argue, however, that this conspicuous, but by far not the only form of synoptic perspective in this genre, can be described in accordance with Occam's razor, i.e., in much simpler terms, by means of interaction of hierarchically linked metonymies, while still being able to maintain that different perspectives in this type of depictions are ultimately intended to convey the message of global significance and universality. Different micro-events are all referred to in an indirect way by means of individual metonymies (sash or belt above Mary's waist, or the position of one of her hands holding her side, while the other hand is raised in response to the Archangel Gabriel, etc.). A micro-event evoked visually in this way, as a part of a complex event (or a scenario), can metonymically evoke the whole complex event (SUB-EVENT FOR WHOLE EVENT, Brdar 2007; Panther and Thornburg 2026).

The visual compression of different temporal planes in some other cases may, however, require an analysis in terms of conceptual blending, but again it is facilitated by metonymies, as when, for example, in some paintings two books can be seen close to Mary at the moment of annunciation, one of them the Old Testament, and the other the New Testament (cf. Brdar-Szabó and Brdar 2023), or when she is painted within a church-like building whose two parts exhibit Romanesque and Gothic traits.

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The Transcontextuality of Metaphor and Metonymy in Fine Arts Practices and Visual Poetics

Natali Rajchinovska-Pavleska (Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, Republic of North Macedonia)

Analyzing the contexts of metaphor's application in the fine/visual arts, this paper explores its essential properties through the applicability of linguistic and artistic theories. Drawing on some of the most significant hypotheses addressing the notion, this paper anticipates the hypothesis that metaphor is a *semiotic key*, a transcontextual means of constructing and transmitting open meaning. The research is based on the analysis of metaphor as a trope of similarity and a trope of deviation (Ricoeur, 2004; Henle, 1958), as a foreign body, as an analogy (Aristotle, 1898; Ricoeur, 2004), as a product of thought (Feinstein, 1998), as a root-metaphor (Langer, 1957), as a symbol (Panofsky, 1935), as a method and translation (Warburg, 1999; Johnson, 2012). The aspects of application highlight its range of functions: of replacement, displacement and extension (Ricoeur, 2004), ability to change meaning (Greimas and Courtés, 1982), transaction between contexts (Richards, 1965), metaphorical shift (Ogden and Richards, 1989), analogical transfer of signs (Benveniste, 1971; Gadamer, 2004), rhetorical activity, leap, etymological transfer, displacement (Eco, 1984), change (Goodman, 1968), formation of meanings (Feinstein, 1998), act of signifying and of interpretation (Grassi, 1980). Considered through all these insights and through the context of movement and transposition with generic potential (Lawler, 1954; Ricoeur, 2004), through the context of discourse (Quintilian, 1876), the process of metaphorization is located in a multitude of examples from the fine arts: Greek art (Minoan, Mycenaean, Classical and Hellenistic), Massys, Botticelli, Rembrandt, Dürer, Bruegel, Caravaggio, Goya, Homer, Friedrich, Van Gogh, Duchamp, Picabia, Höch and Haussmann, Gros, Dix, Hofer, Arp, Ernst, Picasso, Kandinsky, Klein, Warhol, Baldessari, Gillick and others.

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Session #2: Metaphor & Metonymy in Visual Arts II: Painting, Narrative, and Cartoons

2 September, 15:00–17:00



Interpreting Death Through a Cognitive Lens: A Case Study of Jacek Malczewski's Paintings

Agnieszka Grząsko (University of Rzeszów, Poland)

From the early 1890s onward, Jacek Malczewski's artistic output reveals a marked intensification of imagery connected with the problem of death. This recurring thematic focus is so pronounced that it can be described not merely as an episodic interest, but as a sustained fascination that significantly shapes the symbolic and formal structure of his works. Paintings created during this period, such as *Thanatos I* (1898), *Thanatos* (1898–1899), and *Death* (*Śmierć*, 1902), exemplify the central position that death occupies in Malczewski's imagination. These works do not treat death as a purely biological or terminal event; instead, they present it as a complex, multilayered phenomenon embedded in mythological, psychological, and cultural meanings.

The present article aims to analyze this cluster of death-related representations through the lens of cognitive methodology, with particular emphasis on the concepts of metaphor (Kövecses 2000; 2002; 2005; 2010; 2015; 2017) and metonymy (Littlemore 2015) as they function in visual art. Cognitive approaches, originally developed within linguistics, have increasingly been applied to the interpretation of images, allowing scholars to investigate how abstract concepts, such as death, transience, or the boundary between life and the afterlife, are structured and made intelligible through embodied experience and conceptual mapping. By adopting this perspective, the article seeks to move beyond purely iconographic or stylistic interpretations and to explore how Malczewski's paintings engage viewers at the level of perception, cognition, and conceptual understanding.

Within this framework, metaphor is understood as a cognitive mechanism that enables the comprehension of an abstract or elusive domain (death) in terms of more concrete, experientially grounded domains, such as sleep, journey, or personified figures like Thanatos. Metonymy, in turn, operates through relations of contiguity, allowing particular attributes, gestures, or objects within the paintings to stand for broader conceptual structures associated with dying, loss, or the passage of time. The article examines how these two mechanisms interact in Malczewski's works, often reinforcing one another to produce dense and ambiguous meanings. For instance, the repeated figure of Thanatos functions not only as a mythological personification (metaphor) but also as a metonymic condensation of cultural narratives about death, fate, and inevitability.

By focusing on selected works from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the study demonstrates that Malczewski's fascination with death is not morbid in a simplistic sense, but deeply reflective and structurally complex. His paintings invite viewers to negotiate between sensual visual experience and abstract reflection, using cognitive mechanisms that are both



culturally conditioned and rooted in universal bodily experience. The application of cognitive methodology thus provides new insights into Malczewski's art, revealing how metaphor and metonymy contribute to the construction of meaning and to the enduring expressive power of his representations of death.

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Metonymy and Metaphor in Painting Narrative

Marek Hetmański (Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Poland)

In this paper, I start from (1) Arnheim's (1969) thesis that metaphor in a painting arises in the viewer's field of perception through the juxtaposition of similarities and differences between shapes or colours, and (2) Jakobson's (1971) opinion that Cubism is metonymic, while Surrealism is metaphorical. I intend to apply both theses in the analysis of paintings by El Greco and Picasso exhibited at the Prado Museum in 2023. The figures of saints and people playing instruments are shown in symbolic roles thanks to both metonymic and metaphorical comparisons and juxtapositions, which confirms the theses of Arnheim and Jakobson.

The main issue of the paper will nevertheless be the question of whether metonymic and metaphorical means of expression



are capable of depicting not only static scenes, but also dynamic temporal events that are the subject of narrative figurative paintings. Is it possible to create a visual narrative in which the artist not only metaphorically depicts abstract ideas, but also 'visually narrates' an event and action along with dynamics, the passage of time, developing, and decay? To answer this question, I will present the rules for creating metonymic and metaphorical images developed by René Magritte in Surrealism (Dubnik 1980, Gablik 1985). I will also refer to the latest research on visual metaphors (Barcelona 2000, Kövecses 2013, Bolognesi 2019, O'Dowd 2025), which, however, take little account of the narrative form of painting. I will show that it is possible to reconstruct a specific „visual alphabet” enabling the characterisation of narrative images from such different painters as Caravaggio, Rubens and Giorgione, as well as Dali and de Chirico. In conclusion, I intend to determine which of the methods of symbolic presentation of events (metonymic contiguity or metaphorical similarity) used in visual narratives is more fully applicable to depicting their general and universal content.

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Figuring Educational Pressure: Metaphor, Metonymy, and Image Schemas in U.S. Editorial Cartoons

Vladan Pavlović (University of Niš, Serbia)

The paper explores how metaphor, metonymy, and both metaphorical and non-metaphorical image schemas structure meaning in multimodal U.S. editorial education-related cartoons, specifically those addressing pressure exerted by contemporary U.S. political authorities on educational institutions and the institutions' responses to it. Although often positioned outside the domain of "high art," editorial cartoons constitute a compact and accessible multimodal form of visual art, typically supplemented by minimal verbal cues, and rely on the same cognitive principles – cross-domain mapping, metonymic highlighting, and schematic patterning – that structure meaning in painting, film, music, and other art forms (Forceville & Urios-Aparisi, 2009).

Drawing on a corpus of recent online editorial cartoons related to education, the paper shows how meaning is organized through recurring image-schematic patterns such as CONTAINMENT and FORCE (Johnson, 1987) (institutions construed as bounded entities under pressure or intrusion), SCALE (asymmetries of power and status rendered through relative size), VERTICALITY (hierarchical evaluations associated with authority), and BALANCE (institutional stability and normative order conceptualized through equilibrium and its disturbance) (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). The paper further examines how these schematic structures, which often remain underexplored in theoretical literature in the area, interact with established metaphorical patterns (e.g. EDUCATIONAL PRESSURE IS PHYSICAL FORCE) and with metonymic reductions in which individual characters stand for broader populations or institutional systems (Barcelona, 2000; Kövecses, 2020), producing compressed yet powerful socio-educational commentaries. The accompanying verbal elements, which appear as supporting rather than dominating components, function primarily to anchor, specify, or reinforce the figurative structures already activated by the visual domain.

By foregrounding the interaction of image schemas, metaphor, and metonymy in this applied artistic genre, the paper contributes to the aim of exploring how cognitive mechanisms of meaning construction operate in multimodal media beyond language.

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Figurative Framing Devices in Croatian Political Cartoons by Nik Titanik

Goran Milić (University of Osijek, Croatia)

A political cartoon functions to “provide, in one glance, an evaluation of a specific person or state of affairs in the world that is in the news at the moment of publication (Forceville 2024: 255), often walking a thin line between effectively conveying the critical point the cartoonist tries to make, and running the risk of misinterpretation by the audience (ibid.:260).

The present paper builds on expansive research on metaphor in political cartoon (e.g., El Refaie 2003; Đurović and Silaški 2016, Forceville and Van de Laar 2019; Zhang and Forceville 2020) by focusing on the selected work of political cartoonist Nikola Plečko/ Nik Titanik, the (self-dubbed) “chronicler of Croatian stupidity”, to further study the interplay of text and image in multimodal metaphors of the verbo-pictorial variety, found to involve their intricate interaction with metonymy and other meaning-making mechanisms. These are argued to steer the relevant source domain mappings and determine the strength or weakness of its “implicative complex” (Black 1979: 28) in achieving the comical/ critical effect, by figuratively *framing* an issue.

Following Forceville’s (2024) practical advice and desiderata in the analysis of metaphors in political cartoons, the corpus of (daily published) political cartoons analysed spans two months (December 2025- January 2026) whereby specific care was taken to distinguish internal affairs-related cartoons from those foreign-affair related (e.g. the Government (members’) political positioning with respect to pertinent affairs (e.g. the Russo-Ukrainian and Israeli- Palestinian conflict and Trump-related issues (e.g. the tariffs (‘war’), USA annexing Greenland) as methodological ‘spikes’ (Baker et al. 2008) of choice, all the while acknowledging the often intricate and inevitable interrelations of domestic and foreign political issues and protagonists in it. (Depicting) the latter, coupled with other context- specific visuals and accompanying text proved to function as powerful metonyms, indispensable in achieving the intended comical/ critical effect by “piggybacking” (Brdar and Brdar-Szabó 2022) across (the two) modalities by other metonymies and metaphors. Finally, Forceville’s (2024) plea for considering the role of peculiarities of the medium for the reception and interpretation was acknowledged by including and juxtaposing Titanik’s choice of cartoons published in their primary medium, the online edition of the Croatian tabloid *24 sata*, to his featured posts on his personal Instagram profile. The affordance of the author’s comments on Instagram posts was considered as a methodologically useful addition for the analysis of audience sentiment harvested from both the news site and Instagram comment sections.

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Session #3: Metaphor & Metonymy Across Media: Visual Culture, Opera, and Filmic Mediation

2 September, 17:30–19:30

The Winged Lion – Metaphor and Metonymy for Saint Mark and Venice as Reflected in Fine Arts and Opera

Alina Bottez (University of Bucharest, Romania)

This paper will trace the identification of the winged lion with the evangelist and show how the image of this animal became the metaphorical zoomorphic double of Saint Mark, conveying his symbolism and theological values through the monumental art and architecture of Venice, as well as in opera libretti with Venetian settings. In order to provide a historical evolution of this symbolic spiritual companionship, the paper will trace the origins of this metaphor to the Book of Ezekiel, the Book of Daniel 7, the Book of Revelation, and the writings of Saint Irenaeus, Epiphanius of Salamis, and Saint Jerome. The association of this symbol with Venice



originated in the legend of St. Mark, who paused on the shore of the lagoon to rest. The apocryphal story of the angel's salutation to St. Mark ("Pax tibi Marce, evangelista meus. Hic requiescet corpus tuum") was used by Doge Giustiniano Participazio to justify the theft of St. Mark's remains from his grave in Alexandria and their transportation to Venice.

From then on, this leonine metaphor came to express the political, religious, and economic power of Venice, functioning like a stamp, a banner, or an emblem for La Serenissima. Since the winged lion had come to be identified with St. Mark, and St. Mark had become the patron saint of Venice, its image started to function as a metonymy for the republic too, as testified by its heraldic presence on the banner: the simple visual image of the lion was equated with la Serenissima – sometimes only the lion's head or its paw on a Bible, or even the auditory image of the roar.

The religious valence of the saint *in forma lionis* came to dominate all official and triumphant hypostases of the republic. This metaphoric companionship will be analysed through samples from painting, sculpture, architectural decoration, and opera libretti. In an interdisciplinary hermeneutical approach, this paper will analyse the multiple layers of symbolism that the leonine metaphor of St. Mark the Evangelist has in the arts associated with Venice, conveying the political, religious, and economic power of the republic.

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When Harmful Meanings Hide: Verbal and Visual Metaphor and Metonymy Across Political Media and Visual Culture

Wojciech Wachowski (Kazimierz Wielki University, Poland)

Dehumanizing metaphors, in their verbal and visual dimensions, can profoundly reshape perception and moral evaluation. They may legitimize violence and, in some cases, help overcome the natural human aversion to killing. As Gregory Stanton, the founding president of Genocide Watch, points out, dehumanization constitutes a crucial stage in the progression toward



genocide. Historically, dehumanizing metaphors were often overt, framing targeted groups through unequivocally negative source domains such as disease, vermin, or dangerous animals (Musolff 2007; Armoudian 2020). In contemporary political media and visual culture, however, openly degrading metaphors and metonymies have become increasingly socially unacceptable and are therefore replaced with more veiled and insidious forms – forms that are not always easily detectable. As this analysis demonstrates, such camouflaged language can nevertheless be highly dangerous and exert significant persuasive force.

In this talk, I identify and discuss several recurrent cognitive strategies through which harmful meanings may be subtly communicated:

Whole-for-part metonymy, which zooms out and obscures otherwise offensive details;

1. Part-for-whole metonymy, which diverts attention by foregrounding a tangential or seemingly innocuous element of the frame;
2. Metonymy giving rise to metaphor, which requires greater cognitive effort to decode and thus more effectively conceals unpalatable content;
3. Metaphor employing an ambiguous source domain, which, alongside negative entailments, also activates neutral or positive ones. These positive entailments function as cognitive distractors, softening or obscuring dehumanizing implications (some examples I discuss are best accounted for within the framework of conceptual integration theory, as developed by Fauconnier (1997) and Fauconnier and Turner (2002).

These strategies are examined as systematic cognitive patterns rather than isolated cases. The analysis also addresses practices of reclaiming and reworking dehumanizing content, demonstrating how the mechanisms of metaphor and metonymy can be used to resist dehumanization and challenge harmful representations in political media and visual culture. The study draws on both visual and verbal material, including propaganda posters, murals, political graphics, as well as political speeches and press discourse.

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Negotiating the Metonymy–Metaphor Continuum in the Fictionalised Biopic: Strategies and Challenges in Audiovisual Translation

Mara Logaldo (Libera Università di Lingue e Comunicazione, Italy)

This paper examines the metonymy–metaphor continuum in cinematic language as a lens for analysing how figurative meaning is negotiated, transformed, or attenuated in audiovisual translation. While not neglecting theorisations that treat metonymy and metaphor as discrete categories (Prandi 2017), the motivated nature of cinematic signs is shown to anchor figurativity in metonymic contiguity, supporting the view that audiovisual meaning unfolds along a continuum rather than through rigid rhetorical distinctions (Mendoza 2000; Metz 1974; Radden 2000). In multimodal texts, metaphor emerges through linguistic, visual, and auditory cues, creating intermodal relationships that translators must handle under strict temporal and spatial constraints (Pedersen 2015). Translation choices shape communicative intentions and can position the target text at different points on the continuum, though they frequently produce a general “leftward shift” toward metonymy (Dickins 2005).

Drawing on theories of multimodal cohesion and operations of synthesis, the paper argues that metaphor in audiovisual media functions as a principle that organises heterogeneous domains into coherent narrative and cognitive patterns (Tseng 2013). Preserving this figurative architecture while avoiding intersemiotic tension or over-standardisation constitutes a central challenge in translation (Pedersen 2015; Toury 2012). The metonymy–metaphor continuum thus provides an effective framework for examining how figurative structures are constructed, perceived, and reencoded in translation practice.

Building on earlier research into how translation negotiates the continuum in documentary and poetry short film forms (Logaldo 2023), this study turns to the fictionalised biopic, a genre where narrative identity, historical referentiality, and expressive stylisation converge. The analysis focuses on *Blonde* (Dominik 2022), a biographical drama based on Joyce Carol Oates's novel (2000) and structured around metaphorical and metonymic construals of Marilyn Monroe's persona. From a cognitive and multimodal linguistic perspective, the case study investigates how translation strategies negotiate figurative cues in shaping biographical identity, highlighting the challenges posed by figurativity in a genre where audiences typically expect realism.



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Session #4: Metaphor & Metonymy in Film: Cinema, Documentary, and Screen Worlds

3 September, 9:30–11:30

Codependent Love as Painful Fusion: Metaphor, Metonymy, and Embodied Meaning in *Together* (2025)

Carla Manno (Parthenope University of Naples, Italy)

This paper analyses the film *Together* (Michael Shanks, 2025) from a cognitive and multimodal perspective, arguing that its representation of intimacy is organised by a dominant conceptual metaphor: [CODEPENDENT LOVE IS A PAINFUL FUSION]. Drawing on Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) account of metaphor as a cognitive mechanism shaping perception, thought, and experience, *Together* construes intimacy not as emotional closeness but as corporeal adhesion, collapsing relational and bodily boundaries.



The paper's theoretical framework builds on Forceville's and Urios-Aparisi's *Multimodal Metaphor* (2009), examining how metaphor identification depends on the interaction of semiotic modes and genre-specific expectations of body-horror cinema. In line with Irene Mittelberg's (2009) principle that *metonymy precedes metaphor* in embodied cognition, this analysis foregrounds a metonymic mechanism whereby BODY stands for RELATIONSHIP, enabling abstract relational dynamics to become materially and affectively perceptible.

Additionally, this paper seeks to conceptualise body-horror as a privileged site for multimodal metaphor, further drawing on Vivian Sobchack's *Carnal Thoughts* (2004) and Margrit Shildrick's *Embodying the Monster* (2002), which theorise cinematic meaning as arising through embodied sensation and bodily boundary instability. Finally, engaging with Eva Illouz's *Why Love Hurts* (2012), it situates the film's metaphor within a broader socio-affective economy of intimacy, in which emotional pain is normalised as a condition of attachment.

Against this theoretical horizon, the analysis focuses on three core scenes of *Together*, showing how the metaphor of painful fusion is not confined to verbal language but is redundantly cued visually and audially, across embodiment, gesture, sound, music, narrative progression, and affective intensity.

By integrating metaphor and metonymy within a multimodal, genre-sensitive framework, this study demonstrates how cognitive mechanisms shape aesthetic experience and emotional reception, highlighting their pivotal role in articulating the affective power of cinematic meaning-making.

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Chekhov's Gun and Loaded Meaning-Making: Metaphor and Metonymy across Cinematic Narrative Totalities

Ilhana Nowak (Independent Scholar)

Recent explorations of cognitive mechanisms in multimodal artistic realms see cinematography in particular as an exciting area of research (Littlemore, 2015; Ortiz, 2015; Coëgnarts, 2019; Szawerna & Zygmunt, 2023; Forceville, 2024), in which filmmaking devices such as editing, framing and camera movement broaden the mode-dependent possibilities of meaning construction.

The screenwriting principle of Chekhov's gun dictates relevance of all present narrative elements, and postulates that an element foregrounded at the beginning of a narrative should have significance later on; in cinema this rule is often used to connect an object to its intended relevance revealed (non)diegetically in the course of a film. From the point of view of CMT, it can be viewed as a conceptual operation not limited to a single scene or a short sequence of scenes, but spanning the cinematic narrative in its totality. An entire film thus becomes a playground for various cross-modal mappings in the meaning transferal between the filmmakers and their spectatorship. Several prominent examples of Chekhov's gun in multimodal figurativity are discussed, from *Alien* (1979), and *The Thing* (1982), to more contemporary genre offerings such as *The Cabin in the Woods* (2012), and the *Final Destination* franchise (2000-present). As examples of trans-cinematic narratives, *The Shining* (1980) and *Doctor Sleep* (2019), representing two parts of a single narrative arc, will be explored as well.

At the intersection of CMT and film studies, this paper aims to explore how metaphor and metonymy can be constructed with an interplay of modes on a narrative scale of a film or even two thematically connected cinematic units. At a granular level, it is interested in the correspondence of the narrative parentheses of setup and payoff to source and target domains, the structural persistence of cognitive devices and their reliance on cultural memory, and the boundaries of a unit of meaning in cinematography.

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Ecojustice in Ecological Documentary Film: Multimodal Metaphor and Metonymy in Planet Earth (2006/2023)

Shiyu Han (University of Glasgow, United Kingdom)

As environmental crises intensify, ecological documentaries have become crucial sites for shaping and communicating human-nature relationships. This research examines metaphor in BBC's Planet Earth I (2006) and Planet Earth III (2023), with a particular focus on how figurative meaning is realised both monomodally and through multimodal configurations. Rather than treating metaphor as a single rhetorical device, I investigate how it is distributed across narration, moving image, and sound design, and how it interacts with other rhetorical strategies, including personification, simile, idioms, and to structure viewers' ecological understanding. The analysis draws on Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) and Frame Semantics (Fillmore, 1982), and is supported by systematic source-target domain mapping evidence using the Metaphor Map of English (2015) at the University of Glasgow, supplemented by evidence from the British National Corpus (BNC).

The findings indicate that metaphor in Planet Earth series is patterned across modes, with narration primarily framing conceptual meanings, while image and sound provide experiential grounding and affective cues. For instance, the *sea angel* is visually framed through its wing-like form, while the accompanying light, shimmering sound design evokes radiance and weightlessness, together supporting a metaphorical naming strategy for unfamiliar marine life. Different organisms are represented using distinct multimodal metaphorical strategies depending on their perceived closeness or relevance to humans. Metonymy frequently co-occurs with metaphor to provide cues, such as animal appearance, relationship and spatial positioning. It helps to support coherence and guide interpretation. Together, these cross-modal patterns point to a form of creative meaning-making that is grounded in perception, yet shaped by the documentary's narrative and aesthetic choices. This research further demonstrates how figurative meaning-making can support ecological awareness, with examples such as monkeys in Planet Earth III adopting human-like strategies to obtain food, highlighting issues of ecological justice.

By examining the multimodal interactive dynamics of ecological metaphor in documentary film, this research contributes to understanding how metaphor and metonymy operate beyond language in contemporary media discourse.



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S9.- The Pew and Pulpit: Interdisciplinary Approaches to the Language of Late Medieval and Early Modern Preaching and Prayer

Religious texts represent a particularly abundant and influential discourse type in medieval and early modern English, because of the importance of religion in both public and personal life, because of the authority of religious texts such as the Bible and also because of their wide circulation (Kohnen 2014; Nevalainen 2014; Rütten 2012). Nevertheless, while religious texts feature prominently in historical corpora and have on the whole been intensively researched, sermons and prayers are relatively underresearched from a linguistic as opposed to a theological, historical or literary perspective (Kohnen 2012; 2014). Further, looking at the late medieval and early modern periods together can help us see developments in the long durée which are obscured by approaches focusing on individual periods. Manuscript sermons – preachers' own documents less subject to (self or external) editing pressures and often more oral in nature, especially where used as a basis for preaching to their congregations – and the prayers heard and spoken by worshippers themselves can also provide a more intimate insight into the use and features of English religious discourse. Researching these text types presents two major challenges, however: the fact that so many manuscript texts have not been edited let alone digitalised and the interdisciplinary knowledge and skills (e.g. linguistic, literary, theological, historical, palaeographic) required to fully research and understand them (Morrissey 1999). This seminar seeks to explore the language of late medieval and early English preaching and prayer from an interdisciplinary perspective in two broad senses: examining, on the one hand, different aspects of the language of preaching and prayer using different linguistic approaches (e.g. pragmatic, sociolinguistic, lexicological, stylistic, multilingualism/language contact) and, on the other, examining how cross-disciplinary approaches, combining theological, linguistic, literary, historical, palaeographic perspectives, can shed new light on these two central religious discourse types in a period of major linguistic, cultural and theological change.

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Session #1

3 September, 15:00–17:00

The Use of Latin in 17th-century Protestant Vernacular Sermons in Wales

Oliver Currie (University of Ljubljana, Slovenia)

Worship in the vernacular as opposed to Latin was a key tenet of the Protestant Reformation, yet Latin, nevertheless, remained a language of prestige not least because of its central role in secular and religious learning (Armstrong 2011; Reisner 2011; Knight 2015) and continued to have a presence in Anglican worship (Jones 1980). This article analyses the use (and absence) of Latin in a self-compiled corpus of vernacular sermons from Wales, comprising 30 English-language sermons in nine manuscripts by eight different preachers dating from the late 16th to the early 18th century. The manuscripts also contain (in most cases primarily)



Welsh-language sermons by the same preachers.

The sermons appear to have been used for oral preaching in parish churches in Wales, most likely to congregations without a knowledge of Latin (Currie Forthcoming). Nevertheless, both the English and Welsh-language sermons up to the mid-17th century show frequent instances of multilingual practices with Latin. While these mostly involve quotations from the Church Fathers and Neo-Latin theologians – as has been observed in later printed English sermons (Tuominen 2018) – there are also quotations from Classical authors, Latin proverbs as well as instances of the use of Latin words and phrases to explain or highlight a point, all of which attest to the enduring importance of Latin as a language of cultural reference.

The paper discusses the significance of an apparent diachronic change in the use of Latin – from more frequent in the earlier sermons to less frequent later in the 17th century – which may reflect a change in preaching style, a change in the educational profile of the preachers as well as linguistic democratisation, specifically an enhancement of the status of the vernacular languages, Welsh and English, as languages of religious learning and worship.

Manuscript sermon corpus

Manuscript	Preacher	English sermons	Dates preached
NLW 5264B	William Griffith	2	Late C16th/C17th
NLW MS 73A	William Williams	4	1629-1633
NLW MS 12205A	John Piers	2	Mid-17 th century
Cardiff MS 2.219	John Jones	3	1668-1683
Cwrtmawr MS 67B	Anon.	5	1642-1663
NLW MS 6728A	Anon.	5	1654-1685
NLW Bala MS I/769	Anon.	4	n/a
Bodewryd MS 89iA, 89viB	Robert Wynn	5	1675-1720

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Albeit and Notwithstanding: Concessive Innovation in Early Modern English

Cristina Blanco García (University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain)

Religious prose, often seen as conservative (cf. Barber 1997; Nevalainen 2006: 135; Kohnen, Rütten, and Marcoe 2011), nonetheless witnessed the emergence and persistence of new complex adverbial subordinators. This paper examines the role of two concessive subordinators, *albeit* and *notwithstanding*, in Early Modern English religious prose. Both subordinators emerged in Late Middle English or Early Modern English but had a relatively ephemeral history compared with the more entrenched concessives *though* and *although* (Kortmann 1997, Blanco-García 2017).

These subordinators illustrate a broader pattern of Latin-influenced innovation in Early Modern English, often adopted in learned or religious registers. While *though* and *although* dominated concessive constructions, *albeit* and *notwithstanding* appear sporadically in sermons, prayers, and religious biographies, marking an experimental phase in the language of English piety, consider examples (1) and (2). Their limited adoption, however, suggests that they never fully supplanted native subordinators and eventually receded from general usage.

(1) *Albeit the Magitians of Egipt could worke many admirable wonders by their owne Art, and by the instruction of the Diuel, yet they confessed that the workes of Moses were not done by Moses power.* (COERP, Arthur Dent 1608)

(2) *They would obey and keepe the ordinaunces of the king & Queene, & theco~maundementes of the church, notwithstanding that they*



had sayd and done the contrary in the time of K. Edward the 6. (COERP, John Foxe 1563)

Using data from the *Corpus of English Religious Prose* (COERP) and the *Penn–Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Early Modern English* (Bible and sermons), this study investigates: (i) the frequency and distribution of *albeit* and *notwithstanding* across religious genres; (ii) the textual contexts and functions of these subordinators; and (iii) the extent to which Early Modern English religious prose acted as a site of linguistic experimentation with Latin-derived concessives.

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Mapping Social Networks and Communities of Practice: Corpus Design and Sociolinguistic Modelling in Early Modern English Sermons

Hiroshi Yadomi (Kumamoto Gakuen University, Japan)

Religious texts have often been viewed as linguistically conservative, preserving archaic features long after their decline in other domains (Crystal & Davy 1969; Nevalainen 2006: 135; Kohnen et al. 2011). In Early Modern English, forms such as the third-person singular *-th* inflection, the pronoun *thou*, and adverbials like *thereof* persisted most visibly in religious discourse, becoming indexical of religious identity even as they disappeared elsewhere. Yadomi (2019, 2020, 2025, forthcoming) developed the *Corpus of Sermons in Early Modern England* (CoSEME), comprising sermons by 25 contemporary preachers, and demonstrated that these



morphosyntactic features correlate with Communities of Practice (CofP) shaped by religious affiliation, institutional conformity, and adherence to texts such as the English Bible and the Book of Common Prayer. Puritan preachers retained conservative forms, while Anglicans aligned more closely with progressive linguistic changes. In a similar vein, Smith (2020, 2021), using the CofP framework, showed that different communities preferred ideologically charged lexicons of theology and insult.

This paper introduces a revised and expanded CoSEME, now featuring sermons by 40 preachers (~2 million words), with improved balance across sermon dates, audiences, and publication types. This facilitates more comprehensive analysis of both individual and group variation. Building on this, I propose a hybrid sociolinguistic framework that integrates CofP theory with Social Network Analysis, as interpersonal ties—formed through shared education, mentorship, and theological alignment—also shaped linguistic choices. Drawing on biographical and interpersonal metadata from the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, I construct a Network Strength Scale (adapted from Bax 2000) that quantifies relational density via mutual reference frequency and evaluative polarity. This model enables dynamic analysis of interpersonal networks and the clustering of overlapping CofPs. To demonstrate its application, I present pilot analyses of the *-th* inflection and the pronoun *thou*, illustrating how networked relationships correlate with linguistic variation.

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Mapping the Early Modern English Protestant Lexicon: John Foxe's *Sermon of Christ Crucified* (1570)

Jeremy Smith (University of Glasgow, United Kingdom)

In 1976, the critic and cultural commentator Raymond Williams published the first edition of a highly influential book: *Keywords*, described by him in the following modest terms:

.. the record of an inquiry into a vocabulary: a shared body of words and meanings in our most general discussions, in English, of the practices and institutions which we group as culture and society ... [such *Keywords*] are significant, indicative words in certain forms of thought (1988: 15).

Williams's survey – part of a wider project aimed at establishing 'cultural studies' -- was focused on how the usage of his own time, viz. the second half of the twentieth century, had emerged. However, his ideas remain relevant for historical research, since the vocabulary ('practices') of various discourse communities can be shown to align with specific societal groupings or structures (i.e. 'institutions'): a process that might be termed *cultural mapping* (see Thompson 2008 and references there cited). As (inter alia) the ambitious *Linguistic DNA Project* is increasingly revealing, it is possible with considerable precision to distinguish linguistic patterns that hitherto have been discerned only impressionistically through literary, historical, and theological research.

This presentation will 'map' the vocabulary of one major early modern English text: John Foxe's *A Sermon of Christ Crucified* (1570). This work was originally delivered at Paul's Cross, arguably the country's most high-profile preaching-venue, although in its published form its length (over 42,000 words) indicates that it was later considerably expanded. Foxe's Protestant text will be compared with contemporary works by Catholic authors and others in order to identify its distinctive keywords, such as *comfort*, *glory*, *joy* and *wrath*, whose contemporary theological denotations and connotations will then be explored.

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Session #2

3 September, 17:30–19:30

French Influences in the Middle English Sermons of MS Royal 18.B.XXV and Their Implications for the Preaching of Mirk's *Festial*

Laura Poggesi (University of Trento, Italy)

The present paper presents a linguistic study of selected sermons from London, British Library, MS Royal 18.B.XXV (R), one of the fifteenth-century witnesses of the so-called Revision of John Mirk's *Festial* (c. 1380-1390), by far the most popular Middle English collection of sermons *de tempore et de sanctis*. Compared to the *Festial* and to its sister manuscript (London, British Library, MS Harley 2247), the language of R exhibits a strong French influence affecting both its vocabulary and its morpho-syntactic structures. The aim of this study is to analyse these French-derived linguistic features from a philological perspective, relating them to the codicological and palaeographical context of the manuscript as well as to the broader textual configuration of the Revision as a whole.

The results will shed new light on the origin and use of this poorly studied codex at different levels: first, by identifying the cultural milieu behind the production of the manuscript; second, by determining how the language of the *Festial* was tailored to R's intended readership and, more generally, how the textual tradition of a well-known sermon collection changed over time through the use of language; third, by providing more detailed evidence for the dating of some French loanwords in Middle English and for the possible role of sermons as a vehicle for the dissemination of such borrowings. The analysis will also consider the implications of this linguistic stratification for textual criticism, a crucial aspect in the study of medieval sermons.



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Preaching and Prayer in Practice: Linguistic Adaptation in a Seventeenth-Century Parish Sermon Collection

Angela Andreani (University of Milan, Italy)

This paper investigates the language of sermons and prayers through a focused study of a manuscript collection of sermons by Henry Watkins (fl. 1618–1642), vicar of Sutton-under-Brailes, preached in the 1620s. Preserving sermons delivered in different settings, including Paul's Cross and Watkins's rural parish, the collection offers insight into how a single preacher adapted his linguistic and rhetorical practices across audiences and occasions. Paratextual evidence indicates that the manuscript functioned as a flexible preaching resource rather than a fixed record, foregrounding processes of composition, reuse, and revision.

Particular attention is paid to an adaptable prayer before sermon placed at the beginning of the collection, which could be deployed, modified, or omitted according to context. This prayer exemplifies the "modular" character of the collection and highlights the close relationship between sermons and prayers as complementary modes of religious communication.

Methodologically, the study combines the analysis of socio-pragmatic variation with palaeographic evidence and historical contextualisation. By foregrounding unedited manuscript material produced as part of ordinary parish preaching, this paper contributes to a reassessment of parish contexts as central to religious communication in early modern England. Unlike printed sermons, manuscript texts preserve traces of sermons as they were prepared and adapted for performance, offering crucial evidence of how theological instruction operated in everyday settings. In doing so, the study demonstrates the value of integrating



linguistic, historical, and palaeographic approaches in the analysis of medieval and early modern English religious texts.

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To Feel the Word: Sensorial Language and the Catechistic Function of Early Modern Sermons

Yaakov A. Mascetti (Bar-Ilan University, Israel)

This paper investigates the rhetorical deployment of sensorial language in early modern English preaching, focusing on how vivid sensory impressions served not only to move audiences emotionally but also to educate them doctrinally. Drawing on sermons by John Donne, Lancelot Andrewes, Richard Sibbes, William Laud, and William Perkins, the study examines how these preachers used tactile, visual, and auditory imagery to render abstract theological ideas into perceptible experiences. Far from incidental ornament, sensory language in these texts operated as a central pedagogical mechanism, anchoring spiritual truths in the physical faculties of their listeners.

Attending to the interplay between persuasion and instruction, the paper explores how sensory rhetoric facilitated memory, internalization, and transformation — essential aims of catechesis. Donne's synesthetic poetics, Andrewes's etymological meditations on "touch," Sibbes's affective immediacy, Laud's ceremonial expressivity, and Perkins's structured didacticism contribute to a spectrum of sensorial strategies shaped by confessional and theological priorities.

By situating these rhetorical practices within the broader culture of early modern religious instruction and devotion, this paper argues that the sermon functioned as a site of embodied teaching, blurring the boundaries between hearing, seeing, feeling, and knowing. These modes of sensory persuasion not only enhanced doctrinal clarity but also cultivated a spiritually attuned sensorium through which faith might be felt, not merely professed.



From Altar to Communion: Post-Reformation Adaptation in MS CUL Gg.6.16

Ariane Lainé (University of Orléans, France)

This paper presents some observations drawn from my critical edition of the manuscript MS CUL Gg.6.16 (Lainé 2019). Dating from the second half of the fourteenth century, this manuscript is a commonplace book, a personal compilation probably produced by a parish priest for his own use. It mainly contains Middle English sermons for the temporal cycle, as well as sermons for marriages, together with *exempla* and various notes and quotations.

This compilation has attracted scholarly attention because it preserves early versions of sermons, two of which are unique. However, it is also of particular interest as a personal working tool, as it provides insight into the ways in which a parish priest compiled material and into his practical needs in the exercise of his ministry in Norfolk at the end of the fifteenth century (Lainé 2017). One might therefore question whether such a personal object could have been used by anyone other than its original compiler, or even be surprised that it survived the Reformation at all.

A close examination of the manuscript nevertheless reveals linguistic modifications made to some of the sermons in a later hand, most probably that of a reader active after the Reformation. This suggests that perfectly orthodox fifteenth-century sermons could still serve a purpose in a post-Reformation context. In this paper, I propose to analyse these linguistic modifications and to compare them with widespread post-Reformation usages. My aim is to demonstrate, on the basis of material evidence, that the transition from one orthodoxy to another could be achieved through the linguistic adaptation of earlier sermons rather than through their destruction.

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S10.- Disinformation in and out: Qualitative Linguistic Analyses of Digital Disinformation Texts

With the challenges and crises of recent years, digital disinformation texts (in popular – though not always precise – usage also referred to as ‘fake news’) have become increasingly popular and seem to have gained ground among various groups of internet users. Defined as “false information [that] is knowingly shared to cause harm” (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017), disinformation is essentially the result of one’s text production – shaped by the author’s intentions that manifest themselves in the text’s intentionality (Haugh & Jaszczolt, 2012) – and its spread is contingent on the readers’ perception and further interaction with it.

While previous (primarily quantitative) studies of disinformation texts have mainly focused on disinformation detection by identifying recurrent grammatical patterns and stylistic features (e.g., Grieve & Woodfield, 2023), this seminar seeks to bring together contributions that expand this research and underline the relevance and potential of qualitative analyses of disinformation discourse currently on the rise (e.g., Maci et al., 2024). Acknowledging the methodological and ethical challenges this kind of research faces, the seminar takes into account the diversity of the topics disinformation texts are devoted to (e.g., immigration, conflicts, climate change, conspiracy theories) as well as the variety of their discursive structures and formats (e.g., antiestablishment websites, social media posts, online broadcasts). Given the impact disinformation texts are likely to exert both online and outside the digital environment, the seminar also aims to emphasize that adding a critical dimension to the analysis may be necessary in certain contexts.

Considering the above, we invite contributions exploring disinformation texts from a qualitative linguistic perspective that address (but are not restricted to) the following areas: recurrent linguistic and multimodal strategies; adopted argumentative strategies; linguistic differences between mainstream news and disinformation texts (e.g., information-structural, lexical and other features); uptake and audience reactions to disinformation texts; and cross-linguistic differences between disinformation texts.

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Session #1

3 September, 9:30–11:30

“AI Will Replace Us”: Inflated Narratives of Human Obsolescence in Mainstream News Discourse

Maria Cristina Paganoni (University of Milan, Italy)

Recent studies show that alarmist reporting on generative AI can weaken public trust in journalism and distort public understanding of technological change (Farooq & de Vreese, 2025). One common example is the claim, repeated by many mainstream news outlets, that artificial intelligence is about to replace human workers, creators, decision-makers, and professionals. Although these claims are often presented as sober predictions or expressions of technological determinism, they frequently rest on exaggerated, speculative, or poorly contextualised accounts of what AI can actually do.

This paper argues that such narratives should be understood as a form of digital disinformation circulating within otherwise reputable media. Through authoritative language, selective expert voices, and emotionally charged framing, news coverage often normalises misleading ideas about AI while sidelining its social, ethical, and political implications. In doing so, these narratives depict AI as an independent, almost autonomous force and minimise technological limitations and the continued centrality of human judgement, creativity and responsibility (Becerra et al., 2025; Paganoni & Becerra, 2026).



Drawing on a qualitative critical analysis of a corpus of English-language news articles and their accompanying images from global mainstream media collected throughout 2025 and 2026, the paper examines the linguistic, discursive and multimodal strategies that enhance the persuasive power and circulation of human-replacement narratives (Garzone & Santulli, 2023; Lee et al., 2024; Sala, 2023). It identifies recurring lexical, evaluative and visual-verbal argumentative patterns through which these narratives gain credibility and rhetorical authority.

The paper suggests that AI replacement discourse operates at the intersection of disinformation, ideological positioning and widespread anxieties about technological change. It concludes that qualitative critical approaches are essential for uncovering how speculative yet authoritative-sounding claims can function as socially consequential disinformation, shaping how we think about work, agency and human value in the digital age.

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Disinformation and Anti-Politics in Grassroots Slogans for Times of Crisis

M. Dolores Porto (University of Alcalá, Spain)

Isabel Alonso-Belmonte (Autonomous University of Madrid, Spain)

Manuela Romano (Autonomous University of Madrid, Spain)

Disinformation practices involve not only the fabrication and dissemination of falsehoods but also diverse digital practices that circulate misleading content through clickbait, inaccurate captions, decontextualized material, or manipulated quotations



(Maci et al. 2023). A major threat of disinformation to democratic societies is the erosion of political processes and public trust in institutions (European Commission 2018), which can delegitimize governments and encourage radical, often populist, alternative movements (Scardigno & Mininni 2020).

This study explores the role of relexicalized grassroots slogans as discursive vehicles for disinformation and anti-politics through a cross-linguistic, transnational comparison of two analogous formulations: the Spanish slogan *solo el pueblo salva al pueblo* (“only the people save the people”) and the English-language slogan *we keep us safe*. Both slogans circulate widely in social media and protest settings in moments of crisis and perceived institutional failure, and both foreground collective self-reliance as an alternative to institutional intervention. The Spanish slogan is examined in relation to the DANA floods in 2024 and the wildfires in 2025 in Spain, while the English slogan is analyzed in the context of pro-Palestine student encampments in 2024 and social action against ICE raids in 2025–26 in USA.

Adopting a socio-cognitive discourse-analytic framework (Van Dijk 2018), the paper focuses on three core features of lexical reappropriation: semantic displacement, whereby the slogan undergoes shifts, restrictions, or inversions of meaning; ideological recontextualization, through which it is embedded within divergent and often competing political frameworks that reshape its axiological orientation; and strategic function, as the slogans are mobilized to legitimize in-group identities while delegitimizing political adversaries. The findings show that formally similar slogans can support divergent ideological stances, working not only as identity markers but also as discursive anchors for disinformation practices that simplify complex social issues and contribute to the naturalization of polarized, misleading interpretations of reality.

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To Whole-milk or not Whole-milk: The Question of Politicized Disinformation in the US

Cristina Arizzi (University of Catania, Italy)

This study explores the recent political campaign to reintroduce whole milk into American schools with a view to uncovering the linguistic and multimodal strategies of disinformation (Maci et al. 2024) employed. The “Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act” signed into law by Donald Trump on January 14, 2026, is the last of a series of actions aiming at restoring the consumption of full-fat dairy products. Despite claiming nutritional concerns, whole-milk discourse oversimplifies complex nutritional science using a series of disinformation strategies.

Within the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough 1995) and Multimodal Discourse Analysis (Kress & van Leeuwen 2020), this research qualitatively examines samples of digital discourse (e.g., social media posts, interviews), including visuals (e.g., Trump’s White Mustache photo, a bottle of milk on the Oval Office desk) released by Donald Trump and his administration.

The analysis specifically targets Trump’s and conservative actors’ strategies to disseminate disinformation, examining how they omit empirical evidence in favor of rhetorical appeals to “common sense” and populist generalizations.

The study intends to explore how the evaluation (Martin & White 2005) of milk, e.g., “pure” vs. “synthetic”, reinforces polarization and turns the whole milk issue into a powerful symbol of integrity and political alignment. Labeling past public health mandates as “woke”, Trump delegitimizes previous policies and consolidates his status as conservator, thus evoking people’s nostalgia for the good old days and fueling their distrust in expert authorities.

In conclusion, in today’s post-truth reality, the whole milk campaign well exemplifies the use of disinformation through digital platforms, to foster partisan values, consolidate group identity, mobilize a populist base and foster political alignment.

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The “Board of Peace” as a Discursive Construct: Disinformation in a Novel Peacebuilding Initiative

Maria Antonietta Marongiu (University of Cagliari, Italy)

This study investigates the discursive architecture of an international body for peacebuilding, the “Board of Peace”, inaugurated at the World Economic Forum (WEF) 2026, to examine how it constructs its authority and to unveil disinformation dynamics. Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 2013; Wodak & Meyer, 2016) and Critical Metaphor Analysis (Charteris-Black, 2004) are used to qualitatively analyse a digital corpus including the Board’s Charter, inaugural speech transcripts, and six months of official communications. The objective is to detect how lexical choices, argumentative structures, and metaphorical framing manipulate historical events and institutional norms to construct a deceptive peacebuilding narrative.

Preliminary analysis reveals that these texts spread false, misleading and harmful information (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017), particularly through the manipulation of historical narratives and the construction of a supposed institutional legitimacy. Crucial to the analysis is the polysemic keyword “board,” used to label the initiative, and how its dominant corporate meaning (“board of directors”) is activated through co-textual cues present in the Charter. This framing strategically depoliticises the Board’s mandate while projecting an image of managerial efficiency (Musolff, 2023), explicitly opposed to “failed” traditional institutions.

Several disinformation mechanisms are detectable. Firstly, the use of fabricated historical agency to inflate personal accomplishment and discredit established institutions, followed by the metaphorical weaponisation of peace as a transactional achievement, and of conflict resolution through real estate and construction metaphors. Finally, the Charter’s linguistic choices simulate legitimacy by mimicking international legal instruments while centralising absolute power in the hands of the Chairman. The adoption and subversion of formal argumentative strategies thus construct a facade of legitimacy for an authoritarian structure. Ironically, the WEF’s *Global Risks Report 2024* described misinformation and disinformation as the most severe short-term risk the world faces.

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Session #2

3 September, 15:00–17:00

From Silence to Snake Oil: The Rise of the “Meno-Belly” Myth in Digital Health Discourse

Paola Catenaccio (University of Milan, Italy)

Despite a palpable rise in interest for menopause in popular culture, menopause remains structurally under-researched, with long-standing misunderstandings and insufficient scientific attention having created the conditions for non-evidence-based explanations of menopausal physiology, menopause-related complaints, and associated remedies (Van Poucke, 2025; Winett & Dalingwater, 2025). The knowledge gap in both scientific and popularized literature on menopause converges with (and may be assumed to have facilitated) a documented surge in commercially driven digital menopause services and hormone-testing platforms, many of which circulate unregulated or commercially biased messaging that shapes patient beliefs and expectations (Christakis et al., 2025).

Drawing on established scholarship in pseudoscientific discourse, including philosophy-of-science research (Pigliucci & Boudry, 2013; Hansson, 2025), public-health analyses of science denialism (Godulla et al., 2024) and recent discourse-analytical investigations of medical mis- and dis-information (Maci et al., 2024), this study explores the linguistic, rhetorical and multimodal features of the “meno-belly / hormonal belly” myth as a pseudo-scientific reframing of midlife weight change.



Methodologically, the study adopts a qualitative discourse-analytic design, combining critical discourse analysis, rhetorical-pragmatic analysis, and multimodal examination. Drawing on LSP literature (Garzone, 2020), legitimation theory (van Leeuwen, 2007), argumentation theory (Rubinelli & Diviani, 2025), multimodal text analysis (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), the analysis attends to how linguistic choices, evidential strategies, and visual design elements work together to naturalize the “meno-belly” narrative. A corpus of approximately 60 webpages – seeded from high-reach sources including *Verywell Health* and *Yahoo Health*, with additional materials collected via a snowballing strategy – is analyzed to identify the salient linguistic and rhetorical strategies deployed, with a focus on their implications in terms of the social construction of menopause, particularly with reference to medicalizing approaches grounded in deficit conceptualizations (Melby, 2025).

Preliminary findings suggest that scientific under-investment, deficit-based cultural narratives, and pseudoscientific discursive strategies converge to produce persuasive but misleading explanations of “hormonal imbalance” that feed an unregulated health-product market.

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Discursive and Multimodal Strategies in American Anti-vaccine Online Publications

Małgorzata Godlewska (University of Gdańsk, Poland)

This research proposal aims to investigate the discursive patterns of online publications collected from Joseph Mercola's official website, which is dedicated to promoting a healthy lifestyle. The study examines publications that have appeared online from the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic to the present. It employs a dialectical-relational approach to Critical Discourse Analysis and utilises the analytical methods proposed by Norman Fairclough (2001, 2003, 2013) as well as Eve Chiapello and Norman Fairclough (2013). This approach is further supported by the foundational principles of visual grammar developed by Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen (2021), along with Per Ledin and David Machin (2020).

The study explores a corpus of 30 online multimodal publications to uncover the textual and visual patterns present on the American website, along with its implied anti-government stance and self-promotional ideology rooted in the commercial objectives of the website's creators. The analysis involves a qualitative investigation of selected publications and seeks to map recurrent discursive techniques, relying on a model that comprises the categories of genre, discourse, style, and visual design.

The outcomes of the research reveal the author's anti-state discourse, constructed upon a network of discourses: scientific discourse of a medical expert, promotional discourse of a businessman, conspiracy discourse, anti-governmental discourse, and connectionist and inspirational discourses as components of these types. Furthermore, this discourse is significantly characterised by informalisation, intertextuality, individualisation, and the central principles of equivalence and difference, which structure the discourse across all categories of genre, style, discourse, and visual design. Finally, the visual elements of the discourse—such as images, videos, and graphs—accentuate the anti-government statements of the website, reinforcing the linguistic messages through their visual modality markers, colour patterns, and typography.

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Can Podcasts Disinform? Expert Authority and Epistemic Ambiguity in Health Podcasts: A Qualitative Linguistic Analysis of Podcast Discourse

Olga Maria Kopaczyk (Stockholm University, Sweden)

Recent public debates, including investigations by the BBC World Service and the Guardian (2024) into *Diary of a CEO*, have highlighted the role of popular podcasts in amplifying health claims that diverge from established scientific evidence. While such content is often framed as “open-minded discussion,” its linguistic design raises critical questions about responsibility and audience reception. Drawing on Wardle & Derakhshan’s (2017) tripartite model of information disorder and Haugh & Jaszczolt’s (2012) theory of pragmatic intentionality, this study examines how epistemic authority is constructed through strategic ambiguity.

Analyzing the interactional dynamics of one full episode of *Diary of a CEO* from YouTube and a sequential sample of its first fifteen comments, the paper explores how the guest utilizes mitigating hedges and disclaimers to reduce speaker commitment and secure plausible deniability, while simultaneously employing maximalist epistemic markers to assert authority. By applying Haugh & Jaszczolt’s framework, the analysis reveals discrepancies between speaker meaning and hearer interpretation—an “intentionality gap” where interactional disclaimers (e.g., “I’m not a physician”) are pragmatically superseded by the default interpretations of the audience. The study identifies recurrent discursive strategies such as evidential inversion (reframing consensus as “belief” and minority views as “data”) and the saturation of anecdotal legitimation. The findings suggest that genre-specific conventions of podcasting facilitate conditions where epistemically weak claims become resistant to critique and allow listeners to pragmatically supersede speaker hedges with absolute, actionable health interpretations. This study contributes to digital linguistics by demonstrating that podcasts, a media environment where public science communication is largely unregulated and narrative-driven, do not need to be ‘disinformative’ in intent to be ‘disinformative’ in effect.



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The Spread of Disinformation/Misinformation on Health-related Issues: Discursive and Rhetorical Perspectives

Giuliana Elena Garzone (IULM University, Italy)

Evidence from the extensive literature on health information-seeking behaviour (cf. Lamber & Loisel 2007) shows that individuals increasingly turn to online sources to gather information about illnesses, risks, and protective behaviours, rather than relying on medical professionals, family, friends, books, newspapers, magazines, educational pamphlets, radio, television, or pharmaceutical advertisements (Jacobs, Amuta & Jeon 2017). This tendency intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic, as did research in this domain (cf. Rosenberg et al. 2020).

Given the multitude of online information sources—many of which are untrustworthy, inadequate, or biased (Swire-Thompson & Lazer 2020)—relying on the Internet to learn about health problems often leads to misinformation, a particularly worrying fact that may have severe consequences for people’s quality of life and even mortality. This risk is reinforced by psychological factors such as confirmation bias (Nickerson 1998) and belief regression (Swire-Thompson et al. 2023).



This paper examines cases of misinformation and disinformation in the health domain (e.g., cancer remedies), focusing on how misleading medical information circulates through texts on websites and social media (Vosoughi et al. 2018). Attention is given to discursive strategies used across media (websites, social media posts) that facilitate the spread of inaccurate or fake information, whether unintentionally or as part of manipulation strategies aimed at profit. User comments on websites (e.g., WebMD) and CM health support platforms (Garzone 2023) are also considered, especially where they involve biographical or narrative elements.

Methodologically, the analysis combines discourse-analytical tools with a rhetorical perspective, drawing on categories from the Appraisal framework (Martin & White 2005) to examine attitudinal meanings, while rhetorical concepts guide the interpretation of how these meanings are strategically deployed. The ultimate goal is to identify persuasive elements through which disinformation builds credibility (Rubinelli & Diviani 2025) and spreads across communication channels.

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Session #3

3 September, 17:30–19:30

Confidently Incorrect – Analyzing Multimodal Disinformation on Twitter (X) and Its Surrounding Discourse

Jana Hallová (Masaryk University, Czech Republic)

Jan Chovanec (Masaryk University, Czech Republic)

While disinformation has been traditionally considered as a strategic form of verbal communication, it can involve other semiotic modes as well, including visual content. The purposeful manipulation of photographs has had a long tradition, and the advent of digital media has enabled the widespread modification of existing images, as well as the creation of entirely novel images that may be used, with varying degrees of verisimilitude, in public as well as private communication. So far, such multimodal disinformation has not been systematically addressed in such areas as interpersonal communication on social media.

This paper seeks to explore the ways shared multimodal content, such as graphs, charts, or screenshots of AI-generated responses, feature in user reactions on the social media platform X (formerly Twitter). Drawing on the approaches of critical multimodal discourse analysis, the paper traces how such content is incorporated within the textual discourse of users' responses, ultimately advocating for a specific ideology, articulating a specific point of view, or stoking controversy.

The study is based on a dataset of multimodal responses to content presented on several popular profiles on X. The multimodal content includes responses sampled from three posts from four separate dates from December 2024 to September 2025 and three distinct thematic sources – a popular news site (@CNN), a known personage (@elonmusk), and a profile which specializes in sharing humorous content (@NoContextHumans). The analysis identifies some prototypical multimodal responses, notes the role of contextual features, and traces textual evidence of the engagement and approval of such content by the audience. The findings contribute to our understanding of how disinformation spreads and is propagated on the platform, how multimodal elements attract the attention of users to sway them towards specific ideologies, and how such visual disinformation may be countered and resisted by the users.



Multimodal Rhetoric of Election-Related Disinformation Campaigns on TikTok: Evidence from the Philippines

John Paul Dela Rosa (Northern Illinois University, United States)

This research aims to expand studies in less charted or completely uncharted niches on social media disinformation. Anchored on McComiskey's (2017) post-truth rhetoric, York's (2023) visual rhetorical mechanisms of dark patterns, Ridolfo and Hart-Davidson's (2019) rhetoric of information warfare, and Kress and van Leeuwen's (2001) social semiotics theory of multimodal communication, this study explores the multimodal rhetoric features of election-related disinformation campaigns on TikTok. The study corpus consists of TikTok videos that were published in Philippine English, a legitimate nativized variety of English (Dayag, 2012). Multimodal data containing code-mixed texts (e.g., English mixed with Tagalog and other Philippine languages) were translated into English to facilitate analysis. The first research objective relates to describing the interaction among the multimodal elements of election-related disinformation campaigns (posted in 2024 until 2025) in the Philippines. The second objective is to describe the social network structure of disinformation campaigns to visualize and analyze relationships and connections between and among users and disinformation actors. Finally, the study aims to determine the influence of disinformation campaigns on the emotions and affective behavior of Filipino TikTok users through a linguistic analysis of their online comments' emotional tone. This research project adopts a mixed-method approach using content analysis. Social media content analysis examines amounts of user-generated content on TikTok to be able to extract meaningful patterns, trends, and sentiments. Qualitative data are extracted from the multimodal elements (e.g., camera shot, visual object, cut, written and spoken language, sound, music, filters, eventuality) of the TikTok posts using the multilevel TikTok annotation scheme espoused by Grzenkiewicz and Wildfeuer (2025). Quantitative data are generated using computational software programs, such as NodeXL Pro and LIWC-22, to facilitate social network structure and linguistic analyses, respectively. This study hopes to contribute to the compelling need to address the ill effects of social media disinformation.

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The Power of CountercampAligns: Can GenAI Tools Create Plausible Multimodal Misinformation? An On-field Study on Different LLMs

Francesco Meledandri (University of Bari Aldo Moro, Italy)

The proliferation of texts across digital environments has intensified the problem of misinformation in information ecosystems (Lazer et al. 2018). Digital environments facilitate the rapid dissemination of false or misleading content due to low publication barriers, high emotional salience, and engagement-first algorithms (Brady 2023). Research shows that misinformation spreads faster and more widely than factual information, particularly when it appeals to novelty, fear, or partisan identity (Vosoughi et al. 2018). From a linguistic perspective, misinformation relies on specific lexical, syntactic, and rhetorical strategies that enhance plausibility while obscuring falsity (Maci et al. 2024): these include evaluative and emotive language, vague attribution of sources, modal uncertainty, and presuppositions that naturalize contested claims (Grieve and Woodfield 2023). Furthermore, the convergence of misinformation and disinformation complicates detection and regulation, as intent and truthfulness are not always easily distinguishable (Wardle and Derakhshan 2017). The disruptive popularization of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) into language and communication practices raised new concerns in terms of the proliferation of fake news and *ready-to-serve* misleading information (Kreps et al. 2020). Against this background, this presentation aims at testing different GenAI providers in order to verify their ability to tailor fake news on the basis of specific prompts. Attention will be dedicated to the multimodal nature of fabricated news generation, with a particular emphasis on the way in which GenAI images may amplify the impact of information. This case study addresses the issue of the relationship between AI and its use from a multidisciplinary approach that involves both technical and language-related aspects, the latter involving stakeholders to recognize manipulative discourse strategies in terms of meaning-making processes. At the same time, questions about the misuse of AI for these purposes involve media literacy education, ethics of AI development, availability and use, as well as its lack of transparency of this new *digital habitus* (Romele 2024) both from providers and end-users, towards a redefinition of the so-called “malevolent creativity” (Tadik et al. 2025). This confirms that a multi-stage approach is needed for developing effective strategies to mitigate the impact of AI-driven misinformation in digital contexts (Ma et al. 2025).



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Session #4

4 September, 9:30–11:30

Sectarian Rhetoric as Disinformation: A Qualitative Linguistic Analysis of Donald Trump and Jim Jones

Célia Vamiller (Ghent University, Belgium)

This paper investigates how “undermining propaganda” (Stanley, 2015), a form of discourse that co-opts a community’s moral ideals to mask actions that subvert those same values, functions within democratic contexts. By comparing the rhetoric of Donald



Trump during the 2020 US presidential election with that of cult leader Jim Jones, this research adopts a qualitative pragmatic lens to uncover structural mechanisms of emotional deception and disinformation.

Following Macagno's (2022) taxonomy of lies and Argumentation Theory, the study identifies a "sectarian blueprint" consisting of three core strategies: (i) the construction of a savior persona, (ii) "us vs. them" polarization, and (iii) the incitement to action. The analysis is based on a primary corpus of Trump's speeches during the 2020 election cycle, specifically targeting the misinformation surrounding the "Big Lie" of an allegedly stolen election, and a subcorpus of Jim Jones's sermons, including the 1978 "Death Tape", which illustrates the fictional government plan to place Black people in concentration camps.

Findings reveal that approximately 85% of the arguments in both corpora function as manipulative lies. Despite the 40-year gap, both leaders utilized identical linguistic tools, specifically "post hoc" fallacies and "question-begging", to bypass rational deliberation. A key finding is the implementation of "linguistic figleaves": Trump co-opted the democratic ideal of "voter integrity" to spread 2020 election misinformation, while Jones used "social justice" to justify "revolutionary suicide".

Ultimately, this study demonstrates how disinformation was weaponized to override the audience's instinct for self-preservation, leading directly to the 1978 mass suicide in Jonestown and the attack on the US Capitol on January 6th, 2021. By illustrating how disinformation co-opts high-value moral language, the research emphasizes the necessity of adding a critical, qualitative dimension to the study of texts that threaten modern democratic deliberation.

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Disinformation In and Out: The Pragmatics and Perception of Persuasiveness in LLM-generated Propaganda

Silje Susanne Alvestad (Norwegian Defence University College, University of Oslo, Norway)

Nele Poldvere (University of Oslo, Lund University, Norway)

Asbjørn Følstad (SINTEF Digital, Oslo, Norway)

Petter Bae Brandtzaeg (University of Oslo, SINTEF Digital, Oslo, Norway)



EU, NATO, UN and WEF (2025) have identified online disinformation as the biggest short-term threat to open liberal democracies, a threat amplified by the rapid development in generative AI. Within the scope of the *Disinformation in and out* seminar, which aims to demonstrate the “relevance and potential of qualitative analyses of disinformation discourse,” we take this challenge seriously. Specifically, we build on Alvestad et al. (in press), who found that LLMs generate English-language propaganda with less variation in the use of a set of persuasion techniques (cf. Piskorski et al., 2023), while over-generating the techniques *Appeal to Authority* and *Loaded Language*. Moreover, respondents blind to the source rated such propaganda as significantly more persuasive than human-authored propaganda, particularly in terms of *trustworthiness* and *informativeness* (cf. Thomas et al., 2019).

In this pragmatics-driven study, we ask the following research question: What persuasion techniques are selected for the purpose when LLMs are instructed to generate *even more persuasive* text in English? Applying corpus linguistics methods and Grieve and Woodfield’s (2023) definition of propaganda as a sub-type of true but dishonest news and a form of disinformation, we thereby illuminate, i.a., how LLMs ‘understand’ *persuasion*. In a step two we ask respondents how they now perceive LLM persuasiveness. The results may have implications for LLM disinformation identification and mitigation and AI governance.

As for research ethics, we follow the current best practice for prompt engineering, and the respondents may opt out of the survey at any time and are informed that the contents they are asked to assess, are contested by fact-checkers.

Against this background, our contribution explores “disinformation texts from a qualitative linguistic perspective” and address i) “cross-linguistic differences between disinformation texts,” as well as ii) “uptake and audience reactions to disinformation texts”, as mentioned in the call text.

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“Talk about FAKE Science”: Thematic Progression Breaks as a Rhetorical Device in Online Disinformation Texts

Jiří Lukl (University of Ostrava, Czech Republic)

While there is a substantial body of work on linguistic characteristics of disinformation texts (Lugea, 2021), it is notable that the language used in them to express an ideological stance (e.g., through evaluative expressions) has only recently received increased attention from linguists (cf. Baissa et al., 2025; Trnavac & Pöldvere, 2024), though one might argue that expressing a specific ideology is one of the core concerns of disinformation texts. According to Fairclough (1992, pp. 183–184), one rhetorical strategy which achieves this is the employment of various patterns of Theme and thematic progressions, particularly the selection and distribution of marked themes. As argued by Hawes (2010), this is especially true of marked themes which function as thematic progression breaks, i.e., points where one thematic progression ends, and another begins.

The present study continues in this line of research by applying a modified typology of Hawes’s TP breaks to the analysis of disinformation texts. The analysis is conducted on a small corpus of 50 online disinformation texts focusing on the topic of climate change. The primary aim of the analysis is to determine the frequency and distribution of TP breaks in the texts. Preliminary findings suggest that disinformation texts exhibit TP-break frequencies which are characteristic of highly evaluative writing (Hawes, 2010), with exceptionally marked TP-break types – interrogative and exclamative breaks, annexes, and verb themes – being prominently represented. These types are also more likely to occur at major thematic junctures and text-finally, where evaluative meaning is frequently located. Interestingly, the exceptionally marked types often appear in bundles, forming a pattern of progression where each link builds upon and reinforces the communicated ideological viewpoint. Such progressions represent very effective persuasive strategies and warrant further investigation.

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“Imagine Still Believing in this Never-ending Hoax”: The Analysis of News Values and Argumentative Strategies in Disinformation Texts on Climate Change

Dominika Beneš Kováčová (University of Ostrava, Czech Republic)

The declining trust in traditional news media, documented by recent studies (e.g., Newman et al., 2025), is seen to parallel the increasing popularity of alternative news sources. Promoting themselves as *independent* news platforms, they claim to share *the truth* through dedicated websites and social media channels. While their articles may cover a range of topics, on which they offer their alternative (or ‘anti-establishment’) take, the question arises as to how the information these sites present becomes newsworthy and persuasive to attract their readers.

Previous research on traditional news articles has addressed similar questions through the lens of the discursive construction of news values (Bednarek & Caple, 2012, 2017). The present paper aims to extend this line of research to the analysis of articles published on alternative news sites (cf. Baissa et al., 2025); specifically, the dataset includes 50 articles written in English and thematically unified to focus on climate change (dis)information. Conducting a discursive news values analysis, my goal is to identify what news values prevail in this data and which semiotic resources are used in their construction. Considering the potential persuasive force of these texts, the analysis also considers the argumentative effect of the identified resources in the presentation of given information.

As regards its findings, the study shows that the construction of the news values of novelty, unexpectedness and impact predominates in the dataset. Furthermore, despite their use of argumentative fallacies, the collected texts are found to exhibit some features of argumentative style (van Eemeren, 2018), strategically employed for the legitimation of the information they provide as opposed to the information presented in traditional news media. Importantly, it is argued that the co-occurrence of certain news values and argumentative strategies in a thematically unified dataset may reveal specific discursive scripts at play in different disinformation texts.

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S11.- Impoliteness in Pop Culture

Pop culture may be defined neutrally as a culture that is widely popular and is often set in opposition to “high culture”, such that it is produced for mass consumption by non-discriminating consumers. In this seminar, we aim to explore a wide range of different forms of pop culture including television series, film, popular fiction, newspapers, magazines, rap music, video games and social media. Specifically, we focus on impoliteness in pop culture and its manifestation on multiple communicative levels, e.g., character-to-character dialogues that are produced for an overhearing audience. As such, impoliteness can propel narrative as well as entertain and engage audiences. Pop cultural examples of impoliteness may also reflect shifting societal norms, reveal wider socio-political issues, or depict relational work associated with maintaining or subverting power differentials. Impoliteness thus serves a broad range of functions in pop culture, some of them simultaneously on different levels, including the intention to hurt an addressee, banter, entertainment or an attempt to be outspokenly truthful and honest. While impoliteness is an important part of many forms of pop culture, its critical description poses analytical challenges.

In this seminar, we invite contributions that help to advance current theorising in impoliteness studies on the basis of data drawn from pop culture. We are particularly interested in contributions that focus on the challenges of identifying forms of impoliteness within the complexity of the communicative situation of pop culture. Who is addressed by the impoliteness in rap music, for instance? And why is it amusing for the audience to watch characters that insult each other? Are there forms of pop culture that can exist without impoliteness, or is impoliteness a crucial ingredient that makes pop culture interesting for an audience? How can impoliteness be seen as a site of (re)negotiation of power and sociocultural norms?

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Session #1

31 August, 16:00-18:00

The Expressivity of Impoliteness in Looney Tunes' (E)motion Pictures (1940s-1950s)**Camille Chane (University of Montpellier Paul-Valéry, France)****Sandrine Sorlin (University of Montpellier Paul-Valéry, France / Institut Universitaire de France)**

This talk will investigate the workings of impoliteness conceived as disruption of communicative harmony in animated comedy shorts of the 1940s and 1950s. In Warner Bros.' theatrical cartoon short series *The Looney Tunes*, comedy is often derived from interpersonal conflict. This is especially observable in two of Warner Bros.' most famous stars, Bugs Bunny and Daffy Duck.

Created respectively in 1937 and 1941, Bugs and Daffy were soon to become typical examples of modern-day tricksters who use impoliteness to both cause and solve conflicts. Taking into account the specificities of the animated medium and the addressed audience of cartoon shorts, this paper will highlight that the tricksters' language and behaviour always run along a fine line between politeness, impoliteness and physical aggression.

A selection of three shorts, respectively from 1943, 1944 and 1952, will allow us to focus on impoliteness in its close relation to bodies and (e)motion. In these cartoons, disharmony takes the form of a literalisation of impoliteness theory as the frontiers of the characters' bodies are transgressed in social conflict. This will bring us to propose new labels like Body-Threatening Act (BTA) in lieu of Face-Threatening Act. Humour is generated in the mismatch between simultaneous verbal politeness and bodily attacks, complexifying the notion of "mixed message" (Culpeper et al. 2017) and collapsing the distinction between illocutionary force and perlocutionary effect.

They will serve to bring forth the potential violence underlying the veneer of civilised politeness whose opposite is not impoliteness but physical aggression. In this context, the impoliteness of the tricksters is meant to play with social norms in normative situations like that of the hairdresser's appointment or to transgress propriety and tradition as incarnated by humourless European characters. As for the audience, they are invited to vicariously share the pleasure of transgression through bodily and emotional alignment with the impish characters.



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- Porky's Pig Feat*. Directed by Frank Tashlin. Produced by Leon Schlesinger Studio Productions. Warner Bros., 1943. 00:08:41.
- Water, Water Every Hare*. Directed by Chuck Jones. Produced by Leon Schlesinger Studio Productions. Warner Bros., 1952. 00:07:28.

Humour and Impoliteness in Streamed Improv Comedy: From Audience Interview to Fictionalised Performance

Daniela Landert (Heidelberg University, Germany)

The present paper studies the negotiation of humour and impoliteness between comedians and the audience in three improvised comedy shows. While improv usually is ephemeral and often takes place in front of relatively small audiences (cf. Landert 2021), these three shows were created for public streaming and recorded in the presence of a large live audience. Each performance starts with an interaction with a member (or a small group of members) of the audience, in which they recount a true event of their life, answering questions by the comedians. This interaction provides the inspiration for the show. Both the initial interaction and the subsequent fictionalised performance include negative evaluations of audience members and third parties for humorous purposes. These instances of impoliteness share similarities with teasing (Linares-Bernabéu & Ruiz Gurillo 2024; Seewoester Cain 2018; Sinkeviciute 2017)"source": "swisscovery.slsp.ch", "title": "Culture and comedy: Stand-up across cultures", "author": [{"family": "Linares-Bernabéu", "given": "Esther"}, {"family": "Ruiz Gurillo", "given": "Leonor"}], "editor": [{"family": "Ford", "given": "Thomas E."}, {"family": "Chłopicki", "given": "Władysław"}, {"family": "Kuipers", "given": "Giseline"}], "issued": {"date-parts": ["2024"]}], {"id": 14707, "uris": ["http://zotero.org/users/315467/items/MARCMJMT"], "itemData": {"id": 14707, "type": "chapter", "abstract": "This



paper explores teasing – a type of humorous play associated with intimate, everyday conversation – during televised comedy monologue performances. Thirteen teasing instances, which occurred during joke setup sequences and targeted studio audiences, were transcribed/analyzed alongside videos for: (1, jocular mockery (Haugh & Bousfield 2012), and roasting (Dynel & Poppi 2019) by creating affiliation as well as by enhancing the social status and visibility of the audience members in question.

In this paper, I will investigate the links between humour and impoliteness in the interactions between the comedians and the audience by focusing on the multi-layered participant constellation of the shows. This constellation includes the comedians, the audience member(s) directly interacting with the comedians, absent third parties that are discussed, the live studio audience and the streaming audience. I will also argue that the enacted performance of fictional accounts based on personal experiences provides an additional layer of negotiation of meaning that goes beyond the teasing practices previously described for stand-up comedy (Linares-Bernabéu & Ruiz Gurillo 2024; Seewoester Cain 2018) "source": "swisscovery.slsch", "title": "Culture and comedy: Stand-up across cultures", "author": [{"family": "Linares-Bernabéu", "given": "Esther"}, {"family": "Ruiz Gurillo", "given": "Lionor"}], "editor": [{"family": "Ford", "given": "Thomas E."}, {"family": "Chłopicki", "given": "Władysław"}, {"family": "Kuipers", "given": "Giselinde"}], "issued": {"date-parts": [{"2024"}]}, {"id": "14707", "uris": [{"http://zotero.org/users/315467/items/MARCMJMT"}], "itemData": {"id": "14707", "type": "chapter", "abstract": "This paper explores teasing – a type of humorous play associated with intimate, everyday conversation – during televised comedy monologue performances. Thirteen teasing instances, which occurred during joke setup sequences and targeted studio audiences, were transcribed/analyzed alongside videos for: (1. The analysis will show how the comedians manage the complex communicative situation of their performance by carefully balancing affiliative and disaffiliative responses and representations of audience members present in the room.

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From Direct Criticism to Walking on Eggshells: A Diachronic Study of Impoliteness Strategies in Popular Music Reviews on the Web

Karolina Ryker (University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland and Sapienza University of Rome, Italy)

Professional online album reviews play a significant role in shaping music-related discourse on the web. Negative evaluations produced by professional critics are frequently imbued with impoliteness, yet this genre remains underexplored, with systematic linguistic studies emerging only recently (Ryker, 2025). To address this gap, the aim of the study is to conduct a diachronic analysis of impoliteness strategies in online album reviews.

The analysis draws on a specialized corpus of 90 negative reviews published on Pitchfork, NME, and Slant Magazine. The corpus spans three key phases in the development of online music criticism: the early emergence of webnative reviewing (2001–2003), the rise of participatory platforms such as Reddit (2011–2013), and the recent period (2021–2023) marked by the dominance of platforms such as X and intensified fan-driven scrutiny of professional critics. Review segments were coded in QDA Miner using a set of impoliteness strategies derived from Culpeper (2005) and adapted to the genre-specific conventions of music criticism.

The findings show a shift towards off-record impoliteness, with sarcasm and implicated criticism becoming more frequent as direct, on-record strategies decline. At the same time, indirect strategies exhibit higher word counts, contrasting with the brevity of the on-record strategies. This change appears linked to growing public visibility and accountability, especially in the face of active and often hostile fandoms. The study traces the evolving role of the professional reviewer from outspoken tastemaker to cautious cultural intermediary. These results contribute to emerging scholarship on review literacy (Jaakkola, 2024) and popculture literacy (Hood, 2025) by highlighting the genre’s shifting impoliteness norms. Moreover, the study extends the growing body of diachronic research on impoliteness across other genres (Jucker & Landert, 2023; LorenzoDus et al., 2013).

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Who's the Diss Really For? Impoliteness, Addressivity, and Audience Design in Greek and English-Language Rap Across Three Decades

Panagiotis Delis (National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece)

Rap is a pop-cultural genre in which impoliteness is both expected and consequential because artists routinely mobilise taboo lexis, derogatory vocatives, and direct address to construct stances, identities, and power relations (Culpeper, 2008; Delis, 2021; Dynel, 2015; Garcés-Conejos Blitvich, 2010; Kubrin, 2005). Yet the communicative situation of recorded lyrics complicates impoliteness analysis because the apparent ‘target’ of an insult may be a character within the song, an absent rival, an in-group interlocutor, or an overhearing mass audience, and because these multiparty configurations invite attention to the roles of witnesses and overhearers in the interpretation and uptake of face attack (Culpeper, 2011; Dobs & Garcés-Conejos Blitvich, 2013; Graham & Hardaker, 2017). This paper offers a comparative corpus-pragmatic analysis of impoliteness in Greek and English-language rap across three decades, with a focus on addressivity and audience design (Androutsopoulos, 2009; Hess, 2010; Mitchell, 2001).

The study adapts a modified version of Culpeper’s impoliteness taxonomy that has previously been applied to hip-hop lyrics, with particular attention to the strategies ‘use taboo words’ and ‘call the other names’ and to the continuum between genuine and mock impoliteness (Culpeper, 2005, 2011; Delis, 2021; Garcés-Conejos Blitvich, 2010; Lorenzo-Dus et al., 2011). The dataset comprises six sub-corpora organised by decade and language, namely Greek rap and English-language rap for the 1990s, 2000s, and 2010s. Each sub-corpus is manually coded for impoliteness strategies and for addressee configuration, distinguishing moves framed as directed to an in-song interlocutor, to an absent third party, or to the audience (Culpeper, 2011).



Quantitatively, the analysis compares normalised frequencies of the focal strategies across decades within each language and between Greek and English. Qualitatively, close readings of representative extracts show how impoliteness can simultaneously threaten a narrated target and entertain, align, or authenticate the performer for the audience, and how these layered effects are stabilised through cues such as second-person forms, vocatives, and metapragmatic framing (Culpeper, 2005, 2008; Delis, 2021).

It also considers how cultural taboos constrain lexical choice and indexical meanings (Allan, 2020; Crespo-Fernández, 2018; Culpeper, 2018). By foregrounding addressivity and audience design, the paper advances theorising on impoliteness in pop culture texts produced for overhearing audiences, and it clarifies how rap lyrics use impoliteness as a site of renegotiating sociocultural norms and power differentials across two rap traditions (Culpeper, 2008; Garcés-Conejos Blitvich, 2010).

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Session #2

1 September, 09:00–11:00

Hard Truths: Impoliteness as Narrative Practice in the Cinema of Mike Leigh

Valentina Vetri (University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, Italy)

Interpersonal conflict and communicative tension play a significant role in the films of Mike Leigh, where impoliteness functions as both a narrative resource and a stylistic device. Drawing on theories of impoliteness and facework in linguistic pragmatics (Culpeper 2011; Bousfield 2008), this paper argues that impoliteness in Leigh's cinema functions not merely as stylistic realism, but as a flexible mechanism through which social relations, emotional life and power are negotiated. Rather than serving a single purpose, impoliteness performs different functions across Leigh's oeuvre, depending on the social and affective dynamics at stake. In some films, impoliteness operates as a means of resisting classed norms of respectability, with politeness aligned with bourgeois values such as restraint, self-regulation, and moral authority: here, ostensibly polite behaviour functions as passive aggression, enabling characters to exercise judgement, exclusion, and moral superiority while maintaining a surface of civility. In other cases, impoliteness becomes a vehicle for emotional exposure, allowing long-suppressed feelings and grievances to surface and reshape interpersonal relationships: in such situations, face-threatening acts precipitate moments of vulnerability



and affective rupture. Finally, impoliteness plays a central role in power negotiation, as characters deploy verbal aggression and face-attack as strategies of control.

The paper presents a multimodal pragmatic analysis of selected scenes, focusing on how these functions are realised through the interaction of verbal language with kinesics, proxemics and cinematic framing. These semiotic resources operate cumulatively across scenes, allowing impoliteness to function as a recurring narrative pattern that shapes character trajectories and audience alignment over time. By situating Leigh's films within popular culture, this paper highlights how impoliteness circulates beyond elite or institutional contexts and becomes a widely recognisable narrative and ideological resource. The analysis demonstrates how cinematic representations of impoliteness contribute to broader cultural understandings of class, emotional legitimacy and social power, thereby extending impoliteness research into the domain of popular cultural storytelling.

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When Swearing is the Story: An Analysis of *I Swear* (2025)

Karyn Stapleton (Ulster University, Northern Ireland, United Kingdom)

As a form of impoliteness, swearing is scripted for use in cinematic and televisual outputs, where it operates as an interpersonal strategy and a media device (Bednarek, 2019; Beers Fägersten & Stapleton, 2023). In this paper, I examine the representation of *swearing itself* in a recent biographical film. Here, swearing is not a form of impoliteness *per se*, since it manifests as an involuntary behaviour. Nonetheless, a core theme of the film is how such swearing affects the reactions of others to the protagonist, with significant consequences for his life opportunities and outcomes.



I Swear is a 2025 biographical drama film, based on the true story of John Davidson, a Scottish man with severe Tourette's Syndrome. The narrative starts in the 1980s, when Davidson, as a teenager, began to develop symptoms, including bodily tics and *coprolalia*, or involuntary swearing. We then follow Davidson's adult life, which has been severely affected by his condition; and his work raising awareness and understanding of Tourette's Syndrome, for which he received an MBE in 2019.

This setting, where swearing is both an involuntary action and a narrative focus in its own right, provides a unique context in which to examine its interpersonal and media functions. To what extent does this deployment of scripted swearing reflect other cinematic and televisual usage?

The media utility of swearing depends on its potential to shock and offend. Thus, the inclusion of swearing in media productions is a strategic choice, designed to navigate and exploit both viewer expectations and regulatory broadcast constraints. Purposes include affiliative and hostile interpersonal functions; narrative devices such as characterisation, humour, ideological stance, emotional control, and plot development; and sometimes, direct engagement with the audience (Bednarek, 2019; Beers Fägersten & Bednarek, 2022; Beers Fägersten & Stapleton, 2023).

Here, *I Swear* is distinct in several ways. As noted, swearing itself is a central theme; and it is an involuntary action, rather than an interpersonal choice. Moreover, swearing is something that the protagonist would wish to avoid and it is experienced as a detrimental aspect of his condition. Nonetheless, as in other productions, this is scripted swearing within a cinematic setting. Choices have been made about where and how to include swear words, both as an aspect of the narrative, and as a media device.

In this paper, I analyse the type of swearing used; interpersonal and relational effects within the story world; and cinematic purposes and effects. This constitutes a very particular (meta-) perspective on scripted swearing and contributes to knowledge of how swearing is used as a media device.

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Sanitising Bond: Sensitivity Reading and the Revision of Offensive Language

Dan McIntyre (Uppsala University, Sweden)

In 2023, Ian Fleming Publications Ltd, the company that holds the rights to the late Ian Fleming's literary work, commissioned a review by sensitivity readers of the language in Fleming's series of James Bond books. Consequently, the Bond books were reissued after a series of linguistic revisions. This came in the wake of a similar updating of Roald Dahl's books for children (see McIntyre, forthcoming 2026). Both cases provoked a furore in the press concerning the practice of revising the work of a long-dead author, and considerable discussion of whether it is right or wrong to do this. But very few press articles engaged with the actual impact of the revisions that were made to the texts. In my presentation, I will address this issue by comparing both the original and revised versions of Ian Fleming's 1954 novel, *Live and Let Die*. On the copyright page of the new edition is the claim that 'This book was written at a time when terms and attitudes which might be considered offensive by modern readers were commonplace. A number of updates have been made in this edition, while keeping as close as possible to the original text and the period in which it is set.' In my analysis I focus on answering three research questions: (i) How commonplace were the terms that have been deemed offensive? (ii) What have these terms been replaced by? (iii) How successful are the revisions at removing potential offence? My analysis is informed by lexical frequency data from the HUM19 corpus of 19th century British and Irish fiction and the LOB corpus of 1960s written British English, as well as by O'Driscoll's (2020) theoretical distinction between taboo words, taboo references and taboo predications. I use the findings from my analysis to address the question posed by Lawrence (2020) of whether sensitivity reading constitutes a form of censorship.

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Neuromixed Interactions in Autistic Romance Novels: A Discursive Approach to Autistic (Im)politeness

Kate Montgomery (Stockholm University, Sweden)



(Im)politeness theories have, to date, been predicated on the assumption that all interactants are neurotypical. Despite recent advances in discursive understandings of (im)politeness (Culpeper, 2010, 2016; Spencer-Oatey, 2011; Leech, 2014), “(im)politeness studies have not made any significant contributions to autism research to date” (Jagodziński, 2026, p. 8) and, in turn, autistic voices have been largely ignored by linguists. In pop culture—and feeding into clinical discourse—the stereotype of the rude autist prevails (ibid.) and autistic characters’ apparent impoliteness or failure to understand pragmatic language is often played for laughs (McGrath, 2017). In recent years, however, there has been an increase in romance novels written by autistic authors, featuring autistic characters. In the present study, I examine interactions between the autistic main characters and their non-autistic love interests, exploring how autists do (im)politeness in three of these novels—*The Kiss Quotient* (Hoang, 2018), *Always Only You* (Liese, 2023), and *The Right Wavelength* (Crewe, 2018).

Preliminary analysis reveals two things of note. First, autistic characters across all three books explicitly explain relevant autistic traits in conversation with their love interests, perhaps as a strategy to mitigate possible misunderstandings or redress unintentional face threats. This may constitute a unique politeness strategy. Second, communicative priorities for autistic interlocutors may be different from those of their non-autistic peers, leading autists to make pragmatic choices that have internal logic for the autistic mind but appear to be impolite to a non-autistic one. I therefore argue that, in the context of the autistic cognitive environment, utterances that may be interpreted as impolite can serve important communicative/expressive functions that neurotypical researchers might fail to see. In other words, pragmatic failure may be attributable to a mismatch between neurotypes rather than any disorder inherent in the autistic mind (Milton, 2012, 2014; Williams, 2021).

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Session #3

1 September, 17:00-19:00

The Boss Wears Impoliteness: Constructing Workplace Power in Pop Culture

Biljana Mišić-Ilić (University of Niš, Serbia)

The phenomenon of impoliteness on screen has given rise to numerous studies of films and TV series, most of which are restricted to the classification of fictional examples according to Culpeper's impoliteness strategies and their use for character and narrative development (Nasirli 2021, Novera & Amalia 2025, Pacheco Baldo 2019, Ratri & Ardi 2019, Rizqi & Afriana 2025).

This presentation investigates the role of impoliteness in pop culture by analyzing the film *The Devil Wears Prada*, with the aim to demonstrate how fictional impoliteness serves a dual purpose: creating a conflict for the characters while simultaneously creating engagement, entertainment, and, possibly, ideological models of workplace power relationships for the audience.

In the theoretical framework that combines Culpeper's (1996, 2011) impoliteness strategies, Locher and Jucker's (2021) pragmatic analytic approach to fictional communication, Dynel's (2013) view of impoliteness as disaffiliative humour in films, and empirical research on impoliteness in workplace and corporate communication (Chang and Haugh 2011, Cortina et al. 2001, Holmes & Stubbe 2015, Holmes and Schnurr 2017, Ladegaard 2012, Meyerhuber, 2020, Schnurr, Marra & Holmes 2008), a multi-level qualitative analysis of the selected film scenes will be performed to address the following research questions:



- 1) At the intradiegetic level, how is impoliteness manifested linguistically and multimodally, to establish power differences and construct a professional identity within the fictional Community of Practice of the fashion journal?
- 2) At the extradiegetic level, how does the film's narrative framing shape the audience's perception, i.e. create entertainment and humour and suspend a moral judgement on the boss?
- 3) At the sociocultural and ideological levels, how does the fictional representation of workplace impoliteness in *The Devil Wears Prada* diverge from the findings on real-world corporate leadership discourse and what corporate power ideologies does this divergence promote?

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Impoliteness and Bullying in American Workplace Sitcoms

Kristy Beers Fägersten (Södertörn University, Sweden)
Cornelia Gerhardt (Saarland University, Germany)

This paper examines the role of linguistic impoliteness in the act of bullying in the American workplace sitcoms *The Office* (2005–2013) and *Parks and Recreation* (2009–2015). As examples of the mockumentary genre, these series feature communication that operates within a multi-layered communicative context, encompassing speakers, addressees, workplace overhearers, film crew observers and, of course, the audience, primarily the fictional mockumentary audience but also the real television audience. Workplace interactions are thus never private but are openly witnessed. Instances of bullying must therefore be considered as not confined to the bullies and their targets, but knowingly occurring in the presence of others. As such, the impact of bullying may extend beyond the immediate target to bystanders and observers. This “blast radius” (Rosander and Nielsen 2024) includes the television audience, raising the question of whether sitcom bullying can entail broader social effects.

Drawing on impoliteness theory (Culpeper 1996, 2011) and interactional approaches to discourse, our analyses focus on bullying as recurrent impolite practices targeting specific people, namely, the characters Toby Flenderson (*The Office*) and Jerry Gergich (*Parks and Recreation*). Using qualitative discourse analysis, we categorize linguistic impoliteness strategies occurring in instances of bullying, and we consider their effects on the primary target as well as co-present characters and the television audience.

The analysis demonstrates that impoliteness in these sitcoms is systematically designed to travel beyond the immediate interaction. By inviting laughter, alignment, or tacit approval from both on-screen bystanders and viewers, impoliteness expands its blast radius, implicating multiple participants in the interactional normalization of bullying. The findings thus suggest that



impoliteness serves a dual function. On one level, it contributes to characterization and comedic effect, relying on audience familiarity with workplace norms and expectations. On another level, it reproduces recognizable patterns of workplace bullying, including power asymmetries, repeated targeting, and the normalization of impoliteness through laughter or even silence. By framing such behavior as comical and inconsequential, these series may serve to normalize linguistic impoliteness and obscure its cumulative impact, construing it as more humorous than harmful. Importantly, the study examines how impoliteness operationalized as bullying in sitcoms positions the bullied character as someone to laugh at, not sympathize with.

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Multimodal Markers of Fictional Impoliteness

Miriam Locher (University of Basel, Switzerland)

Thomas Messerli (University of Basel, Switzerland)

Moments of impoliteness in fictional artefacts can be conveyed through character dialogue, but are also embedded in larger multimodal storytelling. What linguistic and non-linguistic cues do producers of written texts, telecinematic artefacts and performed fiction draw on to paint story moments as impolite?

We approach impoliteness within fiction from the framework of relational work, which explores how linguistic and multimodal cues contribute to relationship and identity construction (Locher 2013). Norms and ideologies of different types (e.g. societal, situational and co-textual norms) are intertwined with the moral order of societies and groups at a particular moment in time and place (Culpeper 2011). Breaching expected behavior and not heeding face needs (e.g. Spencer-Oatey and Wang 2019) is open to interpretations of impoliteness and challenges the moral order. What if such breaches are part of character creation and what if the producers of fictional artefacts wish to make sure that impolite effects are recognized as such? This explorative paper foregrounds



how multimodal cues are exploited to steer audience perception towards impolite interpretation – and to contribute to character creation and plot development (Culpeper and Fernández-Quintanilla 2017; Locher and Jucker 2021; Locher et al. 2023).

Drawing on the interactional pragmatic concept of composite signals (Clark 1996), we examine pop-cultural artefacts holistically, taking into account the perspectives of the reader/viewer and the producer. At the same time, we highlight how individual, multimodal cues are employed to signal intended impoliteness. Among these cues are facial expressions (performed or described); uptake and reactions by characters; and laugh tracks that guide the audience's recognition of incongruities. Examples for this fascinating interplay of different types of cues and different activations of the participation structure are drawn from a small corpus of recent English-language fictional artefacts in an exploratory manner.

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Impoliteness for Characterisation in Yellowstone

Urszula Kizelbach (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poland)

Studies have shown that impoliteness can be successfully applied to the analysis of fictional characters and plots. For example, Culpeper (2001), in his pragmatic study of the film *Scent of a Woman* (1992), uses impoliteness theory to show the transformation



of Charlie Simms, a student at a prestigious school supported by student aid, who earns extra money as a caretaker to a Vietnam War veteran. Similarly, McIntyre and Bousfield (2017) use impoliteness to characterise a scene from the US sitcom *Friends*, showing how the impolite behaviour of the characters moves the action forward. This talk aims to present different facets of impoliteness as a tool for characterisation in the US neo-Western drama TV series *Yellowstone* (2018–2024), which focuses on the Dutton family and their dramatic battles to protect their Montana ranch from developers, the neighbouring Native Nations, and other external threats.

My pragmatic analysis will concentrate on John Dutton's daughter, Beth Dutton (Kelly Reilly), whose fierce and abrupt attitude, vengeful personality, and acute intelligence knock viewers off their feet in almost every episode of the 52-episode series. I will follow a cognitive-psychological model of viewers' comprehension of character, based on cognitive and affective responses (Culpeper and Fernández-Quintanilla 2017).

In *Yellowstone*, impoliteness is central to the presentation of Beth's character and backstory. It indexes her difficult childhood, including her mother's death and Beth's crushing guilt, her unwilling aborted teenage pregnancy, and her father's high expectations (Beth is the only daughter in the family). Her main strategy for survival is to attack people's positive and negative face, belittle and downgrade her enemies in order to crush their spirit, fight and threaten her brother Jamie, and mock men more generally to hide her own insecurities.

Even though she "doesn't care", it is important to investigate Beth's own "face" and how she wants to be perceived by her family and by society. Is impoliteness her way of saving face in public? Does impoliteness primarily reside "in her mind" (Culpeper 2011), or is it also part of her culture and community of practice (Kádár and Haugh 2013) as a financial fixer? This talk will address these questions, using impoliteness as a framework to demonstrate Beth Dutton's linguistic behaviour and its role in her characterisation.

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S12.- Metadiscourse in and on Social Media

Internet memes and other forms of social media discourse have attracted scholarly interest across a range of disciplines for their role in establishing and maintaining social relationships and in shaping public opinion (e.g. Shifman 2014, Milner 2016, Wiggins 2019). Linguistic approaches, studying how language and image combine in ways that resemble linguistic constructions, have also gained prominence (e.g. Dancygier & Vandelanotte 2017, 2025b; Lou 2017; Zenner & Geeraerts 2018), as have studies of the humorous and emotional aspects involved (e.g. Piata 2020; Zappavigna & Logi 2024; Dancygier & Vandelanotte 2025a).

In this seminar, we want to address the use of English, often alongside images and emoji, in examples of various types of metadiscourse 'in' social media – self-reflexive forms of the discourse itself – but also 'on' or 'about' social media – i.e. discussions that emerge in society on social media usage. The former dimension covers so-called meta-memes or 'memes about memes', including deliberate blends of different, normally incongruent memes, or examples which break the 'fourth wall'. It also covers various platform-specific practices which direct and regulate online readers' attention (cf. Hyland 2005), including 'quote-tweeting' (which the 'quoted' may object to: 'why don't you just reply like a normal person'), 'snitch tagging' (explicitly tagging someone to alert them to the fact they are being discussed, typically unfavourably), and the use of 'alt text' to describe appended images verbally (potentially adding ironic commentary that goes beyond description). As to the second dimension – discussions, by commentators and lay people alike, of specific instances of social media usage – one need only think of cases such as US entrepreneur Elon Musk publicly proclaiming "I am become meme", or the various responses to the recent craze for AI-generated memes in the style of the Japanese animation studio Ghibli. The seminar also welcomes analyses of these types of discourse.

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Session #1

2 September, 9:00–11:00

‘I Have One Daughter’: Meta-Pragmatic Play in TikTok Sound Memes

Kate Scott (Kingston University, United Kingdom)

TikTok’s affordance for reusing the audio track of an existing post enables a distinctive form of multimodal metadiscourse where users communicate not only through what they say, but through how they recontextualise another creator’s discourse. This paper analyses the “I Have One Daughter” TikTok sound meme as a form of meta meme in which creators perform patterns of conversational breakdown, stereotype-driven inference, and repeated pragmatic misunderstanding. Although the original audio was not produced as a meme template, its circulation through TikTok’s “Use sound” feature has generated a family of



posts in which creators lip sync the original dialogue while overlaying incongruent captions that map the inferences associated with the original audio onto new discourse contexts. As performances of miscommunication, the memes offer meta-pragmatic commentary on social misunderstandings.

Through analysis of a corpus of meme tokens, including examples that explicitly break the fourth wall, I show how creators use a combination of audio, text, and non-verbal cues to guide the audience toward the intended interpretation. Drawing on assumptions from relevance theory, I argue that these meme variants function by deliberately manipulating layers of ostension and inference. To form a relevant interpretation of a meme token, viewers must access inferences that are highly accessible when listening to the audio and then attribute them to the discourse context represented via the subtitles and other visual components. The meme's dual layer structure exemplifies a platform-specific practice comparable to other social media native forms of metadiscourse, such as quote-tweeting or ironic alt text. The study contributes to emerging pragmatic research on meta-memes and multimodal constructions, as well as to broader discussions of how discourse is used, recontextualized, and reperformed in contemporary social media environments.

Textual Metadiscourse and Humorous Framing in TikTok's POV Genre

Audrey Willoughby (University of Milan, Italy)

This paper examines how textual-layer features in TikTok's POV genre, specifically textual overlays and captions incorporating emojis and hashtags, function as metadiscursive cues that guide humorous interpretation. Following Hyland's (2005) account of metadiscourse as discourse that frames interpretation and signals stance, these textual elements are treated as resources that organise how viewers are oriented toward the audiovisual scene rather than as part of its diegesis. In POV videos, textual cues operate extradiegetically to structure interpretation across the video, contributing both to the establishment of initial expectations and to the interpretation of humorous outcomes.

Textual overlays and captions perform distinct but coordinated functions within this process. Overlays pre-structure interpretation by assigning the viewer a role and delimiting a set of plausible expectations before the audiovisual action unfolds. In doing so, they activate genre expectations shaped by shared meme conventions and establish an interpretive baseline against which subsequent audiovisual cues can be evaluated as humorous deviations (Shifman, 2014). Captions containing text, hashtags and emojis, instead, operate retrospectively, shaping how viewers interpret and align with the humorous resolution once it becomes available. Drawing on Zappavigna and Logi's (2024) account of emojis as paralinguistic resources, this study examines how these



cues, alongside text and hashtags within captions, shape affective tone, signal stance, and position viewers toward an intended humorous reading.

Extending earlier work on how audiovisual modes construct humorous incongruity through modal interplay in the POV genre (Willoughby, forthcoming), this study examines how textual-layer features function as metadiscursive cues that further organise interpretation and render humorous intent legible within shared communicative norms. By analysing these cues alongside the organisation of audiovisual modes, the study offers a more integrated account of how humorous incongruity is coordinated across modes in short-form digital video.

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“I know it’s basic, annoying, and cringe advice”: Metapragmatic Negotiation of Venting Playframes on R/mentalhealth

Eva Trieb1 (University of Vienna, Austria)

Mental-health communities on social media have been critically discussed as sites that may foster epistemic closure and problematic forms of advice or self-understanding. Such concerns often presuppose a model of interaction centered on deliberation and epistemic consensus (Habermas 1981). This study instead conceptualizes these sites as interactional environments in which the norms of communicating about mental health are reflexively negotiated, and prevailing paradigms of advice and care are challenged. This metapragmatic orientation becomes particularly visible in venting discourse on Reddit, where platform-afforded metapragmatic labels (Haugh 2018) – so-called flairs – are employed to index the pragmatic function of posts, define desired responses, and delimit unwanted forms of discourse. By framing posts as expressions of negative affect rather than requests for advice or solutions, venting complicates models of intersubjectively established consensus and raises



the question of how posters and respondents signal adherence to – or deviation from – the specified playframe, understood as an interactional dilemma in CA terms (Speer 2005).

Adopting a corpus-pragmatic approach, this study examines strategies of metapragmatic calibration in 200 venting-flaired post events on r/mentalhealth (Page 2019). The data were coded for explicit metapragmatic strategies (Hübler & Bublitz 2007) and analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively to identify formal–functional patterns.

The analysis shows that both posters and respondents engage in extensive metapragmatic labor oriented toward managing the normative delicacy of venting. Posters routinely frame their contributions as potentially excessive or inappropriate, while respondents pre-emptively downgrade advice or explicitly account for offering it at all. These self-effacing moves, often playful, are accompanied by metadiscursive commentary on advice-giving norms and prior responses, through which discourse-external voices – such as generalized “advice-givers” or hegemonically perceived mental-health discourses – are invoked and delegitimized. What is often characterized as validation can thus be shown to involve systematic metapragmatic labor through which participation norms are interactionally produced and sustained.

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Epistemic Contestation in Online Political Discourse: Metadiscursive Engagement with ‘Fake News’, ‘Disinformation’, and ‘Conspiracy Theory’ in User Comments on US Presidential Elections

Cedric Deschrijver (Ming Chuan University, Taiwan)

The concepts ‘fake news’, ‘disinformation’, and ‘conspiracy theory’ are often perceived as denoting discrete and describable



categories of problematic content. Yet in public discourse, besides functioning as classifications, these terms also function metadiscursively: their use reflects socially-mediated judgments on discourse, ideologically positions participants in interaction, and signals normative ideas about legitimacy in political discourse. This warrants a unifying analysis that explores how these terms are reflexively engaged with in online interactions.

The current paper analyses a corpus of user comments from The New York Times in response to the 2016, 2020, and 2024 US presidential elections, using the comments as a case of mainstream-platform political talk. It analyses how language users mobilized the epistemic labels ‘fake news’, ‘conspiracy theory’ and ‘disinformation’ at various points in time, and how the terms’ usage shifted across these three pivotal moments. Through corpus-linguistic analysis (including collocation and frequency patterns) and qualitative coding, the analysis focuses on language users’ first-order (emic) interpretations: explicit metalanguage and metacommunication revealing participants’ views of the terms’ meanings, their usage, and how they are linked to stereotypical personae.

The concepts’ shared orientation to truth and authority renders their usage across the dataset highly adversarial. The labels frequently function as a means of contestation, foregrounding not only disagreement about certain propositions, but about the terms of discourse themselves. As disputes recurrently target the legitimacy of labeling (rather than merely the factuality of propositions), they make shared epistemic frames harder to sustain. Over time, some terms increasingly attract metadiscourse, attesting to their entrenchment as flashpoints for contesting epistemic authority. The findings have implications for ongoing debates on polarization in contemporary democratic societies, as their usage may escalate disagreement.

S13.- From Crisis to Change: Language and Discourse in the Face of the Ecological Emergency

This seminar will explore how ecological challenges and social threats—including those arising from military conflicts and the ecological and social destruction caused by war—are represented and negotiated in a wide range of ecological texts and discourses. We will investigate how such texts, whether literary or non-literary, verbal or multimodal, contemporary or historical, reflect concerns related to environmental degradation, climate change, and socio-political instability. Equally, the seminar will focus on how these texts and discourses not only depict crises but also engage in forms of resistance, propose practical solutions, and promote positive environmental and social change.

Participants will examine how language shapes our understanding of ecological issues and how discourse can serve as a catalyst



for action. The contributions to the seminar will apply a broad range of theoretical and methodological approaches. These may include, but are not limited to, ecolinguistics, stylistics, ecocriticism, environmental communication (especially from a linguistic perspective), and both critical and positive discourse analysis. We especially welcome research that employs innovative or interdisciplinary frameworks to deepen our understanding of ecological texts and discourses.

Of particular interest are studies that use methodologies from less commonly applied disciplines such as pragmatics, cognitive linguistics, or rhetorical analysis to investigate ecological communication. We encourage contributions that look beyond traditional boundaries, offering fresh insights into how language, media, and narrative shape public attitudes and responses to ecological and social challenges.

Ultimately, this seminar aims to foster a dynamic and inclusive discussion that highlights the power of language in addressing pressing environmental and societal issues. It seeks to bring together scholars from diverse fields to contribute to a growing body of work that not only analyses ecological discourse but also inspires change toward a more sustainable and just future.

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Session #1

31 August, 16:00–18:00



Contesting Crisis: A Critical Analysis of Econarratives of Extractive Environmentalism in Ecuador's Coca River Disaster

Joanna Morley (University of Sussex, United Kingdom)

Jessica Hampton (University of Liverpool, United Kingdom)

The continuing environmental disaster of regressive erosion along the Coca River in the northern Ecuadorian Amazon has generated intense discursive contestation over causality, responsibility, and appropriate response. Central to this contestation is whether the erosion is framed as a “natural” phenomenon or as a consequence of extractive infrastructures, including oil pipelines and the Coca Codo Sinclair hydroelectric project. This paper examines how language and discourse shape understandings of ecological crisis and environmental futures in this context. Drawing on interviews, ethnographic observations, and official texts, we adopt an ecolinguistic approach grounded in distributed language (Steffensen, 2015), conceptualising meaning-making as emerging across actors, institutions, infrastructures, and ecological processes. Within this distributed semiotic system, we analyse the production and clash of econarratives (Stibbe, 2024) through which the disaster is articulated. Particular attention is paid to econarratives that fall outside a simple binary of official versus counter-discourse, revealing how local community knowledges are selectively taken up, marginalised, or re-entextualised within state-led responses. The analysis is informed by a critical ecological discourse perspective (Burnett, 2026), which highlights how certain forms of environmentalism, especially those aligned with extractive and technocratic imaginaries, can reproduce social inequality while presenting themselves as solutions to ecological crisis. We show how official discourses mobilise “green” and transition-oriented framings to naturalise infrastructural interventions, depoliticise uncertainty, and sustain an extractive state imaginary under the pretence of ecological necessity. By foregrounding distributed language and econarratives, this paper shows how ecological crises are discursively produced and governed, and how resistance and alternative socioecological visions emerge unevenly across communities. The study contributes to ecolinguistics and environmental discourse studies by identifying some of the limits of extractive environmentalism and underscoring the need for ecologically and socially just discursive frameworks in contexts of energy transition and environmental emergency.

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Voices of resistance from the Amazonian jungle: Nemonte Nenquimo's *We Will Not Be Saved*

Mariacristina Petillo (University of Bari Aldo Moro, Italy)

The aim of this paper is to focus on the linguistic and rhetorical features of climate change communication, as extensively investigated by Anna Franca Plastina in *Social-Ecological Resilience to Climate Change. Discourses, Frames and Ideologies* (2020), where she describes different varieties of climate change discourse: scientific, technocratic, media, climate-justice, anti-consumerist and youth discourses. Adopting this text as a theoretical and methodological framework, the paper wants to explore the communicative strategies used by Nemonte Nenquimo in *We Will Not Be Saved*, a sort of “memoir of hope and resistance in the Amazon rainforest” published in 2024, and in other essays and public talks. As an environmental justice activist and human rights defender, Nenquimo is one of the most outstanding indigenous leaders today, gaining international acclaim in 2019 when she launched a lawsuit against the Ecuadorian government. In her 2024 memoir, she addresses such keenly-debated topics as climate crisis, colonization and the prejudiced opinion that the Western world has towards indigenous populations. It will be pointed out how Nenquimo's written story bears traces of the Waorani oral culture she belongs to, trying to reproduce on paper the spirit of their storytelling tradition that she intends as a form of epistemic resistance. Furthermore, Nenquimo uses language in a very direct and passionate way, adopting communicative strategies that aim to emotionally involve the reader in the narration of the facts. *We Will Not Be Saved* will be scrutinised taking Plastina's varieties of discourses into account, in order to show how many discourses she is able to intertwine: apart from the youth discourse that immediately comes to the fore, Nenquimo advocates the use of decolonial and indigenous discourses to dismantle Eurocentric viewpoints and cultural stances established by colonialism, proposing instead a deep connection with land and nature.

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Water Scarcity Crisis in the UK and AI “Sustainability”: A Critical Discourse Analysis of AI’s ‘Thirst’ in British Media

Svitlana Pereplotchykova (Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Ukraine)

In June of 2025 the British government issued a statement to “warn” that climate change, growth in population and hi-tech industries are expected to lead the United Kingdom to face a water shortage of 5 billion litres a day by 2055. A special appeal was addressed to “emerging industries, such as data centres” which “require vast amounts of water to cool their systems”, while one of the “small steps” the general public is asked to take is “deleting old emails to reduce pressure on data centre servers” (Environment Agency, 2025). This paper seeks to investigate how the British media, specifically The Guardian, The Times, BBC, The Independent, etc. in 2024-2026 have constructed the discourse of water scarcity regarding the AI water footprint, a subject which, as far as I am aware has not yet been the subject of extended linguistic research, even though bibliography on the environmental impact of AI has grown rapidly and has already called for the development of AI ethics (Lehuedé, 2025). Following Fairclough’s Three-Dimensional Model (1989; 1992) the research analyses the textual strategies used to represent AI as an equally eligible contender of potable water (cf. metaphors like “Thirsty data centers” (Vaughan, 2025)), the discursive practice to highlight the reliance of the government on “AI Growth Zones” which it believes may help with new job creation (Milmo, 2025), and “the transparency gap” regarding the information the data centres provide about corporate water usage (Horton 2025), which is framed as a structural



threat impeding the UK's ability to plan its future, and finally the social practice, as AI infrastructure becomes the main enemy for sustainable agriculture (Kenny, 2025). The analysis shows that the authorities try to construct via the media the idea of a positive contribution of AI industry to the development of the country. The British media, however, are more concerned about the future of ordinary citizens and focus on the ecological threats for local communities which are literally already in the "jaws of death" (Barradale, 2026). Thus the UK media act as a kind of resistance to official techno-optimism. The paper witnesses the shift the media have taken by questioning the perception of AI as a solution to the climate crisis.

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Session #2

1 September, 9:00–11:00

From “False Solutions” to Agroecology: Modality and Beneficial Discourses in Reports by the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP)**Jorge Fernández-Avilés (University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain)**

The Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP) strives to achieve agriculture, trade and food systems that are beneficial for global and local communities, ecosystems and social justice. To this end, they produce reports promoting sustainable agricultural and trade practices through an evidence-based critique of the industrial food and agriculture system and its contribution to the climate crisis and social inequality. The reports expose how large agribusinesses, particularly in the meat, dairy, and fertilizer sectors, endorse so-called “false solutions” (Lilliston, B. & Murphy 2022), such as carbon offsetting, biogas, and “insetting,” employed to greenwash environmentally harmful practices while sustaining a growth-oriented, extractivist business model (cf. Halliday 2001). Conceptualized as communication in the public sphere (Koller & Wodak 2008), the reports articulate an ecosophy (Naess 1995) that evaluates agricultural practices and corporate responses regarding their ecological consequences, thereby challenging dominant corporate sustainability discourses that suppress ecological reasoning in favor of utilitarian, market-based solutions.

This study investigates the role of modal constructions, as linguistic resources which texturize identity, commitments and realities (Fairclough 2003) in discursively creating the IATP’s ecosophy. It assesses how modality contributes to legitimizing beneficial discourses (Stibbe 2021) aligned with ecocentric values, while delegitimizing neoliberal, market-driven approaches to climate mitigation as ecologically destructive (Alexander 2000, 2009). Drawing on corpus-assisted ecolinguistics (Poole 2022), Ecological Discourse Analysis (Stibbe 2021), and ecostylistics (Virdis 2022), the analysis combines taxonomical models of deontic, epistemic and attitudinal modality (Simpson 1993; Martin & White 2005) to examine a self-compiled corpus of ten IATP reports published between 2018 and 2024, addressing climate change, carbon emissions, fertilizers, and agribusiness. The study tackles the following research questions: (1) What modal categories are used to express ecological responsibility, critique corporate practices, or advocate policy reform in sustainable agriculture? (2) How are modal constructions involved in rhetorical strategies that promote beneficial ecological discourses?



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A Planet that Could Be But is Not: Disnarration in Wangari Maathai's Postcolonial Ecological Texts

Daniela Francisca Virdis (University of Cagliari, Italy)

Falling within the aims and scope of ecostylistics, and against the background of postcolonial ecological discourse, this presentation investigates the narrative device of disnarration in postcolonial ecological texts by Kenyan politician and environmentalist Wangari Maathai. The texts are drawn from Inspirationbase, a collection of leadership speeches on ecology and social justice (<https://www.ecoling.net/inspirationbase>). As such, this ecostylistic scrutiny is the first to systematically explore disnarration in discourses with environmental preoccupations. The research purpose of the presentation is to prove that, in Maathai's texts, disnarration is utilised to describe a planet that could be but is not, and to set down the necessary ecological and social features marking it. To this end, the presentation reviews the literature defining the theory and practice of disnarration and identifying its several categories and



stylistic operators. Moving from this literature review, as required by the disciplinary practices of stylistics, the analytical section qualitatively explores the extremely rich dataset by providing an accurate ecostylistic examination of the different categories of disnarration found in it. In this way, the most frequent disnarration patterns are brought to light, along with the ecological and social messages they convey. Leading on from this presentation and its results, future research on disnarration in both literary and non-literary texts with ecological concerns would be fruitful. Among other possibilities, such work could scrutinise the categories and stylistic markers of disnarration in further texts written by the same author or taken from Inspirationbase by applying either a qualitative or quantitative approach. For these reasons, this project is a contribution from the interdisciplinary field of ecostylistics to the existing scholarship devoted to language and ecology. Furthermore, the project also fully aligns with the seminar theme and with the ecolinguistic commitment for sustainable futures and ecojustice, with a special focus on multicultural contexts and encounters.

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Reconciliation with the Land through Her People: Indigenous Discourses of Resistance Against Consumerist Narratives in Regenerative Tourism

Elena Mattei (University of Bergamo, Italy)

This paper examines how multimodal discourses construct resistance narratives and activate citizen participation by advancing land justice, Indigenous agency, and ecological reconciliation within regenerative tourism (Sheldon, 2025). These challenge dominant neoliberal narratives of commodification and spectacle, foregrounding marginalized voices that employ language and imagery to foster ethical engagement, reciprocal care, and systemic transformation (Mattei & Maci, 2025). Drawing on corpus-based Systemic Functional Linguistics, social semiotics, and tourism discourse (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Bateman



et al., 2017), the study integrates automatic annotation tools (Sketch Engine), and manual visual coding (SRI Tagging, Pibiri & Mattei, 2020) to identify multimodal patterns in such alternative discourses. The dataset comprises over one million tokens and 1,000 posts from regenerative tourism Instagram accounts—including *Playa Viva*, *Destination Indigenous*, *Lady Elliot Island*, and *Elevated Destinations*—supplemented by the annotation and statistical measurement of a sub-sample of 100 images through a data-driven tagging system capturing settings, re-actions, gaze direction, participant roles, and shot composition. Linguistic analysis focuses on *Transitivity* and *Appraisal* resources, revealing how land and Indigenous communities are constructed as active agents of ecological stewardship and collective well-being. Linguistic patterns, particularly, emphasize material processes of conservation, *relational attributive/identifying* descriptions of biodiversity, and *Composition* resources that evoke empathy and ethical reflection on the complexity and balance of ecosystems, while avoiding superficial aestheticism or idealized spectacle, conveyed through *Reactions* that capitalize on hedonistic pleasure. Visual analysis demonstrates a shift from aestheticized landscapes typical of conventional tourism - which idealizes nature as a static, consumable good, depicting it through long, high-angle shots that position viewers as passive observers (Mattei, 2025) - toward imagery that depicts land as a living, nurturing entity. Eye-level shots, direct gazes, collaborative action processes encourage, eventually, citizen agency in cultural preservation and ecological justice.

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Session #3

1 September, 17:00–19:00



Urban Nature Narratives in Tourism Discourse: An Ecostylistic Comparison of Public Parks in Tokyo and London

Masayuki Teranishi (University of Hyogo, Japan)

Azumi Yoshida (Okayama University, Japan)

Masako Nasu (Okayama University, Japan)

This presentation investigates how urban parks are discursively constructed as spaces of nature, culture, and environmental value in tourism texts, through a comparative ecostylistic analysis of parks in Tokyo and London. While ecostylistics has increasingly examined how language shapes perceptions of the natural world, such research has focused primarily on rural landscapes, heritage sites, or national parks. By contrast, this study considers urban nature, defined as green spaces embedded within densely populated metropolitan environments where ecological pressures, climate vulnerability, and social rhythms intersect. The analysis is based on multilingual tourism texts collected through fieldwork at parks and other sites, including signage, guidebooks, brochures, and official website descriptions. Building on Stibbe's (2015) framework of "stories we live by" and Virdis's (2022) ecostylistic methodology, this study analyzes how multilingual tourism texts portray narratives of nature in urban parks in Tokyo and London. The analysis examines how these texts frame the relationship between humans and the environment (particularly through representations of parks as spaces of restoration, co-existence, cultural identity, and ecological stewardship) and highlights the lexical, metaphorical, and evaluative patterns that construct environmental meanings across both cities.

Informed by Cronin's (2017) theory of eco-translation and recent comparative analyses of Japanese tourism texts (Teranishi & Yoshida, 2024), the study further considers how English and Japanese versions of park descriptions differ in the values and ecological orientations they foreground. Translation choices are shown to influence how nature is framed, as a cultural asset, environmental resource, or shared public commons, thus shaping visitors' environmental attitudes and expectations. By comparing how two global cities articulate nature's role in urban life, this study highlights tourism discourse's potential to promote environmental awareness and sustainable cultural narratives. It further examines how linguistic and translational practices foster more ecologically engaged understandings of urban nature amid ongoing environmental crises.

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Cemeteries and Environmental Sustainability: A Positive Multimodal Discourse Analysis

Sole Alba Zollo (University of Naples Federico II, Italy)

In recent times, as sustainability has become one of the most significant global priorities, both public and private sectors have started to develop a myriad of actions, projects and initiatives that support environmental protection and social responsibility. Even cemeteries, traditionally viewed as places of remembrance and cultural preservation, have been recognized as multifunctional ecological assets within urban spaces, acknowledging the important impact they can have on the environment and society.

Historically, cemeteries have posed ecological challenges, but recently municipalities have started to explore their potential for promoting sustainability and well-being. If designed or managed in a sustainable way, cemeteries can mitigate the effects of climate change by enhancing biodiversity and improving citizens' well-being, as they can “provide recreational opportunities, promote mental health, and offer habitat preservation for local flora and fauna” (Jaszczak et al. 2025: 4). Therefore, green cemetery tourism, educational and cultural activities and good practices, such as adopting eco-friendly burial methods (natural burials and biodegradable materials), can actively make a contribution to ecological stability. Consequently, in line with the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly Goal 11, which promotes sustainable cities and communities, several cemetery websites have started to promote this transformation underlining the pivotal role that cemeteries can play in environmental sustainability.

By combining Social Semiotics (Kress and van Leeuwen 2021) and Positive Discourse Analysis (Bartlett 2009; Stibbe 2015; Hughes 2018), the present study will investigate a sample of cemetery webpages (<https://www.greenburialcouncil.org/>; <https://www.resthavenmemorialpark.com/>) which promote sustainable cemeteries.

The analysis will try to detect the key multimodal discursive features aimed at portraying cemeteries not only as significant cultural landscapes, but also as key actors in sustainable development by promoting eco-friendly practices and environmental mitigation



strategies such as eco-friendly burial options and sustainability-focused tours. In addition, a positive discourse analysis approach will allow us to see how the webpages under investigation promote not only environmental solutions but positive discourses aimed at persuading citizens to consider cemeteries as places to raise awareness on positive ecology and inspire action.

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Ecological Concerns in the Linguistic Landscape of a City: The Case of Białystok, Poland

Agata Rozumko (University of Białystok, Poland)

Linguistic Landscape research examines the written texts displayed on signs in public spaces, including street signs, advertisements, business names, and graffiti (Pennycook 2025). This paper focuses specifically on signage related to ecological issues, such as waste segregation, environmental protection, and human–non-human relations involving animals and plants. The study is based on a corpus of photographed signs (mostly public notice signs and advertisements) collected in Białystok, a medium-sized city of approximately 300,000 inhabitants in north-eastern Poland, in the years 2025 and 2026.

The analysis is mostly qualitative and follows the principles of Ethnographic Linguistic Landscape Analysis (ELLA) as proposed by Blommaert (2013). In line with the ELLA framework, the study examines signs in relation to their authors, intended audiences, locations, and communicative functions. The signs are also analysed as multimodal (verbal and visual) pragmatic acts (cf. Jucker 2024), with particular attention to issues of politeness. Politeness is examined from the perspective of Brown and Levinson's



(1987) theory, with particular reference to positive and negative politeness strategies. Attention is given to issues such as the use of address terms and the types of speech acts employed in the signs. The study aims to establish which ecological concerns are raised by various city institutions through public signage and how they are communicated to the inhabitants.

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Session #4

2 September, 9:00–11:00

Communicating the Ecological Emergency through Coffee: An Analysis of Italian Coffee

Daniela Giordano (University of Naples Parthenope, Italy)

This paper investigates how Italian coffee culture is discursively mobilised to address the contemporary ecological emergency, focusing on how sustainability, climate change, and social responsibility (United Nations 1992, p. 2) are communicated through corporate coffee discourse. Drawing on an ecolinguistic perspective, the study examines how language and multimodal resources contribute to shaping narratives of crisis and change (Stibbe, 2015) within the Italian coffee sector, a domain that embodies both material vulnerability to climate change (Bunn *et al.* 2014) and strong symbolic value as part of Italy's intangible cultural heritage.

The research adopts Stibbe's (2015) "stories-we-live-by" framework to uncover and evaluate dominant ecological narratives embedded in corporate communication. This conceptual lens is integrated into a mixed methodological approach that combines ecolinguistics and multimodality (among others, Fill & Mühlhäusler 2001, Jewitt *et al.* 2016, van Leeuwen 2005) to analyse materials produced by Italian coffee companies, including Illycaffè, Lavazza, and Caffè Mokambo. The corpus comprises sustainability reports and campaign narratives, which are examined to explore how ecological meanings are discursively articulated across verbal and visual modes.



The paper aims to contribute to ongoing debates on the role of language in fostering ecological awareness and cultural change, especially in light of the vulnerability of coffee systems and biodiversity under climate change (Davis et al. 2019). Ultimately, it argues that coffee discourse can function not merely as a vehicle for information, but as a discursive space in which ecological values, identities, and future-oriented imaginaries are actively constructed.

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Environmental Discourse in the Clean Beauty Sector: A Comparison of UK-Based and US-Based Company Profiles

Serena Ghiselli (University of Macerata, Italy)

This study offers a contrastive analysis of how environmental and climate-related communication in the clean beauty industry



is culturally and institutionally shaped in the United Kingdom and the United States. It adopts a mixed-methods approach that integrates quantitative corpus tools (Kilgarriff et al. 2014; Gillings et al. 2023) with qualitative discourse analysis (Swales 1990; Bhatia 1993, 2014; Fairclough 2023). The analysis focuses on identifying collocation patterns and examining textual organisation in order to explore how company profiles emphasise, on the one hand, concrete actions undertaken to mitigate environmental degradation and climate change and, on the other, efforts aimed at raising awareness and encouraging positive behavioural change (Stöckl and Molnar 2017; Fitchett and Caruana 2015; Kenalemang-Palm and Eriksson 2023; Silchenko and Askegaard 2020).

The dataset consists of company profile texts published on the “About Us” pages of 36 UK-based and 39 US-based clean beauty brands. UK brands were selected from those certified by the Soil Association, while the US sample was drawn from a list published by CertClean, a North American skincare certification body. These texts are examined to determine how environmental responsibility is discursively framed, with particular attention to key semantic domains, rhetorical strategies, and genre-specific moves.

The study addresses two main research questions: (i) how environmental sustainability is framed in corporate self-presentations within the clean beauty sector, and (ii) whether systematic differences emerge between UK-based and US-based companies in terms of discourse patterns and communicative priorities. By comparing similarities and differences across the two national contexts, the analysis aims to provide a clearer picture of how clean beauty brands position themselves in relation to ecological responsibility and climate awareness. Ultimately, the findings are intended to contribute to ongoing discussions on environmental discourse, corporate sustainability communication, and the role of branding in shaping public perceptions of ethical and eco-conscious consumption.

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Ecological Epistemology and the Debate over Anglicisms: Deconstructing Linguistic Boundaries

Naoko Hosokawa (Tokyo University of Science, Japan)

This study analyses the metalinguistic discourse surrounding the phenomenon of vocabulary borrowing to propose a discursive deconstruction by drawing on recent developments in ecological science. It focuses on Japan, where the use of English-derived vocabulary is a highly controversial subject. Anglicisms are often depicted as 'invasive' through the biological metaphor of invasive species threatening the survival of native species. Such discourse reflects a persistent binary between domestic and foreign elements in language. As the international presence of English grows ever more prominent in the context of globalisation, the debates appear to have become fiercer, fuelling concerns over the sustainability of Japanese. This paper questions whether such defensive, dichotomous discourses genuinely support linguistic resilience in an era of globalisation. Since language plays a central role in ecological learning (Jickling et al. 2018) and serves as an ecological resource embodying unique local knowledge (Ludwig et al. 2021), it is appropriate to analyse linguistic discourses through an ecological perspective. Employing the methodology of critical discourse analysis, this study investigates how debates on vocabulary borrowing reproduce dualistic worldviews and seeks to deconstruct them using ecological epistemology. In this framework, traditional binaries—such as human versus non-human (Rangan 2019), native versus invasive (Pearce 2015), or beneficial versus harmful (Loeuille 2023)—are increasingly problematised in favour of a new approach that recognises ecosystems as dynamic, interconnected networks (Carvalho 2016). Analogously, recent linguistic scholarship has shifted towards frameworks emphasising hybridity and interconnection, exemplified by



critiques of the dichotomy between native and non-native speakers, as well as the growing interest in translanguaging in language acquisition. Building on these findings, this paper argues that current discourses on vocabulary borrowing remain constrained by dichotomies. For languages to develop greater resilience, it advocates an alternative epistemology grounded in an understanding of the linguistic ecosystem as a dynamic and interconnected network.

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The Stories We Teach By: Illuminating Ecological Meaning in English Language Teaching Materials

Edward Rutledge (University of Rovira i Virgili, Spain)



In this era of ecological polycrisis, second language (L2) education, and English Language Teaching (ELT) in particular, has emerged as a significant realm for disseminating information that can shape learners' perspectives regarding the living world. By either fostering or stymieing worldviews that encourage positive attitudes and compel action toward protecting and restoring planetary ecosystems, educational materials used in L2 pedagogy can be counted among the contributing factors that, to paraphrase R. Buckminster Fuller, may determine whether humanity qualifies for continuance in the universe. Applying an ecopedagogical approach to a corpus derived from ELT coursebooks currently used by young learners in Catalonia reveals the linguistic framings and prevalent ideologies around the climate crisis and the environment writ large embedded in the “stories we teach by” that shape learners' ecological worldviews. This methodological framework investigates the linguistic construction of environmental discourse within the corpus by applying content analysis to identify and categorize thematic patterns, narrative structures, and visual elements of environmental discourse, and Hallidayan transitivity analysis to examine how meaning is constructed around environmental themes, identify processes and participants within narratives, and reveal implicit ideologies and the positioning of agents and actions related to nature and the environment. The findings offer valuable insights for educators, curriculum developers, and researchers by illuminating how the language deployed in ELT depicts the environment and shapes learners' understanding of ecological issues, and how educational discourse can serve as a catalyst for, or barrier to, ecological awareness and action. Practical recommendations are proposed for a transformative, ecolinguistically informed, ELT model that fosters L2 competence, critical thinking, and ecoliteracy.

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S14.- Beyond Words: Literary, Cultural, and Linguistic Multimodality in Joseph Conrad's Narratives

Joseph Conrad's narratives serve as a compelling case study for multimodal exploration, blending literary, linguistic, and cultural dimensions into rich, evocative works. This seminar examines how multimodal approaches illuminate Conrad's complex storytelling, focusing on the interplay between linguistic structures, literary techniques, and cultural contexts. By studying works such as *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim* through a multimodal lens, we uncover the myriad ways Conrad crafts narratives that resonate across boundaries of language, imagery, and ideology. From a linguistic perspective, Conrad's use of layered language – marked by subtleties, ambiguities, and multilingual influences – offers insights into the tension between precision and interpretation, a hallmark of his writing style. For instance, the frequent inclusion of polysemous expressions and deliberate syntactic disruptions mirrors the fragmented realities his characters endure. Such linguistic strategies reflect Conrad's own experience as a polyglot navigating cultural and linguistic hybridity, lending his texts an inherent multimodal quality. Literary



criticism highlights Conrad's innovations in narrative form and technique, such as his use of frame narratives and unreliable narrators, which invite readers to engage critically with his texts. These devices create a multimodal interplay between textual layers and meanings, fostering a dynamic interpretative process. For instance, Conrad's frame narrative in *Heart of Darkness* juxtaposes oral storytelling with textual accounts, producing a narrative experience that transcends singular modalities. On a cultural level, Conrad's thematic focus on colonialism, modernity, and existential angst provides fertile ground for multimodal analysis. The cultural contexts embedded in his works – whether through geographical descriptions, historical references, or ideological critiques – reveal a depth of engagement that transcends mere storytelling, creating a network of semiotic connections.

In such context, multimodal analysis enriches traditional literary criticism by incorporating visual, auditory, and cultural dimensions, reflecting the complexity of contemporary textual interaction in an increasingly digitized and globalized world. This seminar underscores the potential to engage with recent critical approaches, highlighting how multimodal analysis aligns with contemporary emphases on interdisciplinarity, cross-cultural perspectives, and the integration of diverse media forms. By integrating linguistic precision, literary criticism, and cultural analysis, this seminar not only deepens our understanding of Conrad's works but also underscores the significance of multimodality as a framework for exploring literature in its broadest dimensions.

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Session #1

2 September, 9:00–11:00

Introduction. Beyond Words: Literary, Cultural, and Linguistic Multimodality in Joseph Conrad's Narratives

Kim Salmons (St Mary's University, Twickenham, London, United Kingdom)

Tania Zulli ("Gabriele d'Annunzio" University of Chieti-Pescara, Italy)

Multimodality in the Gawęda Tale in Conrad's "A Personal Record"

Sylwia Janina Wojciechowska (Ignatianum University in Krakow, Poland)

Joseph Conrad's "A Personal Record: Some Reminiscences" has been celebrated as an autobiographical narrative which, however replete with embellishments and fictions, conveys certain truths regarding the author's past. The paper is aimed at examining the



truth engaging with the multimodal rendition of Polishness as experienced by the author in the Eastern borderlands of Poland. It is argued that, with the implied reader being the British, or else, Western Europeans, Conrad must have reached for means other than linguistics in order to recreate the uniqueness of his Polish childhood and adolescence. Thus, next to the classical epic, in “A Personal Record”, he engages with the *gawęda* tale, i.e., a form characteristic of the Polish epic tradition. Next to deploying a specific language, Conrad’s *gawęda* also engages with other means of expression, means that activate various senses: the vision is created with the help of synaesthesia which builds upon auditory, tactile, and kinesthetic imagery. The paper discusses the multimodal means in terms of their contribution to the rendition of the Polish atmosphere. Apparently, with its multimodal appeal, the *gawęda* tale enabled Conrad to invest his narrative with a distinct Polish character that felt foreign and attractive to his British public.

Translating Otherness: Multimodal Dimensions of Cultural Translation in Joseph Conrad’s Narratives

Joanna Skolik (University of Opole, Poland)

Joseph Conrad’s fiction emerges from the intersections of languages, cultures, and sensibilities — a continuous act of translation that goes beyond words. As a Polish-born writer who adopted English, Conrad inhabited what he once called a “double vision,” turning linguistic displacement into a creative mode of perception in which the traces of both languages remain simultaneously present. His narratives embody what Homi Bhabha terms cultural translation: the restless negotiation of identity, belonging, and otherness across overlapping cultural and semiotic borders. While *Heart of Darkness* remains a pivotal text for exploring the limits of language and representation, this paper turns to “Amy Foster,” “Falk,” and *Victory* to reveal the multimodal textures of Conrad’s engagement with otherness — where linguistic incomprehension becomes both a theme and a narrative strategy. In “Amy Foster,” communication collapses not through silence alone but through a failure of shared modalities — gestures, sounds, and cultural cues that cannot be translated. “Falk” shifts this dynamic into the realm of embodied restraint and unspoken emotion, where meaning emerges through gesture, rhythm, and moral tension rather than speech. *Victory*, by contrast, transforms the crisis of translation into a metaphysical and affective dialogue between isolation and connection, reason and empathy.

Through a multimodal framework, the paper argues that Conrad stages cultural translation not merely as a linguistic or thematic concern but as a sensory and ethical process. His texts invite readers to listen, see, and feel the boundaries of communication — to experience meaning as something translated across voices, bodies, and worlds. In doing so, Conrad anticipates the essence of multimodal storytelling: literature that speaks, and listens, beyond words.



Session #2

2 September, 15:00–17:00

Introduction. Beyond Words: Literary, Cultural, and Linguistic Multimodality in Joseph Conrad's Narratives

Kim Salmons (St. Mary's University London Twickenham, United Kingdom)

Tania Zulli ("Gabriele d'Annunzio" University of Chieti-Pescara, Italy)

Conrad's Paintings in *Heart of Darkness*

Ewa Kujawska-Lis (University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn, Poland)

Heart of Darkness is often quoted as the Conrad text that contains ekphrasis – the verbal representation of a graphic representation, an explicit example of multimodality in literature, since in ekphrasis one mode (image) is represented via a different mode (natural language). In the novella, ekphrasis is exemplified by the sketch in oil of a blindfolded woman painted by Kurtz. While this is obviously the only actual (though non-existent outside the fictional world) painting mentioned in the text, I wish to argue that Conrad's descriptions of nature and people are paintings created within the verbal mode. Additionally, these descriptions frequently enter an intertextual dialogue with extratextual elements, blending the textual layer with the cultural subtext. To illustrate the painterly quality of Conradian descriptions, I will analyse depictions of the Congolese jungle that are replete with details and colours and can serve as blueprints for paintings, often owing to framing, focusing or scanning. I will also indicate the use of figurative language (especially metaphor and simile) in descriptions that are related to the extratextual reality, such as the image of the Thames (evoking the reality of river transportation in the mid-nineteenth century); the image of Marlow as Buddha (informing a highly cultural reading of this narrator); and the image of the grove of death (serving as an indictment of colonization). In each case the metaphor or simile activates a mental image, one that needs complementation at the referential level, as the textual level (the verbal layer) is insufficient for the interpretation, thus blending the verbal with the visual.



Natural Environment, Geography, and Colours: A Multimodal Analysis of *Heart of Darkness*

Simona Laghi (University of Rome Tor Vergata, Italy)

This paper examines *Heart of Darkness* through a multimodal, linguistically grounded framework, exploring how the language of visual perception represents the natural environment within the narrative and how meaning is constructed through Conrad's impressionistic language. While literary criticism has highlighted how rhetorical structures and visual realism are central to Conrad's *ars poetica*, this analysis develops such insights from a linguistic perspective. Departing from Halliday's theory of semiotic metafunctions (1978) and extending it through Kress's social-semiotic view of the "grammar of colour" and "colour as a semiotic mode" (2002), the language belonging to the semantic domain of visual perception, including colour and light, is analysed as a semiotic resource of meaning that goes beyond mere description and intersects with the language of geography and the natural environment. The aim is to show how visual perception is enacted within the narrative and becomes meaningful at the level of discourse.

Methodologically, the study combines corpus-based analysis and multimodal discourse analysis. After analysing words belonging to the semantic domains of visual perception, geography, and the natural environment by comparing *Heart of Darkness* with other water- and sea-centred Conrad novels, the quantitative data are interpreted through Kress's social-semiotic framework. Finally, the study delves into lexical patterns that echo ecological discourses, thus demonstrating that *Heart of Darkness* anticipates questions concerning relational views of human and non-human life, as well as tensions between power and the exploitation of the natural world. These tensions challenge an anthropocentric view and resonate with issues at the core of the political agenda of the twenty-first century. This linguistically grounded multimodal perspective thus goes beyond words alone, supporting literary interpretation by highlighting the interaction between language, visual perception, and discourse constructed through the text.

Where is the *Heart of Darkness*? Multimodal Analysis of the Representation of Colonialism and Existential Angst in Conrad's Novella *Heart of Darkness*

Merima Osmankadic (University of Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Conrad's novella *Heart of Darkness*, though written and set at the end of the 19th century, continues to have a very clear contemporary relevance. Today, we are witnesses yet again to extreme inequality in terms of power relations, access to and distribution of



resources and even in terms of sheer visibility on the international public scene. Because of this, the compelling topics of *Heart of Darkness*, imperialism, colonialism and existential angst are equally relevant in today's alienated society as they have been before. The theoretical framework of this paper draws on Halliday's concept of three metafunctions of language, functionalist stylistics and multimodal stylistics as outlined by Nørgard (2014). The paper tries to answer the following research question:

RQ: Can a deep qualitative analysis of the language of *Heart of Darkness* and the layout of the pages of the novella show that what Said (1994: 34) calls "Conrad's tragic limitation" not to be able to "conclude that imperialism had to end so that 'natives' could live free from European domination" is actually Conrad's genius prophesying that imperialism and colonialism lie at the heart of human existence?

The methodology employed is an analytical toolkit consisting of transitivity, modality, cohesion and page layout analysis. This methodology is expected to show a multimodal crafting of the world of horror by Conrad.



S15.- Linguistic Creativity in the Age of Generative AI

This seminar aims to bring together linguists of all stripes (e.g. those interested in the study of English semantics, morphology, phraseology, syntax, or human and machine translation from/into English) who share an interest in the ways in which the recent advances in AI-enhanced language technology, such as LLM-powered chatbots and neural machine translation tools, are reshaping scholarly views of linguistic creativity. We distinguish between the process and product sides of creativity (see e.g. Runco 2024) and assume the existence of a cline between rule-based F(ixed)-creativity and rule-bending E(xtending)-creativity / X(travagant)-creativity (see e.g. Bergs 2019, Koliopoulou & Walker 2024), which leads us to narrow the seminar's focus to linguistic products characterized by a distance from the pole of F-creativity — we take the concept of linguistic creative output to broadly encompass any innovation that is not strictly predictable from the rules of the linguistic system.

We invite empirical contributions on topics including (but not limited to) the following: linguistic analyses of AI-generated creative outputs, including their biases and other limitations; AI-based linguistic analyses of creative outputs, including their biases and other limitations; creativity ratings of AI-generated vs. hybrid (e.g. through post-editing) vs. human-generated outputs, in terms of originality and/or acceptability (including grammaticality judgments).

Papers may focus on a large variety of creative outputs, whether they are created from scratch, derived from previous creative work, or translated.



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Session #1

1 September, 9:00–11:00



Linguistic Creativity in the Age of Generative AI: Setting the Scene

Vincent Renner (Lumière University, Lyon 2, France)

Marie-Aude Lefer (UCLouvain, Belgium)

Caroline Rossi (University Grenoble Alpes, France)

Recent advances in AI-enhanced language technology, such as LLM-powered chatbots and neural machine translation tools, are reshaping scholarly views of linguistic creativity. While AI systems can demonstrably combine, explore, and transform ideas, the creativity of their outputs remains debatable (Boden 2014). Artificial creative processes have recently been characterized as a “non-cognitive, non-intentional, and non-authentic generative mechanism” (Da Pelo 2025). And yet, because artificial outputs may be “functionally indistinguishable” from human creative outputs (Bender & Hanna 2025: 24), conceptual distinctions are needed to avoid anthropocentric bias and clarify “the theoretical boundaries between natural and artificial creativity” (Da Pelo 2025: 1).

In this introductory talk, we start by defining and distinguishing the process and product sides of creativity (Runco 2024). We discuss computational co-creativity (or collaborative creativity) as a key notion in “recognizing the intricate dynamics necessary for human-AI collaboration” (Deshpande & Magerko 2024: 146). A typology of creativity in linguistic products is then presented, in which we assume the existence of a cline between rule-based F(ixed)-creativity and rule-bending E(xtending)-creativity / X(travagant)-creativity (Bergs 2019, Koliopoulou & Walker 2024). This leads us to narrow the workshop’s focus to linguistic products characterized by a distance from the pole of F-creativity — we take the concept of linguistic creative output to broadly encompass any innovation that is not strictly predictable from the rules of the linguistic system.

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Creative Extension or Overgeneralisation? Suffixation as a Test Case for Linguistic Creativity in LLMs

Alina Reşceanu (University of Craiova, Romania)

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Andra-Maria Florescu (University of Bucharest, Romania)

Recent advances in AI-enhanced language technologies have intensified interest in linguistic creativity, particularly in the extent to which Large Language Models (LLMs) can produce linguistically constrained outputs (cf. Dinu & Florescu 2024, 2025, Dinu et al. 2025a). This paper investigates lexical creativity in LLMs through a focused analysis of English suffixation, a productive and well-described word-formation process that offers a testing ground for distinguishing creative extension from overgeneralisation. Creativity is not approached as a psychological capacity, but as observable linguistic behaviour emerging from the interaction between rule-governed structure and innovation. It is conceptualised along a scale ranging from rule-based (F-) creativity to rule-bending extending (E-) creativity (Sampson 2016).



The analysis draws on a dataset of suffixation outputs generated by 24 LLMs in controlled word-formation tasks targeting the suffixes *-ish* and *-able* (Dinu et al. 2025a, 2025b). Lexical creativity is operationalised through a theory-driven evaluation framework combining six linguistically motivated criteria: morphological well-formedness, constructional compatibility, productivity, novelty, originality, and expressiveness. All outputs were evaluated manually by the authors based on a 0-2 scale for each criterion. The criteria were aggregated into two composite measures, a Morphological Competence Index and a Creativity Index, which made possible the comparison across LLMs and suffix types without reducing creativity to a single numerical score.

The results show that LLMs exhibit high morphological competence, but more variable creative behaviour, sensitive to suffix-specific constraints. Semantically flexible suffixes such as *-ish* tend to produce controlled and predictable extensions, whereas *-able* triggers creative extensions that approach overgeneralisation. There are very few cases combining strong novelty with clear formal violations, indicating that LLM creativity tends to operate within established morphological constructions.

These findings suggest that lexical creativity in LLMs involves exploring morphological patterns within constraints, with innovation emerging at the boundary between creative extension and overgeneralisation.

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Human vs AI Creativity in Word Creation

Valentin Diekmannshenke (Trier University, Germany)

Creative and rule-bending processes of word creation are often assumed to be used when patterns and rules of standard word formations no longer meet the need for more creative and innovative words (Körtvélyessy et al. 2022, Schröder and Mühleisen 2010). Blending and creative compounds seem to be such patterns of creation, enlarging the range of possible products (Sampson 2016 and Schmid 2025). Those patterns are particularly found in the domain of product names (Ronneberger-Sibold 2004). Recent developments within AI have opened up a new perspective on this topic as AI can also be used to form creative novel words. This paper investigates how the process of word creation changes when humans have assistance from generative AI. It addresses two questions:

- 1) How do human creations and AI creations differ linguistically?
- 2) How does being assisted by AI affect the process?

An experimental study was conducted to compare product names created solely through human creative thinking to words created with the assistance of generative AI. Two groups of 50 adult native English speakers were asked to form five novel product names based on given descriptions. The experimental group used ChatGPT to create those product names, whereas the control group came up with their own ideas.

Examples of creations for the same product are given in (1) and (2).

(1) Slice-o-matic (participant) (2) FlexiCut Pro (AI)

(1) Trimora (participant) (2) NipNinja (AI)

Results show that product names created with the assistance of AI differ from human creations. For example, significantly more compounds and compounds containing blends were formed when AI was involved. Also, those creations are on average 0.23 constituents longer than human creations. The results contribute to the research on how the assistance of AI may affect the process of word creation, with important implications for theories of human creativity in word formation.

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Foregrounding and AI: Imitating Christina Rossetti's Style through ChatGPT-Processed Checklists

Davide Castiglione (Vilnius University, Lithuania)

This study explores the potential of AI to recreate a given authorial style based on instructions like 'write a text displaying X, Y, Z' – where the variables are features previously identified in Christina Rossetti's sonnet 'Remember' (Castiglione 2026). These features were selected because they appear foregrounded (Douthwaite 2000, Leech 2008, Gregoriou 2014). The first prompt contained sixteen conditions but no mention of the author to be imitated, and generated two sonnets on 20/12/24 and 02/07/25. Then a different prompt, containing only one top-down condition ("Can you write a sonnet in the style of Christina Rossetti?"), was used for comparison, generating another sonnet on 02/07/25. Then I refined the conditions in the initial bottom-up prompt (e.g., "imperative mood" → "imperative mood with exhortative rather than command tone"), which generated another sonnet in 02/07/25. In total, four sonnets were generated, always using the free browser version of ChatGPT.

The research questions are as follows: 1) To what extent is a stylistic checklist (vs. the heuristics of naming the author) reliable as a diagnostic tool to capture a given authorial style? 2) What is the relationship between a stylistic checklist and broader notions of text similarity including imitation, literary influence (Bloom 1973) and epoch style? and 3) Will the derived poems be deemed as valued, original and creative as the source poem? Answering these questions will help newly theorise style and foregrounding in light of AI technologies.



Stylistically analysing and comparing the generated sonnets to the original one will help address questions 1-2. The third question, being more reader-oriented, will be answered through a questionnaire to be designed on Qualtrics and shared among L1 English speakers who are not familiar with Victorian poetry. The participants will be asked to read two sonnets (the original vs. any of the four generated sonnets, in rotation) and respond to two items: 1) *Are these sonnets by the same author?* and 2) *Please rate these sonnets in terms of originality, aesthetic value, and creativity.* The choice of these parameters and the formulation of this item stem from Allington's proposal that creativity implies "valued originality" (2011: 280).

Participants will answer the first question by choosing Yes or No and rating their confidence level on a slide bar with 0-100 scale settings. They will also be given a chance to provide a written motivation for their choice. The resulting mixed data (categorical, interval, qualitative) will allow us to integrate the insights of the stylistic analyses, therefore shedding further light on research questions 1-2. To comply with the second task, participants will use three more slide bars (one per parameter) with 0-100 scale settings. The resulting interval data will address research question 3 by showing whether these parameters (value, originality and creativity) correlate or not.

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S16.- Translation and AI: Training and Practice

The rapid development of AI and its integration into translator training and translation practices have led to numerous changes in both academia (Bada & Schumacher, 2024; Looock, 2025) and the translation industry (Girletti & Lefer, 2024), hence a need for



trainees and professionals to adapt to an ever-changing field. The necessity of mastering new AI skills, namely prompt engineering (He, 2024: 316), leads both lecturers and professionals to reinvent themselves more than ever. Although the recent AI developments have led to the use of MT for many text types that were considered, until recently, to be AI-resistant, human intervention is still needed to maintain professional quality standards, particularly for literary translation (Hansen & Esperança-Rodier, 2022: 185), creative domains (dubbing, subtitling, localisation) (e.g. Jiménez-Crespo, 2024: 18) and specialised translation (terminology management, polysemy) (Kübler et al., 2024). We welcome proposals to discuss any of the following: Translation training in the generative AI era; prompt engineering in translation and its effects on quality and process; AI post-editing in creative fields; AI post-editing in literary translation; AI post-editing in specialised translation; AI use in terminology management; cComparing AI-generated translation and human productions; post-editing processes and strategies implemented by students and professionals; changes in the translation profession; keep translation training competitive in the AI context; ethical and ecological considerations of AI use; quality assessment tools and their strengths / limitations; and tendency to trust / mistrust AI-generated translation outputs.

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Session #1

2 September, 9:00–11:00

AI and Integrated Sustainability: Translation at the Forefront

Claire Larssonneur (University of Paris 8, France)

What are the implications of AI for translation from the perspective of integrated sustainability (Leblanc 2015, Cousins & Zalewski 2025)? This paper aims at assessing the current ecological, economic and societal situation and examining possible alternatives, in view of shaping up curriculum design and identifying quality resources. A massive disruption of the language industry is under way (Baumgarten 2024, Larssonneur 2026, *Slator*), yet the current business model of AI providers fails to provide a return on investment (Smith 2025). An AI bubble in the making may trigger further instability (Glover 2025). The environmental cost of building and training LLMs is staggering (Luccioni 2024, Ren et al 2023) and concerning social issues are emerging such as misinformation and manipulation, or mental health issues. The development of AI solutions is marred by opacity on several levels (Larssonneur 2026), which enables tech companies to collect data on a massive scale (Jiang et al. 2024, Patterson 2024). Should translation be seen as a commodity, a utility or a commons? (Lacour et al. 2011, Larssonneur 2021, Moorkens 2019, Desjardins 2024).

In terms of curricular design, classes on the economics of information and data, with a focus on automated translation and chatbots, would help students understand the new language industry: how is information structured, how does it circulate, how is it received? What collective representations are fuelling the shift from human work to AI? Classes on information retrieval and research would also be essential. Soft skills such as negotiation, customization of products and services, marketing techniques



and engaging with clients have become key to employment. Building up a critical perspective on economic and societal change would also help students find their way to a more sustainable future in an unstable environment.

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Specialised LLMs for Scientific Automatic Translation: A Qualitative Evaluation in Earth and Planetary Sciences

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Terminological variation is an intrinsic feature of specialised scientific discourse (Bénard, 2024; Kübler et al., 2022; Freixa, 2022), in which a single concept may be designated by multiple denominations. This phenomenon raises specific challenges for automatic translation systems, particularly in the processing of specialised texts (Haque et al., 2020; Cabezas García & León



Araúz, 2023). This study aims to describe how a specialised LLM handles terminological variation by combining the annotation of denominative variation in source texts with the identification of the resulting translation errors in the target texts.

Our methodology for annotating terminological variation is structured around three complementary stages: (1) the identification of base terms from titles, abstracts, and keywords (Fernández-Silva, 2016); (2) the identification of variants through semi-automatic approaches (discourse markers using Sketch Engine) and manual methods (e.g. searching new compounds through single term contexts, terminological validation via specialised databases); and (3) the annotation of types of variation according to a five-category typology developed within the ANR-funded MaTOS project: lexical, graphical, morphosyntactic, semantic, and reduction-based variation. This annotation, carried out on a corpus of ten English research articles in Earth and Planetary Sciences (EPS), revealed a predominance of graphic variation (32%), mainly due to abbreviations and acronyms, followed by lexical variation (22%) and reduction-based variation (20%).

After machine-translating the corpus, using the LLM trained on an EPS parallel corpus developed within the MaTOS project (Peng et al., 2025; Bénard et al., 2023), we annotated errors in the MT outputs, with particular attention to segments containing base terms or their variants. The terminology-specific error typology developed for annotation distinguishes four main categories (lexical and terminological, syntactic and structural, target-language adaptation, and transfer), complemented by more fine-grained subcategories, allowing for a detailed analysis of translation problems. Particular attention is paid to errors occurring within complex noun phrases, which significantly increase translation difficulty.

We will thus present the results of a qualitative study on translation difficulties linked to terminological variation, making it possible to identify current limitations of MT in specialised contexts and to contribute to improving the treatment of variation in MT systems and LLMs.

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LLM-Assisted Error Annotation in Translation: Teachers, Learners, and MT in an Integrated Framework

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Annotating students' translations with an error typology represents an approach to facilitate both formative assessment and empirical research. This has led to the creation of numerous Learner Translator Corpora, which provide valuable resources for analysing learner behaviour and translation difficulties (Granger & Lefer, 2020). However, manual annotation remains highly time-consuming and cognitively demanding. Building on our previous work on AI-assisted error annotation for student translations (Minder et al. 2025), we showed that ChatGPT 4o, using prompt chaining (Ekin & OpenAI, 2023) and zero-shot prompting, can identify and categorise approximately 65-70% of errors. A further study showed that AI-generated annotation could help teachers in the annotation of human translation (Kübler et al., submitted) by reducing annotation time and cognitive effort. The present study explores two complementary research questions. First, it investigates whether AI-generated error annotations can assist teachers in the evaluation and annotation of machine translation outputs and post-edited translations. Second, it examines whether AI-produced annotations can be exploited by students themselves, both to support the revision of their own translations and to guide the post-editing of MT outputs. The experiment is based on a corpus of student translations, machine-translated texts, and post-edited versions, produced during the academic Spring term 2026 and annotated according to an error typology. AI-based annotations are compared with expert human annotations in order to evaluate precision, recall, error identification, and categorisation. MT outputs and post-edits are all annotated by ChatGPT; half are then manually annotated without AI-generated annotations and half with AI support, in order to assess their usefulness. Students are then provided with ChatGPT's annotations to evaluate their impact on revision and post-editing practices and on the quality of the result by comparing the evaluation with previous years results. This research combines didactic objectives with methodological evaluation, assessing the role of LLMs in translation pedagogy, not as replacements for human expertise, but as cognitive and analytical tools for both teachers and learners. It contributes to current debates on AI integration in translator education (Loock, 2025) by examining how automated annotation can be embedded in reflective learning, formative assessment, and post-editing training workflows.

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Session #2

2 September, 15:00–17:00

Qubits and Entanglement: How do Students, DeepL and ChatGPT Translate Conceptual Metaphors in Quantum Computing?

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The aim of the present study is to examine the translation from English into French of conceptual metaphors in quantum computing, “[whose essence] is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 5). Metaphors have been identified by using the Metaphor Identification Procedure Vrije Universiteit (MIPVU), which consists in determining whether words should be considered metaphorical by comparing their meaning in context with their meaning in a dictionary (Steen, 2010). Few studies investigate the translation of those MRWs and, to our knowledge, none have focused on their translation in the field of quantum computing. The source text is a 250-word excerpt that comes from an article in popular science on quantum computing (Monroe et al., 2016). It has been selected because it features the highest ratio of MRWs of the whole article. The objective of this study is twofold: to determine which translation strategies have been used to translate the identified metaphors and to examine tools employed during the translation. To analyse translation strategies, Meyers’s typology (2023, p. 47) has been applied to the target texts produced by twenty second-year master students in translation, Neural Machine Translation (NMT) and generative artificial intelligence (GenAI), namely DeepL and ChatGPT respectively. Since metaphors are part of human cognition and conceptual system, which artificial intelligence systems do not replicate, it is interesting to see how NMT and GenAI have treated and translated those metaphors. The second part consists in examining which tools and websites the students used during the translation since they had access to the Internet, except for AI systems. To do so, each student’s browser history has been quantitatively analysed. This approach provides interesting insights about what they have been taught



to use and what sources they resort to in order to solve translation problems. To our knowledge, this approach is also innovative to some extent.

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Left Periphery Development and Effects on Translating and Understanding Metalinguistic Negation

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Mihaela Tănase-Dogaru (University of Bucharest, Romania)

This paper investigates metalinguistic negation (MN) at the syntax–pragmatics interface, integrating linguistic theory, translator training, and AI evaluation. The study advances a linguistically grounded account of MN that moves beyond canonical *not*-sentences to include unambiguous MN markers and idiomatic constructions such as *like hell*. Following Horn (1989) and Martins (2014), MN is analyzed as a Root/Main Clause phenomenon associated with the activation of higher layers of the Left Periphery and with utterance-level interpretation, including polarity and speech-act-related features.

Building on this framework, the paper examines the pedagogical and technological implications of MN for translation. The empirical study compares English–Romanian translations produced by advanced MA students in Translation Studies at the University of Bucharest (L1 Romanian) and by a state-of-the-art Machine Translation (MT) system. The analysis focuses on whether the renditions preserve the pragmatic and discourse-related effects specific to MN, particularly in contexts involving correction, irony, or metarepresentational meaning. A qualitative evaluation assesses the extent to which translations maintain speech-act force, polarity contrasts, and discourse-structural properties.



The results indicate that students who have received explicit classroom training on syntax–semantics–pragmatics interface phenomena outperform MT systems in capturing the intended pragmatic effects of MN. While MT generally reproduces propositional content accurately, it often fails to convey corrective force, irony, or metalinguistic contrast, highlighting current limitations of AI in processing pragmatically complex constructions.

The findings underscore the importance of explicit pedagogical intervention in translator education and suggest that pragmatically marked phenomena such as MN constitute a valuable testing ground for assessing both human expertise and AI performance. The study thus contributes to discussions on the role of linguistic awareness in translation training and on the limits of MT in handling discourse-sensitive meaning.

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Training, Creativity, and Machine Translation Post-Editing: Insights for Subtitling Curriculum Design

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Growing interest in machine translation post-editing (MTPE) has raised questions about how machine translation (MT) affects translators' creative decisions. Previous research on the topic largely suggests that human translation (HT) leads to more creative interventions than MTPE, though post-editing typically yields fewer errors (Guerberof-Arenas, 2013; Corpas Pastor & Noriega-Santiáñez, 2024; Şahin & Gürses, 2021). Recent studies, however, show that LLM-based MTPE can reduce editing time and that model parameters may influence creativity, though evidence remains limited and language-dependent (Castaldo et al., 2025; Du et al., 2025).

That these technological advances would impact translator training is inevitable. However, research in this area remains limited; existing studies suggest that MTPE training does not appear to enhance creativity (Guerberof-Arenas & Toral, 2020, 2022; Guerberof-Arenas et al., 2024). One underexplored area concerns MT's impact on creativity in audiovisual translation, where meaning is shaped by multiple interacting semiotic modes. Subtitling, in particular, demands creative intervention across these modes (Díaz Cintas & Remael, 2007), giving rise to what can be described as a double creative process.

This quasi-experimental study aims to examine the effects of two subtitling training modes which are HT and MTPE, on trainee translators' creativity. Two groups of fourth-year Translation Studies students at Çankaya University will complete subtitling tasks over a 14-week semester, each receiving training aligned with their assigned mode. Creativity will be operationalized in terms of novelty and acceptability (Guerberof-Arenas, 2020, 2022). Novelty will be assessed using Bayer-Hohenwarter's (2011) Units of Creative Potential (UCPs). Deviations from the source text will be identified as Creative Shifts. Creativity scores will be calculated following Guerberof-Arenas and Toral's (2022) formula, combining Creative Shifts and Error Points relative to the source text.

Furthermore, the findings of this study aim to provide valuable insights into the pedagogical implications of MTPE training, as well as inform the curriculum design of such courses. In short, this study asks: how does machine translation post-editing training affect the creativity of trainee translators in subtitling, compared to human translation practice? And how should such training be structured to best support creative development?

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Session #3

2 September, 17:30–19:30

Enhancing Economic Translation through AI: Visualizing Abstract Concepts and Fostering Critical Thinking

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Recent studies highlight the urgent need to innovate pedagogical frameworks in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and specialized translation by incorporating new approaches based on Artificial Intelligence (Cui et al., 2025; Chatfield, 2025). Emerging models in translation education indicate that the integration of advanced technologies, including generative Artificial



Intelligence (Pym and Hao, 2025), can enhance the effectiveness and engagement of translation curricula. These educational models are particularly robust in the “hard sciences”. In contrast, challenges become more complex in the “soft sciences”, such as law and economics, where concepts, as some researchers have argued, evade clear visualization due to their abstract nature (Malik 2023). In this context, this paper presents preliminary findings from a comprehensive research project aiming to identify a teaching approach that combines AI-powered skills and techniques, such as “prompting”, with human expertise and theoretical knowledge in Translation. This approach seeks to enhance students’ terminology learning, domain-specific knowledge, and improve their accuracy and quality in economic and financial translation. It critically addresses three key questions: 1) How can we teach students in specialized translation to visualize the abstract concepts of economics and finance to enhance their understanding and effectively tackle relevant translation challenges? 2) What resources, particularly those that are multimodal and AI-enhanced, can assist students in overcoming the difficulties associated with specialized translation? 3) How can we foster AI literacy while preserving students’ critical thinking and human judgment?

Drawing on recent teaching experiences and insights from Extended Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Kövecses, 2022) along with advancements in prompt engineering (Kramer, 2025), this study employs a methodology rooted in Action Research (Koshy, 2010) to address these research questions. Specifically, it explores how the advent of artificial intelligence creates new opportunities for developing visual metaphors that facilitate the teaching and learning of abstract economic concepts, ultimately enhancing students’ critical thinking and epistemological awareness in their translation work.

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Why Teach Translation in the Age of AI?

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Pym (2016) evokes the dichotomy between foreign language teaching and translation studies, a dichotomy which has consolidated a generalized absence of translation in courses teaching foreign languages. We present here a university-level course that defies that model and was initially developed to enable students to acquire language and intercultural skills in their target language through the use of translation. Our course originated in 2014 with the development of rapidly improving and inexpensive communication methods (internet, email, video conferences, shared documents, etc., then smartphones and applications such as WhatsApp, Messenger, Discord, et al.), which allowed us to pair two groups of university-level students from New York, USA (L1 English) and Lyon, France (L1 French) into tandems, with the goal of translating texts as yet untranslated.

The course source material consists of non-literary texts that communicate ideas and concepts often resistant to a simple one-to-one translation, thereby requiring students to negotiate meaning by considering the linguistic specificity and nuance of both languages, as well as the sociocultural and disciplinary contexts of the texts. This collaborative process increases understanding of both L1 and L2 languages and extends meta-cognitive skills, particularly because the contrastive process allows students to gain a better reflexive understanding of the working of each language. Simultaneously, their oral skills are improved by direct communication in their target language.

Though the course has always been reliant on technology, we describe here how, over the course's existence, the increasing presence of MT and, more recently, AI, has challenged our pedagogical approach, prompting us, in an initial phase, to signal the limitations of the tools for expressing concepts with accuracy and nuance and to discourage their use. In a second phase, the extended capacity of MT and ubiquitous presence of these tools has led us to focus rather on how we can reflectively and critically use them, not in a dependent way, but rather to foster authentic and spontaneous communication as well as a reflective and critical attitude toward machine-produced communication. We feel that responding to the large-scale use of these new tools has ultimately sharpened the focus of our objectives and expanded the learning outcomes we aim to achieve.



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S17.- Translating / Adapting Law: Thinking out of the Box

According to Iedema (2003), resemiotization provides the analytical means for tracing how semiotics are translated from one into the other as social processes unfold, as well as for asking why these semiotics (rather than others) are mobilized to do certain things at certain times. In fact, as Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996: 37) points out, transcoding between a range of semiotic modes represents a more adequate understanding of representation and communication. For this reason, over the past decades, social semiotics has tried to study the process of transduction/transposition (or intersemiotic translation) from the point of view of social interactions, highlighting the role played by modes’ affordances and their aptness in defining a given meaning for a given editor in a well-defined context, in terms of time and cultural references (Kress 2020).

If specific knowledge is taken into account, as argued by Calsamiglia & van Dijk (2004), popularisation of specific concepts can be represented as a re-formulation of specialist discourse, or a form of inter-epistemic translation (Bennet 2024a; Bennett 2024b; Bennet & Neves 2024), where “specialist knowledge is transmitted across disciplines, reformulated for different audiences, and reworked into imaginative literature, audiovisual content or works of art” (“The EPISTRAN Project” 2025). As part of the 10th session of the EPISTRAN Online Lecture Series (2024–25), Sibony and Esposito analysed the role played by epistemic translation in the field of legal discourse to incorporate non-legal elements, such as economic knowledge, focusing their attention on different genres.

Considering this background, the present panel aims at investigating the various textual transits that can occur when legal knowledge is transduced/transcoded, especially for non-specialist consumption. Topics of interest include, but are not limited



to, the following: popularization of legal discourse in websites and official texts by governments and other regulatory bodies; accessibility to legal knowledge in entertainment products (such as videogames, TV series, etc.); inter-epistemic translation and audiovisuality (with specific reference to dubbing and subtitling); and resemiotization of legal discourse.

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Session #1

31 August, 16:00–18:00

Adapting (EU) Legal Terminology in the Macedonian language: Loan Translations or Direct Borrowings?

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Irina Petrovska (University “St. Kliment Ohridski” – Ohrid, Republic of North Macedonia)

The paper examines Anglicisms in contemporary Macedonian legal discourse, with a focus on loan translations and direct borrowings. The analysis is qualitative and based on a randomly collected corpus of approximately 400 Anglicisms that have



entered the Macedonian language since the beginning of the 21st century. The research identifies and classifies visible Anglicisms and the criteria that determine their visibility and subsequently contrasts them with loan translations or calques. It then examines the patterns of borrowing Anglicisms into Macedonian in order to determine why certain English expressions are directly incorporated into the Macedonian language, while others are translated part by part. These patterns are illustrated through the contrast between direct lexical borrowings, on the one hand, such as benchmark → benčmark, directives → direktivi, Eurozone → evrozona, and stakeholder → stejkholder, and loan translations or calques, on the other hand, for example (pre)accession funds → (pred)pristapni fondovi, strategic partnership → strateško partnerstvo, enlargement process → process na proširuvanje and negotiation framework → pregovaračka ramka.

The findings demonstrate that calques are particularly frequent in the domains of business and law, especially EU law, a tendency closely linked to North Macedonia's status as an EU candidate country and the obligation to harmonize national legislation with EU legal frameworks. In this context, part-by-part translation of phraseological units proves to be the simplest and most effective way to ensure that native speakers can easily understand the fundamental principles and concepts underlying the accession process. Overall, the analysis indicates that socio-cultural factors play a more significant role than purely linguistic causes and circumstances in establishing predictable borrowing patterns.

University Governance and Intercultural Communication: A Corpus-Based Study on Transparency Through Translation at the University of Bologna

Gaia Aragrande (University of Bologna, Italy)

Irene Frosi (University of Bologna, Italy)

This paper intends to shed light on transparency practices through translation in the institutional context of the University of Bologna, one of the largest universities in Italy with a rising number of diverse international stakeholders, from academic bodies to industry and corporate stakeholders. Following Koskinen (2014), this paper starts from the assumption that, in a multilingual setting or when in need of multilingual communication, institutions perform their governing function(s) through language and translation. This assumption leads us to consider the issue of transparency in institutional settings in terms of which texts are translated and how.

To this end, we collected a parallel corpus (Unibo_Institutional) of Italian source texts and English target texts from two sections



of the University of Bologna's website: Bilanci di Ateneo (University budgets) and Piano Strategico (Strategic Plan). The former contains (para-)legal texts informing Unibo's stakeholders about its financial situation, the latter represents the mission and vision of its current governance. Both are mandatory and could be considered as inter-epistemic translation of legal language into lay terms (Robinson 2017). Moreover, these documents are at the heart of the university's governing mandate, and, as such, they also provide insight into how the University of Bologna and its governance intend to project their identity and image to the outside, and if that identity and image undergo some changes when communicated in English. Preliminary results show that not every part of the abovementioned sections is translated, while some segments are left untranslated or show terms that may be hard to understand for an international reader with no previous knowledge of the Italian university and healthcare systems (e.g. calques or borrowings of acronyms and incorrect reference to institutional charges).

While taking a Critical Discourse Analysis approach, our analysis will be further carried out using quantitative and qualitative methods to find other links between translation strategies and techniques and the university's identity- and image-building processes, eventually evaluating whether translation acts as an enabler for or an obstacle to transparency.

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Translating Gender Stereotypes: Inter-Epistemic Mediation of Legal Knowledge in an Italian–English Gender Violence Glossary

Anna Anselmo (University of Milan, Italy)
Caterina Bocchi (IULM University, Italy)

This paper examines the translation into English of the Italian gender stereotype glossary *Conoscerli per evitarli. Dizionario breve sugli stereotipi associati alla violenza di genere e alla vittimizzazione secondaria* (Poggi, Pellizzone, De Giuli, 2024) as a process of inter-epistemic translation (Robinson 2024) and resemiotization of knowledge. Produced within the Human Hall research hub at the University of Milan and disseminated primarily in secondary schools, the glossary was conceived as a pedagogical resource to



foster critical thinking about gender stereotypes and the normalization of gender-based violence among young students (Rodelli et al., 2021; Gibson & Gouws, 2022; UNESCO, 2026).

Drawing on social semiotics (Kress and van Leeuwen 2001), the study conceptualizes translation not as a neutral transfer of terminology but as a process of transduction across epistemic domains (Iedema 2003; Kress 2020) and cultural negotiation that makes the ideological work of words visible. In this sense, translating stereotypes such as *cercarsela*, *esagerata*, or *zoccola* functions as a critical act of “troubling gender” (Butler, 1990), making visible how seemingly colloquial labels encode moral judgment, credibility assessments, and hierarchies of worth (Stahlberg et al. 2017), and often produce forms of secondary victimization (Calsamiglia & van Dijk 2004).

The paper focuses on three interconnected analytical dimensions. First, it addresses gender-stereotyping theory, showing how stereotypes operate as implicit cognitive and discursive shortcuts that naturalize social hierarchies and power-dynamics, and shape how subjects are perceived across institutional contexts, including education, media, and the law. Second, it examines translation challenges arising from the cultural specificity, pragmatic force, and evaluative load of stereotype labels, many of which resist direct equivalence in English and require strategic reformulation, explicitation, or functional translation. Third, it argues that making stereotypes visible through translation constitutes a form of pedagogical accessibility: by exposing the assumptions embedded in everyday and institutional language, the glossary equips students with the critical tools to recognize, question, and deconstruct the gender norms that structure public discourse and social practice (Piedalue et al., 2020).

Methodologically, the paper combines qualitative discourse analysis with a social-semiotic approach to intersemiotic translation, analyzing definitional structures, narrative framing, and multimodal affordances. By foregrounding translation as a site where socio-cultural norms, gender ideology, and public pedagogy intersect, the study contributes to current debates on resemiotization, popularization of law, and the role of translation in promoting epistemic and social justice.

Extending this perspective, the paper argues that gender stereotype glossaries can function as tools of legal self-scrutiny within professional training and institutional reform. Contemporary jurisprudence increasingly recognizes that stereotypical reasoning may distort evidentiary assessment, particularly in cases concerning sexual violence, domestic abuse, and consent. Assumptions about how a “real victim” should react, how a “credible” complainant should behave, or what constitutes “normal” post-assault conduct have historically influenced judicial reasoning and contributed to secondary victimization. By systematically identifying and deconstructing such narrative scripts, glossaries of this kind can be integrated into judicial and prosecutorial training, police



education, and continuing legal development programs, fostering awareness of the cognitive and discursive mechanisms that shape decision-making.

Moreover, this epistemic intervention may generate normative effects. As legal professionals recognize stereotype-based assumptions in interpretation, drafting and doctrine may adopt more precise, consent-based, and gender-sensitive language. Translation mediates not only between languages but also between levels of norm production: by circulating critically reframed concepts across educational, judicial, and policy arenas, it recalibrates legal language, embeds gender awareness in interpretive practice, and potentially shapes statutory development. Translation thus functions as both a pedagogical and juridical act at the intersection of discourse, institutional reasoning, and normative change.

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Epistemic Translation, Audiovisuality, and Legal Discourse

Giuseppina Di Gregorio (University of Catania, Italy)

Marco Neves (NOVA University Lisbon, Portugal)

As argued by Iaia (2017), multimodal popularization entails that both the linguistic and audiovisual dimensions of the episode scripts are meant to enhance the general audience's scientific literacy in a given field. Moreover, if specific knowledge is taken into account, as argued by Calsamiglia & van Dijk (2004), popularisation of specific concepts can be represented as a re-formulation of specialist discourse, or a form of inter-epistemic translation (Bennett 2024a; Bennett 2024b; Bennett & Neves 2024), where specialist knowledge is reformulated and reworked for different audiences, with a different set of epistemic references.

Taking into account legal concepts and discourse, Laudisio (2016) considers legal dramas as an example of effective means of popularization, due to their hybrid nature of products that are created for entertainment purposes and, at the same time, for informative and educational ones. As highlighted by Bonsignori and Sandrelli (2024), they shape the audience's understanding of legal discourse and the legal system in the country where the story is set, creating credible dialogues while striving to make legal terms accessible to the audience. Considering this context, research on Audiovisual Translation (AVT) of legal dramas has investigated how specialized legal language, courtroom procedures, and culturally bound references are translated for international audiences through subtitling and dubbing, focusing on how translators balance accuracy, readability, and synchronization constraints, while also adapting culturally specific legal concepts to viewers from different legal systems. Considering this background, a question arises: what are the main translation strategies that are employed to reach this ambitious set of goals?

Referring to the seminal work of Pedersen (2008), Diaz Cintas and Anderman (2008), and Ranzato (2015) in the field of Audiovisual Translation, as well as to the results of the EPISTRAN project research (www.epistran.org), this paper aims at contributing to the state-of-the-art literature on epistemic translation of legal discourse in screen products, considering a well-known legal drama provided by Netflix, *Suits*. Relevant episodes of this series are considered in order to identify popularization strategies that are adopted in the interactions between professionals and lay characters, as well as translation's accuracy in both English-to-Italian subtitles and English-to-Portuguese ones.

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How to Teach Law through Literature?

The presentation explores how law can be effectively taught through literature, emphasizing the value literary texts bring to legal education. The use of literary texts in teaching law has a long tradition. Short stories told by Roman jurists, known as casuistry, were brief narratives used to explain complex legal issues. Even today, law professors use various anecdotes to explain legal principles. A Polish book is a good example of this: 'Koszałki-opałki, czyli prawo karne w bajkach'. Repetytorium dla studiujących, sędziów i pod sądnych'.

The literature currently shapes legal culture, both in school education and in specialized legal studies. Several examples from contemporary Polish literature, such as „Prawie bajki”, demonstrate how literary texts can clarify issues in the field of legal sciences. Law and literature could be approached through comparative literary methods. It would be worth referring to Martha Nussbaum's concept, introduced in her book 'Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities'. The author discusses, among other things, a type of humanities education that employs literary classics to foster critical thinking about political issues and to teach analysis, reflection, and discussion.



The presentation argues that integrating literary imagination with rational argument is essential for effective student education in law. It will address the importance of humanities education in today's world and examine how communication through literature enriches legal understanding.

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S18.- Translation, Gender, and Censorship: Voices Across Borders

In a world increasingly shaped by global communication, the act of translation becomes a powerful site where cultural, political, and gender dynamics intersect. As English continues to serve as both a source and target language for literary and cultural production, the processes by which gendered narratives are translated, suppressed, or transformed demand critical scrutiny.

This seminar invites contributions that critically explore how gender identities and expressions are mediated, altered, or suppressed through translation, and how censorship—explicit or implicit—shapes the transmission of gendered discourse across languages and cultures. Within this framework, it is also interested in contributions that explore gender and translation in the context of subversive transmission processes and as acts of defiance against censorship constraints.

The seminar seeks to foster international dialogue on questions such as: How are feminist, queer, and non-binary narratives transformed in translation? What mechanisms of censorship—state-imposed, market-driven, or self-regulated—affect the visibility of gender-diverse voices? How do translators resist, negotiate, or reinforce gendered censorship? Participants are encouraged to investigate these dynamics across different historical periods, geographical contexts, and media forms (literature, film, theatre, digital platforms, etc.).



We welcome interdisciplinary approaches that engage with translation theory, gender studies, censorship studies, postcolonial theory, and cultural studies. This seminar seeks to open a space for dialogue on the responsibilities of translators, publishers, and scholars in the (re)production of gendered meanings within and beyond English Studies.

Possible lines of research include:

- The translation of feminist and LGBTQIA+ literature under regimes of censorship.
- Self-censorship and gender politics in the work of translators.
- Case studies of suppressed or altered gender expressions in translation across time and place.
- Comparative analyses of censorship practices affecting English translations globally.
- Translation as activism: strategies for resisting censorship of marginalized gender identities.
- Intersectionality in translation: gender, race, and class under censorship constraints.
- The impact of market censorship on the translation of gender-diverse narratives.
- Ethical dilemmas for translators facing censorship or gender-based bias.

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Session #1

3 September, 9:30–11:30

Translating Dagongmei Poetry: Gender, Experience, and Invisible Censorship Across Borders

Leticia del Toro García (University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain)

The poetry written by *dagongmei*, young rural women who migrate to China's industrial areas, constitutes a body of work highly marked by gendered labor, heartbreaking experiences, and intense silences. Although these poems have attracted scholars' attention in the last two decades, their distribution beyond the Chinese-language environment remains extremely limited.



This paper examines translation as a key element in shaping how issues of gender, voice, and silence are received by non-Chinese audiences. Taking feminist translation theories and close textual analysis as a point of departure, it explores how the translation of *dagongmei* poetry into English faces with the challenge of conveying experiences of female workers that often appear fragmented or silenced in the source texts. Special attention is given to lexical and stylistic choices related to the body, work, and vulnerability, delicate areas in which the original texts either remain silent or, in other anonymous poems, present vivid descriptions, leaving the translator to decide how best to submit them into English.

Rather than focusing on political censorship, this paper treats silence as a textual and ethical challenge, arising both from deliberate omissions in the original poems and from the translator's choices about how to reflect them. For instance, some poems portray the harshness and exhaustion of factory work through physical fatigue or the presence of occupational illness, always depicted by means of very objective descriptions.

Employing examples from different poems, it will show how translation can function as a powerful tool for giving voice to these silences while calling attention to the translator's role in engaging with this type of poetry, which involves much more than merely rendering one language into another.

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Algorithms as Translating Agents: The Afterlives and Soft Censorship of Hindi Urdu Women's Protest Songs in Digital Media

Ananya (University of Delhi, India)

This paper investigates how algorithmic translation systems function as mediators and often as censors of gender focused protest poetry composed and performed by women in Hindi and Urdu. Drawing on ten emblematic poems and songs, including but not



limited to Kamla Bhasin's "Darya Ki Kasam," the feminist rendition of "Hum Dekhenge," and Sona Mohapatra's "Bekhauf", the study traces their trajectories from oral or performative origins to global circulation via social media platforms.

Integrating Venuti's translator invisibility with Jenkins's algorithmic culture framework, the research treats automated translation services as tacit censors that simultaneously amplify and mute women's protest verses. By layering feminist translation theory (Camus et al., 2017), subaltern studies (Bacardí & Godayol, 2016), and censorship scholarship (Gibbels, 2009; Merkle & Baer, 2025), the analysis reveals a consistent pattern of soft censorship that reshapes gender and LGBTQ + charged poetry as it traverses digital borders.

Using a mixed methods approach, the research combines close textual analysis of the original Hindi Urdu lyrics with a corpus based examination of their algorithmically generated English renditions passed through three translation pipelines: Google Translate, platform integrated auto translate (e.g., Instagram's "Translate Caption"), and community generated subtitles (YouTube's automatic captions). Using the YouTube Data API and Instagram Graph API, the study extracts the original text, timestamps, view counts, and engagement metrics for each piece. Quantitative metrics (lexical density, sentiment polarity, frequency of euphemistic substitutions) are paired with qualitative assessments of how algorithmic "algospeak" reshapes semantic fields related to war, gender equality, and social justice.

The analysis reveals a consistent pattern of algorithmic "soft censorship": LGBTQ + motifs, graphic depictions of violence, and explicit calls for justice are frequently muted or rephrased, thereby reshaping the affective force of the original protest. Yet the same algorithms also enable transnational diffusion, granting these women's voices unprecedented reach. By foregrounding the tension between amplification and erasure, the paper contributes a nuanced model for studying digital translation as a site of power, offering scholars, translators, and platform designers actionable insights for mitigating bias while preserving activist potency.

(Still) Out of Sight, (Still) Out of Mind: Gender and Censorship in the English Translations of Galician Autofictional Narratives

Keah Amy Dixon (University of A Coruña, Spain)

Censorship once pervaded the literatures of Spain. In the Galician case, suppression and exclusion have been acutely felt by women and women writers, even to this day. Spain's *guerra civil* (1936-1939), along with the exile and decade-spanning dictatorship it left



in its wake, contributed to stifling the public employment of the country's minority languages. Such an atmosphere spelt the emergence of a mode of writing the self that blurs autobiography, memoir and fiction in a way that speaks to both personal and collective experience (Vilavedra 291-2). From the margins in more ways than one, Xosé Neira Vilas' *Memorias dun neno labrego* (1961) and, more recently, Berta Dávila's *Os seres queridos* (2022) bring to light (hi)stories of migration, memory, motherhood and loss infused with local nuances. Through a comparative, close reading and analysis of two autofictional Galician-language novels from two different periods alongside the published English translations of the two works – Ogando Vázquez (2007) and Rutherford's (2021) renderings of the former and Rogers' (2023) rendering of the latter – my study asks how anglophone translators address the (in)visibility of women through their (para)textual strategies. Homing in on the strategies applied to gendered nouns in Galician as well as the presence of women at other points in the narratives, the study interrogates the influence, if any, the autofictional nature has on translatory decision-making in the global, hegemonic language. Adopting an interdisciplinary functional, feminist and transcultural theoretical lens, the findings point to the existence of a form of censorship perpetuated in all three anglophone translations that (re)shapes the authors' ideologies and contexts and, ultimately, eclipses women. In foregrounding how ostensibly neutral translational choices can reproduce gendered censorship, the article underscores the ethical stakes of mediating visibility in/of translated literature for anglophone audiences, advancing ongoing debates within feminist translation studies from an often-neglected minority-language perspective.

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Translating Queer Literary Texts: An Analysis of “The Words That Remain” (“A palabra que resta” by Stênio Gardel)

Érica Lima (University of Campinas, Brazil)

This presentation focuses on “A palavra que resta” (“The Words That Remain”), the winner of the 2023 American National



Book Award for Translated Literature, translated by Bruna Dantas Lobato. The story follows Raimundo, a 71-year-old illiterate man who has held onto a letter from his childhood love, Cícero, for 52 years, despite being unable to read it. After discovering his homosexual orientation, Raimundo's father reacts violently, expelling him from home and forcing him to move to the city, where he also disguises his sexual orientation. However, after befriending Suzzanny, a transgender sex worker, Raimundo achieves self-acceptance, stability, and the courage to learn to read and write. The novel portrays Brazil as a place of persecution, brutality, and homophobia, and it shows how writing can transform relationships. This talk will examine the translation process, exploring how extensive the Portuguese vocabulary for male homosexuals is altered or suppressed, and the complexities involved. The research is a qualitative study that began with reading the original text and selecting passages in which terms referring to male homosexuality evoke negative representations in the popular imagination. Next, the novel was read in English, and the translated passages were compared to the original. This presentation aims to address the following question: What are the main differences in identity and homosexual representation between the Brazilian and English versions of the novel? The analysis is based on the concept of disothering (Seligmann-Silva, 2022) and other translation theories, including the translation of queer texts (Démont, 2018), ethical translation (Berman, 1984), translation as transformation (Derrida, 1972), and transcreation (Campos, 2011). Overall, the research indicates that a greater variety of pejorative terms were used in the Portuguese (Silveira and Serra, 2021) than in the English translation. The study also proposes hypotheses about the causes and consequences of these translation choices.

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Session #2

3 September, 15:00–17:00

Censorship and Translation of British and American Essays on Homosexuality in 1960s and 1970s Spain

Juan Carrillo del Saz (Pompeu Fabra University, Spain)

During the final years of Franco's dictatorship and the transition to democracy, there was considerable interest among Spanish publishers in issuing translations of essays on homosexuality. These included numerous essays authored by British and American pastors, lawyers, sociologists and psychiatrists, including books such as *The Homosexual Society* (1962) by Richard Hauser, *The Homosexual and His Society: A View from Within* (1963) by Donald Webster Cory and John P. LeRoy, and *Toward a Christian Understanding of the Homosexual* (1966) by H. Kimball Jones. In certain instances, the Spanish censorship system permitted the publication of these translations, while in others, it did not.

This publishing boom coincided with a time of considerable change in attitudes towards homosexuality. These changes—not necessarily favorable—took place in the religious, legal, and medical spheres, both nationally and internationally. Key events included the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), the introduction of the Press and Print Law (1966) and the Law on Dangerousness and Social Rehabilitation (1970), and the depathologization of homosexuality by the APA (1974). In general, this was a period characterized by significant discord between those who were campaigning for the removal of homosexuality from the list of sins, crimes, and pathologies, and those advocating for the opposite position.

This paper provides an initial examination of this phenomenon from the perspective of censorship and translation studies. The objective of this study is to provide a comprehensive characterization of the attitudes towards homosexuality held by the agents involved in the publishing process, including authors, translators, censors, and publishers. To that end, an examination of the source and target texts, censorship reports, and, where applicable, galley proofs and publishers' arguments, is conducted, with emphasis placed on the linguistic elements that reflect the ideological dimension.

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The Political Indoctrination of Girls in Franco-era Spain: English Translations of *Lecciones para las Flechas* in Richard Wright's *Pagan Spain* (1957)

Daniel Linder Molin (University of Salamanca, Spain)

Daniel Ordóñez Castro (Freelance Translator and Proofreader)

One of the most striking aspects of *Pagan Spain* (1957), a travel narrative by Richard Wright, is the inclusion of thirteen excerpts translated into English from the book *Formación Política. Lecciones para las Flechas* (Political Education: Lessons for the Arrows), published by the Women's Section of the Traditionalist Spanish Falange (F.E.T.) and the National Syndicalist Offensive Committees (J.O.N.S.). At the beginning of his first of three trips to Spain, Wright becomes interested in the "thin green book" being read by Carmen, the young receptionist at his boarding house in Barcelona, who ends up giving him "my political book." Wright offers the first English translation on pages 26 to 29, an excerpt from the first lesson, on the "Theory of the Falange," for "girls aged twelve to fourteen and for the Flechas." The thirteen translated fragments that populate the book occupy two, three, or four pages each, totaling about 45 pages, or 15.6% of the book's length, and therefore constitute a significant part of the book and an important object of study. The African-American author was struck by the clear differences he observed between the education of women versus men during a peak period of National Catholicism in Spain. He also observed parallels between the repression of women in Spain and that of the African American community in the United States. In addition to studying Wright's into-English translations, we will analyze the into-Spanish translations of these fragments in the three Spanish-language versions available, all entitled *España pagana* (1970, 1989, and 2022). These are back-translations, that is, translations of translations, into the original Spanish language. The first, by Aníbal Leal, is an Argentine version that circulated clandestinely in late Francoist Spain; the second, by Salvador Guerra, is a plagiarism of the first; and the most recent, by Sandra Caula, is an independent retranslation by a Venezuelan translator based in Spain. By taking a closer look at these translated and back-translated fragments as well as Wright's observations during his travels, there emerges a valuable literary and historiographical portrait of a minoritized author's



impressions of repressed girls and women in autocratic Spain as both convergent with and divergent from the repression of his own community in the United States.

“Esa espera eterna del amor”: Women and Sexuality in the Translation of Pop Song Lyrics under Francoist Censorship in the 1960s

Gabriel Dols Gallardo (University of the Balearic Islands, Spain)

This paper discusses the effects of censorship and, particularly, self-censorship in the translation of pop and rock songs during the 1960s in Francoist Spain, focusing on the representation of women and sexuality. The decade was characterized by a gradual opening of the Regime to foreign influence, after a long period of isolationism, and pop songs offered just the kind of ‘ideologically clean texts favoured by censorship boards’ (Merino and Rabadán 2004, 137) which could help display a façade of modernity. This entailed, initially, the wholesale importation of the genre from abroad and, thus, a major translation effort that has, nevertheless, barely been researched. The imported foreign repertoire, which had brought about a sexual revolution in the West fueled by rock music, came to clash with the ultra-Catholic foundation of the Spanish censorial regime (Valiño 2012; Zaragoza Ninet 2024). The paper looks at the sociocultural and material context where those translations were created and carries out a descriptive analysis of the lyrics from the most popular covers in the decade, looking at the passages more likely to have been problematic for censors (Gómez Castro 2023, 390). Censorial concerns about the mass audience of pop music—made up in no small measure by teenagers, including young women—acted on a still not fully autonomous cultural production field such as the Spanish pop music industry. The result was, as the study shows, a repressive climate in which the lyrics of the more popular songs were made to align with the Regime’s values to a remarkable degree, through a combination of post-editorial censorship and widely internalized self-censorship. In the case of the representation of the female body and romantic relationships, the main result was a strong tendency to erase all specific mentions to the female physique and any talk of love other than in strictly indirect and abstract terms (Neuschäfer 1994, 10).

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S19.- Reflection in English Language and Literature Teacher Education

In this seminar, we would like to consider the role of reflection in English language and literature teacher education from different perspectives. At the ESSE conference in Lausanne, where we concentrated on critical issues in English language teacher education (ELTE), we concluded that, from the point of view of teacher educators, student teachers often seem to lack the skill of reflection. One of the major conclusions from the seminar in general was that reflection in teacher education is a crucial skill that should be developed in all areas of ELTE, as it clearly leads to professionalism. This is consistent with the vast scholarship on reflection in teaching and teacher education inspired by Donald Schön's (1983) theory of reflective practice. In European policy documents, reflection is also linked to the goal of building and consolidating education for democracy (Lenz et al., 2021). Due to the global character of English, cultivating critical reflection in future teachers of English is particularly important, as they will meet pupils who consume media in this language (Kaatari et al., 2023) and need to understand how language can be used to influence and manipulate groups of people. At the seminar, we would like to explore the following and related issues: reflection in English teachers' practice, reflection leading to professionalism in ELTE, reflection in the process of becoming a language teacher and in building the language teacher identity, reflection on the English teacher's linguistic competence and communication skills, reflection in ELTE student teachers' placement (practicum), critical reflection and self-reflection in ELTE, reflection in the teaching and learning of English literature or cultural studies, the role of reflection in education for a democratic culture, reflection and critical thinking in ELTE. Both empirical research and theoretical/methodological studies are welcome.

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Session #1

3 September, 9:30–11:30

Reflection as a Critical Issue in English Language Teacher Education

Lucie Betáková (University of South Bohemia, Czech Republic)

This study examines reflection as a critical issue in English language teacher education. Critical issues are understood as elements of educational content that are perceived as challenging, problematic, or insufficiently addressed (Nohavová et al., 2021). Findings from our research into critical issues in foreign language teacher education (Betáková et al., 2026), with a particular focus on English language teaching (ELT), indicate that both teacher trainees and teacher educators view reflection as a significant area of concern.

From the educators' perspective, a major challenge lies in trainees' limited ability to engage with constructive criticism and reflect on their own teaching practices. Educators also report that trainees often undervalue theoretical knowledge, prioritizing practical experience while overlooking its conceptual underpinnings. Additional problems include the persistence of secondary school habits that hinder autonomy, limit responsibility for one's own learning, and contribute to reluctance to participate in discussions



and collaborative tasks. Many trainees also exhibit rigid preconceptions, tending to reproduce the instructional models they experienced as learners and resisting pedagogical change.

Teacher trainees similarly identify reflection as a critical area. Many feel insufficiently prepared for professional practice and express a desire to “get rid of” traditional teaching styles in favour of more communicative and innovative approaches. Some report frustration during practicum placements in high-performing schools, where they perceive a mismatch between their developing competencies and the expectations of experienced mentor teachers.

In the final part of the paper, I analyse how reflection is conceptualized within the newly introduced competencebased framework for English language teacher education graduates issued by the Czech Ministry of Education, and how this framework responds to the challenges identified in our research.

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Enhancing Critical AI Use in Foreign Language Teaching through Hands-on Experiences and Reflection

Éva Szabó (Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary)

The proposed talk presents a two-stage research project designed to provide students in a pre-service teacher education programme at a Hungarian university with hands-on experience in using AI for teaching activities. The project, conducted by three teacher educators teaching English and Spanish language teaching pedagogy courses, had two main aims. First, it sought to develop students' AI literacy by familiarizing them with specific ways of using AI in foreign language teaching, as outlined in Peachey (2024) and Menyhei and Szoke (2025). Second, it aimed to engage students in reflection on their experiences, focusing on their



own AI use, the quality of AI-generated outputs, the affordances and challenges of using AI in teacher tasks, and the benefits of completing these tasks collaboratively.

The first stage of the project, supported by the OTP Fáy Foundation, ran from December 2024 to September 2025. It involved eight AI-based teacher “challenges” which students solved while collaborating in groups of three. The results suggest that the students who were already active AI users prior to the project developed new understandings of using AI for professional purposes and became more self-aware and critical users of AI.

The second stage of the project, supported by the Charm-EU association of nine European universities, started in October 2025 and will end in September 2026. In collaboration with a Finnish university, the AI challenges adopted in the first stage were refined and redesigned. It is hoped that after analysing the findings of the second stage, the final results of the project will help to formulate guidelines for integrating AI use in foreign language teacher education curricula.

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Bridging the Gap Between Theory and Practice and Enhancing Democratic Values: The Reflection in English Language Teaching

Serkan Şen (Baskent University, Türkiye)

Reflection is a crucial skill widely recognized as a fundamental component for enhancing teaching effectiveness and fostering continuous professional growth in all areas of English Language Teaching. Furthermore, reflection is essential to education for a democratic culture because it helps teachers to go beyond subject-matter expertise and adopt a strategy based on human rights, equality, intercultural communication, and student empowerment (Lenz et al., 2021). In this context, reflection is not merely a method but a way of life that requires teachers to critically assess their beliefs and the socio-political impact of their instruction (Farrell, 2013). Starting from this premise, this qualitative research study investigates the role of reflective practice strategies in the professional development of English teachers. Data will be collected through semi-structured interviews to uncover how English teachers analyze their “puzzles of practice” (Munby, & Russell, 1990). The theoretical framework is based on the chronological



dimensions of reflection-in-action, reflection-on-action, and reflection-for-action (Schön, 1983). Thus, this study aims to explore how and to what extent English teachers can bridge the gap between academic theory and classroom reality and whether and/or how they can enhance democratic values in their classrooms by employing different reflective teaching strategies.

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Fostering Reflective Competences and Adaptivity in English Language Teacher Education: A Focus on Cultural Learning

Max von Blanckenburg (University of Regensburg, Germany)

As part of university-based teacher education programmes, students are expected to develop an awareness of language teaching as a complex, dynamic endeavour. Understanding how teachers can and need to respond to diverse situational cues and contextual affordances constitutes a key component in the development of reflective practitioners (cf. Mann & Walsh 2017; Gerlach & Leupold 2019). In this context, the notion of *adaptivity* marks an essential dimension of professional language teaching, referring to the capacity to respond adequately and appropriately to, for instance, the diversity of learner groups, the complexity of language learning processes as well as to issues concerning subject-specific topics and goals.

One of the central areas of English language teaching in the German educational system can be broadly described as *cultural learning* (cf. König et al. 2022). It involves engaging learners with cultural groups and spaces as well as with current and potentially contentious issues, and may draw on approaches such as inter- and transcultural learning or democratic and global education (cf. Freitag-Hild 2018). Particularly when addressing sensitive cultural or political themes, teachers need to be equipped with specific competences related to critical awareness, self-reflection, and pedagogical relations (Hawkins & Norton 2009; Volkmann 2023).

Against the background of current conceptualisations of critical and agonistic language education (cf. Bartosch et al. 2022; Heidt



et al. 2025), this paper will explore how university teacher education can contribute to empowering (future) teachers to act competently in distinct contexts of cultural learning. Drawing on vignettes from university and school classrooms, a theory-guided discussion will shed light on the development of decision-making competences and professional intuitions through situational reflection of critical culture-related moments in language learning settings.

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Session #2

4 September, 9:30–11:30



Critical Self-Reflection in Literary Studies within English Language Teacher Education

Iulian Cananau (University of Gävle, Sweden)

In scholarship on critical thinking (CT) in education, critical reflection and self-reflection are identified as key aspects of *criticality*, a theoretical model that adds ethical, civic, and ontological dimensions to more familiar approaches to CT as cognitive and argumentation skills. The aim of criticality-inspired higher education is to cultivate not just critical thinkers, but critical persons capable of critically engaging with the world and themselves, as well as with knowledge (Shpeizer, 2018; Normile, 2024). Burbules and Berk (1999) consider the ability to reflect on one's own views and assumptions as a type of critical reflection that is enabled through conversations with others (p. 61). In Barnett's (1997) criticality model, critical self-reflection (CSR) is a form of critical being, alongside critical reason and critical action, each of them corresponding to the domain of the self, knowledge, and the world, respectively (p. 7).

In this paper, I discuss the potential of this *criticality* notion of CSR for learning in literary studies as part of English language teacher education (ELTE) with respect to the disciplinary content of literary studies, including what is called "literature didactics" in many European countries, and the practice of teaching literature in ELTE at Swedish universities. In connection with the latter, I illustrate the discussion with a few solutions for training CSR in literature classes, which my colleagues and I have implemented in our teaching practice at our university. Some of these solutions rely on Brookfield's (2012) protocols for training critical thinking in dialogue with one's peers by identifying assumptions, checking their accuracy and validity by looking at them from multiple perspectives, and, based on this, developing new perspectives. Others were developed out of conventional instruments of self-evaluation adapted to specific disciplinary aims and content.

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Designing a Reflection Architecture for Literary Learning in English Language Teacher Education

Thorsten Merse (University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany)

Reflection is widely regarded as central to professionalisation in English Language Teacher Education (ELTE) (Mann / Walsh 2017; Wallace 1991). Yet, teacher educators frequently observe that student teachers remain limited to routine reflection, indicating that reflection must be pedagogically scaffolded so that students can move beyond affirmative-reproductive modes (cf. Feike/ Zabel 2025; also: Gerlach/Fasching-Varner 2020; Gerlach/Lüke 2024). This paper proposes a transferable model of a reflection architecture that scaffolds reflective competence in university-based ELTE with a focus on literary learning and cultural diversity. This model draws on Wallace's (1991) reflective practice framework and concepts of literary and cultural learning (Freitag-Hild 2018; Merse 2018, 2021). 'Architecture' is used here to conceptualise reflection as a designed, multi-layered construct.

Based on my practice as a teacher educator at the UDE in Germany, I outline how I employ this architecture through (1) structured reflection spaces, (2) reflection through design, and (3) reflection in practice. Structured reflection spaces include portfolio work and in-class reflections that invite student teachers to revisit their own experiences of literary learning and interrogate tacit beliefs in dialogue with theory. Reflection through design occurs when student teachers create literary text ensembles together with task sequences addressing cultural diversity and socially contested issues. Reflection in practice is fostered during school placements via small-scale action research related to literary and cultural learning.

I will use snapshots from student reflections and my teaching practice to illustrate how student teachers articulate moments of disturbance, reassess assumptions, and negotiate their emerging professionalism. These examples will reveal typical reflection trajectories and tensions in ELTE. The paper argues that a programmatic reflection architecture can foster critically reflective and diversity-responsive English teachers, offering impulses for ELTE contexts that seek to connect literary and cultural learning with reflective professionalism.

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In Other Words. A Free Online Resource to Provide Innovative Materials, Participatory Methodologies, and Critical Reflections for ELTE Teachers

Paola Giorgis (IOW Dictionary)

One of the most debated criticalities both in ELTE teacher's training and in the classroom practice is how to provide teachers with adequate and meaningful teaching materials, and students with engaging activities that can help them become protagonists of their foreign language learning.

On the one hand, teachers are often furnished with decontextualised theoretical approaches that can be of little help in real educational contexts, while, on the other hand, the traditional vertical teacher-students structures often hinder the students' interaction and participation, which are fundamental structural demands in the foreign language class.

To provide innovative materials and approaches in ELTE teacher education, in my presentation I illustrate the online dictionary



In Other Words – A Contextualized Dictionary to Problematize Otherness (IOW), (www.iowdictionary.org). The IOW dictionary is a critical, collective, and creative project structured as an open, collaborative online resource that analyses keywords that, in different contexts and countries, (re)produce different forms of Otherness.

Since the entries are written in English, the IOW dictionary offers innovative materials and methods for ELTE teachers' practices and critical reflections, while engaging students in contextualised and participatory activities in the foreign language, also through the use of multidisciplinary, multimodal, and multimedia creative materials from literature, visual arts, blogs, videos, films, street art, music, etc.

I discuss how the IOW dictionary can be used – and implemented – as an innovative resource for ELTE teacher education and practices by presenting some experiences in real classroom contexts illustrating a) how IOW dictionary is used as a resource for teachers to engage students in language learning, critical language awareness and critical reflections, and b) the results of qualitative interviews with teachers showing the impact of the work with the IOW dictionary on their classroom practices and their professional commitment.

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s20.- Let's Talk About Gender: Critical Pedagogies and Intersectional Knowledge Transfer in the English and American Studies Classroom

Educational systems as institutions of power influence the production and maintenance of societal norms, particularly with regard to gender and their intersections. Despite the fact that many suggestions have been made how to achieve participatory intersectional teaching practices, there is still an urgent need to reflect on practices and methods in the English and American Studies classroom. Very often experiences in the educational system show that regardless of well-intentioned efforts and excellent research in critical pedagogy, the educational system has been oddly consistent in producing and re-producing gender norms. This seminar suggests a feminist pedagogical approach to English and American Studies that focuses on intersectional aspects of race, class, gender, age, and sexual orientation and offers a revised perspective as a didactic tool for literary and cultural analyses in educational settings for teaching in challenging times, where established narratives as well as gender assumptions and norms are questioned. Emphasizing intersectionality, the seminar will ask for contributions to “trouble gender” (Butler) and offer insights into intercultural and intergenerational dynamics for teaching literature. This feminist didactical approach will not only highlight the importance of a critical engagement with established narratives, but will ultimately function as a tool within educational contexts in order to critically engage with and deconstruct (gender) norms and assumptions and offer individuals involved the means to move beyond established and limiting normative social conventions. Established feminist literature and theory will provide an understanding of social, political, and cultural assumptions as narratively constructed concepts limiting the individual in terms of gender and other identity categories. Contributions are welcomed that provide such analysis of narratives and interpretation of texts, or offer theoretical considerations of social reproduction theory, transnational gender literature and/or intersectionality for the English and American Studies classroom teaching literature, language and culture on all levels and providing a critical engagement with the question of identity and social structures within teaching.



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Session #1

31 August, 16:00–18:00

Speculative Pedagogies: Feminist Educational Practices to Cultivate Inclusive Futures and Communities of Care

Nicole Haring (University of Graz, Austria)

Amitav Ghosh's (2016) declaration of 'a crisis of the imagination' with regard to the current period on our planet is the venture point for my presentation on speculative pedagogies in English and American Studies' classrooms in higher education. This declaration points towards the derangement, confusion and our collective imaginative failure. My talk proposes to not only view the current climate crisis as a result of our collective imaginative failures, but as one interrelated outcome of the growing societal inequalities, hegemonial power and domination relations, capitalistic conflicts of interest, asymmetrical gender relations, as well as international border and migration regimes (Haring 2025). Hence as the current moment in history is marked by the complexities of individual phenomena and their interrelatedness, it is not easily understandable as a whole and thus relies on the ever-expanding development and experiments of new approaches and narratives (Ritchie 2023). To contribute to the ongoing scholarly and educational debate on how to tackle this "crisis of the imagination" (Ghosh 2016, 9), I argue that speculative approaches on how to envision an inclusive future are of utmost importance and higher educational institutions are the necessary arena to do so. Therefore, this presentation will showcase speculative future practices that challenge our collective and individual perception of futures. Thinking of futuristic works of Ursula Le Guin, it is an attempt to showcase speculative pedagogical practices. I argue that it is paramount to be experimental in our thoughts, theories, and approaches to be able to negotiate a feminist framework that may contribute to a better understanding of our interdependencies and to imagine an inclusive future consisting of communities of care.



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Gender Response-able Labs: Interfacing Cultural and Visual Cultures as Agents for Social Intervention

Adelina Sánchez Espinosa (University of Granada, Spain)

My contribution will present the results of a research project experience called "Gender Response-able Lecturing Labs: Interfacing cultural and visual cultures as agents for social intervention" (ResLab), Andalusian R+D Project of Excellence, whose objective was to implement labs on the various interfaces between literature and visual cultures. Our ultimate goal was to activate the potential of such labs as methodological tools to generate response-able transgressive teaching and research (hooks, 1994; Buikema et al., 2011; Revelles-Benavente and González-Ramos, 2017; Revelles-Benavente and Sánchez-Espinosa, 2024; Bauer et al. 2025). My contribution will briefly browse through the three moments in the project: inside the undergraduate classroom, at master's level and with extra-academic audiences. It will then focus specifically on labs which explored the transmedia palimpsestic dialogues between Literatures in English and audiovisual products (such as, for instance, Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* and Sally Potter's and Paul Preciado's adaptations).

We will finally talk about two of the most interesting findings from our experiences in the labs from feminist response-able perspectives: the need to queer our failure and accept and share our vulnerabilities inside the classroom so as to create authentically "safer" spaces; the need to raise awareness on our roles as activist researchers and teachers who dare mediate our most immediate social challenges by disseminating the knowledges created in academia beyond academic spaces.

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Teaching Traveling Concepts across Disciplines

Jasmina Lukic (Central European University Vienna, Austria)

The paper discusses challenges of teaching a course on traveling concepts to interdisciplinary and international groups of doctoral candidates, the main problems in conceptualizing the course, and possible solutions. After teaching such a course for more than a decade with the Department of Gender Studies at Central European University, I have developed a special method of co-creating the course with PhD candidates to address the needs of highly diverse groups of young scholars, researching across humanities and social sciences. The outcome was a course with an open structure, in which both the teacher and the participants contribute when it comes to the choice of topics and the choice of literature to be read for the classes. The task of the teacher is to provide the backbone of the course and some of its main points, while the participants offer special points of interest. In this way it was possible to find a common ground across academic differences, and for all the participants to feel equally included. Particular attention is given to the significance of selected concepts for research projects of the students, thus emphasizing methodological aspects of the course.

Intergenerational Eco-Narratives of Resistance: Feminist Writings as Feminist Pedagogies

Roberta Maierhofer (University of Graz, Austria)

Since the 1980s, scholars in the field of cultural gerontology have turned to cultural manifestations to investigate ideas about the meaning of identity within the life course. Narratives both reaffirm and subvert dichotomies of gender *and* age. In a feminist



tradition, Susan Sontag identified early on aging as a social judgement of women based on a lack of imagination rather than a biological eventuality, when she pointed to the “Double Standard of Aging” (1973) as applied to men and women and recognized socially and culturally set boundaries as *imagined* predicaments. Since the beginning of the 1990s, anocriticism (Maierhofer) links theories of gender and age to emphasize the narrated expressions of counter-worlds as voices of resistance and subversion – necessary for social and cultural change. When Amitav Ghosh identifies the failure to address issues of climate change as “a crisis of the imagination”, he suggests that narratives create thought experiments challenging the status quo. Addressing asymmetrical structures of power (Sachs 2014), eco-imaginaries provide counter-worlds on different levels. Regarding gender, age, and generations, climate discourse has highlighted this asymmetry and often ignored intergenerational collaboration. By portraying older adults as “greedy geezers” (Fairlie 1988) and the young as victims of previous generations, intergenerational tensions have increased. Acknowledging the short story “A White Heron” (1886) by Sarah Orne Jewett as an early eco-imaginary of generational with a subtle demand for social justice, this presentation seeks to provide an understanding of the importance of telling ecological stories across the generations as feminist pedagogies. By (re)presenting a feminist collaborative, multi-generational voice within the climate discourse, intergenerational narratives are imagined and function as critical pedagogical tools for the American Studies classroom.

Artificial Intelligence in the SLE: Using Contemporary Literature to Make Visible Gender(ed) Invisibilities

Beatriz Revelles-Benavente (University of Granada, Spain)

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a transformative tool that repeats particular patterns and homogenizes determined discursive-material practices. However, at the same time, some authors claim that it is the new calculator from our era (Pym & Hao, 2025), meaning a transversal device that facilitates determined results within different areas of knowledge, particularly relevant in the area of teaching English as a Second Language. AI permeates our students’ methods but also their future in English Studies, while at the same time, it is a tool that can reinstall certain oppressive patterns creating subjectivities with similar features. Therefore, it is an instrument that needs to be revised from an onto-epistemological point of view, as well as a pedagogical one.

Working with critical pedagogies, I propose the concept “respons-able pedagogies” (Revelles-Benavente & González, 2017; Revelles-Benavente & Sánchez, 2024) from a feminist perspective in order to make visible the patterns that AI can reproduce in the literary canon and the subjectivities and how it can, at the same time, be used in an undergraduate class of Translation and Interpretation.



I want to engage with the possibilities that it can offer in our classes through the novel of *The Handmaid's Tale*, while at the same time thinking through a gender perspective in order to break a possible reconstruction of homogeneous societies that make gender invisible. I will propose several pedagogical examples in order to promote critical thinking as the necessary capacity in order to engage with AI *respons-ably* in our classes.

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Session #2

1 September, 9:00–11:00

Transnational Literature Incarnated: Notes on (Counter)mapping Otherwise or How Concepts can be Embodied

Angie Harris-Sánchez (University of Oviedo, Spain)

Marina Casado (Central European University Vienna, Austria)

Olga Fenoll (University of Lodz, Poland)

Séamus O'Kane (University of Granada, Spain)

How can literature be represented in classrooms as a material process and as a tool of embodiment? This presentation aims to reflect on a session taught in the GEMMA (Erasmus Mundus Master in Women's and Gender Studies) by researchers and doctoral candidates that belong to the MSCA Marie Skłodowska-Curie EUTERPE: European Literatures and Gender from a Transnational Perspective network. The aim of this presentation is to bring together some reflections on the challenges that teaching in academia



involves, especially when it comes to the transmission of knowledge in contexts that deal particularly with gender studies. With the purpose of constructing response/able (Haraway 2016) teaching environments, this presentation brings forward reflections on embodiment of concepts as methods (Taguchi and St. Pierre 2017, Mazzei 2021) through an exercise of counter-mapping (Mesquita 2018, GeoBrujas 2023) that would bring the students physically closer to the concepts that were being used in the session by EUTERPE researchers. These concepts were the following: transnational, gender, literature, new materialisms, translanguage and activism. Prior to the session, the convenors of the exercise, researcher Angie Harris, and DCs Olga Fenoll, Séamus O’Kane and Marina Casado, asked the students to bring any piece of written text, visual or sound artifact that might be activated by one or more of the aforementioned concepts. The final goal was to draw a map in small groups at the end of the session where all these ideas would relate to further theories/concepts they would want to include and connect/disconnect with. This collective mapping gave them freedom of connection, association, and activation which, as they themselves discussed, sometimes is not easy to find. In the end, this experience made us reflect on how to stay with the trouble (Haraway 2016) while promoting feminist pedagogies (Revelles-Benavente and Sánchez Espinosa 2024) that can activate concepts and theories differently.

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“Moments of Affection” in the English Classroom through Literature and Cinema

Orianna Calderón Sandoval (University of Granada, Spain)

This paper summarises the experience of two “response-able” (Barad 2007; Revelles-Benavente and González 2017) laboratories carried out in two undergraduate courses from the second year of the Degree in Translation and Interpreting at the University of Granada. The first lab took place within the course “Lengua C4 Inglés”, and the second lab within the course “Cultura de la Lengua C Inglés.” In the first lab, the starting point was a literary text that triggered individual reflection and collective discussion about social inequalities, the 2016 novel *Homegoing* by the Ghanaian-American novelist Yaa Gyasi. Students were asked to read the novel along the course, with different groups presenting a summary of two chapters in different sessions. Apart from identifying previously specified key points, students had to complement these presentations with transmedia resources that could help us better understand the socio-political and historical context in which the plot was developed.

In the second lab, the starting point is a selection of Anglo-American films that illustrate different topics from the Cultures in English course, among which: Gender, Race, Class, Postcolonialism, Economy and Politics. Students will be asked to make a video essay in pairs, discussing the topics and films. They will screen their video essays to the group to trigger collective discussions.

Following Barad’s redefinition of responsibility as “response-ability” (2007) and bell hooks’ “engaged pedagogy” (2010: 8), both labs are designed with the goal of enabling students to think critically and to become response-able for “creating a learning community together” (2010: 11). The methodology for approaching the texts is that of feminist close reading, which entails a careful interpretation of textual passages bearing in mind “the contextuality and historicity of any reading” (Lukic & Sánchez 2011: 106), as well as the power relations that traverse texts, with gender as a key entry point. At a second stage, the labs also employ a “diffractive reading”, in which literature and cinema are “read through one another” (Barad 2007: 30), thus allowing for critical dialogues past-present-future to be established, and for transformative “moments of affection” (Hongisto 2015) to take place.

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Troubling Gender Stereotypes: Discomfort Embraced in Young People’s Digital Storytelling

Vicky Macleroy (Goldsmiths, University of London, United Kingdom)

This paper critiques coming-of-age stories and looks at how emerging sexuality is explored, represented and contested within young adult digital stories. Research in the field of children’s and young adult (YA) literature reveals censorship and silence in representing menstruation in YA texts and challenges the shame and secrecy of talking about menstruation in YA literature (Pokorny-Golden, 2015). In a more recent study, Gaybor & Harcourt (2022) position menstruation within global body politics and call for the end of menstrual stigma as vital to the demands of intersectional reproductive justice. In this paper, I examine how young people trouble gender stereotypes and embrace discomfort in the digital stories they choose to tell global audiences.

I draw on research from our global literacy project, Critical Connections (2012-ongoing) to demonstrate how young people break stigmas and design stories that embrace discomfort and intergenerational gender stereotypes. Firstly, I present a digital story created by young people (14-16 years old) in India, *The Menstrual Cycle*, and how their story aimed to revolutionise feminist struggles and raise awareness to normalise menstruation. I then turn to a digital story, *Lost in the Mirror*, produced by young people (13-14 years old) which revolves around an ordinary schoolgirl fitting in and changing herself for others. Finally, I present a digital story created in Taiwan, *Home is Where Care Begins*, where these young people (16–17-year-olds) make reusable sanitary pads and end their film with these words: ‘In every stitch a heartbeat. In every heart, a home’, and the idea that small acts of care can reach far beyond borders. I conclude the presentation by examining to what extent these digital stories trouble gender stereotypes and encourage young people to embrace and disrupt discomfort.

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Practicing Feminist Hope in the Capitalocene: Affirmative Becoming in Women's Transmedia Life-Writing

Belén Cornejo Daza (University of Granada, Spain)

This paper examines contemporary feminist transmedia life-writing as a form of hope and resistance in the Capitalocene (Moore 2015). Drawing on Anna Poletti's *Stories of the Self: Life Writing after the Book* (2020), it foregrounds the material transformations of self-inscription narratives by women in the twenty-first century and explores their political and critical potential to intervene in the present and imagine it otherwise. The analysis centers on Los Angeles-based writer Gabi Abrão and her work *Notes on Shapeshifting* (2024), which brings together poems and essays previously published across digital media such as Substack, Instagram or Patreon. Across her transmedia practice, experiences of damage, loss and finitude under the regime of advanced capitalism are rendered visible; yet her testimonial, non-speculative and non-fictional writing simultaneously materialises a processual and collective form of feminist hope that does not deny negative affects but refuses to allow them to exhaust the possibilities of living and imagining otherwise. Mobilising feminist new materialist and posthumanist theories, particularly Braidotti's (2019) ethics of affirmation, this paper understands the present not as the record of what we are ceasing to be, but as the trace of what we are in the process of becoming (Braidotti 2019). Hence, Abrão's life-writing is analysed here as a feminist practice of hope that processes lived material in the direction of affirmation and, rather than diminishing our power of "relating to the very conditions that engender our existence", expands our ontological capacity "to relate and take in the world" (Braidotti 2019). Methodologically, the paper combines feminist close reading (Sánchez-Espinosa & Lukić 2011) with a diffractive reading in Karen Barad's (2007) sense, attending to the intra-actions of Abrão's texts through and with these theoretical frameworks. Ultimately, it argues that women's contemporary life-writing across media emerges as a lived, experiential and creative practice of hope with the potential to transform the present in affirmative, rather than optimistic, ways.



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S21.- The Poetics and Ethics of Sexual Dissidence in Anglophone Postcolonial Literatures

We invite submissions for a panel that will examine the intersections of sexuality, identity, resistance and dissent in Anglophone postcolonial non-fiction, fiction, drama, and poetry. We wish to explore the avenues offered by literary texts to challenge and/or disrupt heteronormative and "universal" norms of gender and sexuality, by pondering over what Jonathan Dollimore calls "sexual dissidence" (1991), linked to a form of transgressivity. In so doing, these texts can be considered as "political", if we follow Jacques Rancière, for whom "dissensus" is at the heart of "politics" (2010).

To what extent do these literary texts shed light on *other* modes of being that interrogate the legacies of colonialism? By adopting a decolonial perspective, which lays bare the "colonial wound", could Anglophone literatures delve into ways of reaching "decolonial healings" (Mignolo and Vazquez 2013)? As David L. Eng puts it, sexual dissidence and other forms of intimacy can work as "sites of critical response" (2010) for addressing the challenges of race in the so-called "colorblind" age of global capitalism. By staging vulnerable, "precarious" (Butler 2004) and "ungrievable" (Butler 2009) lives, embodied and "willful" (Ahmed 2014) lives even, at the intersection of race, gender and sexuality, these texts can be said to resist censorship, the law, and more generally "queer" invisibilisation. In this light, the focus on sexual dissidence could lead to what Emmanuel Renault calls "recognition" (2001), especially for LGBTQIA2S+ people who tend to be stigmatized; the lack of "recognition" can be "experience[d] [...] as real moral wounds[,] [t]he experience of [which] is painful and radical enough to lead to a revolt" (Renault 2001). Building on these insights, this panel will strive to elucidate how Anglophone postcolonial literatures help cultivate an ethics and a poetics of sexual dissidence, serving as an archive of (cultural) resistance.



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Session #1

31 August, 16:00–18:00

Radical Refusals: (A)sexual Dissidence in *Escape to an Autumn Pavement* (1960)

Kristina Weber (University of Rostock, Germany)

The queer orientations of asexuality and aromanticism have increasingly gained a discursive critical quality as theoretical terms over the last twenty-odd years of Asexuality Studies research. Especially in conjunction with post- and decolonial perspectives, an asexual lens on society and on cultural artefacts and literary texts uncovers hegemonic societal structures around sexuality and human relating, such as the desexualisation of certain population groups (e.g. indigenous or East Asian people, among others) and the power structures or social control enabled through them. Further, the “asexual resonances” (Przybylo/Cooper, 2014) found in such texts function as social critical and sexual dissidence through refusal, non-sexuality, radical intimacies and a rejection of sexual and romantic norms that go beyond the heteronormative.



In this paper, I offer an asexual reading of Andrew Salkey's Windrush novel *Escape to an Autumn Pavement* (1960). The novel is considered the first black British text (and one of the only Windrush novels) to detail same-sex attraction between men through the protagonist's homo- or bisexuality. Conversely, an asexual lens that highlights the elements of refusal, non- or antisexuality inherent in the main character's rejection of his hypersexualisation at the hands of two white lovers and his rejection of the false 'choice' between the man and woman exhumes a radical, and radically queer, anticolonial impetus in this classic novel. The disruption of the heteronormative through the same-sex elements in this story must in turn be disrupted by highlighting the rejection of a colonialist compulsory sexuality. My reading will allow me to demonstrate the critical potential of considering non-sexual literary phenomena as pertinent to an ethics and poetics of postcolonial sexual dissidence.

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Sapphic Intimacies and Dissident Sexualities in the Works of Jamaica Kincaid

Ashley Coyne (University of Orleans, France)

While challenges to dominant sexual norms in the works of Antiguan-American author Jamaica Kincaid have been addressed in postcolonial and feminist scholarship, queer readings of her texts remain relatively sparse. This research gap is puzzling given that sapphic desire and relationships abound in the early lives of Kincaid's narrators. Such scholarly silence is perhaps due to Kincaid's assertion in a 1991 interview that these relationships are "just practicing" for heteronormative futures, a claim the author more recently contradicted by referring to "the latent lesbianism" present in *Annie John* (1985) (Vorda & Kincaid 1991: 18). Indeed, Kincaid's adolescent narrator Annie John confesses her love for three girls with whom she exchanges kisses and erotic embraces, as well as makes plans to marry. In *Lucy* (1990), this desire for women extends into the narrator's young adulthood, for she is arguably attracted to her employer Mariah and kisses her friend Peggy "until we were exhausted" (Kincaid 1990: 64)

Moreover, in the *Autobiography of My Mother* (1996), the narrator transgresses dominant gender and sexual norms imposed on Caribbean women by, for example, playing with gender through dress and expressing no shame when she is discovered masturbating. As this paper aims to demonstrate, such patterns of sexual dissidence are inscribed within larger praxes of dissent



savored and celebrated by Kincaid's narrators who revel in opportunities to contest the colonial and heteropatriarchal order. My work thus aligns itself with that of Akash Nikolas (2017) by insisting that queer readings of Kincaid's work be enriched by – and not carried out in isolation from – postcolonial and feminist scholarship on her writing. Moreover, this paper interrogates the ethics of imposing the “baggage of Euro-American queer scholarship” on the Caribbean through labels such as “lesbian” and “queer” by instead exploring Caribbean sexual grammars, including the terms *mati* or *zanmi* which describe sexual feelings and praxis rather than sexual identity (Ghisyawan 2015).

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The Question of Representing Women’s Sexuality in Hanif Kureishi’s “With Your Tongue Down My Throat”

Berfin Özlem Erden (Istanbul Kültür University, Türkiye)

In his short story “With Your Tongue Down My Throat”, Hanif Kureishi presents a doubly-coded picture of female sexuality, which both celebrates the freedom of women’s sexual expressions and questions how this freedom should be represented in fiction. Written



within a frame narrative device, the text, at first, consists of the first-person narrator voice of the (female) protagonist. Towards the end, when the story is revealed to be a frame narrative from a white male perspective, however, the legitimacy of how the story presents female experience is shattered. Metatextually, this collapse of trust in the narrative also involves Kureishi as the author who has shaped the voices of both of these narrators. The reader, hence, is also forced to reconcile with Kureishi's own potential limitations on representing female sexuality from a male perspective, making the frame narrative a deliberate choice to reflect on authorial limitations as a narrative device. As H. Porter Abbott claims, framing devices play "critically important roles" in our interpretations of a narrative (Abbott 28) and Kureishi's story is a prime example of this notion. Considering the postcolonial elements of the narrative, too, Kureishi's short story also presents a questioning of postcolonial identity as well, which is closely related to the sexual beings the characters are. All in all, Kureishi's portrayal of female sexuality from a postcolonial and, inevitably, male perspective both proclaims and questions the nature of their sexual dissidence.

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Session #2

1 September, 9:00–11:00

Bodies that Refuse: Sexual Dissidence in Margaret Atwood's Biopolitical Imagineries

Caroline Sarré (University of Orleans, France)

Drawing on Michel Foucault's concept of biopower, this paper will examine how sexual dissidence operates as a site of contested power in the fiction of Margaret Atwood. Biopower, understood as the regulation of bodies, sexuality, and reproduction in the service of population management, is a recurring organizing logic in Atwood's speculative and historical narratives. From the theocratic reproductive regime of *The Handmaid's Tale* to the technocratic bioengineering of *Oryx and Crake*, Atwood consistently depicts sexuality as a political and technological tool through which life itself is governed.

This paper argues that Atwood represents sexual dissidence not as a utopian form of liberation but as a precarious, embodied



practice that exposes the limits and contradictions of biopower by reclaiming desire, refusal, and narrative agency from regimes that seek to regulate life through sexuality. Read through a postcolonial lens, Atwood's biopolitical regimes echo colonial practices of population management and disposability, in which the regulation of sexuality and reproduction sustains hierarchies of life and value shaped by settler-colonial and neo-colonial histories. Shifting positions of power and peripheralism are explored through a necessarily symbolic and ambiguous representation of the colonial opposition of self and other.

Acts of dissident sexuality—illicit pleasure, queer desire, strategic celibacy, and sexual opacity—do not overthrow biopolitical systems; rather, they function as localized interruptions that reveal the fragility of totalizing control and that resist them. Offred's illicit relationship in *The Handmaid's Tale*, Moira's lesbian resistance, and the commodified yet unsanctioned sexuality of Jezebel's all illustrate how desire persists outside reproductive utility. Similarly, *The Testaments* reframes sexual dissidence as refusal and non-participation, while *Oryx and Crake* relocates biopower within corporate biotechnology, where sexuality is engineered, commodified, and stripped of affect.

Finally, this paper will also consider how narration itself can be considered a form of sexual and cultural resistance. By reclaiming memory, pleasure, and storytelling, Atwood's protagonists reassert subjective embodiment against systems that seek to render bodies purely functional. Ultimately, Atwood's work suggests that while biopower may regulate sex, it cannot fully contain desire, memory, or meaning, making sexual dissidence a critical lens through which the vulnerabilities of biopolitical control are exposed.

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From Surveillance to Shelter: Sexual Dissidence and the Rewriting of Family in Jonny Garza Villa's *Fifteen Hundred Miles from the Sun*

Tamara Rojo-Castro (University of the Basque Country, Spain)



This paper examines how sexual dissidence in *Fifteen Hundred Miles from the Sun* (2021) by Jonny Garza Villa constructs alternative forms of kinship that resist heteronormative, racialized, and colonial models of family. Centering Julián's queer coming-of-age as a Latinx teen, the study argues that the novel reimagines refuge not as an inherited structure but as an affective practice shaped through distance, willfulness, and chosen intimacy.

The analysis employs a qualitative methodology grounded in close textual reading and informed by queer, affective, and decolonial theory. It situates the novel within scholarship on chosen kinship and critiques of the privatized family, engaging the work of Sophie Lewis and M.E. O'Brien alongside José Esteban Muñoz, Kath Weston, and Sara Ahmed. Rather than relying on empirical data, the paper interprets the text through these theoretical frameworks to examine how mobility, affect, and the connections we have destabilize the usual family structures.

Within the narrative, the family home operates as a site of surveillance and emotional containment rather than protection, reproducing fear, obligation, and silence. Julián's departure thus becomes a necessary act of queer dissidence. Through migration, friendship, and intimate attachments, he assembles networks of care that redefine family as something created rather than imposed. Julián's movement challenges dominant regimes of belonging by exposing how racialized queer lives are rendered fragile or disposable while also disrupting the systems that seek to confine them.

Ultimately, the paper demonstrates that sexual dissidence in the novel functions as a form of queer world-making. Migration and distance emerge as decolonial strategies through which home is transformed into a chosen, collective, and resistant space for survival and recognition.

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The Poetics and Ethics of Jewish Sexual Dissidence: Elana Dykewomon's *Beyond the Pale* and the Decolonial Reimagining of Queer Jewish Womanhood

Irina Rabinovich (Holon Institute of Technology, Israel)

This paper offers a close reading of Elana Dykewomon's *Beyond the Pale* (1997) as a transgenerational narrative of Jewish women's endurance, erotic attachment, and political awakening, tracing three generations from the violence of the Pale of Settlement to immigrant life in early twentieth-century New York. The novel follows Gutke Gurvich, a midwife born from rape during a pogrom; her lifelong partner Dovid/Dovida, who escapes an arranged marriage, assumes a male identity, and builds a career as a banker; and the younger generation—Chava, orphaned in the 1903 Kishinev pogrom, and her cousin Rose, who becomes her lover and later a garment worker involved in labor activism. By embedding these fictional lives within historical events such as pogroms, mass migration, the 1909 “Uprising of the 20,000,” and the 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire, Dykewomon constructs a feminist–queer archive that intertwines private intimacy with collective struggle.

The novel foregrounds female networks of care—midwifery, mentorship, ritual bath encounters, tenement solidarities, and labor organizing—as alternative infrastructures of survival in the face of antisemitic violence, patriarchal authority, and economic exploitation. Gutke's training under Milcah and her mentorship by Pesah Kohn establish a matrilineal lineage of female knowledge and autonomy. Dovid/Dovida's cross-dressing complicates fixed categories of gender and reveals both the costs and possibilities of navigating a world structured by compulsory heterosexuality and communal regulation. In New York, Chava and Rose's evolving lesbian relationship unfolds alongside their participation in the garment industry and suffrage activism, situating erotic attachment within the public sphere of labor politics. Rose's death in the Triangle fire marks a decisive rupture in the narrative, transforming private grief into political consciousness and linking queer intimacy to the making of labor memory and feminist public history.

Beginning from these narrative and historical coordinates, the paper situates *Beyond the Pale* within a theoretical framework of sexual dissidence (Dollimore 1991), gender performativity (Butler 1999), and willful resistance (Ahmed 2014). I argue that the novel enacts a form of decolonial aesthetics (Mignolo and Vázquez 2013) by reclaiming Jewish lesbian subjectivities long marginalized within both nationalist and communal historiographies. Through what Jacques Rancière terms “dissensus” (2010), Dykewomon reconfigures the visible and the sayable, rendering queer Jewish womanhood historically legible where it has been marked as deviant, precarious, or ungrievable (Butler 2004, 2009).

Ultimately, *Beyond the Pale* articulates a poetics of Jewish sexual dissidence that unsettles the dual hegemonies of patriarchy and



assimilation. By reframing exile not solely as dispossession but as a condition for alternative kinship, ethical solidarity, and feminist public history, the novel reimagines belonging beyond colonial, national, and religious boundaries.

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S22.- The Response of Anglophone Fiction to the New Age of Denial

The word “denial” has become ubiquitous in contemporary criticism and theory. Originating in psychology, it has been developed by sociology, history, political theory, ecology, and literary studies. Its upsurge is correlated to the decline, over the last decade, of the concept of trauma. It seems as if a paradigm shift were under way, underlining the evolution from “The Age of Trauma”—characterised by concrete catastrophic events, like natural disasters or the Covid pandemic—had given way to a new “Age of Denial,” made distinct by extended exposure to anguish in the face of the current state of polycrisis. Indeed, there is a growing perception among critics that the outlook on denial provided by the social sciences falls short of suggesting solutions in terms of individual and collective action. They efficiently demonstrate that such ongoing crises as global warming, the rise of populism, the attacks on scientific discourse or the distortion of clearly established facts, provoke an increasing state of apathy and inertia. Yet, they content themselves with anatomising our failure to apprehend, act upon, and overcome the present situation. These ideas underlie the working hypothesis of this seminar, namely, that fiction has the pragmatic power to delve into the forces at work in the current state of polycrisis, and the capacity to help readers apprehend them imaginatively, thereby becoming instrumental in eye-opening, consciousness-raising, decision-making and action-taking.

We seek proposals based on contemporary Anglophone fictions (about global warming, Brexit, migration, neo-imperialist forms



of warfare, Trump's reversal to nineteenth-century liberalism, etc.) that address the ways in which denial has become a central thematic, poetical and ethical category. We are interested in the ways in which fiction identifies, fights against, and curbs denial and other forms of psychological resistance, both individual and collective.

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Session #1: Post-colonial and Diasporic Issues

2 September, 9:00–11:00

Introduction

Jean-Michel Ganteau (University of Montpellier Paul-Valéry, France)



States of Denial and the Slum Ethics of Survival in Merlinda Bobis's *The Solemn Lantern Maker*

Susana Onega (University of Zaragoza, Spain)

To be in a state of denial is to block out or repress information or emotions. Psychoanalysis has amply studied individual denial as an unconscious defence mechanism for coping with guilt, anxiety and other disturbing emotions, aroused by a traumatic event or situation (see Freud and Breuer). Unable to cope with the upsurge of affects, the psyche blocks off information that is literally unthinkable or unbearable, so that “we know without knowing” (see Bloom; Herrero and Baelo). As Stanley Cohen argues, “[t]he political echoes of these states of mind may be found in the mass denial so characteristic of repressive, racist and colonial states. Dominant groups seem uncannily able to shut out or ignore the injustice and suffering around them” (5). In such sociocultural contexts, a model emerges of socially organised denial, where state crimes and human rights violations are normalised, silenced or outright denied. The paper seeks to analyse Merlinda Bobis's *The Solemn Lantern Maker* from this perspective. Published in Australia in 2008 and in the United States in 2009, Bobis's second novel provides an insightful and moving picture of life in the slums of Manila during the presidency of Gloria Macapagal Arroyo (2001–2010) in the Philippines, and of President George W. Bush (2001–2009) in the U.S.A. It tells the story of Noland, a ten-year-old boy suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder since the age of four, when he witnessed the murder of his father, a farmer, and the bashing of his mother at the hands of uniformed men. This event echoes the land disputes and forced evictions taking place during Arroyo's neo-colonial rule with the connivance of the Bush administration. Although the country acquired nominal independence from the United States in 1946, and the U.S. military bases were shut down in 1991, they continued to exert a tight control of the Philippine military and police forces, particularly after the declaration of the war on terror, when the Bush administration transformed the Philippines into “the second front” in the global war against Al Qaeda and “rogue” states, with the complicity of Arroyo, who “allowed the intervention of thousands of U.S. troops into the Philippines in a botched thirty-eight-years-old counterinsurgency drive against the Communist Party of the Philippines and the New People's Army, declared as ‘terrorists’ by the U.S. State Department in 2002” (San Juan Jr. n.p.). After the murder of his father and their eviction from the farm, Noland became mute and his mother never mentioned the event or named her husband. But she transmitted to him a source of resilience and hope through a song-wish: “*Star-light, star-bright / Make a wish-a wish-a-wish-a-wish-tonight*” (Bobis 23), and the story that the stars were “angels guarding the land and the hearts that will always be true to it” (83). The action begins on the first of the nine-day festivals preceding Christmas Eve. Noland and his



protective friend Elvis are selling star-shaped lanterns to people stuck in a traffic jam in Manila, when they witness the shooting of a journalist targeted by the government for exposing their corruption (59). When Noland sees that a beautiful blonde American woman is also hit, he runs to her rescue, convinced that she is an angel. Thus, Noland's fantasy of celestial intervention and hope materialises, while the joint military forces under *Balikatan* (Philippine-American friendship), create their own paranoiac fantasy that the American woman has been abducted by terrorists (108), with terrible consequences for the slum people and for Elvis in particular.

Deconstructing Narratives of Denial in Shehan Karunatilaka's *The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida*

Chamindi Perera (University of Montpellier Paul-Valéry, France)

The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida (2022) is a paradigmatic response to the 'Age of Denial' through its homodiegetic protagonist's efforts to curb denial in Sri Lanka. Granted seven nights to identify his murderer, the amnesiac spectre-protagonist navigates the limbo crowded with souls subjected to multiform denials in real life. I focus on how this posthumous narrative framework grants the protagonist a high degree of agency, providing a platform for marginal voices within Sri Lankan society, both dead and living. Here, denial is articulated as an active process of disavowal enacted by the national totems of justice, leaving no place for ethical culpability. My paper further examines how this dead war photographer counters denial by publishing the table-turning photographs that expose contemporary injustices based on real events. His camera functions as a tool of resistance against forgetting and denial, preserving evidence of atrocity to seek accountability. The visual media and their apparatuses are symbolically constructed as counter-denial mechanisms within this contested terrain, focusing on violence perpetrated by four major agents in the 1980s: the government, insurgent groups, separatist groups, and the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF). His photographs further underscore the complexity of denial in Sri Lanka, particularly as the Global North profits from the warfare and therefore remains complicitly silent on the human rights violations. Antithetically, the narrative's liminal space grants supernatural agency to these marginal voices to reclaim the denied justice. Finally, I argue that the novel's use of magic realism, satire, and second-person narration (Sorlin, 2017) leads to the naturalisation of the supernatural, exposing the inherent absurdity of the denial discourse and mobilising fiction itself as a reparative strategy to counter denial (Rosello, 2010).



Socially-mediated Belonging in the Age of Denial: Nicolas Padamsee's *England is Mine* as a Literary Intervention

José Igor Prieto-Arranz (University of the Balearic Islands, Spain)

This paper analyses Nicolas Padamsee's debut novel, *England is Mine*, as a compelling literary intervention against the "Age of Denial" that shapes contemporary societies. Focusing on the intricate experiences of second-generation immigrants in present-day England, the novel vividly portrays the complexities of (largely socially mediated) identity, belonging and cultural assimilation. The paper will argue that Padamsee's narrative deftly explores various manifestations of denial, from the individual's psychological suppression of heritage or internal conflicts to broader social denials regarding the lived realities, challenges and contributions of immigrant communities. By delving into the subtle forms of exclusion, the pressure to conform, and the fragmented search for authentic selfhood, *England is Mine* functions as a powerful, "eye-opening" work that challenges monolithic understandings of national identity. It forces readers to confront the often-unacknowledged biases, structural resistances and systemic denials that characterise the "polycrisis" identified by the seminar, particularly in relation to migration. Ultimately, Padamsee's novel serves as a critical literary response, illustrating how fiction can identify, fight against and curb these forms of denial, fostering a more nuanced and empathetic understanding of contemporary multicultural experiences.

Session #2: Collective Denial

3 September, 9:30–11:30

Ghosts and Sirens: Writing Affect against Collective Denial in Jan Carson's Northern Irish Fiction

Héloïse Lecomte (Sorbonne University, France)

It has often been argued by critics that contemporary fictional representations of Northern Ireland tend to portray a political and cultural "state of suspension" between the violent memories of civil strife and the uncertainties of the future, leading to apparent forms of collective inertia. Jan Carson's fiction, and more particularly her novels *The Fire Starters* (2019) and *The Raptures* (2023), as well as her collections of short stories *The Last Resort* (2021) and *Quickly, While They Still Have Horses* (2024), dramatizes this



suspended state in its articulation of affect, the combination of grief and anxiety that characterises the post-Brexit era in Northern Ireland. In this paper, I will examine how Carson questions the very label of “post-conflict” society by focusing on communities that actively refuse to acknowledge the persistence of violence, social breakdown and inherited guilt. In *The Last Resort*, *The Raptures* and the short story “Grand So”, the figure of the ghost materialises the unresolved legacy of the Troubles, returning both as an agent of re-visibilisation and a reminder of a past the community is seeking to normalise or to bury. In *The Fire Starters*, the double-sided figure of the siren, both as mythological creature and warning sound, is also used as a counterpoint to communal and institutional denial. Taken together, these works of fiction build up a poetics of denial in which incursions into the supernatural do not provide escapism but rather function as an instrument of ethical and political awakening or reckoning. Carson’s magical realism exposes the mechanisms of denial by making the figures of collective grief or mounting anxiety impossible to ignore, thereby forcing characters and readers alike to confront what is systematically ignored.

“Stop Yourself Thinking”: Denial, Dissociation, and Climate Trauma in John Lanchester’s *The Wall*

Nihal Topcu (Ordu University, Türkiye)

John Lanchester’s *The Wall* (2019) imagines a near-future Britain surrounded by a colossal concrete barrier built to keep out climate refugees known as “Others.” In this sterile and militarised landscape, a generation of young Defenders patrols the Wall in compulsory two-year shifts. This paper argues that *The Wall* is not only a climate dystopia but also a fictional exploration of denial and psychic disconnection in the face of systemic catastrophe. Reading through trauma theory and eco-criticism, the novel captures the collective impact of an age marked by polycrisis: emotional numbness, moral detachment, and a sense that nothing can really change. The narrator, Joseph Kavanagh, speaks in a voice drained of feeling, describing his world in flat, affectless language. Kavanagh and his peers are fully aware of the risks of their task; however, they are so steeped in fear and fatalism that denial becomes the only way to endure. Their world is one where boredom, routine, and surveillance mask a deep-seated trauma: the irreversible loss of the pre-Change world, the exclusion of Others, and their own expendability. The Wall is not just a setting; it is a metaphor for psychological enclosure. Eco-critically, the novel also echoes Timothy Morton’s concept of “hyperobjects,” treating climate change and its effects (rising seas, displacement, mass migration) as overwhelming in both scale and perception. The Defenders know the world is broken, yet they feel emotionally paralysed and cannot envision alternatives. Even in moments of potential connection, such as Kavanagh’s relationship with Hifa, emotional engagement remains shallow,



framed by exhaustion and scarcity. *The Wall* thus emerges as a study in institutionalised dissociation, where trauma is displaced by obedience, and denial becomes an act of adaptation rather than ignorance. In an age where polycrisis breeds apathy as much as anxiety and fear, Lanchester's novel functions both as a dystopian warning and as a mirror. It also raises urgent ethical questions about complicity in the post-Change order and the psychological cost of normalising catastrophe.

From Domestic Crisis to Collective Denial: Ireland's Culture of Inattention in Paul Murray's *The Bee Sting*

Angelo Monaco (University of Bari Aldo Moro, Italy)

Set in a small town in the Irish Midlands, Paul Murray's *The Bee Sting* (2023) traces the gradual unravelling of the Barnes family, exposing private fears, failures, and desires. As financial precarity, emotional estrangement, and ecological anxiety intensify, the novel shifts from domestic realism to a broader meditation on responsibility and the cumulative impact of seemingly minor choices. In this respect, denial emerges as a central theme, influencing the characters' reactions to sexual transgression, economic decline, and the climate crisis. In the novel, denial operates not only as a recurring motif but as an organising principle of narrative consciousness: through alternating first-person perspectives marked by omission, misrecognition, and self-justifying retrospection, Murray articulates denial as a mode of perception, compelling readers to inhabit the same partial and evasive awareness that governs the unravelling of the Barnes family. *The Bee Sting*, therefore, illuminates how such patterns of inattention operate collectively, reflecting post-Celtic Tiger economic amnesia and climate denial. In my presentation, I will draw on Eviatar Zerubavel's theory of socially organised silence (2006) and Jean-Michel Ganteau's examination of the ethics of attention in contemporary literature (2023) to interpret denial as a collective survival strategy influenced by social norms, which ultimately challenges the reader's capacity for sustained attention. First, I will analyse how denial shapes the narrative structure through unreliable narration and fragmentation. Each section is governed by a protective viewpoint that conceals more than it discloses, resulting in gaps and contradictions that the reader must actively interpret. I will then address the ethical ramifications of this structure, contending that *The Bee Sting* assigns to the reader the responsibility of recognition. Given that the characters appear incapable of confronting the most pressing issues, it falls to the reader to fulfil this role. In this manner, Murray posits that denial does not simply delay catastrophe but actively contributes to its emergence, illustrating how both personal and societal collapse can follow a similar trajectory of sustained, collective inattention.



Session #3: Social Norms

3 September, 15:00–17:00

Institutional Denial, Racial Invisibilization and Populist Explosion in Alan Hollinghurst's *Our Evenings* (2024)

Georges Letissier (Nantes University, France)

Hollinghurst's whole literary project may be seen as an attempt to shatter homosexual denial and queer invisibility, by outing the subdued connections between closed gay life and the cult of homosexuality in a country where the links between politics and homosexuality have been both obfuscated and institutionalised. Indeed, denial (of the facts of life) led to the formation of clandestine circles of influence and power (the Cambridge Apostles, the Cambridge Five) and nourished collective obsession with putative conspiratorial groups (the so-called homintern) (Woods). *Our Evenings* forms a diptych with the flamboyant *The Swimming Pool Library* (1988) which was an ode to emancipation and a public exposure of what amounted to historical denialism (through euphemism, concealment, facts twisting and distortion, or even plain repression). (Zerubavel) Indeed, instead of opting for an open, iconoclastic denunciation, *Our Evenings* investigates the common, often unnoticed situations of self-, collective and public denial (Bardon) in a society where rampant homophobia coupled with systemic racism predominate (Elias). *Our Evenings*, the testimony of a mixed-race, aging gay man (aging being often a denied physiological reality among gay men) (Gillick) instantiates denial in all its subtle forms, to tackle head-on the political stakes of denial in a society where the prospect of any consensus on basic human values seems to be receding. It documents the denial of homosexuality in a post-war rural community, the bias against coloured actors resulting in their being denied lead roles irrespective of their talents. It also addresses linguistically the repression exerted on oneself when open statements would only exacerbate further ostracization (Caracciolo). In a final twist, Hollinghurst shows how in a society plagued by rising populism, what had been so far denied, or half-articulated, may now flare up in downright abuse and physical violence when the aged narrator is mercilessly beaten up and called "Fucking Chink Poof cunt". (478) Thugs having up until then, at least to some extent, held in check public use of verbal and physical violence are shown to transgress all limits in an anomic context. Through fiction the "denial turn" may thus embrace a whole range of situations for which governance and politics are crucial. If anything, Hollinghurst makes a decisive contribution to broach the topic of intersectional denial and its dire damages.



“I’m obsolete, romantic. It’s a start”: Denial, Resistance and the Ethical Dimension of the Sublime in Ali Smith’s *Gliff*

Soňa Šnircová (Pavol Jozef Šafárik University, Slovakia)

In her recent novel *Gliff* (2024), Ali Smith presents a near-future dystopia, a product of relentless expansion of new technologies and the collective denial of the ethical and social costs of digital convenience. The authoritarian society, characterized by constant surveillance, exerts complete control over individuals who are denied the right to exist beyond a network of data control and digital identities. Sustained by the exploitation of the marginalised and persecuted ‘unverifiables’ whose slave labour fuels the consumerist economy, the system depends crucially on the production of structures of collective denial. These range from the apathy and indifference of those reliant on consumer devices and oblivious to the realities of suffering to the passivity of bystanders, shaped by the fear of an overwhelming, impersonal and coercive system. Narrated from the perspective of a teenage ‘unverifiable’ Briar, reprogrammed by re-education and torture into an obedient servant of the system, Smith’s novel engages all key dimensions of denial identified by Stanley Cohen (2001): cognition (knowing but not acknowledging), emotion (desensitization), morality (avoiding responsibility) and action (not taking active steps in response to knowledge).

The reading of the novel presented in the paper focuses on Smith’s appropriation of the sublime as a means of exploring the possibility of resistance to states of denial produced by technological overwhelm and systemic oppression. The paper argues that Smith employs the aesthetics of the sublime in two distinct ways. First, through ekphrastic passages on George Stubbs’s *The Lion and Horse* series she visualises the affective paralysis induced by life-threatening force, transposing Burke’s ‘terror-based sublime’ (Brady 2013) from the realm of nature into that of authoritarian social power. Secondly, she stresses the role of Briar’s memories of the exceptional, ‘sublime’ child—the lost younger sister—and her special connection with the sublime in nature (symbolized by the eponymous horse Gliff) in Briar’s overcoming a state of denial and responding ethically to the suffering of the other. Smith thus examines the capacity of the Romantic sublime to reactivate moral agency, grounding it in relational acts based on the ethics of responsibility towards both human and nonhuman others. In this way, the paper claims, Smith’s novel engages with the ‘moral sublime’ in the Romantic tradition (Potkay 2012), suggesting that the novel’s exploration of resistance to denial aligns with the Blakean belief that ‘the most sublime act is to set another before you.’



Novelistic Responsibility: Ian McEwan's *What We Can Know* and the Crisis of the Humanities

Petronia Popa-Petrar (Babeş-Bolyai University, Romania)

Ian McEwan's latest novel revisits one of the persisting themes of its author's long and revered career: fiction's ethical position in a world thrown in permanent crisis. While *Atonement* (2001) investigated authorial and readerly responsibility via a masterful staging of the act of (mis)interpretation, and *Saturday* (2005) examined the moral failure attached to the divide between the scientific and the literary cast of mind, *What We Can Know* (2025) raises the stakes by interrogating the complex constellations, both discursive and material, that give rise to the humanities as a cultural system and to humanistic civilization itself. Firmly anchored in the first-person perspectives of the two narrators, whose lives are separated by a century, but who are both academics engulfed in messy relationships with the people surrounding them (including authors, publishers, critics, archivists, librarians, historians), the novel maps the murky moral obligations and drastic epistemological limitations of individuals and communities making up the very institution of literature. Itself the result of an epoch of pretrauma (Kaplan, 2015), the text self-reflexively performs its own production and reception, via an amalgam of genres (science fiction, climate fiction, realistic notation, poetry, life writing, literary criticism) and narrative styles (realistic, speculative, confessional, investigative) both during a time of abundance (our present) and one of precarity (the year 2119 and the catastrophic history preceding it). Following McEwan's tracing of the networked forms of responsibility involved in this performance, my paper will focus on the mechanisms of forgetfulness, denial, selective attention and violence that both facilitate and impede the agential modes of fiction during the age of disaster.

Session #4: Climate Crisis

3 September, 17:30–19:30

Ian McEwan's *What We Can Know* as a Critique of Contemporary Denial

Zekiye Antakyalıoğlu (Istanbul Kültür University, Türkiye)

This paper reads Ian McEwan's *What We Can Know* (2025) as a response of contemporary fiction to the "Age of Denial." Set in the aftermath of ecological and civilizational collapse, the novel interrogates not the absence of knowledge but the persistent



inability—both individual and collective—to act meaningfully upon what is already known. By integrating elements of climate fiction, dystopian, historical and (auto)biographical narratives, *What We Can Know* emerges as a hybrid text that figures denial as an epistemological, ethical, and temporal condition of the Anthropocene. The narrative follows Thomas Metcalfe, a literary historian searching for the lost manuscript of a poem written in 2014, a period retrospectively designated as the “Derangement,” from the vantage point of the “Inundation” of 2119. This backward-looking temporal structure transforms the present century into an already completed past, rendering ecological catastrophe not as speculative threat but as epistemic certainty. In doing so, the novel exposes denial not as ignorance but as a sustained form of psychological resistance and moral paralysis in the face of polycrisis. In this respect, the novel resonates closely with Walter Benjamin’s *Theses on the Philosophy of History* (1940), particularly the image of the “Angelus Novus”, whose backward gaze apprehends history as an accumulating catastrophe rather than a linear progression. Read through Benjamin, denial in McEwan’s novel appears not as a failure of knowledge in the present but as an epistemic paralysis that becomes fully legible only in retrospect, once its consequences have irreversibly materialized. The novel positions readers in a role analogous to that of the Angel of History, compelled to look back at a past that possessed sufficient knowledge to act yet remained ethically and politically inert. Drawing also on Mark Currie’s *About Time: Narrative, Fiction and the Philosophy of Time* (2007) and his account of prolepsis and future-oriented narrative, this paper argues that *What We Can Know* mobilizes fiction’s temporal imagination to confront denial by situating readers between retrospection and anticipation. By staging denial as something apprehended after the fact, the novel unsettles apathy and inertia, transforming retrospective knowledge into an ethical provocation that asks not only what can be known, but what can still be done in the face of irreversible environmental collapse.

Radical Hope and a Call to Action in the Age of Denial

Matthias Stephan (Aarhus University, Denmark)

In her Coda to the 2021 collection on Languages of Trauma, Kaplan moves from the notion of pretrauma to the consideration of a trauma in the future—trying to motivate those suffering trauma towards healing—even if the trauma has not ended. She suggests, “the question is how to move people suffering perhaps unconsciously, from trauma future-tense—seeing no hope for survival and living in anticipatory fear—towards some sort of what Jonathan Lear calls radical hope” (Kaplan 2021, 391). I argue that working through iterations of trauma, even in (speculative) fiction forms, allows us a means to confront our anxieties and



provides a road map to move from the arresting notion of fear towards a more productive call to action. Through a close reading of Alexandra Kleeman's 2022 novel *Something New Under the Sun*, this paper considers the ways in which our current engagement with the polycrisis – focusing specifically on water scarcity and climate change – can be read through the lens of denial and radical hope. Kleeman's novel considers the inability of its main characters to face the environmental and social challenges, first through ignorance and denial, then through a lack of ability to effectuate change. By considering their response, we can subsequently model for us just how connected we already are, and how those social connections are the key to allowing us to focus on solutions for change. We have to accept, and mourn, the lives we are living, and the current imaginaries of the future, if we are to shift to imagining the future given our changed circumstances and importantly turning those revised ideas into reality.

Subtle Denial: The Quieter Side of Climate Fiction

Jean-Michel Ganteau (University of Montpellier Paul-Valéry, France)

Some contemporary English fiction avoids addressing climate change directly, through satire (McEwan's *Solar*) or apocalyptic cli-fi (Jensen's *The Rapture*), but as a complex set of emotional and attentional processes allowing ecological disaster to be integrated in everyday life. It suggests that denial operates through deferral rather than rejection: climate change is recognised intellectually, but requalified as background noise amid more intense political crises, personal needs and cultural nostalgia (Coe's novel *Middle England*). Climate change requires constant, long-term collective imagination, but these texts depict a present steeped in distraction, where the future is distant and abstract, inaccessible to consideration. It also shows how normalisation or numbing are at work, when ecological disruption is perceived – through seasonal anomalies or generalised tension (Smith's *Autumn*) – only to be toned down. Such assimilation transforms catastrophe into atmosphere, making it difficult to assess climate change as a distinct or urgent phenomenon. In line with the principles of cognitive dissonance, denial continues to be maintained through emotional self-protection. Instead of sadness, guilt, and radical moral agency, the characters manage climate information through emotional restraint, sticking to kindness, intimacy, and routine as ways to remain functional. These strategies are not presented as moral failures, but as reactions structurally caused by powerlessness. Finally, these novels consistently link climate denial to issues of inheritance and responsibility (Greengrass's *Sight*). In short, they show that the most common form of climate denial in contemporary Britain is not ideological opposition, but a quiet, socially reinforced way of life in which disaster



is acknowledged but constantly postponed, thus becoming unimaginable precisely because it is omnipresent and permanent. Distraction, avoidance, distance, numbing are less flamboyant processes (and produce less transgressive formal presentations) than splitting, denialism and contrarianism, but they provide a more experiential knowledge of denial that exposes complicity and promotes ethical unease.



S23.- The Reception of the Brontës in Europe

In academic discourse, reception studies is an approach to literature that highlights the importance of how literary texts were received by their respective audiences, taking into account not only the authors and the texts, but also their recipients and all the elements that intervened in this complex process. Reception-oriented literary theory, history and criticism are highly interdisciplinary, including literature, art, music, film, translation, and other representations of culture. Their reception in Britain has been scrutinized while, to quote Elinor Shaffer when dealing with George Eliot (2016, viii), the study of these authors in Europe has not been “examined in any systematic, long-term or large-scale way.”

This seminar aims at joining a number of scholars interested in presenting their research on any of the three Brontë sisters in the different countries and cultures of Europe, from the point of view of their reception, that is, how the authors and their texts were interpreted, appropriated, adapted, translated, transformed, manipulated, censored, ignored, disseminated, and/or canonized by various audiences. While their novels and poems were not widely disseminated in their own, short lifetimes, this call for papers seeks to explore the processes by which they have since been read and translated, or not, in the various European languages. Our main emphasis is on translations and criticism, but transnational comparative studies are also welcome, as they may illuminate modern interdisciplinary interpretations of these authors. Further issues to be considered may be their influences on other writers, the material history of their books, their possible political impact, and many others.

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Session #1

3 September, 9:30–11:30

What Constitutes a Classic? Close-reading a Norwegian Mid-twentieth-century Translation of Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights***Marie Nedregotten Sørbo (Volda University College, Norway)**

Although some of their books in English were present in Norwegian library collections from the early period, the Brontës seem not to have been translated before the turn of the century (1902). However, the 124 years since have brought thirteen translations in all, five of Emily's single novel, one of Anne's novels, and seven of Charlotte's. Apart from the two earliest, they all date from the post-WWII period, and five of them since 1999. The list testifies to a moderate and changeable interest in the three sisters' works, and with a clear preference for two of their novels: Charlotte's *Jane Eyre* (6) and Emily's *Wuthering Heights* (5).

Wuthering Heights is available to Norwegian readers in five different translations from 1945, 1964, 1973, 2004 and 2019. The first four were reprinted several times, ensuring their availability on the market, and revealing a greater readership than suggested by the mere years of translation. The six translators involved in these five versions comprise three women and three men.

This paper will focus on the translation by Finn Aasen from 1964 (reprinted 1991, 2000). Like the other versions, it preserved and translated the original title of the novel, in Norwegian rendered *Stormfulle høyder*. Commissioned for a book series of selected classics, these mid-1960s editions presented themselves as handsome novels in leather binding with gold lettering. This visual impression leads readers to expect a reverent attitude to the text of the novel and the context of the author. For this paper I will investigate this implicit claim, and through close reading discuss observable translational strategies and potentially changing perceptions of the author. What will turn out to constitute Emily Brontë's nominally classic status in mid-twentieth century Norway?

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“Severed from embodiment and freed from any accident of sex”: Charlotte Mew’s Affective Engagement with Emily Brontë

Eva Ulrike Pirker (Free University of Brussels, Belgium)

In an essay devoted to Emily Brontë, the poet Charlotte Mew (1969–1928) projects the notion of an affective reading, challenging readers to go beyond a “casual” understanding. To truly engage with Brontë’s “rebellious and contending music” they must allow themselves to be “haunted” (Mew, *CPP*). Mew managed to reproduce this quality in her own poetry, “stir the reader to great apprehension” and stimulate the imagination (Monro 79). Like Brontë’s works, Mew’s have time and again had the general effect of turning even “casual” readers into affected readers. What attracted Mew to Brontë? First, the notion of the poet’s aloneness in the world: What Mew reads as Brontë’s rejection of a deceptive shelter provided by company and her embrace, instead, of an existence on the “other side of silence” surfaces in a variety of ways in Mew’s oeuvre. Secondly, the pull of a force from beyond, a “spiritual shelter” provided by “elements she worshipped” is a recurring feature in Mew’s work; Thirdly, in spite of the sense of aloneness in the world and the attraction to the otherworldly, the reality of affective bonds and obligations is framed as a constant source of existential dilemma; Fourthly, although from a different region in England, Mew was intrigued and inspired by Brontë’s use of vernacular, which complicates the norms of literary discourse; Lastly, Mew frequently embraces an indeterminacy regarding her speakers’ sex and gendered identity, alerting us to Emily Brontë’s “genius” as “purely spiritual, strangely and exquisitely severed from embodiment and freed from any accident of sex.” (Mew, *CPP* 363). In my contribution I propose to explore Mew as reader and poet who mobilizes the figure and the works of Emily Brontë to carve out a poetics that has sometimes been described as ‘queer’ in its attempt to form(ulate) the modern experience of longing and belonging.

The Brontë Sisters Abroad, Destination Portugal

Isabel Lousada (NOVA University Lisbon, Portugal)

Now that the 200th anniversary of the Brontë sisters’ birth has passed, it is important to map the reception of their work in Europe. In order to address the theme suggested for this session by the convenors, our presentation will provide an overview of how their work arrived in Portugal. Which works were translated and disseminated in Portuguese, and in what order? From a comparative



perspective, is it possible that translations published in Brazil were known before those published in Portugal? Or vice versa? What implications will this study have? Will it be possible to know if the Portuguese versions were translated directly from English or mediated by other languages, namely French? Who translated them? These are some of the central questions we will seek to answer through our research, starting by scrutinizing selected sources to ensure a feasible and representative analysis.

Session #2

3 September, 15:00–17:00

The Translations of Anne Brontë's Novels into the Galician Language

María Jesús Lorenzo Modia (University of A Coruña, Spain)

This presentation will examine the translations of Anne Brontë's novels into Galician, a language originally part of the Galician-Portuguese linguistic family, which is the official language of Galicia, and widely spoken in this autonomous community. In the last fifty years, there is a strong tendency to translate works from other literatures into Galician, mainly those by authors recognized as classics. Thence, it is good news to have translations of the two novels by the somewhat forgotten sister of the Brontës into a new language. The analysis will cover the reasons and processes why these texts have been ignored so far in this cultural community, and how they are now timidly canonized. Together with the reception of both *Agnes Grey* and *A inquilina de Wildfell Hall* in 2020 and 2025, respectively, these new readings and manipulations by different translators will be explored following the path trodden by María del Carmen África Vidal Claramonte in *Traducción, manipulación decontrucción*, (1995) and *Translation and Repetition* (2023). Additionally, new, subversive, philosophical ways of approaching translation will be explored in the new versions of these fictions, following Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*, particularly their deterritorialization concept. This presentation will scrutinize the different processes of escaping fixed territories, like traditional gender roles, national borders, or stable identities, creating new paths or "lines of flight" in the two versions that constitute the corpus of this study. After these processes, new representations or reterritorialization of these issues will appear in the new, translated version in a new linguistic and cultural context. How they appear in the two novels translated into Galician will be the object of this study.



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“Wild, Weird, Writing” – The WWW of Brontë’s Myth Making in Isabel Greenberg’s *Glass Town*

Xoán Guitián Carril (University of A Coruña, Spain)

This paper reads Isabel Greenberg’s graphic novel *Glass Town* as a neo-Victorian re-imagining of the Brontës’ juvenilia, informed by Elizabeth Ho and Kate Mitchell’s formulation of neo-Victorian fiction as a “memory text” that both communicates memory and operates as memory. It argues that *Glass Town* mobilizes Charlotte Brontë’s retrospective memory as a narrative aegis through which the imperial and cultural imaginaries of nineteenth-century Britain are refracted. The graphic novel reconstructs a mythic British landscape that simultaneously recalls and interrogates the imperial frameworks embedded in the juvenilia, presenting memory not as transparent recovery but as an active, shaping force.

Historically, the collaborative dynamics through which the Brontë siblings created the *Glass Town* narratives resemble the immersive logic of role-playing games: a shared world not only authored but inhabited, sustained through collective imagination and narrative play. *Glass Town* suggests that of this imaginative community, only Charlotte ultimately “returns” — bearing memory rather than presence — in order to spin the yarn for later readers. This act of return is explicitly figured in the text as the weaving of a web that appropriates, reorganizes, and partially eclipses the stories of the other siblings.

Drawing further on Ho’s contention that melancholic representation functions as a social index, this paper reads the novel’s melancholic treatment of the juvenilia not as nostalgic mourning but as a reflective mode that exposes the processes of literary myth-making. Visually, this web is rendered through Greenberg’s distinctive graphic style — a personal, naïve, harsh, and scratchy line — which produces an immersive and destabilizing texture that recalls what Elizabeth Gaskell famously described as the Brontës’ “wild, weird writing.” Through this interplay of memory, melancholia, and visual form, *Glass Town* refracts the juvenilia through the glass of myth, inviting a critical reassessment of neo-Victorian mediation, collaborative authorship, and literary inheritance.



Brontëan Drama: The Brontës and their Novels in Spanish Theatre

Sara Medina Calzada (University of Valladolid, Spain)

The purpose of this paper is to explore how the Brontë sisters and their novels have been represented in Spanish theatre. Although Charlotte, Emily and Anne Brontë never published a play, drama is central to the study of the reception of their works in Europe. Stage adaptations of *Jane Eyre*, produced soon after the novel's publication, boosted its popularity in Britain and abroad. Continental audiences discovered *Jane Eyre* thanks to Charlotte Birch-Pfeiffer's German adaptation (1853), which was translated into English, French, Danish, Italian and Spanish. The Spanish version, Francisco Morera's *Juana Eyre* (1869), preceded the first Spanish translation of *Jane Eyre* published in Spain, where Brontë novels were not widely known until the mid-twentieth century. Their presence on the Spanish stage has been scarce but noteworthy. Aurelio Tejedor and Arturo Guasch wrote a theatrical adaptation of *Wuthering Heights* "inspired" by Emily Brontë's novel and published it in 1944 after being authorised by the censors of Franco's regime, who had denied its approval the year before. Also in the 1940s, Clemence Dane's *Wild Decembers*, a play based on the lives of the Brontë siblings, was translated into Spanish as *Los Brontë*. This is not the only biographical play on them: William Luce's *Brontë* (1988) was also performed in Spanish translation in Madrid in 1996. More recently, a stage production of *Jane Eyre*, adapted by Anna Maria Ricart and directed by Carme Portaceli, toured first in Catalan in 2017 and then in Spanish in 2018. This paper analyses how these plays imagine the Brontës and adapt *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre* for a Spanish audience, connecting them with the reception of their novels in Spain from the second half of the nineteenth century until the present.

Session #3

3 September, 17:30–19:30

The Irish Brontës in the Eyes of Martina Devlin's *Charlotte* (2023)

Marisol Morales-Ladrón (University of Alcalá, Spain)

The Brontë sisters are undoubtedly amongst the most canonical writers of the 19th century. Commonly studied as British authors, the fact that their father was an Irishman from County Down and that their rich literary imaginations were strongly influenced



by Irish authors has been overlooked. Edward Chitham's study *Western Winds: The Brontës' Irish Heritage* (2015) has stressed how such influences can be traced in their writings, though further research still remains to be conducted. Besides, Charlotte married an Irishman, Arthur Bell Nicholls, who was his father's curate, and they spent their honeymoon in Ireland, traveling around and mingling with society. Yet Charlotte's Irish background has somehow been belittled, as she dramatically passed away only nine months into her marriage. Intending to address these gaps, Irish writer of historical fiction Martina Devlin has devoted her latest biographical account, *Charlotte* (2023), to probe into the author's heritage. Her narrative seamlessly blends fact and fiction and highlights the likely influential presence of Ireland on her writing. Told by Arthur's second wife, his cousin Mary Nicholls, and Charlotte's confidante, the novel delves into the formation of the Brontës' legacy following her death, while it raises questions about the mythologizing of an iconic figure whose full story remains to be unveiled. Bearing all these aspects in mind, the purpose of this contribution is to examine unexplored aspects of Charlotte Brontë's Irish background, thereby contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of her work.

The Serbian Journey of the Brontë Sisters: Their Works in Translation and Retranslation

Mirjana Daničić (University of Belgrade, Serbia)

Sandra Josipović (University of Belgrade, Serbia)

Since the purpose of any literary translation is to reproduce literature, it plays a crucial role in the continued survival and afterlife of the translated work. This study aims to explore the history of translating the works of the Brontë sisters into Serbian, beginning with the first postwar translation of *Wuthering Heights*, which was published in 1951. Considering that the translation and reception of the Brontë sisters' works into Serbian have been substantial, both in academic circles and among general readership, this study does not treat retranslations as mere replications. Instead, it views them as rich interpretative re-writings, each reflecting the time in which it was created. The authors investigate whether subsequent retranslations of the Brontës' works reflect a shift in reception or whether they are triggered by external factors, such as the publishing industry, or socio-cultural and political contexts. The comparison of the general structural, lexical, and paratextual features of retranslations leads the authors to conclusions about the remaking of the Brontës' works.



The Brontë Sisters Reception in Romania: History, Mentalities, Morals

Constantina Raveca Buleu (The “Sextil Puscariu” Institute of Linguistics and Literary History, The Romanian Academy, Romania)

While working on the *Chronological Dictionary of the Translated Novels*, currently a work in progress at the “Sextil Puscariu” Institute of Literary History of Cluj-Napoca, belonging to the Romanian Academy, I have dedicated a lot of research time to our domestic reception of the Brontë sisters’ novels. Beyond comparing the quality of their translation and registering the objective listing of the existing titles, I have come to realize that the diachrony of the Brontë sisters reception in Romania expresses a series of intriguing socio-cultural and even political dimensions, implying ideology, the progressive transfer of the main public opinion towards a rationalistic, less mystical approach and, to my greatest surprise, the imperative of a desired paradigm of a refined, enlightened civilisation, together with all its byproducts, like social choreography, fashion and some sort of dandy-like self-construction.

The first edition of *Jane Eyre* was published in the Danube city of Galati back in 1894, preceded by fragments hosted regularly by the periodicals of the time, the custom of the Brontë Sisters literary magazine serials becoming a must in a society in search for an alternative emancipation and diversification. Beyond the literary interest, the open, sociological and psychological aim of these translations was to foster social empathy and to provide their readers with the paradigm of the standard, secretly envied English manners and civilisation, which was rather exotic but utterly attractive to them if we take into consideration the fact that the great majority of the Romanian upper class of that time spoke formally French, even at home, not to forget the formative milieus of the open debate clubs, soirées and political confrontations.

By going up in time, Mary Polihroniade’s translation of the *Wuthering Heights* appeared in 1937, the interwar period being also the most fascinating as related to the multicultural evolution of the Romanian mentalities and morals, because the numerous Brontë editions published in these years and the critical approaches which started to appear (written by consecrated names like M. Sebastian and O. Constantinescu) discretely nurtured a certain hidden, but tacitly shared “British ideal” pride within the domestic bourgeoisie, aristocracy and cultural Establishment, by challenging, as a rational and moral equilibrium as it was understood, the growing cultural and psychological irrationality of those times.



My proposal goes towards the elaboration of a multidisciplinary presentation, which aims to discuss, beyond the factual and objective investigation of the existing Brontë translations in Romania (it can be done by relying on trustful quantitative tools), the spiritual dimensions the translations have acquired along the different historical socio-political textures of the Romanian society, including the Communist regime imposed from 1945 on, which, not at all paradoxically, eagerly instrumentalized the translation and dissemination of the Brontë novels because they heralded an energetic, never to give up type individual and social impulses and fulfilments, which can be associated, as hidden ideals, to the fundamental language change of the 70s and the early 80s in Romania, when English finally won the battle of attrition with French and Russian and become the most cherished secondary language in the school system.

Session #4

4 September, 9:30–11:30

The Reception of Charlotte Brontë within the Czech Cultural Space

Kristýna Janská (Charles University, Czech Republic)

Based on the author's doctoral dissertation (scheduled for completion in 2026), this paper provides a systematic overview of the significant milestones in the reception of Charlotte Brontë within the Czech cultural space. It traces Brontë's emergence as one of the most frequently translated English novelists in the Czech language; *Jane Eyre* alone has been rendered by at least nine distinct translators (excluding numerous adaptations and abridgments) and consistently ranks at the top of surveys regarding the most popular books among Czech readers.

The first milestone is characterized by the “folklorization” and domestication of the Brontë myth, beginning in the mid-19th century. During this period, Charlotte Brontë was introduced to the Czech public primarily through the massive success of Charlotte Birch-Pfeiffer's theatrical adaptation, *The Lowood Orphan*. Consequently, her literary pseudonym was initially associated with sentimental melodrama rather than high literature.

By the turn of the century, Charlotte Brontë became a “proxy” in a foundational polemic between two major literary-critical schools: the proponents of criticism based on ethical and social qualities, represented by the philosopher and future Czechoslovak



president T. G. Masaryk, and the school of *l'art pour l'art* centered around the preeminent critic F. X. Šalda and the Czech Decadent movement.

Finally, the paper outlines how these early milestones paved the way for later 20th-century interpretations and translations. By tracing these “English footprints” in Czech soil, the paper argues that the history of Brontë’s reception is, in fact, a narrative of the Czech nation’s own struggle to negotiate the boundaries between morality, gender roles, and the autonomy of art.

The Puzzle of the Early Spanish Reception of *Jane Eyre*: How *Juana Eyre: Memorias de un aya* Travelled the Globe in the 19th Century

Marta Ortega Sáez (University of Barcelona, Spain)

Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* was the first of the Brontë sisters’s novels to be translated into Spanish. Under the title *Juana Eyre: Memorias de un aya*, it appeared in book form in Paris in 1849, published by Ediciones de La Administración del Correo de Ultramar, only two years after the original English edition. This Spanish translation was based on Émile Daurand Forgues’ French adaptation, released earlier that same year, as *Jane Eyre ou Mémoires d’une gouvernante*. This version had been serialized in *Le National* in Paris also in 1849 (Dillon, 2023).

From Paris, *Juana Eyre: Memorias de un aya* circulated widely throughout South America, reaching countries such as Chile, Cuba, Bolivia (Ortega Sáez, 2013; 2022; Dillon in Reynolds & Vitali, 2021; Reynolds et al., 2023). Recent findings reveal that it also arrived in Mexico and Uruguay. In 1855 Old Nick’s version reached Spain, where it was published in serial form in *El parlamento* (Madrid), and later in 1875 in *Irurac bat. Diario político de Bilbao*.

The first aim of this paper is to complete the study of the circulation of Old Nick’s version by reconstructing what appears to be an incomplete puzzle concerning the global dissemination of *Juana Eyre. Memorias de un aya* across the globe. A second aim is to examine Forgues’ adaptation in detail. Despite its historical significance as the source for the earliest known Spanish rendering of *Jane Eyre*, Old Nick’s version remains largely unstudied. Explicitly labeled as an imitation, it is highly condensed and transformative, diverging significantly from Charlotte’s novel. Analysing this version is therefore crucial to understanding the earliest reception of *Jane Eyre* in the Spanish-speaking world.



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Jane Eyre in Hungarian (Re)translation in the 21st Century

Judit Mudriczki (Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church, Hungary)

Often seen as one of the most cultic English novels (Kirchknopf 2017), *Jane Eyre* reached Hungarian audiences in less than a decade after its publication in 1847. Similar to its popularity ranking in Anglophone countries (Rubik–Mettinger–Schartmann, 2007), it has also been widely known in Hungary as an almost timeless narrative of love and mystery. Hungarian translations of Charlotte Brontë's masterpiece have appeared in various art forms that range from interlingual translations and retranslations published in print and set on stage to the dubbed versions of canonical audiovisual products (Chaume 2018).

The first stage adaptation was performed in January 1854 as *A lowoodi árva* (Orphan of Lowood), the Hungarian translation of the German play *Die Waise aus Lowood* by Charlotte Birch-Pfeiffer, which remained popular in Hungarian theaters for forty years (Dörgő 2017). On the other hand, the first Hungarian translation by Imre Huszár to be read as a book was published in 1873, and since then it has been retranslated seven times. The three film adaptations that have been dubbed into Hungarian include the 1996 cinematographic “rereading” of the novel by Franco Zeffirelli (Parkinson 2015), the 2011 “partial” adaptation by Cary Fukunaga (Engle 2011), and the 2006 BBC mini-series by Susanna White, the four episodes of which are broadcast on Hungarian TV channels even today.



My paper focuses on the reception history of the novel in the past thirty years and studies interlingual, intersemiotic, and intralingual translation practices applied while rendering the film adaptations available to contemporary viewers. I argue that in this period Hungarian retranslations and changing dubbing conventions have led to a change that we may describe as an increasing femininity of the narrative voice both in print and on screen.

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s24.- Reimagining History: Subjectivity and Marginalized Voices in Contemporary Historical Novels

Historical novels offer a unique space where the past is not only revisited but actively rewritten, shaped by the concerns and aesthetics of contemporary authors. This seminar explores how contemporary historical fiction reimagines pivotal moments in British and Irish history, from the Middle Ages to the 20th century, focusing on the interplay between subjectivity, marginalized voices, and historical re-construction. Many contemporary historical novels challenge dominant narratives by shifting perspectives, recovering overlooked voices, and interrogating the boundaries between fact and fiction. Novels such as *Hamnet* (2020) by Maggie O'Farrell and *Wolf Hall* (2009) by Hilary Mantel reframe the lives of early modern figures, while *Atonement* (2001) by Ian McEwan and *Life After Life* (2013) by Kate Atkinson offer alternative and fragmented narratives of World War II. How do these novels navigate historical accuracy and imaginative storytelling? What narrative strategies do they use to foreground subjectivity and recover silenced histories?

This seminar invites papers that examine how contemporary historical novels engage with historiography, memory, and narrative form. It aims to map feminist and postcolonial reimaginings of the past, the tension between personal experience and collective history, and the ethical and aesthetic challenges of fictionalising real historical figures. How do novelists use shifting perspectives,



nonlinear timelines, or speculative elements to challenge received histories? In what ways does historical fiction offer a means of reclaiming lost voices, whether through real or imagined figures?

We welcome contributions from a range of critical perspectives, including gender studies, postcolonial studies, and memory studies, to foster a rich discussion on the role of subjectivity and marginalized voices in contemporary historical fiction. Possible topics for exploration include, but are not limited to: neo-historical fiction; historical fiction and war/ trauma narratives; postcolonial historical fiction; historical fiction in a globalised world; and gendering the past in contemporary historical fiction.

CONVENORS:

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Session #1

2 September, 9:00–11:00

“Now you see me”: Reimagining the Voice of the Witch in Jeanette Winterson’s *The Daylight Gate*

Calliope Wellbelove (University of Portsmouth, United Kingdom)

Contemporary fiction has recently begun to re-imagine the historical figure of the witch. Jeanette Winterson’s 2012 novel *The Daylight Gate* explores this through a narrative following wealthy Alice Nutter and the impoverished Device family as they are systematically accused of witchcraft in the Pendle Witch Trials of 1612. The witch trial that Winterson writes of is one of England’s most infamous due to its documentation in Thomas Pott’s pamphlet *The Wonderfull Discoverie of Witches in the Countie of Lancaster*. At Pendle there were sixteen people tried as witches, ultimately leading to the execution of 10 by hanging. Using queer and gender theories, such as that of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, this paper argues that Winterson’s novel acts as a vessel to voice those accused and murdered in the Pendle trials, challenging the male dominance of historical witch narratives, while evidencing the artistic freedom of the neo-historical genre in order to place these concerns in the present. This paper explores the marginalized voices of



both the accused women and the key witness – young Jennet Device, daughter of one of the accused women – in what signifies an actualisation of oral histories that may have been suppressed by the male-led chronicling of the trials. Winterson’s text, therefore, focuses on reflexively reclaiming marginalized voices in the present day, as led by a use of speculation through supernatural elements that epitomise how the narrative allows women to feel, think, and speak in ways that history has denied them. Notably, this paper draws upon these ideas to return to the integral significance of the witch and neo-historical fiction as a genre that repeatedly reaffirms the importance of history in the modern day, giving a voice to silent and marginalized histories.

“Hathaway hijacked the book”: Counter-archival Practices and Border-crossings in Maggie O’Farrell’s *Hamnet*

Vassiliki Markidou (National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece)

As Maggie O’Farrell, author of the highly acclaimed and multi-award-winning *Hamnet*, notes, her initial plan for this work was to write a story about Shakespeare and his son, Hamnet (2020). Within the archival process she embarked on, however, “Hathaway hijacked the book.” From a story about fathers and sons, the text evolved into a counter-archive of the character of Agnes (Anne) Hathaway, Shakespeare’s wife, and Hamnet’s mother. Excluding the mention of Shakespeare, *Hamnet* maps Hathaway’s parental grief and critiques the stock historical negativity toward her. To do so, I underline that O’Farrell chose a hybrid genre that highlights the porosity of generic boundaries and, as such, constitutes a border-crossing work of art, namely biofiction. Fittingly, *Hamnet* is shaped, as will be demonstrated, by convergent manifestations of border-crossing, namely physical, cultural, and narrative, through which O’Farrell’s text carves a counter-archive, a counter-space, both physical and mental, that opts for openness rather than enclosure. In so doing, *Hamnet*, I argue, revises the archive from a markedly affective standpoint to reshape Agnes (Anne) Hathaway’s fragmented and marginalized historical narrative by retrieving her silenced historical voice. I contend that O’Farrell’s biofiction unearths the hidden and unsaid, hence it contributes to the reconfiguration of Hathaway’s archive. As such, *Hamnet* opens new possibilities for reimagining the silenced, lost, or marginalized histories of historical female figures.

Gendering the Past through Lisa’s Memories in Pat Barker’s *Lisa’s England* (1986)

Hasibe Ambarcıoğlu (Fırat University, Türkiye)



Historical fiction renarrates the past through public events, wars, national crises and foregrounding heroic figures, usually representing masculine forms of agency. Feminist critics have opposed this model by contending that these kinds of narratives ignore women's experiences and stories in order to silence the forms of suffering that do not conform to the dominant historical fiction. In this respect, feminist historical fiction can be defined not only as an alternative mode of representation but also an ethical questioning of how, why, and for whom the past is remembered. In accordance with this definition, Pat Barker's *Lisa's England* (1986) can be seen as an example of this ethical perspective of historical fiction by highlighting memory rather than official history. The novel tells the past through the memories of Lisa remembering the lives of working-class women suffering from poverty, emotional restriction, and effects of the traumatic world wars. To this end, this study aims to analyse the novel in terms of ethics of memory while focusing on silence, fragmentation and trauma. The novel presents a reconstruction of historical fiction as a space in which remembering serves as an ethical awareness to those who have been officially unheard or ignored throughout history.

Gendering the Nigerian Precolonial, Colonial, and Postcolonial Past in Ezeigbo's Novels

Solomon Omatsola Azumurana (University of Lagos, Nigeria)

Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo can be said to belong to the third generation of Nigerian female writers, a period which witnessed “a significant generic shift from poetry to the novel” (Adesanmi & Dunton 2005). To date, she has written and published five novels: *The Last of the Strong Ones* (1996); *House of Symbols* (2001); *Children of the Eagle* (2002); *Trafficked* (2008); and *Roses and Bullets* (2011). In this paper, drawing on Julia Kristeva's and Hélène Cixous's notions of women writing themselves into history by resurrecting the occluded mother, I analyze two of her novels – *The Last of the Strong Ones* (1996) and *Roses and Bullets* (2011). While the former is the story of the coming of the whites to an Igbo community in Nigeria very much like Chinua Achebe's story in *Things Fall Apart*, the latter is the tale of the Nigerian/Biafran civil war (also very much the same as Festus Iyayi's story in *Heroes*). In doing this, however, my aim is to demonstrate the ways in which Ezeigbo revises, reconstructs, and reinterprets the received and established phallic literary legacy of the Nigerian precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial past from a woman-centred perspective. I argue that her decision to write about the same subject matter that has been imaginatively tackled by a plethora of male writers is an indication that she is motivated by an aesthetic vision to rewrite and reconstruct the masculinist literary heritage of the Nigerian society. Yet, within the interpretative universe of this study, the male-written novels I specifically draw



on to demonstrate how Ezeigbo revises the phallic literary legacy in Nigeria are Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Festus Iyayi's *Heroes*, which is the story of the Nigerian Civil War, that falls into the category of the Nigerian postcolonial past.

Session #2

2 September, 15:00–17:00

Forgotten Soldiers: RAF Service and Counter-Historiography in Andrea Levy's *Small Island*

Atakan Sumer (Istanbul Aydın University, Türkiye)

Published in 2004, Andrea Levy's *Small Island* reconstructs postwar British history by centering the experiences of Caribbean migrants whose wartime contributions have been largely excluded from national memory. The novel explores the formation and subsequent disintegration of imperial belonging through the RAF service of Caribbean soldiers, particularly Gilbert Joseph and Michael Roberts, whose loyalty to Britain is empowered by colonial education and ideological promise of inclusion within the "mother country." As the narrative moves between wartime service and postwar settlement, *Small Island* exposes the contradiction between the rhetoric of national unity and the realities of racial exclusion and institutional discrimination encountered by former servicemen in Britain. The aim of this paper is to examine how Levy represents RAF service as both a site of attachment and a point of historical erasure, revealing the conditional imperial recognition. This paper argues that *Small Island* functions as a counter-historiographical narrative that challenges dominant accounts of the Second World War by recovering marginalised military histories. Drawing on Michel Foucault's concept of counter-history and subjugated knowledges, this paper elucidates how the novel disrupts celebratory national narratives that rely on the systematic exclusion of racialised and colonial experience. Through first-person narration and retrospective reflection, Levy enables Caribbean servicemen to articulate suppressed perspectives that reposition them as central in Britain's wartime past. This narrative technique establishes a bridge to the ethical failure of a national memory that mobilised colonial subjects in war while denying them recognition in peace. By reflecting the persistence of the gap between service and belonging, *Small Island* revisits postwar British history through marginalised military subjectivities and reveals the colonial structures embedded within British national identity.



Historical Crisis and Subjective Breakdown: The Limits of Cosmopolitanism in Isabella Hammad's *The Parisian*

Jorge Berástegui Wood (University of La Laguna, Spain)

This paper analyzes Isabella Hammad's historical novel *The Parisian* (2019) through the figure of its protagonist, Midhat, whose cosmopolitanism collides with the historical reality of early twentieth-century Palestine, producing in him a condition of historical, ideological, and psychic displacement. Educated in Paris during his university years, Midhat embraces cosmopolitanism as a model of emancipation that proves impossible to realize in his homeland. His aspirations are constrained both by familial traditions and by the historical context that developed after the First World War, including the colonial restructuring of Palestine under the British Mandate, successive waves of Jewish immigration, and the repression of Palestinian goals of national self-determination. Midhat's resulting stagnation, paralleling that of his people, leads him into a life of affective superficiality and existential suspension, ultimately culminating in a psychic breakdown. Drawing on Marxist, psychoanalytic, and postcolonial theory, the paper interprets his subjective disintegration as the psychic inscription of a broader historical crisis and considers that Hammad's work rescues the voices and interrupted vital projects of those whose aspirations to the spirits of cultural modernity were structurally conditioned by the colonial context of the British Mandate.

"I hear voices. Many voices": Reclaiming History in Biyi Bándélé's Yorùbá *Boy Running* (2024)

Cédric Courtois (University of Lille, France)

In Yorùbá *Boy Running* (2024), Nigerian writer Biyi Bándélé reimagines the life of Samuel Àjàyí Crowther, the first African Anglican bishop, centring a narrative that spans his capture in the trans-Atlantic slave trade and his subsequent life and achievements. Wole Soyinka highlights Bándélé's distinctive approach in his introduction to the novel: a "mix of the anecdotal, archival and inquisitional" that departs "from conventional slave narratives," signalling a commitment to reconfiguring historical content and form. In a crucial manner, Bándélé interweaves extracts from Crowther's diary and archival materials with literary re-creation, unsettling colonial archives while foregrounding Crowther's interiority.

The novel emphasises voice as a central site of historical reclamation. Drawing on Roland Barthes's notion of the embodied quality, texture, or materiality of the voice—or "grain de la voix," in French [1977]), Bándélé's novel can be said to convey Crowther's



singular, affective presence, highlighting the material and resonant aspects of his voice beyond its content. This focus complements Gyanendra Pandey's concept of "unarchived histories" (2014), revealing stories and affects of minoritised or marginalised subjects elided from official records, and aligns with Saidiya Hartman's notion of "critical fabulation" (2008), blending archival fragments with imaginative reconstruction to recover what has been historically silenced.

Bándélé's intervention resonates with Linda Tuhiwai Smith's call in *Decolonizing Methodologies* (1999) to produce "counterstories [that] are powerful forms of resistance." Yorùbá *Boy Running* employs polyphonic narrators and stylistic hybridity, from lyrical reflection to visceral depictions of violence, using sensory and emotional registers as a decolonial strategy. Drawing on affect theory, I argue that the novel immerses readers in the psychic and bodily costs of historical trauma, aligning with Carol Azumah Dennis's claim that history is "viscerally experienced" (2018). In doing so, Bándélé stages a decolonising intervention: challenging scholarly (historical) detachment, validating emotion as an epistemic tool, and positioning Crowther's voice at the centre of historical reclamation.

Setting the Record Straight: Prosecution and Persecution in Nadifa Mohamed's *The Fortune Men*

Lukas Lammers (Freie Universität Berlin, Germany)

Nadifa Mohamed's novel *The Fortune Men* (2021) draws on records about the historical case of Mahmood Mattan, a man who came to Great Britain with the Merchant Navy from British Somaliland during World War II and was convicted and executed for allegedly murdering a Jewish shopkeeper in Cardiff in 1952. Decades later, the case was referred to the Court of Appeal, which found the case severely flawed, quashed the conviction. Nadifa Mohamed picks up this story to scrutinise a piece of British history which is at the same time decidedly local and strikingly global. While there are numerous reviews of the novel, scholarly criticism has not been forthcoming so far – despite the novel having been short-listed for the Booker Prize. I suggest building on existing criticism of Mohamed's earlier work to demonstrate how *The Fortune Men* opens up a much wider historical perspective and contributes to discussions about the intersection of different traumatic histories in postwar Britain.

A review in the *New York Times* complains that "[t]he book dissipates a good deal of its energy [...] pivoting between the stories of the shopkeeper, her family, Mahmood's estranged wife and their sons, and that of Mahmood himself" (Garner n.pag). I will argue that this apparent flaw – the "pivoting between the stories" – in fact allows Mohamed to create a unique historical panorama that manages to focus but also transcend the life of a historical figure whose voice had been violently silenced. It allows Mohamed to reappraise the postwar history of Cardiff's multicultural Tiger Bay area and, at the same time, to transcend this time and place to



bring into focus connections between different histories of racism. In particular, I will focus on Mohamed's attempt to link stories of Black British immigrants to the experiences of Jewish communities in Britain during and after World War II. Mohamed's postcolonial reimagining of the past builds on and broadens the scope of more widely known London-centred narratives. As the Booker jury points out, "The Fortune Men takes us to a place we haven't encountered on the page before. [...] It] demonstrates what historical fiction can achieve at its best" (The 2021 Booker Prize n.pag).

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Session #3 3 September, 15:00–17:00

Representations of War and Trauma in Pat Barker's Novel *Regeneration*

Adrian Radu (Babeş-Bolyai University, Romania)

Pat Barker's novel *Regeneration* (the first novel of the "Regeneration" trilogy) is one of the many creations dedicated to the depiction of human conflicts on a great scale and the trauma of their aftermath. This novel's (just as the trilogy's) main concern is British soldiers of the Great War who, besides their physical wounds, often suffered from psychic and psychosomatic disorders, more or less disabling. Through a narrative that re-examines the Great War, Pat Barker re-creates a kind of personal history where she intertwines individual and collective experiences, combines real (like Dr. Rivers or the war poets Siegfried Sassoon or Wilfred Owens) and fictional characters and dramatically critiques the glorification of war while revealing the profound impacts it had on soldiers' lives. In Barker's reconstruction, the hospital of Craiglockhart looks more as a prison or an institute of re-education than a hospital, whereas the controversial Dr. Yealland's medical way of treatment virtually anticipates a Nazi German Gauleiter. It is the aim of this paper to discuss how Barker revisits history, to represent factually and fictionally the trauma that generated neurological and psychic disorders, the injuries that affected the lives of soldiers, as well as the doctors of the time who attempted to cure them and make them fit only to be able to return them to the frontlines to be mutilated or killed. Though the references



made in the paper may be expanded to all three novels of the trilogy; this paper's main concern is *Regeneration*, the first novel in the sequence.

Experimental Landscapes of Memory in Contemporary British and Irish Historical Fiction on the Spanish Civil War

Alberto Lázaro (University of Alcalá, Spain)

Recent historical fiction has moved beyond traditional realism the overt self-reflexivity of early historiographic metafiction. This paper examines how British author Patrick McGrath, in *Last Days in Cleaver Square* (2021), and Irish writer Anamaría Crowe Serrano, in *In the Dark* (2021), employ experimental narrative strategies to explore the psychological afterlife of the Spanish Civil War. Drawing on memory studies and narratological theory, it argues that both authors use formal experimentation to privilege psychological resonance and disruption over linear historical reportage. McGrath's novel operates through a mode of Gothic realism, externalising historical trauma via the spectral apparition of a General Franco "ghoul" who haunts the protagonist and embodies what the novel terms a "Principle of Ethical Disintegration": a moral corrosion stemming from wartime brutality. The narrative is mediated through posthumously discovered, erratic exercise books—a metafictional framework that, combined with an unreliable narrator and intertextual echoes of Goya and Romantic poetry, compels the reader to negotiate a fractured reality. In contrast, Crowe Serrano's *In the Dark* employs polyphonic fragmentation and a stream-of-consciousness style that abandons conventional syntax to render the sensory deprivation of a man in hiding. The novel incorporates multimodal materials—newspaper clippings and personal advertisements—to interrupt its prose and counter a historical "Great Forgetting". Further experiments, including phonetic transcription of song lyrics and extreme dilation of domestic time, transform the household into a "domestic prison". Ultimately, these experimental strategies illuminate lives "kept in the dark" by historical silence. By foregrounding narrative form as a site of memory work, McGrath and Crowe Serrano propose a new paradigm for historical fiction that transcends verisimilitude to capture the visceral residue of a violent past.

Neill Lochery and Ronald Weber's Imagological Constructions of Wartime Lisbon

Ana Rita Pereira Brettes (NOVA University Lisbon, Portugal)



This paper repositions Neill Lochery's *Lisbon. War in The Shadows of the City of Light 1939-1945* (2011) and Ronald Weber's *Lisbon Route. Entry and Escape from Nazi Europe* (2011) within contemporary debates on the narrativization of history, drawing on Hayden White's theorization of historical discourse as inherently *emplotted* and Linda Hutcheon's understanding of historiography as a self-reflexive process shaped by ideological and aesthetic choices. Although both works are non-fiction accounts, they participate in narrative practices commonly associated with neo-historical fiction and historiographic metafiction, revealing the constructedness of historical meaning and the role of narrative form in shaping collective memory.

Through a comparative imagological framework, the study analyses how these Anglo-American authors reimagine wartime Lisbon as a liminal geopolitical space, structured around refugee displacement, espionage cultures, and transnational encounters. Their external perspectives, narrative positioning, and selective foregrounding of certain actors illustrate White's claim that historical writing is mediated through tropes, plot structures, and rhetorical strategies that shape the reader's understanding of the past. At the same time, moments of metahistorical awareness, implicit in their reflexive treatment of bibliographical sources, archives and historical documents, testimonies and geographies, echo Hutcheon's view of historical representation as an interplay between fact and fiction, memory and narrative.

By examining how Lochery and Weber both foreground and silence different subjectivities, particularly refugees, minorities and Portuguese civilians, this paper argues that their works resonate with contemporary historical fiction's broader project of recovering marginalized voices and challenging dominant Portuguese wartime narratives. Ultimately, the study demonstrates how these texts contribute to a translational re-reading of Portugal's role in World War II, illustrating how national images circulate and acquire ideological significance through the narrative reconstruction of history.

Reimagining Irish History from Below in Roddy Doyle's *Last Roundup* Trilogy

Leman Demirbaş (Gazi University, Türkiye)

This paper examines how Roddy Doyle's *Last Roundup* trilogy, *A Star Called Henry* (1999), *Oh, Play That Thing!* (2004), and *The Dead Republic* (2010) reimagines twentieth-century Irish history through the perspective of the dispossessed. By narrating the nation's revolutionary and post-independence eras through the irreverent and self-reflective voice of Henry Smart, Doyle dismantles the



heroic and nationalist myths that dominate traditional historiography. Drawing on Linda Hutcheon's concept of historiographic metafiction and Hayden White's theories of narrative history, the paper argues that Doyle exposes the constructed nature of historical truth while recovering working-class subjectivity as a site of historical knowledge. His use of colloquial language, irony, and fragmented narration transforms the everyday into an alternative archive of memory. Across the trilogy, Doyle blends historical realism with metafictional play to portray Irish history from the margins rather than the centre. Through Henry Smart's shifting identities as rebel, exile, and witness, Doyle redefines the Irish historical novel as a form of ethical remembrance, reclaiming the experiences of the urban poor, emigrants, and disillusioned revolutionaries as central to the story of modern Ireland. In doing so, Doyle's work exemplifies how contemporary historical fiction challenges the authority of official history by foregrounding subjectivity and the fragmented voices of those excluded from the national narrative. His reimagining of the Irish past not only interrogates the relationship between memory and myth but also invites reflection on the ethical responsibility of storytelling in shaping collective historical consciousness.

Session #4

3 September, 17:30–19:30

Contested Truths and Marginal Histories in Zadie Smith's *The Fraud* (2023)

Margarida Esteves Pereira (University of Minho, Portugal)

Reading *The Fraud* (2023) by Zadie Smith, one cannot fail to experience a sense of mistrust towards historical recounting. In a recognizably postmodernist guise, the novel raises questions about truth claims and narrative authority by placing at its centre a plotline – the “Tichborne Claimant” case – that is itself fraught with suspicion and ambivalence. At a moment when public discourse is increasingly shaped by Orwellian distortions of reality and the circulation of “fake news,” *The Fraud* returns to the Victorian era to interrogate the construction and manipulation of truth, particularly by the Victorian press.

Drawing on Linda Hutcheon's notion of “historiographic metafiction,” this paper argues that *The Fraud* problematizes the relationship between history and fiction, actively destabilizing Victorian epistemologies by shifting narrative attention toward marginal perspectives. The novel revisits the nineteenth century through the consciousness of Mrs. Touchet, a highly perceptive



yet socially displaced figure whose position as a woman, widow, and housekeeper situates her at the edges of Victorian society. From this vantage point, Mrs. Touchet functions as a sceptical focalizer, resistant to both dominant and residual narratives that circulate around her. At the same time, *The Fraud* expands its critique beyond the metropolitan centre by engaging with postcolonial Black subjectivities in Jamaica. By juxtaposing working-class female marginality with colonial Black experience, Smith reveals how the production of historical “truth” is inseparable from structures of power.

Finally, this paper contends that the novel’s fragmented chronology and multiplicity of textual references further confound the reader’s perception of historical truth. If, in *Metahistory* (1993), Hayden White argues that historical narratives are fundamentally verbal and narratological constructions, *The Fraud* exposes the constitutive entanglement of fiction and history, foregrounding the instability of historical meaning itself.

“Not all the Death Stay Silent”: Spectral Historiography and Metafictional Narrative in *The House of Doctor Dee*

Buse Güner Usta (Istanbul Bilgi University, Türkiye)

This study explores how Peter Ackroyd, a preeminent novelist in the 20th-century British fiction, particularly in history-writing, provides an alternative perspective of canonical history. In his novel, *The House of Doctor Dee*, Ackroyd delves into the conventions of historiographic metafiction to question the construction of historical epistemes, particularly through the portrayal of marginalized and distant voices. Drawing on postmodern theories of historiography, this paper examines how Peter Ackroyd blurs the boundaries between history and fiction, fact and reality, by portraying the double narrative voices between past and present, challenging the possibility of a linear, objective account of the past. The novel reenacts historical consciousness by juxtaposing the temporality of time and narrative structure to lay bare the silences and exclusions inherent in dominant historical meta-narratives and discourses. Through its metafictional structure and emphasis on displacement, erasure, and haunting as a spectral memory, *The House of Doctor Dee* explores alternative (h)istories and voices that have been marginalized and suppressed by authorial figures for societal and political purposes. The double, interwoven timelines of contemporary London and the Elizabethan era, the novel opposes the lives of two protagonists, Matthew Palmer, a historian, and the historical figure John Dee, the Renaissance scholar and alchemist. Employing postmodern metafictional narrative techniques, including narrative recursion and unreliable narration, provides a destabilization of the fixed interpretation of history. Additionally, it portrays a palimpsest of the culmination of voices and narratives, allowing readers



to question the ethical role of writing in both preserving and giving voice to marginalized figures. Thus, this study argues that Ackroyd not only reconstructs the historical narrative from the postmodern point of view but also critiques the epistemological and ontological authority of given history, allowing readers an imaginative space for altering historical agency and identity beyond canonical frameworks.

Re-staging History: Subjectivity and Marginalized Voices in Barry Unsworth's *Morality Play*

Evrin Doğan Adanur (Fenerbahçe University, Türkiye)

Barry Unsworth's *Morality Play* (1995) reimagines the medieval past to interrogate historiography, subjectivity, and the recovery of marginalized voices. Set in the fourteenth century—a period marked by plague, feudal hierarchy, and ecclesiastical authority—the novel explores how performance can challenge official narratives. The story follows a troupe of itinerant players and a fugitive priest who abandon biblical pageants to dramatize a recent local murder. Their decision transforms theatre into a site of inquiry, where drama functions less as moral allegory than as investigative commentary. In staging the crime, Unsworth highlights the tension between sanctioned accounts and alternative storytelling, exposing the complicity of feudal and clerical institutions in suppressing truth. Narrative strategies such as metatheatrical layering, improvisation, and shifting perspectives blur the boundary between fact and fiction, foregrounding the novel's concern with memory and representation. Crucially, *Morality Play* amplifies voices absent from medieval chronicles—peasants, women, itinerant laborers, and the falsely accused—reframing the murder as symptomatic of systemic inequities. As a neo-historical novel, it reconstructs the Middle Ages while infusing them with contemporary questions of justice, authority, and agency. This paper argues that *Morality Play* stages history as contested performance, positioning theatre as a mode of resistance to silencing and a precursor to later neo-historical fiction that challenges received histories through fragmented and speculative forms.

Historical as Crime Fiction: John le Carré's Nietzschean Baroque

Tatjana Jukić (University of Zagreb, Croatia)



I propose to argue that John le Carré's fiction, with its steady focus on intelligence in its different meanings, entails an intellectual history of modernity to which political thought is essential. As such, le Carré's body of work is also a study in crime fiction tasked with repositioning concepts like crime, war, mind, sacrifice, authority, state, institution, guilt, conscience, ideology, deliberation and democracy, one whose endpoint is an insight into the criminal aspect of historical modernity itself. Drawing on *Silverview* (2021), le Carré's last novel, I suggest that melancholy may be an overriding concept in this study, and that an anatomy of melancholy underwrites it, because *Silverview* unlocks into a reference book about other novels by le Carré yet points emphatically to W. G. Sebald's *The Rings of Saturn* (1995) for its consistency. Like Sebald's narrator, le Carré's key secret agents rely on the baroque for a sense of melancholy worldness and the baroque is slated, in both cases, as a template of modern intelligence; like Sebald's narrator, le Carré's key secret agents remain split between English and German, prohibiting that intelligence, or modernity for that matter, be studied except also as an exercise in philology. That this assemblage is ultimately Nietzschean is suggested by the title. *Silverview* is an English translation of *Silberblick*, the villa in Weimar in which Friedrich Nietzsche spent his final years and which used to house the Nietzsche Archive – just as le Carré's *Silverview* is an old villa in which le Carré's last superagent spends her final years, and dies, the eponymous novel housing the cryptoarchive of le Carré's body of work. If this is to imply that le Carré's baroque is inflected in Nietzsche's writings – nineteenth-century modernity being to us perhaps what the baroque was to the nineteenth century, so that only the historical inflection remains – I will argue in conclusion that *Silverview* is also a Satis House, and that Charles Dickens's Victorian *Great Expectations* (1860-1) may be a decisive cryptogram in le Carré's ideation of history.

S25.- Pilgrims and/in Dickens

Inspired by Santiago de Compostela—arguably the most famed pilgrimage destination—the seminar examines how Charles Dickens explores the theme of pilgrimage as individual progress through life and all its interpretative implications. Dickens often embedded the theme within a picaresque framework, but his characters also embark on literal journeys, such as Pip's quest in *Great Expectations* to seek his fortune and climb the social ladder, as much as on profound spiritual and moral voyages of self-discovery and transformation, exemplified by Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol*, Nancy in *Oliver Twist*, and Mr. Dombey in *Dombey and Son*. Dickens himself was a cultural and intellectual pilgrim, who documented his observations and experiences of the United States and Italy in his travelogues—*American Notes* and *Pictures from Italy*—as well as in numerous letters. In many of his novels,



he drew inspiration from John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, weaving its allegorical themes of sin, redemption, temptation, perseverance, and the eternal struggle between good and evil into his narratives. Notable examples comprise *Oliver Twist* and its subtitle "A Parish Boy's Progress"; *The Old Curiosity Shop*, where Little Nell "seems to exist in a kind of allegory" (ch. 1) and evokes Bunyan's work, for instance, when in chapter 15, Nell and her grandfather's departure from London parallels Christian's escape from the City of Destruction. Similarly, in *Bleak House*, Lady Dedlock's ennui is compared to being in "the clutch of Giant Despair" (ch. 12).

The organisers invite a broad and imaginative interpretation of the theme of pilgrimage in Dickens in connection with his fiction, travels, journalism as well as his personal life.

CONVENORS:

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Session #1: "Travel like a Pilgrim" – Pilgrims and Pilgrimage in Dickens's Novels: Literal and Allegorical

3 September, 9:30-11:30

On the Road to Nowhere: Rerouting the Pilgrimage in *Our Mutual Friend*

Lillian Nayder (Bates College, United States)

When Charley Hexam enters the home of the Veneerings near the start of *Our Mutual Friend* (1864-1865), carrying the message for Mortimer Lightwood that John Harmon, his client, has been found drowned, the boy is ushered into the library for questioning. Looking up at an engraving on the wall, Charley sees its "bran-new pilgrims ... going to Canterbury in more gold frame than



procession, and more carving than country,” his gaze, returning to the image, seeming to make him a pilgrim himself: he is “again upon the road to Canterbury,” as the narrator puts it. Veneering, too, proves fascinated by the picture, though “he is accustomed, when contemplative, to give his mind to the carving and gilding of the Pilgrims going to Canterbury” rather than to the pilgrims themselves (121). These allusions to Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* are just one sign of Dickens’s preoccupation with pilgrims and their journeys in this work. While the patriarchal Riah, climbing stairs in “his long black skirt,” “might have been the leader in some pilgrimage of devotional ascent to a prophet’s tomb” (276), Betty Higden walks from place to place, “toiling ... along the roads” to sell her wares, hoping only “to die, untouched by workhouse hands” (496). Walking on the Shanklin sands, the Lammles fail to follow “a straight track,” each wayward spouse “enlightening” the other about their mutual deception (125). Eugene Wrayburn walks London’s streets for hours every night, his route arbitrary and unmeaning, his sole purpose to “torment” and exhaust Bradley Headstone, his antagonist and shadow (533-34). His perambulations have neither spiritual purpose nor geographic destination. In his satiric depiction of Veneering’s gaze -- “contemplating” the gilded frame of the pilgrimage image, not its subject or higher meaning -- Dickens foregrounds the problem of misdirection, one that plagues both his pilgrims and those who follow them in *Our Mutual Friend*. My paper examines the ways in which Dickens “reroutes” pilgrimage in his last completed novel, questioning and redefining the ends of such journeys, and shortening the distance between Victorian and modern in so doing.

Charles Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend*, ed. Adrian Poole (New York: Penguin Books, 1997), pp. 27-28. All page numbers following quotations from the novel refer to this edition.

Little Dorrit: Memory as Pilgrimage

Francesca Orestano (University of Milan, Italy)

My proposal focuses on pilgrimage as progress through space and memory, both crowded with fears and hopes, wrong turns, safe paths and landslides. Memory and remembrance are deeply entwined with the plot of *Little Dorrit*. As with the prison motif which directs the plot, *Little Dorrit* develops the discourse of memory vs. oblivion, as agents in the painful pilgrimage shared by most characters – especially the Dorrits and the Clennams.

The very opening of *Little Dorrit* contains a reminder of the power of memory: the mother of Arthur Clennam, just back from China, gives him his father’s watch that contains the initials: “DNF.” Interpreted as “Do Not Forget” the motto gives an ominous



Shakespearian turn – *Hamlet* the case in point – to the beginning of the novel, as if a ghost had appeared, asking for remembrance and revenge. Arthur Clennam’s pilgrimage is difficult and momentous: too much, for him, has been covered, or forgotten. Mrs. Clennam’s trajectory is no less painful, memory building an iron cage around her.

For Mr. Dorrit at the Marshalsea the outside world is forgotten; once out, he forgets about the Marshalsea. With the exception of Amy, who remembers the family past and incarnates the painful gift of memory, active despite the attempts to erase, to varnish, to deny, to hide, all those involved in the story are hampered by memory loss, accomplices of willful erasure, prone to vagaries in the form of dreams about the past. The pilgrimage of the whole family from poverty to riches is performed at the expense of memory. In the end Amy is the only true agent of salvation for Arthur Clennam: their pilgrimage takes the shape of a journey through Purgatory, which, as in Dante’s comedy, culminates in the passage from the waters of Lethe – the river of oblivion – to Eunoë, the river of good memories.

References

Charles Dickens, *Little Dorrit*, ed. Harvey Peter Sucksmith. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1979.

Michael Hollington, “Milestones on the Dover Road,” *The Oxford Handbook of Charles Dickens*, eds. R. L. Patten, J. O. Jordan, C. Waters. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2018: 312-323.

Nathalie Vanfasse, *La plume et la route. Charles Dickens, écrivain voyageur*. Aix-Marseille, Presses Universitaires de Provence, 2017.

Pilgrims After Dark: The Debtor’s Nocturnal Escape in *The Old Curiosity Shop*

Adrianne Wojcik (Northern Virginia Community College, United States)

This presentation examines *The Old Curiosity Shop* as a narrative shaped by the legal structures of Victorian debt and their literary reimagining through pilgrimage and nocturnal movement. I argue that Dickens represents debt not merely as an economic condition, but as a legal and social force that compels mobility, turning the road into a space of temporary refuge from arrest, imprisonment, and dispossession, typically associated with Victorian debtors’ prisons. Nell and her grandfather’s journeying allows them to escape the threat of imprisonment posed by creditors, such as Quilp. The novel also contrasts the law of debt as a mechanism of surveillance and coercion with the ethical values associated with pilgrimage—charity, endurance, and communal care. Further, drawing on literary traditions of pilgrimage and the cultural symbolism of night, I argue that Dickens contrasts



the visibility demanded by legal systems with the obscurity of nocturnal movement, exposing the moral shortcomings of a legal regime that criminalizes poverty. Since Nell and her grandfather frequently travel after dark, when the reach of legal authority is partially obscured, nighttime in the novel functions as a temporal space in which the rigid structures of law loosen, allowing alternative ethical relations that emerge along the road. Yet, the nocturnal pilgrimage remains fragile and provisional, offering delay and temporary escape rather than deliverance from debt's legal claims. In sum, by tracing the unique convergence of darkness, debt, and pilgrimage, this paper shows how *The Old Curiosity Shop* critiques Victorian debt law while reimagining mobility as an ethically charged but unstable form of resistance.

Session #2: “I thought of his solitary figure toiling on, poor pilgrim” – Pilgrims Sacred and Secular

3 September, 15:00-17:00

Ambiguous Pilgrimages: Dickens and De/Sacralization

Matthias Bauer (Eberhard Karls University of Tübingen, Germany)

David Copperfield, describing his travels on the Continent after the death of his wife, remarks that he had “no purpose, no sustaining soul within me, anywhere” (ch. 58). It is surprising that, in the same breath, he calls this soulless and purposeless journey his “pilgrimage.” If a pilgrimage is defined by its destination, a sacred place, the expression does not appear to make sense. This is just one example showing that Dickens’s use of the word and the notion of pilgrimage is frequently out of the ordinary, marked by irony and unexpected shades of meaning. When evoked for satirical purposes, pilgrimages go together with acts of desacralization. A case in point is the bran-new home of the Veneerings in *Our Mutual Friend*, which is decorated with a print of “bran-new pilgrims on the wall, going to Canterbury in more gold frame than procession” (ch. 3) – a feature emphasizing that the cultural and religious value of this traditional pilgrimage is marginalized by the show of recently acquired wealth. At the same time, however, even when the terms “pilgrim” and “pilgrimage” are used in an apparently secular way, a sacred dimension may be at play. In David Copperfield’s case, for example, there is narrative irony in the use of the term “pilgrimage,” because, unbeknownst to David and the reader at this point, he is actually on his way to Agnes, the woman clearly endowed with a sacred



aura towards the end of David's story. In my talk, these countervailing processes of sacralization and desacralization – connected by the ambiguity of “pilgrimage” – will be explored.

Pilgrimage and Emblem in *Hard Times*: The Novel as Book of Life

Magdalena Pypeć (University of Warsaw, Poland)

The paper examines Dickens's industrial novel *Hard Times* in the context of the emblematic and allegorical tradition represented by John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Francis Quarles's *Emblems*, and the influential devotional work *Scola Cordis* (*The School of the Heart*)—texts that remained staples of Victorian domestic reading. Drawing on Dickens's definition of art as a representation of “the ways of Providence, of which ways all art is but a little imitation” (letter to Wilkie Collins, 6 October 1859), the paper argues that the novelist sought to invest everyday events with spiritual significance at a time when Victorian readers were still accustomed to interpreting art emblematically. The paper explores the interpretative implications of Bunyanesque echoes in the novel, such as its journey structure (employing pilgrimage as an image of life); Stephen Blackpool's heavy “burden” of a destructive marriage and social exclusion (Book 2, Chapter 6); Coketown as a modern “City of Destruction”; Mr. Gradgrind as a false guide (e.g., a Worldly Wiseman figure) until he comes to recognise the value of “a wisdom of the Heart” (Book 3, Chapter 1); and Mrs. Sparsit's descent into “the Slough of Despond” after her failed attempts to regain her former position in Mr. Bounderby's life (Book 3, Chapter 5). It also analyses how Dickens translates selected emblems from Quarles into the material landscape of the industrial town and its inhabitants—for example, in Louisa's inner emptiness and associated fire imagery; the motif of a mind crammed with learning while the heart is neglected; the portrayal of Coketown as a mechanical hell; the collapse of Bounderby's pride built on falsehood, echoing the emblematic warning against building one's life on unstable foundations; and the symbolic use of the labyrinth/maze and the cage/prison motif.

Session #3: Dickensian Pilgrimage: Quests, Places, and Afterlives

3 September, 17:30-19:30



Charles Dickens's Comedy Pilgrimage: The Journey Inside and Out

Rob Jacklosky (University of Mount Saint Vincent, United States)

In 1865, Charles Dickens wrote to Bulwer Lytton: “I think it is my infirmity to fancy or perceive relations in things which are not apparent generally” (76-7). As Malcolm Andrews points out in *Dickensian Laughter*, he is identifying the notion of “incongruity” and what Arthur Koestler would call “bisociation” that fuels so much comedy. Bisociation is that delightful jolt that occurs when two incompatible frames of reference come into fruitful, surprising, contact. This, Dickens was saying to Lytton in this late-career letter, came naturally to him. Andrews further observes that Dickens always knew that his comedy was a collaboration between himself and his readership. “Dickens wasn’t just a funny writer waiting for people to discover him,” Andrews writes. “His principal mission in the mid-1830s was to convert his audience to ‘Dickensian’ humor” (1). From those early sketches that relied on incongruity and broad satire of public and private behavior in *Pickwick Papers* (1836-7), Dickens would bring his readers along with him, to his more mature and somber comedy of *Great Expectations* (1860-1). In doing so, Dickens trod and perhaps helped create (along with Jane Austen) the standard route of the comic voice and long comic career. Exuberance, hope, incongruity and surface satire of youth, followed inevitably by the more grounded maturity of his later years and possibly the confrontation with his own shame. It is the standard route---from Shakespeare to Chaplin---as life-experience tempers antic beginnings. But how related was this development to his growing and deepening relationship with his audience, to his growing command of craft? Here I’ll take early works (*Pickwick Papers*) and late, *Little Dorrit* (1855-7) and *Great Expectations*, and examine what his comedic pilgrimage owes to his audience and growing awareness of the world’s limitations, and his own.

References

Malcolm Andrews. *Dickensian Laughter*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Journeys and Observations: *The Pickwick Papers* as a Form of Social Knowledge

Borislav Knežević (University of Zagreb, Croatia)

The Pickwick Papers is not just the first novel Charles Dickens wrote; its publication brings into focus a map of the circumstances of the accession of the genre of the novel to the cultural centrality that it would enjoy in Victorian society. The organizing principle



of the novel's plot is a journey of Samuel Pickwick around a part of England, and this journey is framed as a quest for social knowledge. The basic plot formula includes Quixotic and picaresque elements, popular in the 18th century English novel; however, Dickens's novel uses the older novelistic conventions of a travelling protagonist and episodic form to place a new emphasis on novelistic social observation and novel-writing as a form of social knowledge. In the context of the rapid economic and cultural transformation of the society of its day, *The Pickwick Papers* may be said to mark the emergence of a new cultural authority of novel-writing. In this paper I will examine the confluence of various cultural and social circumstances that allowed Dickens to embark on creating a new kind of novel in *The Pickwick Papers*, which led to the establishment of serial publication as a central form of popular entertainment, a new configuration of the economy of literature, a new importance attached to participation of literature in social debates, as well as a new set of assumptions about the aesthetics and social imagination of the novel as a genre. The focus of the paper will be on the motif of travel, permeating the narrative in the literal sense of Pickwick's journeys; the motif can also be read as an important formal feature of the engagement with contemporary society and culture in Dickens's writing. While brief references will be made to other texts by Dickens, the central concern of the paper is with *The Pickwick Papers*.

Pilgrimage and Performance: Embodying Dickens

Anita Fernandez Young (The Nottingham Mechanics Institute, United Kingdom)

In an interview about her novel *Demon Copperhead*, Barbara Kingsolver describes her feelings when she sat in the chair at the desk where Charles Dickens is said to have written part of *David Copperfield* in Fort House, Broadstairs. 'Charles Dickens told me in a conversation at his house, to let the child tell the story'. 'I was drawn to the study – I laid my head on the desk...' She is quite explicit about the connection she felt with the author and the ideas she felt were transferred from his perceived self to hers. This quite extreme response to a visit, a pilgrimage, to the author's preferred residence at Broadstairs, one of several holiday destinations Dickens enjoyed, was very similar to one I had myself, years earlier, in the same study in the same house, but in my case I was not being urged to write something specific, nor even to perform his works as I do. I simply felt a strong connection with the man, as I looked out on the view he had seen, touched the surfaces he had touched and recalled the words he had written there, as if I were in some way embodying his mind. In recalling that visit to Fort House in 2000, I also remember that whenever I visit 48 Doughty Street I touch the banisters, using the surfaces as a means of connection with the man whose hand touched them when he lived there. This is not a unique experience. In this paper I explore the search for authentic meaning and experience in the pilgrimage to Dickens's and other authors' homes and sites associated with them.



I-SPY Charles Dickens: Key Stations on the Pilgrim Path

Jeremy Parrott (Independent Researcher)

The current vogue in Dickens tourism, for the fan or devotee, is to temporarily occupy spaces once inhabited or at least visited by the Master or his characters, amounting to secular pilgrimages with quasi-religious undertones. This illustrated talk will trace a mazy pilgrim route from the birthplace museum in Portsmouth to Westminster Abbey via Furnivall's Inn, Highgate, Buckingham Street, Doughty Street and Wellington Street in London, also taking in Rochester, Broadstairs and Gad's Hill in Kent. This interactive presentation will be framed as a virtual I-SPY book, based on the popular series of handbooks for children from the 1960s. The audience can tick off and score points for places which they have visited and contribute by suggesting additional key locations. Along the way I will consider the nature of literary fandom in general and devotion to Charles Dickens more specifically, drawing parallels with both cults and more mainstream religious denominations. Finally, I will add one new stop on the pilgrim route: the Britannia Monument in Great Yarmouth, which inspired Dickens to develop the plot outline of *David Copperfield*.



S26.- 'Cut and Paste': Modalities of Assemblage in Victorian and Neo-Victorian Studies

This seminar addresses assemblage thinking and practice in Victorian and neo-Victorian studies. The notion of assemblage, developed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1980), among other writings, was later explored by critics Bruno Latour and Manuel DeLanda, and has recently gained traction due to the "network turn". Assemblage is a mode of ordering heterogeneous entities that work together and co-exist for a certain time, demonstrating the dynamics of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation. It is a useful term both to conceptualise relational forms and to describe unpredictability and contingency in the way conceptual models are shaped and enacted. Thus, the notion is especially fitting to analyse the human body, understood in the Victorian period as an assemblage. This bears resemblance to contemporary perspectives on the human body that draw on new materialism and phenomenology. In addition, the concept of assemblage offers new ways of examining Victorian and neo-Victorian productions. In the nineteenth century, the 'cut and paste' practice was common and resulted in objects such as albums and scrapbooks, as has been amply studied in Ellen Gruber Garvey's *Writing with Scissors* (2013). Such practices also informed compilations of information borrowed from various sources, which formed the basis of almanacks and periodicals. In turn, neo-Victorianism itself can be understood as an assemblage mode of existence, relational



as it is since its inception, manifested in a wide range of contemporary texts that look back to the Victorian past. In this seminar, we invite papers exploring modalities of assemblage in the Victorian period, as well as in neo-Victorianism, bringing together productive ways of assembling past and present concerns. Proposals may focus on, but are not limited to, the following topics: the human body as an assemblage; albums, scrapbooks, and almanacks as assembling practices; periodical writing; (neo-)Victorian photography and other Victorian techno-scientific inventions; Victorian theatrical tableaux; museology; curiosity cabinets; neo-Victorian/steampunk fashion; mash-ups, etc.

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Session #1: Assembling Practices in Victorian Literature

31 August, 16:00-18:00



Queer Assembling Practices: The Case of *The Yellow Book* (1894-1897)

Manuel Hueso Vasallo (University of Málaga, Spain)

Often referred to as ‘the Yellow Nineties’, the 1890s marked a period of unprecedented aesthetic experimentation within the Victorian era. Led by the examples of Walter Pater’s theorization of aestheticism and Oscar Wilde’s practical application of the same tenets, artists and editors such as Aubrey Beardsley promoted the appearance of periodicals that popularised aesthetic ideals among a wider readership. Among these, perhaps the longest-lived and most influential was *The Yellow Book* (1894-7). Edited by Henry Harland and Beardsley himself, this publication featured works by eminently queer (in its nonnormative sense) authors such as Oscar Wilde, Henry James or Edmund Gosse alongside illustrations by Beardsley, Max Beerbohm and other decadent artists. At the same time, the materiality of each issue reflected aesthetic principles by employing different kinds of paper, fonts, and margins in a highly idiosyncratic way. Taking this into account, the aim of this presentation is to illustrate how queerness is assembled within the pages of *The Yellow Book* as the continuation of an ongoing project that seeks to illustrate the many potential advantages of rethinking queer literature from an Assemblage Theory perspective (Hueso 2024). To achieve this, I follow Frederik King’s notion of ‘queer books’ as “textual and sexual discourse” (2024, 2) alongside Deleuze and Guattari’s conception of the assemblage as constituted by the ‘desire machine’, and Bill Brown’s views on the “assembled mode of existence” (2020, 271) of literary texts. This theoretical framework grounds an exploration of *The Yellow Book* that seeks to position it as an example (and forerunner) of multimodal queer literature. I shall argue that the materiality, textuality and artistic concerns of this publication are constituted by desire itself, understood as a generative force that brings together different modes of expression to create a queer assemblage that defies, in its unconventionality, the lines of ‘straight’ thinking and conventional literary uses (Ahmed 2019). In other words, I seek to explore how the material properties of *The Yellow Book* are caused by the intangible desires and sensibilities that it brings together as an expression of queer modes of thinking, as well as its ongoing influence in queer textual practices.

The Self as Assemblage: Walter Pater’s *Imaginary Portraits* (1887)

Anna Budziak (University Wrocław, Poland)

Of the four character sketches in Pater’s *Imaginary Portraits* none is set in the nineteenth century. Each, however, reflects the



nineteenth-century passion for collecting. The town-house where Pater's *Watteau* is lodging, just to illustrate, looks like a “precious museum”; one of Pater's narrators finds inspiration in “the shop of an old dealer in bric-à-brac”; and his fictional German duke inherits the palace that could compete with the “Green Vaults’ at Dresden.” It is the air of late-Victorian decadence his characters breathe, the epoch Herta Pauly describes as that of “inadequate coordination” and Silke-Maria Weineck as one obstinately holding onto its stupendous disorderly legacy. Pater's restless protagonists—even if they are cast as medieval, seventeenth- or eighteenth-century characters—belong to the late nineteenth century, down to reflecting the affluent Victorians' fondness for the mixed-period costume (the fashion bewailed by Max Nordau and jocularly commented on by Richard Jenkins). The model of the self they represent can be explained in terms of assemblage. It has intensity, but neither depth nor core. It is in process. It does not develop in climactic ways, but rather grows through accretion or, to use a biological metaphor, by shooting into the realms of myths, visual arts, and philosophy—by appropriating heterogeneous cultural languages as diverse as those of marine painting and Spinozian theorems (in “Sebastian van Storck”). Its growth can be conceptualized, in the language we owe to Richard Rorty, as “re-descriptions.” But it can also be viewed as rhizomatic, as in Guattari and Deleuze. Is this, however, the type of self-fashioning Walter Pater recommends or critiques? In trying to explain his skepticism about the self he himself constructs in his narratives, this presentation intends to show how Pater, nowadays forgotten by general audiences, nevertheless retains his relevance in the era of data overload.

Casterbridge as an Assemblage

Sinem Oruç Kesici (Middle East Technical University, Türkiye)

The Mayor of Casterbridge (1886) is often heralded as Thomas Hardy's most tightly structured novel, as its tragic movement is divided into distinct phases of Michael Henchard's rise and decline in Casterbridge. The town emerges as the locus of narrative organization, functioning as a key agent in narrative turning points. Prior to such nodal moments, the settings' past is disclosed, foregrounding their Roman heritage and establishing Casterbridge as a historical palimpsest. Henchard's present footing is continually permeated by resurging elements of his repressed past as well as the town's collective history, which resonates through its architecture, allowing past and present to bleed into one another. This study zeroes in on narratorial accounts of the town's Roman past and its contemporary state as “a place of sepulture,” and surveys the novel's story space as an assemblage, drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's notion. Focusing on key settings such as Weydon-Priors, the Roman Ring, High-Place Hall,



and Mixen Lane, the paper examines how these spaces shape narrative progression through a rhetorical narratological lens. It is argued that Hardy's employment of space as a narrative resource illustrates the porousness of characters to their environments. Although these settings appear distinct and stratified, their centripetal and centrifugal forces affect narrative progression while also being reshaped by the characters' actions, most notably in Henchard's desire to inscribe himself onto Casterbridge and the town's gradual unmaking of his character. By reading the story space of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* as an assemblage, this paper identifies a proto-Deleuzian dimension in Hardy's aesthetic undertaking of prose that challenges linear models of plot movement. It also proposes a story space not only as an ever-evolving, interactive system but also as a major resource for narrative progression.

Session #2: More-than-human Assemblages (Spiritual, Ecological, Cosmic Assemblages)

1 September, 9:00-11:00

Present Absences: Victorian Spiritualist Performance as Assemblage

Miriam Borham-Puyal (University of Salamanca, Spain)

Tatiana Kontou (National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece)

A teenage medium from Dalston, the discoverer of thallium, an artist relaying God's messages through pen and ink, a group of Cambridge dons ghost-hunting, a draped figure emerging on a glass plate in a photographer's studio, an investigative journalist drowned on the Titanic, a classicist in trance, a former prime minister in love trying to sustain presence through absence (a phrase adapted by Edna O'Shaughnessy). This paper considers the wide range of spiritualist practices in the late Victorian and Edwardian period as assemblages: provisional, mobile configurations of bodies—living and ectoplasmic—, technologies—the camera, the radio, utterances-recorded, analysed, revised—and affects—love and loss, grief and hope. As assemblages they are then characterized by multiplicity, “made up of many heterogeneous terms” and which establish “liaisons, relations between them, across ages, sexes and reigns – different natures”, becoming “a symbiosis, a ‘sympathy’” rather than “successions, lines of descent” (Deleuze and Parnet 69), without clear temporal lines or hierarchies, in what could be termed their nomadic nature (Nail 32). Drawing on two key examples from the height of Victorian spiritualism, the paper explores materialization seances which were proof of survival after death as well as a night's entertainment, and the ‘cross-correspondences’ case in which a network



of mediums, psychical researchers and interpreters came together to gather and make sense of messages delivered through automatic writing and direct voice phenomena over a series of years and across continents. We then consider how the strange affiliations between the public and the private merge into affective tableaux and how the spirit messages evoke the practices of common-place books and scrap books, practices of selecting, collecting, arranging and re-arranging into new forms. These familiar practices to the Victorians anticipate psychoanalytic theories and practices of the twentieth century. We argue that within these assemblages, presence and absence are not opposed but felt as coexisting states, sustained through collective practices of attention, interpretation, and emotional investment where heterogeneity becomes imperative and finality is continually deferred.

Starry Negatives in the Victorian Night: Metaphor of a Celestial Graveyard and the Breath that Quenched Kantian Flame

Ondřej Váša (Charles University, Czech Republic)

The Victorian era was a time of unprecedented exposure of stars; only to cut them out of the sky and paste them into the depths of human interiors, where the former fixed stars took on the role of errant coordinates of human assemblages. There wasn't much left to see anyway; after Andrew Ainslie Common photographed the Orion Nebula in 1883, and revealed stars appearing for the first time only on the photographic plate, it no longer made sense to grope in the "miserably poor and barren regions" of nocturnal darkness (Herschel 1847). The true wonders were disclosed in the darkrooms. The stars themselves began their migration earthward, casting off their cosmic uniform(ity) to serve the volatile metaphors of the world: crowds and memories blurred into "nebulae" (De Quincey 1846, Proust 1913), cities pulsed as "galaxies of events" (Joyce 1920) and men and women converged with metaphors of sidereal bodies "blindly running" along their wandering paths (Tennyson 1850). Which also meant: instead of the sky, the stars were observed rather in "the cow and horse tracks in the road" (Hardy 1891). The well-mapped interweaving of modern astronomy with Victorian literary cosmology (e.g., Sachs 1985; Henry 2003; Gossin 2007; Henchman 2014) will serve, however, as the backdrop for tracing one particular consequence of the "cut and paste" of the stars. Very briefly put, the demotion and democratization of stars remarkably fused both with the nascent resistance to Kantian moralization of the heavens and with the pathos of photography revealing the world in dying light (Cadava 1997). There emerges a distinctive revolt against stars and their ever so slightly transcendental claims, apparent, among other things, in the image of the sky as a stellar graveyard, or rather in the inversion of that image into the candles and bonfires here on Earth (Hardy 1878, 1882). For once the



stars – as a metaphorical humanized assemblage – became objects of introspection, their former dominion above was necessarily reterritorialized as a site of downward gaze: and consequently established itself as a manifest landscape of amoral darkness.

Victorian Eco-Assemblages: Fractures, Fusions, and Environmental Formalism in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*

Anna Kérchy (University of Szeged, Hungary)

Wuthering Heights is a fragmented text for multiple reasons. Its canonical position already situates the author as one of the trio of the three legendary Brontë sisters. Its multilayered, non-linear narratological structure employs multiple unreliable narrators, nested accounts, and time shifts that split the story into halves. The novel is a generic patchwork, mixing tropes from Gothic fiction, romance, the Bildungsroman, and the sensation, regional, and psychological novelistic traditions. Through intermedial inspiration, the literary text is indebted to the nineteenth-century visual tradition of ghost photography, resulting in ekphrastic epiphanic ruptures in the narrative flow. Most evidently, the novel thematizes fatal psychic disintegration through a passionate Liebestod that blends the sublime and the abject, creating an atmosphere of suspense and destabilization through cognitive, affective dissonance. However, I wish to argue that the novel's series of fragmentations ultimately results in fusion through a fading back into nature—the totality of (non)being. A close reading of the novel reveals that fossil, aquatic, vegetal, animal, and ecological metaphors conceptualize the human–nature bond in terms of multispecies continuities and entangled, dynamic transformations of fellow life forms and material earthly entities. While Brontë's novel lends itself to be read as a satire of the Romantic lyricist concept of nature, and particularly of the egotistical sublime, it can also be interpreted as a precursor to a post-anthropocentric, posthumanist, ecofeminist worldview. While a growing corpus of recent scholarship has examined *Wuthering Heights* from an ecocritical perspective, drawing parallels between the patriarchal oppression of women, the arbitrary imposition of social norms, and the exploitation of nature, I propose an eco-philosophical reading. This reading shows how dissolution and assemblage (Deleuze and Guattari 1980), “networked thinking” (Latour 1996), and sympoietic becoming-with more-than-human entanglements in fuzzy contact zones (Haraway 2008) together circumscribe an “environmental formalism” (Strayer 2021). This framework conveys an ethics and aesthetics that allow Brontë's novel to embrace non-hierarchical relationalities and productive unpredictabilities. I am also interested in how contemporary filmic adaptations translate *Wuthering Heights*' eco-assemblages into the cinematic medium.



Scrambled Rhythms in Botanical Assemblages by Urszula Zająchkowska and Olivia Laing

Teresa Bruś (University of Wrocław, Poland)

This paper explores personal narratives as sites of conversation centered on heterogeneous rhythms. I apply a plant-based lens to question essayistic models of subjectivity as open and processual. I concentrate on the philosophy of the late Victorian gardener's Gertrude Jekyll and map her nature-culture relations (developed in *Woods and Garden: Notes and Thoughts, Practical and Critical of a Working Amateur*) as foundational for botanical assemblages of the 20th and 21st-century. Vegetal rhythms unravel a relational ontology in Urszula Zająchkowska's *Sticks and Stems* [Patyki, badyle 2019] and Olivia Laing's *The Garden Against Time: In Search of a Common Paradise* (2024). Focusing on personal models of heterogeneous rhythms, I test the unpedantic "conversible" principle and the idea of living-as-thinking that embraces growth, decay, and metamorphosis. By following Zająchkowska's and Laing's notions of plant thinking and plant imaging, I engage with the scrambled rhythms of their assemblages as a means of forming new territories. Drawing on Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's proposition from *A Thousand Plateaus* that "an assemblage is precisely this increase in the dimensions of a multiplicity that necessarily changes in nature as it expands its connections," I argue that Zająchkowska's and Laing's ideas of being-in-the-world with plants and humans promote assemblages as relational formations.

Session #3: Body as Assemblage

1 September, 17:00-19:00

Living Corpses: Empathy, Assemblage and Artificial Bodies in Vernon Lee's "The Doll"

Elena Ramírez Sáenz (University of Valencia, Spain)

This paper approaches Vernon Lee's ghost story "The Doll" (1927) through assemblage thinking as developed by Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980) and later elaborated by Latour and DeLanda. Assemblage is understood here as a mode



of ordering heterogeneous entities that temporarily co-exist and interact, producing unstable configurations. Drawing on the nineteenth-century prevalence of ‘cut and paste’ practices, as examined by Garvey in *Writing with Scissors* (2013), the paper foregrounds Victorian material culture as inherently assemblagic. This same logic informs Victorian understandings of the body, particularly in contexts of death and mourning, where corporeality, memory, affect, and spirituality intersect.

Reading “The Doll” against these practices positions the corpse-doll at the centre of a fluctuating network of relations involving material fabrication, emotional investment, and spiritual presence. The paper argues that assemblage offers a compelling lens through which to analyse Victorian conceptions of the human body as composite, mutable, and networked rather than unified or autonomous.

The paper argues that the corpse-doll exemplifies the Victorian body as an assemblage in its most literal sense: fabricated, composite, and animated by affective and spiritual investments. This assemblage is further perverted through the Countess’s husband, whose obsessive and secretive interactions with the doll distort mourning into a form of possession and control, culminating in its abandonment upon his remarriage. Lee exploits the emotional core of the mourning doll to radicalise her aesthetic theory of empathy, pushing it beyond identification toward an unsettling fusion between the Doll and her observer/narrator. In doing so, “The Doll” exposes the unstable boundaries between life and death, materiality and affect, that underpin Victorian conceptions of the body and mourning.

Female Body Anxiety in Late Victorian Girls’ Magazines: Reassembling the Young Woman Reader

Charlotte Boyce (University of Portsmouth, United Kingdom)

Sally Mitchell famously argues that the ‘girl’ became visible as a discrete cultural and commercial category in the final decades of the nineteenth century, a discursive product of the array of print media that sprang up around her. Gaining insight into the authentic attitudes and concerns of the ‘real life’ girls who bought and read publications such as the *Girl’s Own Paper* and the *Girl’s Realm* is a task fraught with difficulty, however. As Mitchell notes, ‘perplexed as we are when trying to recollect the intense and shifting emotions of our own adolescence, it is probably not possible to apprehend the shape of girls’ inner lives’ from over a century ago. This paper argues that one way we can partially reassemble the preoccupations of young women readers is by engaging with the ‘Answers to Correspondents’ sections in late Victorian girls’ magazines. Although they were typically filtered



through an editorial screen, letters pages bear traces of readers' original voices, giving shape to their varied self-perceptions, values and ideals. This paper focuses in particular on girls' attitudes to and anxieties about body image, arguing that while the OED locates the emergence of that term in the twentieth century, the worries about weight, shape and appearance encompassed within it are very much in evidence in Victorian correspondence pages. Piecing together the patchwork of voices that resonate through girls' magazines, and highlighting the tensions that exist between editorial and readerly ideas about the female body, this paper aims to give form to the elusive figure of the young woman reader, while acknowledging her multiplicity, mutability and contingency.

“All the Mass of Material of which the Record is Composed”: Assembling the Victorian Body in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*

Sidia Fiorato (University of Verona, Italy)

Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* epitomizes the collapse of the monolithic conception of human identity that had characterized the Victorian period; at the same time, it presents an investigation of the human body intended as a palimpsest of related elements, which had emerged thanks to the scientific developments of the time. Through a narrative structure that intermingles letters, diaries, journals, newspaper articles, telegrams, phonograph/shorthand transcriptions, and authorial notes, in itself an example of assemblage that forms and puts into question the body of the text throughout its intrinsic interconnections, it guides the reader into contemporary perspectives upon the physical body in its relation with troubling aspects of the mind and identity. In the novel, medical science dismembers a body that the vampire reassembles by highlighting its relational nature and by substituting it through its own exceptional and undefinable nature. Suspended between life and death, Dracula participates of both conditions and becomes the metaphorical representation of Victorian England, on the verge of dissolution but grounding itself in its own body politic, as a form of solipsistic resistance that reveals to be permeable to new forms and new (inter)relations. The paper aims at presenting the vampire as “a multiplicity which is made up of many heterogeneous terms and which establishes liaisons, relations between them, across ages, sexes, and reigns—different natures.” (Deleuze-Guattari), its meaning dynamically comprised and contained by everything that it is connected to. The analysis will intersect issues of madness, gender, science, and medicine to analyse the process of becoming of the Victorian palimpsestic human. The different and intersecting discourses of the text reveal a fragmentary whole represented by both the text of the novel and its collective protagonist.



A “Catalogue of Horrors”: Neo-Victorian Assemblages in Alexander McQueen’s Posthuman Fashion

Samuel Egea-Castañeda (University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain)

When situated within culture, the human body is rarely bare; it is usually dressed or adorned to varying degrees (Entwistle 2023). Dress and body are so intricately related that their convergence might be read as an “assemblage” (DeLanda 2016) whereby the two elements shape and affect one another. In avant-garde fashion, the assemblage “body-dress” often reconfigures normative conceptions of beauty and femininity, de- and re-territorializing the human body and foregrounding it as an “ontological site of becoming” (Braidotti 2022, 113). Indeed, some fashion designers imbricate the human form with the non-human—whether biological or technological—, and thus represent the body as fluid, contingent, and embedded in a complex, heterogeneous network. This paper stitches together the notion of assemblage, posthuman theory and fashion studies to examine the early fashion shows of British designer Alexander McQueen (1969–2010). Once described as a “catalogue of horrors” (Hume 1993), these collections reveal his penchant for Victorian material and visual culture. Not in vain, McQueen’s graduate collection was titled *Jack the Ripper Stalks His Victims* (1992), and it set the tone for the subsequent collections that almost functioned as a cabinet of curiosities, featuring Neo-Victorian interpretations of taxidermy and mourning dress alongside Gothic themes of decadent sexualities and dissected bodies (Spooner 2015). For instance, *Eclect Dissect* (A/W 1997–98) was inspired by a surgeon who collects women, costumes, and animals, assembling them as exotic hybrid forms. Through grotesque elements such as worms encased in transparent bodices, animal skull headpieces, or antelope horns sprouting from jacket shoulder pads, the dressed body in McQueen’s collections becomes a Gothic posthuman assemblage. The collections thus “cut and paste” human and non-human parts at the couturier’s whim and, by scavenging the Victorian past, he offered alternative forms of embodiment to a contemporary audience, confronting an industry traditionally fixated on idealized human forms with the dissolution of corporeal borders.

Session #4: Neo-Victorian Assemblages

2 September, 9:00-11:00

“Each Section Became Its Own Project”: Heather Parry’s *Carrion Crow* (2025) as Neo-Victorian Sensorial Assemblage and Gothic Scrapbook



Rosario Arias (University of Málaga, Spain)

Heather Parry's *Carrion Crow* (2025), set in late Victorian London, redolent of bad odours, provides a phenomenological and material perspective on the Victorian female body through the characters of Cécile Périgord and her daughter, Marguerite. Her mother imprisons her in the attic after the announcement of her engagement with George Lewis, a doctor, with the only company of Mrs Beeton's *Book of Household Management* (1861) which, apparently, will help Marguerite in the process of becoming a wifely woman. This book, a hugely popular guide to the culinary and social expectations of married life in Victorian times, had taught Cécile how to turn from one thing into another in her youth: "Cécile formed herself in the model of Isabella" (Parry 177). At the hands of incarcerated Marguerite, Beeton's book turns into a gothic scrapbook (Kelly), and her body a text where the recipes and guiding material are enacted and reterritorialised, thus turning Marguerite's body into a site of decay, but also of potential resistance. Thus, the novel as a body horror story shows an assembling mode of existence in which heterogenous elements, parts, things, bodies, and senses work together in a non-hierarchical way. The notion of assemblage was first suggested and examined by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in several of their writings, in particular, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1980, translated to English in 1987 by Brian Massumi). However, as Yannis Hamilakis states, "the assemblage was already in its inception, an assemblage of concepts" (171), and since then the notion has been evolving and in constant transformation, interpreted and re-assembled by critics like Manuel DeLanda, Bruno Latour, Jane Bennett, and Bill Brown, among others. Interestingly, the novel, like an assemblage, appears in a state of becoming since it builds on multiple components, co-functioning and allowing for flows, processes and transformation, ultimately a defining feature of Parry's novel. Therefore, this paper will examine *Carrion Crow*, a gothic neo-Victorian novel, as a sensorial assemblage, which capitalises on embodied subjectivities, the fluidity of the senses, and the potential of resistance and agency embedded in the assemblage.

Cutting up and Reassembling (Victorian) Bodies, Texts and Identities: Alasdair Gray's and Yorgos Lanthimos's *Poor Things***Dietmar Böhnke (Leipzig University, Germany)**

At various levels, both Alasdair Gray's novel *Poor Things* (1992) and its award-winning 2023 film adaptation by Yorgos Lanthimos indulge in practices of deconstruction and (re)assemblage. First of all, at the plot level, there is the actual dissection of the suicide



Victoria/Bella's pregnant body and its reassembling and revival by Godwin Baxter's surgical genius, using the brain of Bella's unborn child - with all the Frankensteinian overtones this evokes. The novel is moreover copiously illustrated with cut-out organs and body parts from the nineteenth-century textbook (Henry) Gray's *Anatomy*, as well as various other Victorian illustrations, next to (Alasdair) Gray's own drawings. Secondly, and following on from this, the text itself can be seen as one of those prototypically postmodern (or neo-Victorian) 'schizoid' or 'split' texts (cf. McHale 1987) – being a 'facsimile reproduction' of Bella's husband Archibald McCandless's autobiography, couched in layers of competing discourses (Editor's Introduction, Victoria's letter, Historical Notes etc.). This facilitates a metahistorical interpretation of the novel as commenting on the limitations and pitfalls of writing history (and neo-Victorian/historical novels) in general. Lastly, this 'cut-and-paste' method extends also to the representation of identities (e.g. gender, class and regional/national), which can be simultaneously read from a Victorian and contemporary perspective, highlighting for example feminist readings and debates about class bias in Glasgow's year as European Capital of Culture in 1992. In this paper, therefore, I want to analyse various such assemblage practices in the novel, and then compare them with Lanthimos's film version. The way in which the film in its turn cuts up Gray's original (almost completely losing the Scottish dimension, for example) and yet manages to reassemble it into an entirely convincing and fascinating neo-Victorian work of art will be in the centre of my interest. Among other things, I will comment on the co-existence of and tension between feminist vs anti-feminist interpretations, black-and-white vs colour cinematography, realistic vs fantastic modes, comedy vs tragedy, and the use of steampunk aesthetics

Neo-Victorian Mashups as Assemblages: *A League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* and *Penny Dreadful*

Anna Gutowska (SWPS University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Poland)

Drawing on the concepts of transfictionality (Marie-Laure Ryan) and character recognisability (Jens Eder), the paper will explore the creative strategies of selected Neo-Victorian mash-ups, notably the comic book series *A League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* (1999-2007) co-created Alan Moore and Kevin O'Neill and the television series *Penny Dreadful* (2014-2016) created by John Logan.

The *modus operandi* of these Neo-Victorian mashups is creating universes in which various recognizable characters such as Dracula, Dorian Gray, Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde and Dr Frankenstein and his creature coexist as protagonists and antagonists. This creative strategy bears all the marks of assemblage as its goal is creating a new cultural text, in which heterogeneous fragments of earlier texts coexist. The success of a given mashup, just as the success of any new adaptation, depends on the balance between repetition



and variation (Linda Hutcheon), and in other words, the proper mixing of the old (recognisable characters, plot points and tropes) and the new (subversion of known storylines, new character pairings and story resolutions). Recognizability of the out-of-copyright characters becomes a crucial consideration in mashups, and this issue will be discussed using the different versions of Mina Murray as an example. One of the principal characters from Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, Mina becomes the protagonist both in Moore's comics and in *Penny Dreadful*. While in *The League* she becomes the leader of "a Justice League of Victorian England", in *Penny Dreadful* her recognizable features are split between two characters: a minor character called Mina Murray, whose kidnapping by Dracula becomes the inciting incident of season 1 of the series, and Vanessa Ives, the series' protagonist and Dracula's opponent.

While at face value it seems that Neo-Victorian mashups offer their audiences primarily the simple pleasure of recognition, analysing them through the lens of transfictionality and character studies shows that their palimpsestic creative strategies can in fact deepen the audiences' perceptions of the original texts.

Reanimating the Dead: Heterogeneous Transnational Assemblage in Project Itoh's and Toh Enjoe's *The Empire of Corpses* (2012)

Akira Suwa (Doshisha University, Japan)

In Project Itoh's and Toh Enjoe's *The Empire of Corpses* (2012), characters and elements from a wide variety of sources (fictional as well as historical) are cut and pasted to create a unique, albeit unruly, form of assemblage that operates across bodies, texts, and authorship. Set in a steampunk-influenced nineteenth century, the novel imagines a technology that resurrects the dead for labour and military service, producing bodies that are animated yet denied full human status. Medical student John Watson is recruited by Walsingham, a British secret agency, to locate the diary of Victor Frankenstein, which is said to contain the secret of creating 'the One', a corpse capable of thinking and speaking like the living. Through the quest of Watson and his partner Frederick Burnaby, which takes them to Afghanistan, Japan, the United States, and back to the United Kingdom, Itoh and Enjoe bring together British imperial history, Victorian scientific discourse, and contemporary Japanese speculative fiction to construct a heterogeneous transnational network.

In Itoh's and Enjoe's novel, the resurrected corpses function as literal assemblages of flesh, science, and state power, which reflects Victorian anxieties about industrialisation, imperial expansion, and the unstable boundaries between life and death. At the same time, *The Empire of Corpses* is itself an assemblage at the level of authorship. Following Itoh's untimely death, Enjoe took over the project and



completed the novel, resulting in a text composed of distinct yet co-existing literary styles. This collaborative structure mirrors the narrative's preoccupation with composite bodies and borrowed agency. By tracing how Victorian Britain and contemporary Japan are assembled within a single narrative framework, this paper argues that neo-Victorian fiction can operate as a transnational assemblage that reworks models of cultural inheritance and adaptation.



S27.- Neo-Victorian Deviant Minds

As Lennard J. Davis argues, the Victorian era witnessed an increased emphasis on the 'normal' mind, with the consequence of constructing non-normative minds as deviant others (Davis, 2017, pp. 1-14). Furthermore, the Victorian period is notable for a proliferation of classifications of non-normative minds, with attendant anxieties about degeneration and potential eugenic interventions becoming more prevalent as the century progressed. Even in the twenty-first century, we are still dealing with the legacies of nineteenth-century exclusionary practices and attitudes towards cognitive difference. Although there has been some existing scholarship on neo-Victorian 'madness' (see, for example, eds. Ayres and Meyer, 2020), the ways in which neo-Victorian literature and culture might represent and/or challenge a broader range of nineteenth-century discourses of mental 'disorders' is yet to be fully examined. This seminar seeks to look beyond the figure of the Victorian madwoman to explore how cognitive disorders, illnesses and disabilities also affected men and children. It also aims to address how intersectional issues of identity such as class, ethnicity and sexuality intersect with gender to produce representations of the mentally 'other' in neo-Victorianism. What insights might neo-Victorian texts offer on mental differences, past, present and future?

We welcome paper proposals that address any aspect of depicting the deviant mind in neo-Victorianism. Possible topics include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Neo-Victorian reappraisals of scientific discourses on cognitive difference (Cesare Lombroso, Henry Maudslsey, Charles Darwin, amongst others)
- Neo-Victorian places and practices of the confinement of deviant minds (asylums, restraints, isolation etc)
- Cognitive differences/disabilities/diseases including intellectual disability, neurodiversity, dementia, eating disorders, Alzheimer's, etc
- The connections between addictions and mental illness
- Challenges to the pathologisation of cognitive difference, especially from a disability studies and/or medical



humanities perspective

- Thinking beyond the neo-Victorian madwoman to include men, children, and diverse gender identities
- The intersections between gender, sexuality, ethnicity, class and cognitive difference/disability/disease

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Session #1

3 September, 9:30–11:30

“Every Penny Gone to Aid and Comfort the Needy”: Caring and Queer Use in Emma Donoghue’s *The Wonder* (2016)

Maria Isabel Romero Ruiz (University of Málaga, Spain)

Eating disorders have become some of the most problematic complaints that relate to both physical and mental instability and are associated with anorexia and bulimia, among other conditions. At the same time, fasting and stopping eating either voluntarily or as the result of extreme political and economic situations are part of the traditional Irish history that moves back to the time of Catholicism and the Famine in the nineteenth century. Irish Canadian writer Emma Donoghue in her most acclaimed neo-Victorian novel *The Wonder* (2016) writes the story of eleven-year-old Anna O’Donnell who becomes well-known because of her voluntary fast. As a result, many people consider her feat a miracle, and many others consider her deed the result of a hoax orchestrated by her family. In this context, English nurse Lib Wright comes to the island and the poor village where Anna lives to uncover the swindle by keeping a watch on her. However, Anna is not only the victim of Irish Catholic bigotry, but also of trauma caused by the relationship with her brother whose tragic death determines her and her family’s strange behaviour.

Sarah Ahmed’s notion of “queer use” can be revealing for the analysis of the novel. Identification of undesirable (mis)uses is the starting point for a trans-formation that relies on a re-thinking of heretofore “proper” uses. According to Ahmed, mis/ab/use is



the result of processes of classification carried out by cultural structures and power agents. Ahmed posits a queer use as a way of implying that things can be used in ways that were not intended or by those for whom they were not intended (200). In this sense, a queer use implies how we dismantle a world that has been built to accommodate only some (221). Thus, it is my aim to demonstrate how Donoghue makes a queer use of Anna's situation and character to conclude that by giving another use to bodies that have been traditionally misused, abused and othered a better future can be built.

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Neo-Victorian Sensation Novel: Imperial Fears and Racialised Deviant Others in John Harwood's *The Asylum*

Ayse Circir (Erzurum Technical University, Türkiye)

John Harwood's neo-Victorian sensation novel *The Asylum* (2013) serves as a gothic and sensational reconsideration of the nineteenth-century psychiatric projects, specifically where it intersects with imperial anxieties. This paper examines how Harwood moves beyond the traditional trope of the Victorian madwoman to explore a more complex web of 'deviant minds' defined by 'tainted' lineages and non-normative identities.

Set against the clinical and legal backdrop of 1860s and 1880s England, *The Asylum* depicts madness not merely as a clinical condition but as a cultural construct used to police the boundaries of Britishness. Drawing on the theories of Michel Foucault and Elaine Showalter, I argue that the novel's depiction of the Tregannon lunatic asylum functions as a laboratory for Victorian exclusionary practices. In Harwood's narrative, the 'deviant minds' are inextricably linked to 'dangerous' bodies, specifically those of the Other Victorians whose half-English heritage, hereditary madness, and homoerotic tendencies represent a threat to the stabilised, heterosexual, and metropolitan imperial nexus.

My paper specifically analyses the novel's 'anti-Victorian' resolution. While Harwood appears to challenge Victorian pathologising by domesticating the asylum at the novel's denouement, I contend that this closure in fact stabilises imperial fears. By clearing the homelike space of queer bodies and racial Others, the novel consolidates a vision of exclusion that reflects twenty-first-century legacies of nineteenth-century attitudes toward cognitive and ethnic difference. Through this intersectional lens, the paper explores how *The Asylum* offers a critical commentary on the deviant mind as a tool for both Victorian discipline and neo-Victorian imperial nostalgia.



“I have lost myself”: Thomas Hardy’s Grieving Mind in Elizabeth Lowry’s *The Chosen*

Bożena Kucała (Jagiellonian University in Kraków, Poland)

This paper analyses the representation of Thomas Hardy’s grieving mind in Elizabeth Lowry’s biographical novel *The Chosen* (2022). Lowry imaginatively recreates the immediate aftermath of the sudden death of Hardy’s first wife, which, despite their long-lasting estrangement, plunged the writer into an overwhelming crisis. Whereas grief is widely considered a natural reaction to bereavement, it may also be regarded as a pathological condition insofar as it resembles the manic-depressive state (Melanie Klein in Gross, *Understanding Grief*, 2016, p. 70). The loss of a loved one, especially spousal bereavement, is an unsettling and distressing experience that entails a major deviation from established patterns of social interaction and behavioural norms. Lowry depicts Thomas Hardy as manifesting a range of abnormal behaviours in the wake of his shock: numbness, social withdrawal, disorientation, obsessive thoughts, confusion between wakefulness and dream, between present reality and recollection. Emma’s unexpected demise has shaken his world so profoundly that he loses his grip on space and time, startling the people in his household with his mental detachment and aberrant conduct. Hardy is temporarily suspended in a liminal zone between the living and the dead, experiencing an inner split and a sensation of being a ghost to himself. Lowry imagines the Victorian writer additionally suffering from a crisis of language, as he loses his ability to write. By filling in a lacuna in Hardy’s biography, Lowry fictionalises his transition from a resentful husband to a grieving widower who eventually disciplines his mental and emotional disorder into commemorative love poetry.

The Architecture of Madness: The Sickroom as Heterotopia in Michel Faber’s *The Crimson Petal and the White* (2002)

Linda Šubertová (University of Ostrava, Czech Republic)

Heterotopias, first conceptualised by Michel Foucault in 1966, are spaces of otherness existing outside of ordinary space, which function as counter-sites or mirrors that simultaneously reflect and contest the other spaces surrounding them. These heterotopic spaces—prisons, asylums, brothels, or cemeteries—exist in every culture, evolving over time and adapting to geographical contexts. In neo-Victorian literature, heterotopias frequently appear as spaces where history is revisited and interrogated, since it is precisely in these heterotopic emplacements where much of historical injustice took place. Accordingly, this paper proposes a



reading of the Victorian sickroom as a heterotopia of deviation by examining the character of Agnes Rackham in Michel Faber's *The Crimson Petal and the White* (2002). The sickroom in which Agnes is kept establishes a threshold that regulates who may enter and who may leave, allowing the husband to hide away, medically examine, and monitor the deviant Other. Control over the sickroom door, held exclusively by men, means control over female autonomy. Through Agnes, whose undiscovered brain tumour precipitates paranoid delusions, menstrual hallucinations, and religious monomania, Faber's novel interrogates the social and medical processes complicit in constructing and containing female madness. The paper further addresses the collateral effects of Agnes's madness on her daughter, Sophie, who is viewed by her own mother as a malevolent presence and is subsequently excluded from the sickroom. By considering the spatial aspects of madness and its construction in neo-Victorian literature, this paper argues that the sickroom, as a heterotopia of deviation, enables the maintenance of patriarchal control within the (neo-)Victorian home. Madness is thus shaped not only by medical and social discourse, but also by space, as it is managed through architecture, confinement, and the control of women's movement.

Session #2

3 September, 15:00–17:00

“You are Hannah Grose”: The Erasure of the Self, Dementia, and the Ghost in *The Haunting of Bly Manor*

María de los Ángeles Gil Mansilla (University of Extremadura, Spain)

This presentation examines *The Haunting of Bly Manor* (Mike Flanagan, 2020) as a neo-Victorian reimagining of dementia and Alzheimer's disease through the language of haunting, memory loss, and the dissolution of the self. Departing from the radical ambiguity of Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw* (1898), Flanagan's series establishes a coherent logic in which death entails the gradual erosion of identity, memory, and narrative continuity. Within this framework ghosts are no longer conventional supernatural figures, but embodied metaphors for minds trapped in recursive loops of fragmented memory.

The analysis focuses primarily on the character of Hannah Grose, whose repeated recitation of biographical facts (“My name is Hannah Grose. It is 1987”) operates as a cognitive anchoring strategy that closely mirrors coping mechanisms employed by



individuals experiencing dementia-related memory deterioration. In parallel, the figure of Viola Lloyd (the “Lady of the Lake”) whose face has been erased by centuries of forgetting, represents the ultimate horror of neurodegenerative illness: the complete annihilation of autobiographical memory and personal identity.

The presentation further argues that Bly Manor itself functions as a space of neo-Victorian cognitive confinement. By situating cognitive impairment within a haunted domestic space, the series collapses the Victorian binary between sanity and insanity and replaces it with a model of identity as relational, unstable, and dependent on care.

Patients, Perverts, and Parody in Will Self’s *Dorian: An Imitation*

Isaac Linton Clewes (University of Málaga, Spain)

Will Self’s consciously titled *Dorian: An Imitation* (2002) takes the plot of Oscar Wilde’s original novel but moves it from 1890s Decadence to the 1980s AIDS crisis. The homosexual characters (Dorian, Henry, and Basil) indulge in “degenerate” behaviour that goes against heterosexual family values (Duff 150) and resemble what Max Nordau described in 1895 as egomania, with the unconscious itself subject to disease (313). However, Dorian, being the “chameleon,” can adapt to his surroundings (Self 107-108), while AIDS victims like Basil and Herman cannot.

This ties in with *Dorian*’s twist or sleight of hand: that the novel we have been reading was in fact a fictional manuscript written by Henry before his death. The Dorian of the 2000s, now leading the Gray Organisation, declares himself physically and mentally sane by accusing Henry of fabrication and “self-hatred” (264), promising an end to the “willed decline” of the *fin de siècle* through his own efforts (267).

I argue, however, that Henry’s playful and postmodern style, one that is indeed deviant and grotesque, captures the “reality” of the situation more effectively by displaying the nuances of homosexuals’ states of mind during the crisis (addiction, for example), thus being more “truthful” than Dorian’s repudiation. While Henry himself cannot be read as fully trustworthy due to his cruelty and comical masculinity, he voices a limited sort of empathy, albeit from a distance, towards victims of Dorian’s crimes and the AIDS crisis (mainly his friend Basil, or “Baz”). Moreover, by channelling Oscar Wilde, Henry orchestrates Dorian’s demise from beyond the grave, undoing what I consider to be Dorian’s false promise of progress.



Hence, the novel reveals how “deviant” minds and bodies can reclaim agency and autonomy through unconventional prose styles and the clever use of parody, particularly within a male, homosexual context, rethinking contemporary strategies of healing.

Mothering and Disordered Eating in Emma Donoghue’s *The Wonder* (2016)

Lara Brändle (University of Oslo, Norway)

In Emma Donoghue’s 2016 novel *The Wonder*, Anna, a young girl living in 1850s Ireland, is reported not to have eaten anything but “manna from heaven” in four months. What readers quickly realise is that severely disordered eating – the child’s trauma response to having been repeatedly raped by her now deceased brother – is declared a miracle by the family, local clergy, and the child’s doctor. Where there has been considerable focus on Anna’s disordered eating in scholarship around this novel, especially in the context of the Famine, I want to shift the focus in this paper to the two maternal figures and their care for Anna. There is the English nurse, Lib, who travels to Ireland to either verify this ecclesiastical miracle or uncover the girl and her family as frauds. Lib will finally save Anna’s life and adopt her. In that process, however, she demonises Rosaleen, Anna’s biological mother, and portrays her as the villain of this story, the one who instigates this fast to make herself into a Mary-like, saintly mother of a miraculous child, allowing no sympathy for her. I want to look at both Lib and Rosaleen and view their care in the light of caring for someone with an eating disorder while negotiating their own traumatic past. Furthermore, while not making light of Rosaleen’s actions, I will recontextualise her as a grieving, struggling mother trying to care for her daughter to the best of her abilities and capabilities within the patriarchal context of Catholic Ireland. I argue that this novel, by choosing a Victorian fasting girl as its focal point, negotiates contemporary anxieties around the care of children – especially girls – with eating disorders and the kind of blame and responsibility that is assigned to mothers, because, as Susan Bordo argues, the “[d]enial of self and the feeding of others are hopelessly enmeshed in this construction of the ideal mother” (Bordo 118).

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S28.- (Re-)Staging the (neo-)Victorian

Odai Johnson recently built on the idea of how the historical holes that remain to be discovered by theatre historians have ‘signatures’ (46) that retain meaning and ‘shape the narrative they omit’ (48). The latest research on nineteenth-century theatre history demonstrates the overwhelming size of ‘signatures’ of the period that still wait to be undeciphered.

Playwrights and theatremakers have tapped into such signatures and into our fascination with the nineteenth century so that neo-Victorian drama has become an impactful and reiterative presence on the contemporary stage. Neo-Victorian drama often deals in difficult contemporary issues: the legacies of colonial oppression, the roots of climate change and the depredations of capitalist economies, or the ways in which gendered, racialised and other forms of inequality have (or have not) shifted from the Victorian age into our own. It has also grown into an effective aesthetic means to fill in the historical holes of nineteenth-century entertainment industry.

Alexander Feldman mobilised the notion of metatheatricity to define the ways in which twentieth century drama staged the past, and Benjamin Poore has more recently suggested that contemporary history plays are becoming ‘more complex and layered in their aesthetic approaches’ (3). This seminar seeks to further our understanding of how and why the Victorian world is played out on the contemporary stage. Also, to dig into the historical gaps of the entertainment industry of the nineteenth century which are being researched on by recent scholarly work. With such diachronic perspective, this seminar invites speakers to consider new research avenues on the following questions: how are theatre historians, neo-Victorian scholars and the neo-Victorian project responding to the historical gaps of the entertainment industry of the nineteenth century? How do Victorian sources find purchase on contemporary stages? How does the contemporary stage create affective adhesion with the past?

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Poore, Benjamin. *The Contemporary History Play: Staging English and American Pasts*. Bloomsbury, 2024.

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Session #1

2 September, 15:00–17:00

Introduction

Laura Monrós-Gaspar (University of Valencia, Spain)

Beth Palmer (University of Surrey, United Kingdom)

Odai Johnson recently built on the idea of how the historical holes that remain to be discovered by theatre historians have ‘signatures’ (46) that retain meaning and ‘shape the narrative they omit’ (48). The latest research on nineteenth-century theatre history demonstrates the overwhelming size of ‘signatures’ of the period that still wait to be undeciphered. Playwrights and theatremakers have tapped into such signatures and into our fascination with the nineteenth century so that neo-Victorian drama has become an impactful and reiterative presence on the contemporary stage. Neo-Victorian drama often deals in difficult contemporary issues: the legacies of colonial oppression, the roots of climate change and the depredations of capitalist economies, or the ways in which gendered, racialised and other forms of inequality have (or have not) shifted from the Victorian age into our own. It has also grown into an effective aesthetic means to fill in the historical holes of the nineteenth-century entertainment industry.

Alexander Feldman mobilised the notion of metatheatricity to define the ways in which twentieth-century drama staged the past, and Benjamin Poore has more recently suggested that contemporary history plays are becoming ‘more complex and layered in their aesthetic approaches’ (3). This paper seeks to further our understanding of how and why the Victorian world is played out on the contemporary stage. We seek to dig into the historical gaps of the entertainment industry of the nineteenth century which are subject to recent and current scholarly work. To this purpose, we shall utilise the concept of ‘multiple geographies’ and network-based adaptation models to explore the following questions: how are theatre historians, neo-Victorian scholars and the neo-Victorian project responding to the historical gaps of the nineteenth-century entertainment industry? How do Victorian sources find purchase on contemporary stages? How does the contemporary stage create affective adhesion with the past?

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Poore, Benjamin. *The Contemporary History Play: Staging English and American Pasts*. Bloomsbury, 2024.

A New Singing Voice: Secondary Female Characters and their Soliloquies in the Musical Adaptations of *Wuthering Heights* (1996) and *Jane Eyre* (2000)

Clara González Espelt (University of Barcelona, Spain)

In the opening issue of the journal *Neo-Victorian Studies*, Llewellyn argues that neo-Victorian studies theorise around "new approaches to the Victorian period" (2008, p. 160), often realised in texts, films, and other cultural representations, that act as mediators between the Victorian and our contemporary lives. In addition to resurfacing the Victorian past in our time, neo-Victorianism aims to give voice to those who have not been given it before and to put the focus on what "has been left out of the past's telling." (Kohlke, 2008, p. 10)

Despite the wide range of neo-Victorian studies, the focus has been placed on literary and audiovisual media, often overlooking other creative forms such as visual art and performance (Kohlke, 2008). The scope of material to study in the area of neo-Victorian theatre and musical performance is not narrow. In her study of the reception of the Brontë sisters, Stoneman (1996) lists more than fifty stage plays and fifteen musical settings inspired by Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, and more than twenty musical settings based on Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, including musical theatre, opera and musical compositions inspired by the novel

My contribution aims to open new ways of study in the field of neo-Victorianism in musical theatre. My paper focuses on the representation of secondary female characters in Bernard J. Taylor's musical adaptation of *Wuthering Heights* (1996) and Paul Gordon's Broadway musical *Jane Eyre* (2000). The paper draws from the vocal score of each musical and the character's solo songs to establish how those female characters who are overlooked in the novel may or may not acquire a voice of their own, as well as the way this voice is portrayed in contemporary times.



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Neo-Victorian Gothic and Class Satire in Peter Barnes's *The Ruling Class*

Tuğba Şimşek (Social Sciences University of Ankara, Türkiye)

Peter Barnes's play *The Ruling Class* (1968) is a scathing critique of the British aristocracy, exploring class hierarchy, hypocrisy and corruption through the dichotomy between sanity and insanity. The story revolves around Jack, the Earl of Gurney, a paranoid schizophrenic who embraces goodness and virtue, as he assumes he is the God of love. While his delusions are rooted in goodwill and love, they are at odds with the expectations of his family and the established societal order. For this reason, the Earl is marginalised and deemed unfit to govern not because of his mental illness but because of his benevolence which is seen as a threat to the nature of the class system. The play's central irony emerges with the Earl's supposed 'cure.' With the help of a psychiatrist seeking to reintegrate him into society, he is apparently cured and begins to behave 'normally,' that is, by adhering to class-based conventions. Yet beneath this so-called normalcy, he is driven by bloodlust and misogyny. In fact, he transforms from the embodiment of the good, the God of love, into a Neo-Victorian villain or madman: Jack 'the Ripper.' His uncanny evilness is in fact correlated with his acceptance into his own social circle, thereby exposing the problematic nature and values of the ruling class. Written against the backdrop of the 1960s counterculture movement, a period defined by a radical challenge to established orders, Barnes exploits Gothic motifs and a Neo-Victorian setting to present a social satire in which the ruling class attempts to preserve its power and status by consuming the lower classes while the benevolence is contrasted with the moral decay and hypocrisy of the aristocracy.



Brian Friel's *The Home Place*: Home, Science and Empire before the Irish Land Wars**Maria Gaviña Costero (University of Valencia, Spain)**

Friel's *The Home Place* is a historical play set in 1878, a time when the British Empire's colonisation of Ireland is seemingly well consolidated. It takes place between the first wave of the Great Famine (1845-1857) and the second. The threat of the so-called Land Wars, which broke out in 1879 against the absentee Anglo-Irish landed gentry, hangs heavy in the air. Yet, in line with Friel's previous historical plays, *The Home Place* engages with the events of the past not as a reconstruction of the period, but primarily as a means of interrogating the issues of the present. The play premiered in 2005 at Dublin's Gate Theatre, yet its debut in 2009 in Northern Ireland – staged at Belfast's Grand Opera House with a cast drawn exclusively from both major Northern Irish ethno-cultural traditions – acquired a particular resonance ten years after the referendum that initiated the peace process, amidst the persistent difficulties in reconciling a profoundly divided society. The play contends directly with the competing constructions of memory that jeopardize peaceful cohabitation, examining the evolving and contested signification of "home" for both communities from the era of plantation to the present. Moreover, the play presents the ways in which science, here in the form of "anthropometry and craniology", has been weaponized as an instrument of imperial expansion, while presenting the coloniser as the sole possessor of reason and civilization. My paper aims to demonstrate that Friel's final original play, *The Home Place*, constitutes a synthesis of his most socially aware theatre. Having abandoned the introspection of the previous decade, he once again speaks directly to his community with a play in which echoes of his work with the Field Day Company resonate powerfully.

Session #2**2 September, 17:30–19:30****Neo-Victorian Dialogues Between Page and Stage****Sarai Ramos (Valencia International University, Spain)****Cristina Santaemilia (University of Valencia, Spain)**

As an attempt to re-present the Victorian past, neo-Victorianism is a fundamentally performative and theatrical project. Not in vain does Mitchell wonder apropos of neo-Victorian fiction “Can these novels recreate the past in a meaningful way or are they playing nineteenth-century dress ups?” (p. 3). We argue that these “nineteenth-century dress ups” can lead to meaningful engagement, and, while the self-reflexivity of the performative is sometimes opposed to affective investment, we consider that theatre provides strategies that allow these impulses to converge. This confluence of self-reflexivity, recognition, and immersion is particularly manifest when one considers the workings of adaptation, especially since adaptation is ‘a fundamental part of neo-Victorianism as a concept because all engagement with the Victorian in contemporary culture ... are necessarily adaptations or appropriations’ (Heilmann and Llewellyn). To reflect on adaptation, canonicity, and heritage, we will examine works that in some way adapt prominent Victorian hypotexts and, to do so, effect transfers from the page to the stage and vice versa. These include the novels *Drood* (2009) by Dan Simmons and *Havisham* (2012) by Ronald Frame, and the plays *Frankenstein* (2008) by Lisa Evans and *Alice in Wonderland* (2022) by Jack Bradfield. As theatrical staging techniques are part of the novels’ recreation and explicit references to the textual hypotext are present in the plays, we are particularly interested in the way these works invoke different media to reflect on Victorian legacy and neo-Victorian adaptation and in doing so combine distancing effects and immersive affects. Ultimately, this paper affirms the idea that it is the combination of self-reflexive detachment and affective engagement that keeps the Victorian legacy alive, continuously adapting for survival.

The Persistence of the Past in Present Performance: Neo-Victorian Adaptation & ‘Doing’ Theatre History

Hayley Jayne Bradley (University of Manchester, United Kingdom)

From the classic treatment to radical rethinks, retelling the text to revisioning the text, prequel to after-life; adaptation models abound as we continue to examine the relationship between meta-text(s) and point(s) of origin. Sarah Cardwell argues for viewing each work of adaptation as part of ‘the gradual development of a ‘meta-text’ that has a relationship with prior adaptations as well as a so-called originary text.’ (2002: 25). As Linda Hutcheon observes ‘adaptation is how stories evolve and mutate to fit new times and different places’ but what of the cultural ripples and resonators from the nineteenth century in Neo-Victorian adaptation? (2012: 195).

In this paper I will reflect on a research-inspired undergraduate module I designed and delivered which explores adaptation practices as ‘act’ and as ‘art’ - linking the contemporary British stage to the nineteenth century theatre in order to illuminate a



lineage and crucially, an interlinked fluidity. From iterations of George Dibdin Pitt's *String of Pearls* (1847) to Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*, (1861) to Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (1879) and beyond, the transposition of material from the long nineteenth century to the twenty-first demonstrates their survival in popular culture through reproduction and resurgence. Underpinning this movement across time, space, medium and genre is, as playwright Winsome Pinnock has noted, "...this sense that history hasn't been resolved (...) it's interesting to use because it still pervades the present moment..." (Pinnock 2026). How can examining this complex system of cultural recycling, often churning the irresolvable, open up our historical understandings of popular performance then *and* now and perhaps even how we 'do' theatre history?

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Black Performance on the Neo-Victorian Stage

Caroline Radcliffe (University of Birmingham, United Kingdom)

In this paper I will discuss how nineteenth century Black identity has recently been performed on the contemporary stage. I will focus on two dance performances, *Black Victorians*, by Jeanefer Jean-Charles and *Dandyism* by Patrick Ziza.

Patrick Ziza's *Dandyism* is rooted in the global history of Black dandyism, and 'stands as a testament to how what was once regarded as the "master's style" has been reclaimed and reimagined as an expression of cultural resilience' (<https://www.patrickziza.com/dandyism>). With its subversive origins traceable to the Pinkster and cakewalk dances of the nineteenth century, Ziza's piece joyfully subverts and challenges the white caricature of the Black 'dandy', demonstrating how dance and performativity are positively translated as a Black act of resistance (See Mary Shannon, *Billy Waters is Dancing* (2024, Yale University Press) on the Pinkster Festival, 27-35).

Jeanefer Jean-Charles's *Black Victorians* translates formal portrait photography of Black Victorian Britons. Inspired by an exhibition of nineteenth century studio photographs of black men, women and children, "Black Chronicles II", curated by Renée Mussai at the Autograph Gallery in London ([link](#)), *Black Victorians* 'explores a complex, but often forgotten black presence' in



Victorian Britain, challenging historical and contemporary perceptions ([link](#)). Using African, contemporary and hip hop dance and referencing the white Victorian parlour and ballroom styles of the waltz and the polka, the work ‘restores life and humanity to its forgotten subjects’.

While focusing on these two performances, I will contextualise them within a body of contemporary drama by Black writers that directly challenges representations of Blackness in the melodramas and minstrelsy of the nineteenth-century stage, including Branden Jacobs-Jenkins *An Octoroon* and Dave Harris’s *Tambo and Bones*. While *An Octoroon* and *Tambo and Bones* expose the racialised stereotypes of the nineteenth-century stage created by white writers, performers and audiences and grounded in the legacies of slavery, *Black Victorians* and *Dandyism* reclaim Black histories through positive affirmations of identity, self-expression and freedom.



He's Behind You! Re-staging the Victorian Pantomime

Kate Newey (University of Exeter, United Kingdom)

The pantomime is not what it used to be. Indeed, pantomime is never what it used to be, even when it was what we thought it was back in the nineteenth century. Pantomime is represented as the quintessential 'traditional' entertainment of the twenty-first century, connecting audiences through theatre history and community. Going to the pantomime is still regarded as a given of national cultural life and has been part of the experience of virtually every generation and class of British people since the Industrial Revolution. Rarely, however, is the question asked about the role of pantomime (and its associated forms) in British culture.

This paper will consider pantomime as a neo-Victorian performance form. As a neo-Victorian form, pantomime is unusual in that its practitioners claim a direct line back to Victorian origins, claiming authority and cultural capital by doing so. This paper will ask: 'What is the cultural work done by pantomime in the twenty-first century as a neo-Victorian form?' Contemporary pantomime uses strategies of nostalgia and metatheatricity to claim a direct line from Victorian pantomime, yet it has radically reworked pantomime conventions to accommodate contemporary political concerns.

I'll draw on my spectatorship of Christmas pantomime over the 2020s, drawing on both spectacular commercial pantomimes such as those at the Newcastle Theatre Royal and the Birmingham Hippodrome, and small community pantomimes, such as those staged at the Georgian Theatre Royal, Richmond, North Yorkshire or Theatre Royal, Bath. I'll argue that the contemporary pantomime is a 'perfect' neo-Victorian performance form in its dialectic tension between an authoritative claim to the truth of the past and its constant innovation and contemporary topicality.

S29.- Rethinking Neo-Victorianism Beyond the Literary and the Audiovisual

In the inaugural issue of *Neo-Victorian Studies*, Marie-Luise Kohlke writes that the emergence of neo-Victorian texts is "too prolific to be contained as a ghost in the corner of the Victorian Studies parlour" (1). Since this statement was made in 2008, research into the neo-Victorian mode has flourished in many ways – however, despite the openness towards a variety of media and practices



present in early theoretical approaches, the concept of neo-Victorianism emerged from, and remains to be mostly studied in, literature, film, and TV. Even though neo-Victorian engagement beyond these media is an essential component of contemporary cultures, these other forms of neo-Victorianism continue to be, to paraphrase Kohlke, a ghost in the literary and audiovisual parlour.

This seminar aims to rethink neo-Victorianism from a vantage point of a variety of media, practices, and objects that are highly understudied, and whose mode of engagement with the nineteenth century is undertheorized. With this seminar, we hope to broaden perspectives on neo-Victorian reworkings of and engagements with the past that are haptic, spatial, performative, immersive, interactive, multimedial, or sequential in nature. We invite papers that contribute to a reconceptualisation of neo-Victorianism in texts and practices that go beyond the literary and audiovisual. In particular, we welcome papers that showcase theoretical deliberations on how we can reconceptualise the neo-Victorian mode without using literature, or TV as a starting point.

Possible topics include, but are not limited to: neo-Victorian objects and other forms of haptic engagement; neo-Victorian performance, cosplay, LARP; neo-Victorian theme parks and other forms of spatial engagement; neo-Victorian (dark) tourism; neo-Victorian museums and heritage industries; neo-Victorian video games and analogue games; neo-Victorian graphic novels and comic books; neo-Victorian fandom, neo-Victorian podcasts; and neo-Victorian engagement on social media.

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Session #1

3 September, 17:30–19:30



Playing with the Kiplingverse: Neo-Victorian Interactivity and Intertextuality in The Secret Games Company's *Kim*

Paolo D'Indinosante (Sapienza University of Rome, Italy)

In the burgeoning field of neo-Victorian studies, research on the afterlives of Rudyard Kipling remains very limited and typically confined to the analysis of literary and audiovisual reworkings of his texts (e.g., Noimann 2018; McNulty 2022). This paper seeks to join the seminar's collective effort to expand the scope of neo-Victorian studies and rethink neo-Victorianism beyond post-Victorian literature, cinema and television by developing my own preliminary work on interactive Kipling (D'Indinosante 2023; D'Indinosante 2025, 62). After a necessarily brief overview of several other instances of engagement with Kipling and his works in the video game medium, such as *The Jungle Book: Groove Party* (Ubi Soft Montreal 2000) and *Petrophobia* (Orbis Tertius Games 2023), I set out to discuss *Kim* (The Secret Games Company 2016), an understudied neo-Victorian video game adaptation of Kipling's 1901 colonial novel of the same title. My discussion aims to complement and, to some extent, complicate Lindsay Meaning's analysis of the game, which, to the best of my knowledge, is the only one to have been published to date and which exposes the colonialist assumptions embedded in the game without mobilising the notion of 'neo-Victorianism' (Meaning 2020). In my paper, I aim to begin theorising the game's complex yet overlooked intertextual approach before integrating this discussion with an analysis of the game's interactive aspects, highlighting how its neo-Victorian ludic modes of engagement reshape the Victorian imperial past for players. To this end, I intend to scrutinise such aspects as the game's incorporation of other Kipling-based characters from his short fiction, which echoes the novel's own transfictional approach; the influence of adaptations of Kipling's works in other media (e.g., films) on the game; the game's mobilisation of biographical and historical details that are not present or equally explicit in the novel.

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Victorian Archetypes and Cosmic Horror in *Bloodborne*

Alina Astăluș (Ovidius University of Constanța, Romania)

This paper proposes a neo-Victorian read of FromSoftware's *Bloodborne* (2015), a Gothic-inspired video game that reanimates nineteenth-century anxieties through a contemporary interactive media lens, with a focus on cosmic horror elements. The focus of the presentation will be a reconfiguration of archetypes frequently found in a Victorian setting: the mad doctor, the fallen city, and the beast within. Rather than reproducing Victorian aesthetics as mere atmosphere, *Bloodborne* mobilizes these archetypal figures to interrogate narratives of progress, morality, scientific authority and its hubris, from a contemporary critical perspective.

Central to this analysis is the game's depiction of blood ministration and medical experimentation, which mirrors Victorian faith in scientific advancement while simultaneously exposing its ethical instability. Like classic Victorian Gothic narratives such as *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* or *The Island of Dr Moreau*, *Bloodborne* situates the body as a site of horror, emphasizing degeneration and contamination. These corporeal transformations literalize anxieties surrounding evolution, disease, and moral decay, while reframing them through the modern lens of cosmic horror. In *Bloodborne*, medical rationality is inseparable from violence and experimentation, and the promise of healing collapses into bodily mutation and monstrosity, where the average citizens' trust in medical procedures is abused and betrayed.

The paper further examines the archetype of degeneration through *Bloodborne*'s pervasive imagery of atavism and transformation, which quite literally turns people into beasts to be hunted by their peers. Beasthood literalizes Victorian anxieties surrounding evolution, heredity, and the instability of the human subject, while the city of Yharnam itself functions as a fallen Victorian



metropolis which was once a symbol of order and enlightenment, but is now consumed by its own repressed excesses. The boundary between civilized citizen and monster dissolves, revealing monstrosity as a product of social and institutional structures rather than individual failure, bookended by a monstrous cosmic creature with an indifference to human suffering.

Neo-Victorian Objects and Affects: Haptic and Sensory Engagement with the Nineteenth Century in Video Games between Authenticity Effects and Defamiliarisation

Sarah Beyvers (University of Passau, Germany)

When playing a neo-Victorian video game, players are also invited to take part in the game of authenticity: reading the world they encounter against their expectations of what ‘the Victorian’ looks and feels like, players are given the opportunity to interrogate the game’s notion of authenticity as well as their own, reflecting on their part in “shared imaginaries” (Esser 1) and “collective memor[ies]” (5) of the era. In neo-Victorian video games, authenticity effects are simultaneously produced and disrupted in the space between the player and the game. The player is confronted with their own ideas about the past as they read the gameworld in and out of historical contexts. This performative nature of authenticity (Funk et al. 13) draws our attention to how this *feeling* is continually shaped by and derived from fictional encounters with a reworked past. In neo-Victorian games, past and present as well as fact and fiction merge, and this is achieved by asking the player to engage with a version of the past in haptic and sensory fashion. Computer games present engaging and interactive items and spaces whose physicality is transported to the player by a “threshold object” (Murray 121) like a controller, thus literally traversing the boundary between a game and the physical world. This paper shows how neo-Victorian objects in video games allow for sensory and haptic engagement with a version of the past that oscillates between proximity and distance. Using *Assassin’s Creed Syndicate* (Ubisoft Quebec, 2015) and *Sherlock Holmes: The Devil’s Daughter* (Frogwares, 2016) as examples, this paper argues that the player’s active role in noticing, finding, collecting, cataloguing, reading, gazing at, sensing, and moving neo-Victorian objects engulfs them in a multi-layered experience of palimpsestic materiality that makes space for reflections on how we encounter the past today.

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Performing Poverty – BBC's *The Victorian Slum* as Neo-Victorian Living History

Sophie-Constanze Bantle (University of Freiburg, Germany)

Living history showcases have become increasingly prominent in recent years. Re-creations of Victorian scenes of life are included in exhibits such as the Beamish "Living Museum of the North" and performances by groups like the *Ragged Victorians* make the 19th century tangible for its audiences. The BBC program *The Victorian Slum* (2017) combines elements of living history recreations with a reality television and documentary format. Mirroring many Neo-Victorian texts, *The Victorian Slum* focuses on the representation of Victorian poverty as "a group of 21st-century people move into a Victorian tenement that has been painstakingly brought back to life in the heart of London's East End" ("The Victorian Slum." BBC, link). Covering the period from 1860 to the early 1900s, and including historical developments such as Irish immigration and suffragism, *The Victorian Slum* presents a selective and immersive way of remembering the Victorians based on a popular perception of history. Following Neo-Victorianism's duality of focus, the episodes are framed by the narrator Michael Mosley leading the viewers from 21st-century London into the (recreated) past. This framing underlines that *The Victorian Slum* is not a fictional narrative but rather aims to combine affect and education. Remembrance is depicted as a personal act, as participants assume characters modeled after their own ancestors. In including participants of color and those with disabilities, the series uses the Neo-Victorian strategy of giving a voice to those who were and continue to be marginalized. However, *The Victorian Slum* also plays at stereotypes connected with the Victorians which are, despite its claim of authenticity, not challenged by participants or producers. Similarly, the (Neo-Victorian) meta-textual level of performing poverty and the questionable ethics of this act remain unacknowledged. *The Victorian Slum* thus constitutes a Neo-Victorian way of remembering the Victorians, presenting an example of popular history which oscillates between clichés and affective, empathetic representations of the past.

Session #2

4 September, 9:30–11:30



Afterlives: Reweaving the Victorians in Manchester Museum Spaces

Emma Liggins (Manchester Metropolitan University, United Kingdom)

Manchester, in the North-West of England, has a number of award-winning museums, libraries and art galleries which pay homage to its industrial past and status as one of the key Victorian cities. Many of the colourful exhibits in these heritage sites offer to the visitor a glimpse into its former reincarnation as Cottonopolis, the centre of the cotton trade. Increasingly, museum spaces set out to recreate and reinvent the past, as artists, dancers, fashion designers and poets embed their own reinterpretations of Victorian artefacts and histories in newly manufactured display boards, textiles, performances, perfumes and visual art. Now is the time to reconsider Neo-Victorianism in the heritage sector, and the effectiveness of the diverse ways in which ‘contemporary authors and artists confront and extend Victorian display techniques’ (Logan-Smith, 2024).

This paper reflects on this extension of Victorian display techniques through a reassessment of objects in both temporary and permanent exhibitions. I begin with the unsettling Gothic Cabinet of Curiosities in the Whitaker Museum and gallery, near Burnley, on the outskirts of Greater Manchester. This room mimics and transforms the Cabinet of Curiosities tradition, playing on the museum’s famous collection of Victorian taxidermy displays with a life-size model of a woman’s body with the head of stuffed birds, video installations and a mish-mash of authentic Victorian objects and ‘fake’ neo-Victorian copies. Artist and swamp enthusiast Ruby Tingle also created her 2024 exhibition *Afterlife* (<https://www.creativetourist.com/event/ruby-tingle-afterlife/>) in response to the Whitaker’s taxidermy collection. I will also consider an 1850s-style performance costume created by textile artist Holly Graham for Manchester Art Gallery in 2024, evoking the presence of African American abolitionist Sarah Parker Remond. This ‘reweaving’ of the afterlives of slavery for the Global Threads project (<https://globalthreadsmcr.org/>), in Graham’s words, ‘channel[s] some of the strategies of institutional critique in speaking back to ... histories of place’. It is displayed in juxtaposition to more traditional Victorian artefacts such as newspaper clippings, photographs and visual art, all of which tell a different story about cotton, slavery and femininity. How do these headless mannequins and swamp-inspired collages reinvent the Victorians for a new audience?

Dressing Up History: Neo-Victorian Fashion and Experimental Archaeology on Social Media

Sarah Faber (University of Klagenfurt, Austria)



Contemporary neo-Victorian fashion practices on social media function as a haptic, aesthetic, and deeply personal engagement with the past through the making and wearing of historical dress. As is generally characteristic of neo-Victorianism, this enthusiasm for Victorian aesthetics does not necessarily entail espousing Victorian values, instead “view[ing] the past from our own standpoint” (Mandler 147). Rather than a bland copy, historical dress becomes a medium of self-expression, craft revival, and critical historical inquiry.

For some online sewists, making and wearing Victorian clothing can be a way to engage in experimental archaeology, gaining deeper insight into historical practices, habits, and daily life by reiterating production techniques and sartorial habits, retracing the steps of past generations. Others, meanwhile, are drawn to Victorian fashion through its intersection with fantasy and Steampunk, bringing together, in the same niche, historians, designers, and cosplay communities, which provides a wealth of interesting conversations around the meaning, value, and context of historical accuracy in garment production.

Drawing on archive theory and material culture studies, this talk is going to offer YouTube and Instagram case studies and argue that neo-Victorian fashion content online functions as a living, participatory archive, positioning practitioners as scholars and keepers of embodied historical knowledge and inviting consumers of this content to cross the digital-material boundary and become practitioners themselves. In the larger context of the panel, this presentation will contribute to the overall discussion of neo-Victorian material culture and its digital reproduction, community-oriented approaches to historical knowledge, and how contemporary uses of Victorian aesthetics charge them with new meanings and values.

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“The house that ghosts built”: The Winchester Mystery House and Spatial Transmediality

Barbara Braid (University of Szczecin, Poland)

Transfiction is conceptualized spatially; drawing on Lubomir Doležel’s idea of fiction as world-building and Richard Saint-Gelais’s concept of ‘fictions transfuges’, one can define transfiction as fiction that “confront[s] the canonical protoworld by constructing



a new, alternative fictional world” (Doležel 1998: 206). These new storyworlds may parallel existing ones, expanding or displacing them, creating “polemical antiworlds” (Doležel 1998: 206-7). In these transformations, elements from existing storyworlds – characters, objects, canonical plot events, etc. – ‘travel’ to new ones.

Places and spaces can also be elements that travel between storyworlds. Rebecca Williams uses the term “spatial transmediality” to describe “moments of narrative extension and world-building that take place within specified rooted locations” (2020: 12). While Williams’s term has been proposed to discuss theme park fandom and its spatial poaching, I intend to use it to explore how space may be expanded, transformed, or displaced transfictionally across various media.

The Winchester Mystery House serves as an apt example of a place that has been poached transmedially. Sarah Winchester’s mansion in San Jose, California, is known for its endless rebuilding and development during its owner’s lifetime. It serves as a metonym for transfiction, as its constant spatial expansion mirrors the transmedial growth of narratives. The legends surrounding this unusual construction associate it with hauntings and curses, suggesting that its perpetual state of becoming is a source of horror. Through spatial poaching and transmedia, Winchester epitomizes the American haunted house.

Recognizing the Winchester Mystery House’s significant presence in American horror media as a clear instance of spatial transmediality, this presentation examines the comic book *House of Penance* (2016) as a text that utilizes sequential art to visualize spatial and textual expansion and the trauma that shaped this quintessential Haunted Mansion.

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Deconstructing Victorian England in *Kuroshitsuji* and the Readers’ Deconstructive Experience

Megumi Kumagai (Independent Researcher)

In recent years, manga produced in Japan that depict the Victorian era or Victorian-inspired worlds have maintained steady popularity in the country, with new works continuing to emerge one after another. Among these, *Kuroshitsuji* (*Black Butler*, 2006–) by Yana Toboso, set in a parallel-world Victorian England, is not only a major hit, having sold 36 million copies worldwide, but also a seminal work that incorporates a wide range of motifs and elements popular in neo-Victorian works, such as Sherlock Holmes,



Jack the Ripper, Queen Victoria, aristocrats, servants, public schools, fashion, circuses, and slums.

While *Kuroshitsuji* allows readers to fully enjoy the motifs typically expected of “Victorian” works, its skillful narrative structure unsettles this straightforward enjoyment, forcing readers to reconsider their engagement with the story. Acting under the orders of Queen Victoria, the protagonist Ciel Phantomhive and his butler, Sebastian Michaelis—who is revealed to be a demon—systematically expose the ostensibly idealized darkness of Victorian England, thereby deconstructing its structure. In the process, the series’ sharp perspective also reaches the readers, who had previously engaged with these motifs and settings primarily as objects of entertainment.

This presentation examines *Kuroshitsuji* from several perspectives, including how the Victorian era is depicted, how it is deconstructed, and the contradictions involved in readers’ enjoyment and consumption of the fictional Victorian world, all while paying attention to the distinctive balance achieved within the work.



S30.- Mental Illness in Contemporary Anglophone Literature: New Narrative Perspectives

The twentieth century saw the institutionalization of mental illness in specific diagnoses through the publication of the first edition of the DSM in 1952. Then, in the 1960s-1970s, antipsychiatry questioned the idea of normality, presenting altered mental states as sources of creativity. The turn of our century, for its part, has been marked by social movements (Mad Pride and neurodiversity), which have contributed to a surge in (self-help) narratives committed to raising mental health awareness. These key developments in the history of diagnosis, treatment, and cultural theory of mental illness shed light on the multiple dimensions of mental illness narratives. Most of these literary texts not only have a distinctive aesthetic dimension and typical narrative patterns (Frank 2013), they are also personal (by allowing patients to reclaim their illness from healthcare professionals and institutions), social (by affecting the lives of others), and political (by advocating for destigmatization, challenging institutional knowledge, and fostering social change).

This seminar will not only consider these aspects and dimensions of contemporary (post-1945) mental illness narratives in English but also the ways in which they might call for a broader reconsideration of narrative theory and analysis of literature. The DSM itself is claimed to be invested in narrative patterns, from which diagnoses are then derived (Wood 2004). However, narrative can and often does challenge said patterns by, for instance, decentering narrative authority or dismantling the linearity of identity,



leading to new forms of understanding sanity, normalcy, and psychic suffering (Felman 2003).

Proposed contributions may deal with, but not be limited to: literary epistemology: knowledge and self-knowledge through writing; narratives of self-care and self-harm in neoliberal times; institutions and space in mental illness narratives; neurodiversity in narrative: rhetorical challenges; intersectionality and mental health: gender, race, class, and sexuality as structural conditions; and narrative ethics in mental illness narratives.

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Session #1

1 September, 9:00–11:00

Mother as a Secondary Witness to Her Daughter's Trauma: Clare B. Dunkle's *Hope and Other Luxuries* and Elena and Clare B. Dunkle's *Elena Vanishing*

Martina Domines (University of Zagreb, Croatia)

In *Hope and Other Luxuries* (2015), an award-winning author, Clare B. Dunkle, writes about her daughter's struggle with anorexia nervosa. One year, after the publication of her memoir, she helps Elena write her own memoir, *Elena Vanishing* (2016). This paper will look into two memoirs on a deadly mental illness from two different perspectives, Elena's and her mother's, in order



to question the idea that autobiography and trauma stand on opposite ends (Gilmore). Since this is a rare case of a mother and a daughter writing about the same traumatic experience, the paper will explore the mother-daughter relationship by engaging with the ethics of vulnerability (Gilson, Ganteau) and caring (Noddings). In line with recent trauma theory and the notion of vicarious traumatization, the mother will play the central role as the “empathetic listener” (Assman), traumatized herself through her daughter’s suffering. Thus, in the context of both memoirs, the paper will explore how the family unit but also the wider community contribute to Elena’s healing journey through mental illness, triggered by sexual abuse when she was still a child.

“Much Madness is Divinest Sense”: (In)Sanity and Patriarchal Oppression in Maggie O’Farrell’s *The Vanishing Act of Esme Lennox* (2006)

María Jesús Martínez-Alfaro (University of Zaragoza, Spain)

O’Farrell’s fourth novel opens with an epigraph from Dickinson’s poem “Much Madness is Divinest Sense”, thus immediately highlighting its main theme: the shifting line between sanity and insanity. Esme’s ghost-like “return to life” after sixty years in a mental asylum allows us to see O’Farrell’s as one of the many contemporary novels featuring representations of “those who occupy a space between being and non-being” and where the spectral signals “towards larger historical anxieties” that still haunt us (Shaw 3). In this light, hauntology provides a frame to deal with the protagonist as representative of “the vanished”: “inconvenient” women erased from society through institutionalisation in what constitutes a shameful episode of our past that the public consciousness is still wary of addressing (O’Farrell 2006). Also central to my analysis is Esme’s sister Kitty, once a compliant child, now an old woman living with Alzheimer’s. Although often read as antagonists, they are brought together in my paper to show how patriarchal ideology and gender expectations may undermine women’s mental health and well-being (Kaur 2023). While Esme’s life is crushed through psychiatry, Kitty’s is undone by a systemic ignorance of female sexuality and marital reality, which shatters a self-identity rooted in the domestic ideal. The style and structure of the narrative—with its shifting perspectives, voices, and timeframes—are also shown to come together with its main themes. Drawing on Felman (1985) and Berlin (2017), I contend that *The Vanishing Act* is a “mad narrative” since madness transcends plot to inhabit the form of the novel (see also Rovira y Gay 2024). As Schultz notes in her *Dementia Blog*, formal confusion can serve as an “apt metaphor” for the confusion of dementia (7). Thus, Kitty’s disjointed interior monologue provides insight into the darkness of memory loss, but also



into her past suffering. Similarly, the sections focalised through Esme, fragmented and non-linear, reflect formally the effects of trauma. The third focal character is Iris, Esme's and Kitty's young relative, whom I approach as a bridge for the confrontation between the present and past. This confrontation implicates the reader and draws him/her, as I conclude, into a site of resistance—to oppressive social and gender norms, the pathologisation of dissent, the complicity of silence—where discomfort becomes a necessary precursor to change.

Literary Bodyminds and Resistance to White Psychiatry: Black British Female Mental Patients in Jacqueline Roy's *The Fat Lady Sings*

Christina Slopek-Hauff (TU Dortmund University, Germany)

“If I was white you'd let me play my music, but if anybody black makes a noise, everyone gets scared there's going to be a riot” (Roy 2021, 9). Gloria, the protagonist of Jacqueline Roy's *The Fat Lady Sings* (2000), thus calls out mentalist and racist bias in British society. A mental patient who is hospitalized involuntarily, she interrogates the power structures that shape a British psych ward of the 1990s. On one hand, the novel resists having its Black British female mental patient characters subsumed into white-dominated, systemically racist psychiatric discourse and practice (Fernando 2017). On the other hand, it does showcase the need for inclusive psychiatric treatment, using the literary text to imagine such pluralization of psychiatry.

Central to this destigmatizing intervention, I argue, is the novel's insistence on the interplay of mind and body well-captured by Margaret Price's “bodymind” (2015). This paper will analyze the novel with a special focus on textual embodiment of mental distress, exploring its intermedial poetics (Neumann 2015; Wolf 2018; Slopek-Hauff 2025) and its use of the materiality of the page as ways of embodying resistant bodyminds. This analysis is mindful of racially motivated overdiagnosis (Metzl 2009) and more sensitive attempts at attuning psychology to the interplay of race and gender (Dickens and Stephens 2024). Taking its cues from Black British scholars' contention that “[r]acism ensures that [black women's] ways of relieving tension are witnessed with alarm” (Bryan, Dadzie and Scafe 2018, 119), this paper asks how literature can (prompt us to) reimagine psychiatric discourse and notions of mental illness with the sensitivity necessary for such vulnerable contexts and contribute to an approach to mental illness that does not bracket the intersectionally positioned body.



Mental Illness as Narrative Indirection: A Repurposed Feature of J. M. Coetzee's *Dusklands* (1974) in Adania Shibli's *Minor Detail* (2020)

Kai Wiegandt (Barenboim-Said Academy, Germany)

My paper analyses how the contemporary Palestinian novel *Minor Detail* by Adania Shibli repurposes the use of mentally ill narrators in J.M. Coetzee's novel *Dusklands*. Formally as well as thematically, Adania Shibli's novel *Minor Detail* adapts features of Coetzee's *Dusklands*. Both novels share a concern with violence done to native populations by explorers and armies that occupy and rule their land, and with the discourses that legitimize this violence. The novels focus on two distinct historical moments. *Minor Detail*'s diptych structure – two narratives about different periods of time, told by different narrators – invites readers to seek for meaning in the echoes between the narratives, as do the narratives of *Dusklands*. In both novels, the diptych structure invites the question of how, exactly, the episodes of violence are related to each other. Most importantly, however, Shibli's novel conveys its narratives through focalizers – an Israeli officer, a young Palestinian woman – whose thoughts and perceptions are skewed by psychopathology. This narrative strategy is reminiscent of *Dusklands*' Jacobus Coetzee and Eugene Dawn. I read this indirection through mental illness, as well as *Minor Detail*'s use of the diptych form, as choices that allow readers to distance themselves from the narrator-protagonists, to second-guess the narrator-protagonists' authority and to consider them critically. I demonstrate how Shibli's bold repurposing of *Dusklands*' devices resembles Coetzee's own fiercely independent reworkings of authors such as Kafka and Beckett.

Session #2

1 September, 17:00–19:00

Mobilizing Figurative Language in the Autobiographical Articulation of Mental Distress: The Case of Jay Griffiths' *Tristimania: A Diary of Manic Depression*

Cristina Hurtado Botella (University of the Balearic Islands, Spain)

This paper examines how *Tristimania: A Diary of Manic Depression* (2016), a contemporary mental illness narrative by British author



Jay Griffiths, foregrounds figurative language as an epistemological device through which the lived experience of bipolar disorder is articulated. While Susan Sontag (1978) famously rejected metaphor in discourses on illness for its association with stigma and taboo, more recent scholarship has argued that metaphors are not inherently harmful but context-dependent meaning-making tools that open alternative hermeneutic pathways in the negotiation of illness (Wohlmann 2022; Frank 2011; Holmes 2011). Building on this work, this paper contends that Griffiths mobilizes figurative language to productively engage with several challenges central to experiences of mental distress: the hermeneutic hegemony of psychiatry (Hermesen 2011), identity dilemmas arising from the perceived entanglement of self and illness and anxieties surrounding the authenticity of the self (Carlin 2022), and the cultural expectation to narrate illness through formulaic stories of individual triumph (Woods 2012).

Through close readings of the four essays that comprise *Tristimania*, the paper examines how metaphor is used to address these challenges. First, it shows how Griffiths resists the subsumption of subjective experience into psychiatric discourse by questioning diagnostic categories and symptoms descriptions, and foregrounding phenomenological metaphors drawn from nature rather than medical imagery. Second, it argues that the aforementioned identity dilemmas are negotiated through the figure of the trickster, which is read as a form of prosopopoeia (de Man 1984) that simultaneously others and integrates bipolarity within Griffiths's autobiographical self-construction. The paper further examines Griffiths's account of her pilgrimage along the Way of Saint James during a bipolar episode, arguing that the figure of the *homo viator* is used to revise the framework of the hero's journey (Campbell 1949) and emphasize ongoing navigation rather than closure. Finally, the paper analyses the co-constructed metaphors that Griffiths describes in contexts of clinical care, illustrating the relational dimension of autobiographical writing (Smith and Watson 2024, 58) and the affordances of relationality in the narrative articulation of mental distress.

Re-narrativizing PTSD in *Leda & the Swan* under the Lens of Materialist Ecofeminism

Juan Ignacio Oliva (University of La Laguna, Spain)

This paper proposes an analysis of contemporary poems on the ancient myth of Leda and the Swan, in which, instead of miraculous procreation, divine will, or the conformity and resignation of the woman, the trauma suffered from the god's unexpected rape is addressed from a mental and psychiatric perspective. This unexpected contact by a lustful god—who besieges a young woman, solacing near the water, and, disguised as a swan, possesses her and impregnates her with twins—despite traditional interpretations attempting to imbue it with an aura of grandeur and positivity, carries, in light of new contemporary readings, a



significant burden of implicit imbalance and gender violence. Thus, through the lens of Materialist Ecofeminism (Stacy Alaimo's "transcorporeality," Donna Haraway's "sympoiesis," or Vandana Shiva's "maternal biopiracy"), history will be reinterpreted with a far more dystopian and subaltern perspective that delves into the nature of mental illness as post-traumatic stress disorder. Furthermore, it will explore potential cures for the mental scars inflicted by metamorphic rape, as well as, above all, the healings and revitalizations that emerge in these new rewritings to achieve a paradigm shift. It will delve into the various traumas that have arisen and underlie stories told from a place of compassion and into the perversion of traditional messages by contemporary institutions of knowledge within the canon of universities and artistic, cultural, and literary academia. To do this, two very different texts will be made use of, namely the poems "Leda" by Mona van Duyn (1971) and "Living Next to Leda" by Barbara Bentley (1996), which exemplify, respectively, a kind of "absence" syndrome, with hints of Stockholm syndrome, and a much more complex PTSD, which includes anxiety, obsession, and confinement.

"Is This How I'm Supposed to Feel?" Rehearsing Mental Illness in *The Effect*

Yıldız Hazal Altındağ (Haliç University, Türkiye)

Lucy Prebble's *The Effect* (2012) explores contemporary culture's diagnoses and governance of mental illness within the institutional practices of psychiatry and biomedical science. The play stages the body which is regulated through monitoring, dosage, and consent, as both an object of treatment and a site of interpretation. The pharmaceutical drug trial for a new anti-depressant not only operates as a controlled environment in which emotions are rehearsed, but also transforms subjective experience into measurable data. Michel Foucault's concept of "docility-utility," which describes how institutions produce bodies that are simultaneously obedient and productive, and Tracy C. Davis's theory of "rehearsal and emergency," are useful to frame modern risk management as a performative training for anticipated crises. This paper argues that the play reveals the limits of biomedical narratives by showing the instability of affect under clinical observation. The trial becomes a space for rehearsal to train participants to describe their feelings in medically legible terms while preparing clinicians to manage potential emotional "emergencies." When two participants, Connie and Tristan, fall in love, emotional experience disrupts the trial's attempt to distinguish between pathology, pharmaceutical side-effect, and authentic feeling. This instability is intensified by Dr. Lorna James, whose own depression unsettles the boundary between clinician and patient, exposing diagnostic regimes are themselves subject to mental vulnerability. By presenting mental illness as embodied, relational, and unreliable, *The Effect* questions who has the authority to define lived experience within contemporary psychiatric discourse.



Gender (Miss)Treatments: Kaysen's *Girl, Interrupted* (1993) and Plath's *The Bell Jar* (1963) as Angry Pathographies

Claudia Alea Parrondo (Complutense University of Madrid, Spain)

This presentation will explore how Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* (1963) and Susan Kaysen's *Girl, Interrupted* (1993) can be read as 'angry pathographies', a term proposed by the author Anne Hunsaker Hawkins in her work *Reconstructing Illness: Studies in Pathography* (1993). According to Hawkins, a "patography" is "a form of autobiography or biography that describes personal experiences of illness, treatment, and sometimes death" for the purpose of trying to "achieve a new balance between self and reality" (1-2). In this way, Hawkins proposes a categorization of pathographies, describing angry pathographies as a text that denounces how "illness is treated in America today", as the health system dehumanizes, even "sometimes brutalizing", the patients (6). Moreover, having an autobiographical approach (being the former a *roman à clef*, and the latter a memoir), this presentation will argue that both texts can be considered as autopathographies, as they narrate (to some extent) the experiences of their respective authors. According to this, this presentation will argue that *The Bell Jar* (1963) and *Girl, Interrupted* (1993) can be considered angry autopathographies, as they reflect the methods, treatments, and problems of the US 1960s patriarchal psychiatric system. Reading these texts as angry autopathographies will serve to explore medical mistreatments of the female body when dealing with mental illnesses, as both texts describe the use of Electroshock therapy, for instance. Furthermore, even if the medical and psychiatric system have improved the well-being of patients over the last decades, American society still works with the myths surrounding mental illnesses that operated in the 50s and 60s (Frank & Glied 133-34). Consequently, these myths can also be found in Plath's and Kaysen's novels, affecting the lives of the main characters of the texts. Additionally, the experience of the texts' main characters is also related to their condition of being a woman, so the works by Ussher (2005) and Chesler (2005) will be used to explore the repercussions on the patients' treatment and, subsequently, on their well-being, that their gender has.

Session #3

2 September, 9:00–11:00



Objects of Grief: Survivor's Guilt, the Materialization of Memory, and the Inexorability of Trauma in 9/11 Fiction



Laura Rodríguez Arnáiz (Complutense University of Madrid, Spain)

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, caused a profound traumatic wound in the U.S. society which was, then, perpetuated by an official narrative that kept the event alive in people's minds through an overuse of audiovisual pictures, continually reproduced in mass media, but that also ignored some of the realities of that day. In such a context, many survivors, family, and friends of the thousands of victims—most of whom were already suffering from physical and psychological afflictions as a result of the attacks—faced a secondary crisis: the crushing weight of having lived while their friends and colleagues did not. The notion of survivor's guilt is one of the most representative characteristics of trauma, as the individual who experienced the shocking and traumatic event gets tainted by a strong sentiment of guilt over their survival when others did not. This, too, was silenced by the official narrative that promoted the U.S. resilience and strength in such an adverse situation.

In such a context, despite authorities and media's persistent avoidance of the most horrific realities of that day, the literary page became the 'blank space' in which authors and readers engaged in the process of trauma healing, also through the restoration of these silenced realities' voice. While the memorialization carried out in 9/11 fictions, like the ones written by Paul Auster or Jess Walter, shaped remembrance as a spectral confrontation with the ghosts from one's past, Stephen King's "The Things They Left Behind" portrays the very act of remembering—first step of trauma healing—and the associated survivor's guilt as a literal haunting, when the physical belongings of the protagonists' dead colleagues randomly begin to appear in his apartment. This paper explores how King's tale, in contrast to Auster and Walter's narratives and ghostly apparitions, conveys the inexorability of trauma through the constant apparition of tangible objects, and how the only possibility of healing comes from facing and not hiding from one's trauma, further exposing authorities and media's approach to the attacks' memorialization as pathologizing.

Medicalised Reality: Rewriting Clinical Understandings of Psychosis in Mira T. Lee's *Everything Here is Beautiful*

Simon De Backer (Independent Scholar, Belgium)

Since at least the late nineteenth century, Western psychiatry has increasingly medicalised madness. To many, madness became synonymous with the diagnostic notion of psychosis (Lacan 1981, 4). This development can be understood as part of a broader tendency towards a 'medicalised society' (Conrad 2007).



This presentation examines how Mira T. Lee's *Everything Here is Beautiful* (2018) corroborates and resists medical frameworks for understanding psychosis. By building on scholarship from critical disability studies, this presentation aims to show how literary fiction may reflect understandings of psychosis that exist outside of clinical frames of knowledge. In particular, it draws on the field's critique of normative and medicalised understandings of mind, body, and human behaviour. By conducting a cognitive- and unnatural narratological analysis of Lee's novel, the presentation discusses representations of the protagonist's alternative experience of the world and analyses how this non-normative conceptualisation of reality is embedded in the social structure of the novel. Consequently, by engaging with concepts from disability studies such as able-mindedness (Kafer 2013) and the bodymind (Price 2015), the presentation conceptualises prevalent Western notions of psychosis as socially constructed and mandated through medical discourse. In doing this, the presentation also draws attention to the embodied (Caracciolo and Kukkonen 2021) and enactive (Polvinen 2025) features of cognition and psychosis.

In utilising a combined methodology of cognitive- and unnatural narratology informed by insights from critical disability studies, this presentation attempts to highlight the contradictory nature of psychosis. While psychosis is often seen as a break away from reality, it nonetheless remains the reality of the person experiencing it. Therefore, focusing on the aspects of psychosis that elude narrative naturalisation, and instead violate realist logics of coherence and possibility, this presentation demonstrates how literary form can challenge medicalised assumptions about reality, cognition, and mental difference.

Madness as Narrative Possibility in the Comics of Nate Powell

David Lombard (Research Foundation Flanders / KU Leuven, Belgium)

The cultural myth of the 'mad genius' has associated madness with creativity, from the Romantic period to at least twentieth-century antipsychiatry (Laing 1965; Deleuze and Guattari 1972). Rather than treating madness as a springboard for literary achievement, a clinical category, or an identity (Beresford 2020), this paper will argue that madness and schizophrenia—including hallucinations and obsessions—function in the comics of Nate Powell as a formal catalyst that expands narrative possibility. More specifically, I will focus on visual metaphors, animal imagery, and fragmented page layouts as means of externalizing mental distress or trauma in three of Powell's comics—*Swallow Me Whole* (2008), *Any Empire* (2011), and *Come Again* (2018). Building on insights from comics studies and cognitive narratology—particularly Charles Hatfield's concept of the "art of tensions" (2009) and embodied



approaches to narrative experience (Caracciolo and Kukkonen 2021)—this paper will examine how madness intensifies formal tensions between word and image, sequence and page design, and narrative coherence and fragmentation. Instead of treating hallucinations or altered realities as merely thematic content, I will show that Powell deploys them as structuring devices that influence readers' interpretive and experiential engagement with the narrative. Ultimately, my intermedial and narratological analysis will show that madness allows Powell to transform subjective mental states into visual narrative spaces. In doing so, Powell reframes madness not as a pathology or romantic exceptionalism, but as a creative framework that enables narrative and artistic experimentation.

S31.- Posthuman Intersections in Contemporary Fiction in English

This seminar is aimed at exploring the synergies among human and non-human beings, the environment, machines and modern technologies through contemporary fiction in English. The framework of posthuman studies (Hayles 1999; Braidotti 2013, 2017; Clarke and Rossini 2017; Bartosch and Hoydis 2019; Segarra 2022, among others) with its interrogation of dominant configurations of the human, and with a broader scope that incorporates the nonhuman, serves as an adequate avenue of research to approach current philosophical debates regarding anthropocentrism while also exploring the potential benefits of science and technology to improve the human form. 'Posthumanism', being both a theoretical and empirical frame that is applicable to many fields of enquiry and, significantly, to literary criticism, has put the focus on the recognition of the others as interconnected to the self (Ferrando, 2014). The scrutiny of the impact of posthuman philosophy on the literature and literary criticism produced in English in the last decades has inspired scholars to look for adequate answers to the incommensurable challenges posed by our current age.

Taking this into consideration, this seminar invites contributors to reflect on the posthuman intersections found in contemporary fiction in English. We welcome proposals that foster a rich discussion regarding the potentiality to apply posthuman and transhuman theories to novels and short stories that reflect to what extent contemporary literature sheds light on other modes of being. This will allow this seminar to bridge the gap between philosophical theory and literary criticism by exploring the representations and rhetorical techniques used by contemporary authors in English to challenge traditional humanist assumptions.

This seminar proposal is part of the 'Posthuman Intersections in Irish and Galician Literatures' Research Project, MCI and ERDF, ref. PID2022-136251NB-I00.



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Session #1

2 September, 9:00–11:00

Ishiguro’s Sensing Subjects: *Klara and the Sun* and Posthumanism’s Embodied Being

Liani Lochner (University of Laval)

Kazuo Ishiguro’s *Klara and the Sun* evinces an acute awareness of the spatial, embodied dimension of subjectivation. Klara’s cataloguing of her sensory perceptions of the world reveals an interpellating address that takes place not only through language but also, as Judith Butler writes in *Senses of the Subject*, through “other kinds of signifying actions, through touch, movement,



holding, by turning one way or another, achieving and losing visual or tactile connection” (13). Both human interaction and the institutions and environments that comprise the scene of address form the conditions for the emergence of the embodied subject who is animated into a sensory awareness of and bodily disposition towards their environment. The notion of animation has an almost literal application in the case of Klara as a form of Artificial Intelligence: like “a young child, coming into awareness,” as Ishiguro describes her, she learns through reinforcement, acting as a mirror to human nature and society. If, as Ulrika Maude claims about twentieth-century and modernist writing, literature “maps the manner in which technology changes our relationship to the world and to ourselves” (117), then Ishiguro’s novel, I will argue in this paper, invites us to contemplate anew the role of the organic body and of sensory experience in the social constitution of the subject.

Utopian Desire and Altermodernist Estrangement in Kazuo Ishiguro’s Posthuman Novel *Klara and the Sun*

Laura Colombino (University of Genoa, Italy)

In the light of recent work (by Fredric Jameson, Timotheus Vermeulen, David James and others) that identifies tendencies in early twenty-first-century fiction towards forms of consolation, this article examines Kazuo Ishiguro’s *Klara and the Sun* focusing on how the protagonist’s posthuman perspective enables the novel’s mildly dystopian world to yield quiet, uncertain forms of solace and even utopia. Klara’s estranging perspective is used to invite us to reflect on the performative power of hope, while maintaining a persistent undercurrent of skepticism and irony. To articulate this tension, I argue, Ishiguro fashions an altermodernist aesthetics that, through the protagonist’s gaze, interweaves enchantment and disenchantment. On the one hand, taking my cue from Fredric Jameson’s discussion of science fiction as a form of modernist experimentation, I argue that, in the naivety and faultiness of Klara’s outsider perspective lies a potential for redemption which is couched in a new “altermodernist” (Bourriaud) aesthetic language for the twenty-first century. On the other hand, while Ishiguro’s visual language draws on the legacy of post-Impressionist avant-gardes, it is tempered by an acute awareness of the impossibility of recovering purity or sustaining a naïve faith in progress within a post-liberal society in which technological advancements have destabilized and compromised human values and relationships.

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From Posthuman Otherness to Transhuman Aspiration in Kazuo Ishiguro's Biodystopian Narratives

Eugenio Vecchione (University of Naples "L'Orientale", Italy)

Contemporary posthuman narratives provide a fertile ground for examining the ethical, social, and biological challenges that shape human life in the modern era. This seminar explores how Kazuo Ishiguro's novels *Never Let Me Go* (2005) and *Klara and the Sun* (2021) use speculative, biologically grounded scenarios to illuminate fundamental aspects of human existence, highlighting the moral and ethical dimensions of posthuman and transhuman experiences.

In *Never Let Me Go*, cloned bodies serve as a metaphor for the human condition, foregrounding constitutive features such as disposability, otherness, and ethical marginalisation embedded in their posthuman status (Guo 2015; Vichiensing 2017). Rather than focusing on the mechanics of cloning, the novel interrogates the clones' humanity: while designed for utility and sacrifice, they often exhibit a deeper moral consciousness than the humans who exploit them, prompting reflection on responsibility, empathy, and the social structures that define inclusion and exclusion.

By contrast, *Klara and the Sun* presents the *Artificial Friend* as a figure of transcendence and enhancement, whereas Ishiguro emphasises the moral and social implications of transhuman aspiration (Bavetra & Ravi 2021; Chapagain 2024). The narrative explores both potential benefits and ethical risks, such as inequality, restricted access to enhancement, and the consequences of exceeding the boundaries of human embodiment. It encourages reflection on human capacities for care, connection, and ethical decision-making in the face of technological change.



Drawing on posthumanist and transhumanist theories (Haraway 1991; Hayles 1999; Bostrom 2005; Braidotti 2013; Huxley 2015), this study investigates how Ishiguro constructs a bioethical discourse that moves from posthuman otherness to transhuman aspiration. As biodystopian narratives, these texts renegotiate the limits between human and posthuman conditions, ultimately questioning not only what it means to inhabit—or transcend—the body, but what it truly means to be human.

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Posthuman Empathy and its Limits in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun*

Margarida Pereira Martins (University of Lisbon, Portugal)



In the age of AI, machines are becoming more human-like in their form and behaviour. Embodied technologies such as robots are capable of mimicking thought, emotion and empathy with such perfection that it becomes hard to distinguish the human from the non-human (Braidotti, 2013). This development – long imagined in science-fiction – means that what is commonly perceived as intelligence in a machine has moved beyond disembodied systems to other human and more-than-human spheres such as consciousness, adaptability, survival and agency (Clark, 1996; Pfeifer and Scheier, 1999; Hayles, 1999).

Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *Klara and the Sun* (2021) explores the ethical and affective boundaries of such technologies through Klara, an “Artificial Friend” embodied with feminine physical and behavioural features. Her attuned empathy and perception grant her with more-than-machine attributes that allow her to actively participate in the affective, social and ecological systems that surround her. Her belief in the interconnectedness of humans and nature aligns her with ecocritical and posthumanist concerns about interdependence, agency and vulnerability in technological futures.

Drawing on posthumanism, affect theory and embodied AI, this paper explores the limits of empathy and agency in a human-centred world through Klara's narrative. While Ishiguro projects embodied artificial intelligence as restorative of affective and ecological relations, the novel also exposes its entanglement with systems of control. Klara reflects the promise of technology as well as its constraints as AI remains framed as a tool of anthropocentric, techno-colonial structures. Therefore, by bringing postcolonial critique into the discussion I propose to examine whether Klara's intelligence and empathy challenge human exceptionalism or ultimately reproduce imbalances, domination and extractivist logic embedded in racial capitalism and colonial thought (Benjamin, 2019).

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Session #2

2 September, 15:00–17:00



About Dolls' Rigid Plasticity: Narrow Visions of (Post)humanity in Contemporary Dystopia

Almudena Machado-Jiménez (University of Jaén, Spain)

The posthuman, particularly cyborgs, becomes an ambivalent ingredient in utopian thought, capable of supporting feminist utopianism or reinforcing patriarchal hierarchies, as it “can be both a patriarchal fantasy of dominating technologies and a feminist tool of resistance” (Melzer 2006, 25). More specifically, the gynoid could reconcile women and technology as a form of resistance both within and against patriarchy. Haraway (1985/2016) suggests how shifts of power in the posthuman era can abandon the old white capitalist patriarchy and its sexual hierarchy rooted in natural determinism. However, gynoid displays in society reveal that the system remains rigidly patriarchal, transferring old conventions into the posthuman era.

This research explores posthuman limits in neoliberal society, which sustains servitude through immobility and extends patriarchal infallibility beyond traditional patriliney into the biopower industry. To this end, it analyses Louise O'Neill's novel *Only Ever Yours* (2014), in which, after the extinction of female humans, genetic engineers design eves. Marketed as consumer goods, these “mechanical dolls” (O'Neill 2014, 46) are trapped in the submission of a “claustrophobic culture” (Walter 2010, 2), despite improvements for perfection: they are more beautiful but also weaker, duller, more self-conscious. This plastic self could enable transgressive potential through the material's malleability and resilience. While the plastic body can “hack into the phallogocentric codes that structure ideals of femininity [...] as tied to nature” (Toffoletti 2007, 79), eves' creative process renders them rigid, incapable of articulation, and disposable. This supports Vint's feminist anti-humanist claim that “what needs to be transcended [...] is not the human body but instead the narrow vision of humanity that has been characteristic of humanism as a discourse” (2006, 137). This stance prompts critical discussions on the actual condition of (post)humanity in the Capitalocene by addressing Braidotti's claim: “how can we prevent the posthuman from becoming inhuman(e)?” (2013, 187).

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Projecting the Future from the Past: Posthuman Gothic in Contemporary Irish and Galician Women's Fiction

José Manuel Estévez-Saá (University of A Coruña, Spain)

Margarita Estévez-Saá (University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain)

The present contribution addresses the features and uses of the revival of Gothic fiction identified in Galician and Irish literature written by both consolidated and emerging women authors such as, among others, Marilar Aleixadre, Teresa Moure, Emma Pedreira or Leticia Costas in the case of Galician literature; and of Sue Rainsford, Jess Kid, Jan Carson, Molly Aitken or Sophie White in contemporary Irish Fiction.

The authors and works we study combine the projection of traditional Gothic elements such as the featuring of passionate characters inhabiting isolated and decaying dwellings in wild rural landscapes; with the evocation of Irish and Galician folklore (witches, healers, cailleach, legends) (Fahey 2014). Furthermore, these narratives focus on the representation of complex female characters whose particularly close relationship with animals and the more-than-human world (Calarco 2015) could be interpreted, as we intend to demonstrate, as a posthuman conception of creaturely identity (Wolf 2010: xv).

Therefore, our proposal combines gothic studies, ecofeminist criticism and folklore to assess the featuring of posthuman ontologically liquid characters (Barcz 2015: 216) in recent fiction by both Galician and Irish women writers.

It is our contention that these developments and renderings of Gothic fictions serve the authors a double purpose: on the one hand, it works as a retrieval of the past of the Irish and Galician communities (their landscape, myths and folklore) and a vindication of women's traditional connection with the more-than-human natural world; on the other hand, these narratives participate in contemporary debates that point out towards the future, illustrating ecofeminist theorisations of nature and even more clearly the projection of ontological liquidity.



The theoretical part of our study is illustrated with the analysis of two representative novels: Sue Rainsford's *Follow Me to the Ground* (2018) and Leticia Costas's *Pel de cordeiro* (2025). Both authors feature powerfully complex female protagonists, strongly connected to nature, isolated from and marginalised in communities that regard suspiciously the protagonists' alleged healing powers as well as, and more interestingly, fear and reject their connection with the more-than-human world.

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Posthuman Intersections with Birds in Recent Irish Nature Writing

Catherine Conan (University of Western Brittany, France)

This paper examines, within a critical posthumanist theoretical framework, the intersecting paths of birds and human observers, experiencers and writers in recent Irish nature writing, with a particular focus on Declan Murphy's *A Life in the Trees* (2019) and Seán Ronayne's *Nature Boy* (2024).

From the evolutionary standpoint, birds are situated quite far from humans, they have widely different physical abilities and cognitive systems. They inhabit a three-dimensional milieu, which determines a relationship to space that has long puzzled and fascinated earth-bound humans. In modern times, the evolutionary distance with and fascination exerted by birds has generated a number of apparatuses designed to interact with them. These can be technological (telescopes, sound recorders) but also discursive and symbolic: scientific discourses on bird anatomy, physiology and ethology mediate these encounters in our corpus.

Within the particular textual locus of nature writing, a genre that is situated between fiction proper and academic scientific discourse, a varying degree of anthropomorphism, or the attribution of a theory of mind to birds may occur. In the sign-based,



representational site of the text, the language used to situate birds in relation to humans, as irreducibly other-than-human, reveals the historical, symbolic and technological condition of the human subjective observer.

In particular, the intersection between the Irish ecosystem (understood holistically as environmental, historical and cultural conditions) and the specificities of bird behaviour creates a platform for the expression of historically developed Irish anxieties around questions of place and belonging. Indeed, the tension constitutive of birds' relation to place between migrating, whether seasonally or one-off, and nesting, in patterns affected by global climate breakdown, is expressed in terms that situate the author in relation to past and present human settlements in Ireland. Words such as “colonize”, “territory”, “invader”, or the vexed question of what constitutes a “native species” reflect, whether consciously or not, questionings about Ireland's own colonial and post-colonial status as well as issues around more recent migrations to and from Ireland in a globalized world. This paper will seek to determine therefore the extent to which posthuman engagements and entanglements with birds displace, or possibly dissolve, the borders of national identities.

Posthumanist Intimations in Northern Irish Women-Authored Short Fiction

Manuela Palacios González (University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain)

Posthumanism proposes a post-anthropocentric idea of the human condition by conceiving it as a divided entity open to alterity (Braidotti 2013). This approach therefore challenges uniform and exclusionary notions of subjectivity with the aim to recognise and promote human diversity (González Arribas 2026). The present proposal aims to examine the range of posthumanist features identifiable in a selection of short stories by contemporary women writers from Northern Ireland. The stories under analysis are included in the anthologies *Female Lines* (2017) and *The Glass Shore* (2016), two collections that have been commended on their discerning rendering of the societal concerns of Northern Ireland in the early 21st century (Day 2016, Cunningham 2019).

Female Lines reportedly aims to “explore conditions for women in Northern Ireland post-ceasefires, post-peace process, and post-Good Friday Agreement” (Anderson and Sherratt-Bado 2017, 1), so this paper will examine whether this new political and social climate in Northern Ireland has allowed women writers to move beyond the immediate and pressing topics of sectarian violence and whether it has fostered a more reflective and interrogative mode about the human condition. The impact of new technologies, the furtherance of bonds between human and more-than-human nature, the questioning of human sovereignty



and self-sufficiency (Butler 2001), the acceptance of vulnerability and imperfection alongside the necessary coping strategies (González Arias 2017), these are aspects perceptively explored in the stories of these two collections. The focus on women writers is highly relevant, as women have traditionally been construed as the defective, non-rational, non-cultural counterpart of the modern humanist subject. In an oppositional move, these anthologies celebrate women's creativity and invaluable contribution to Northern Irish literature, although their publication is simultaneously the paradoxical testimony of preceding, relentless and pernicious exclusionary policies and attitudes.

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Session #3

2 September, 17:30–19:30

Posthuman Love and the Ethics of Transcendence in Jeanette Winterson's *Frankissstein: A Love Story*

Caterina Pan (University of Salzburg, Austria)

This paper examines the representations of love in Jeanette Winterson's *Frankissstein* (2019), a palimpsestic adaptation of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818). The subtitle *A Love Story* signals a romantic dimension in the dual sense of engaging with love



and with an author of the Romantic period. In the historical storyline, Mary Shelley's reflections on the grief of losing children and her erotic awakening with Percy position love within (literary) creation, loss, and responsibility. These themes intersect with the parallel modern narrative centred on Mary's alter ego, Ry, a transgender medical doctor whose relationship with the transcendentalist scientist Victor Stein (who resembles both Shelley and Victor Frankenstein) becomes a testing ground for ethical questions about the posthuman future. While Victor seeks to transcend human vulnerability through disembodied technological immortality, and Ron Lord (a parodic reversal of Lord Byron) commodifies and dismisses corporeality with his "mindless" sexbots, Ry maintains that although love should not be restricted by biology or gender, the physical body remains an integral part of human consciousness.

Bridging Gérard Genette's adaptation theory and Donna J. Haraway's feminist posthumanism – particularly her concepts of the cyborg and the role of science fiction in the Chthulucene – the discussion situates Winterson's novel within a framework of duality and doubleness, articulated structurally through intertextuality, parody and paratexts as well as mirroring and complementary Promethean characters. Ontologically, these strategies unsettle binary logics of gender and challenge both materialism and transcendence by advancing a non-dualistic, fluid and embodied subjectivity. The analysis suggests that the novel resists the unethical transcendence and erasure of the (feminized) body through its insistence on hybridity, also as embodied writing, that reframes love and creation in a posthuman, sci-fi context as acts of care, ethical preservation, and "response-ability," rather than one of monstrous, misconceived and irresponsible domination. In doing so, it aligns with Haraway's call to "make kin."

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An Affective Reading of the Fetishisation of the Posthuman Body in Jeanette Winterson's *Frankissstein*

Vega Álvarez Rivas (University of Oviedo, Spain)

This paper aims to examine the vulnerability and exploitability of posthuman subjects in contemporary capitalist societies from a feminist perspective through the reading of Jeanette Winterson's *Frankissstein: A Love Story* (2019) from a posthumanist and affective lens. Drawing on feminist posthumanism (Braidotti; Haraway), affect theory (Ahmed; Clough) and ethics of care (Held, Tronto), this paper argues that the novel exposes how hybrid and technologically mediated bodies become particularly susceptible to fetishisation, commodification and affective exploitation in patriarchal, capitalist societies.

The analysis focuses on the comparison of two parallels that occur throughout the novel: the commodification of female sex robots designed to satisfy male desire, fantasies and expectations; and the erotic fetishisation of the protagonist, Ry Shelley, a trans man whose posthuman hybridity becomes the object of fascination for Victor Stein. These dynamics reveal how patriarchal capitalism erases the histories, labour and vulnerability of posthuman others, rendering them disposable and exploitable while reproducing gendered expectations of care, submission and emotional subjugation. By combining posthumanism with affect theory, the paper highlights emotions as material and affective forces that circulate between both human and non-human bodies, while also being commodified within capitalist economies. Moreover, the ethics of care perspective provides a critical framework to analyse sex robots not merely as technological artefacts, but as posthuman, gendered caregivers whose design reinforces the exploitation of emotional and sexual labour.

Ultimately, this paper underscores *Frankissstein*'s relevance within contemporary debates on the current growth of artificial intelligence and technological development and their direct relationship with gender issues, arguing that literary representations of posthuman relations are crucial in order to interrogate the ethical consequences of the technological era.

Towards a Relational Responsibility: Hybrid Subjectivities from *Frankenstein* to Contemporary Posthuman Narratives

Claudia Cao (University of Cagliari, Italy)

This paper investigates the roots of a proto-posthumanist perspective (Gramantieri 2024) in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), proposing the novel as a foundational paradigm for key posthuman concerns, including ethical responsibility, care, and the



moral recognition of a sentient Other (Micali 2019; Ferrando 2017). After outlining these theoretical issues, the paper examines the influence of Frankenstein and posthuman theories on Ian McEwan's *Machines Like Me and People Like You* (2019), focusing on how both texts problematise anthropocentric assumptions and challenge the notion of autonomous human agency.

By juxtaposing the two main characters, Victor Frankenstein and Charlie Friend, the analysis foregrounds the failure of the ideals of rational mastery and anthropocentric exclusivism (Nayar 2014; Ferrando 2017), as well as the gradual reversal of the master–servant dialectic, ultimately culminating in the human's dependence on the artificial other in both stories.

The paper will focus on Alan Turing's concluding discourse in McEwan's novel to investigate three key issues highlighted by the scientist with regard to the relationship between humans and non-humans: the risks inherent in a transhumanist approach to artificial life (Ferrando 2017); the unresolved question of recognising a moral status for artificial beings – potentially legitimising the attribution of human rights to them (Mosakas 2025); and the prospect of a posthuman horizon grounded in hybrid subjectivities and an ethics of co-dependence and shared responsibility.

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Session #4

3 September, 9:30–11:30



“To be still Is to be without life”: Human/Plant Relations in English Fiction from Northeast India

Lisa Cristea (Braunschweig University of Technology, Germany)

The increasing loss of biodiversity, widespread deforestation and geopolitical fights for ‘natural’ resources have created a new urgency in cultural and literary studies for a negotiation of the role of plants and their specific forms of agency in our crisis-ridden world. By examining the representation of plants in fiction from Northeast India, this paper argues for a *phytopoetics* in Janice Pariat’s novel *Everything the Light Touches* (2022).

According to John C. Ryan, *phytopoetics* “calls attention to creative productions that focus on the botanical realm, the lives of plants, human-fauna-flora interrelations and factors endangering botanical futures” (2024, 260). *Everything the Light Touches* negotiates the threat of both historical and contemporary extractivist practices to sacred groves in Northeast India and interweaves the storylines of several protagonists throughout different centuries. One of them is Shai, a young woman from Delhi who returns home to her family in the Indian state of Meghalaya for a period of self-reflection while becoming engrossed in the native plant ecology and the fight against uranium mining in the Khasi Hills that endangers the sacred groves and the local human populations. Shai’s story is intertwined with that of Evelyn, a young woman from London who lives in the Edwardian era and embarks on a journey to the Khasi Hills to search for the mythical Diengiei plant while experiencing the conflict between colonial forest management and the spiritual and cultural importance of sacred forests for indigenous peoples.

Structurally, the protagonists’ individual journeys of self-transformation become enmeshed with the life cycle of plants and trees and their steady dynamics of ‘becoming’. By envisioning a relational *phytopoetics* that manifests itself in trans-historical and spatio-temporal entanglements between humans and plants, the novel defies teleological and neoliberal notions of linearity and ‘development’ while highlighting the significance of plants in promoting more ethical human/more-than-human relationships.

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Feeding the Nonhuman: Vegetal Agency, Gendered Epistemology, and Becoming-Earth in Frances Hardinge's *The Lie Tree* (2015)

Irene Stoukou (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece)

Children's literature has long provided fertile ground for reconfiguring the human and the latter's connection to the nonhuman. Staged in a neo-Victorian key, Frances Hardinge's *The Lie Tree* (2015) relocates the posthuman from the spectacular machine to the networked systems that organise and produce knowledge: gendered infrastructures of circulation (post, gossip, scientific reputation) and an organic apparatus that materialises language. Young Faith discovers her father's scientific observations on a tree described as a "symbiote" that survives through interspecies collaboration: humans feed it lies, and it repays them with fruit that grants visions of secret truths. In this paper, I argue that this botanical agent decentralises the human knower, reconfigures truth as a more-than-human prerogative, and exposes knowledge production as an ecological transaction rather than a disembodied ideal. Using posthuman critical theory, I mobilise Hayles's critique of informational abstraction to examine how Hardinge insists on embodiment: information here is never pure, but embodied, transmitted through voices, and amplified by the island's social ecology in ways that recall the distributed systems through which human capability and vulnerability emerge. I apply a Braidottian, cartographical reading of the novel's communication circuits, and read processes of becoming as departure points to trace posthuman subject formations and the power relations that sustain them. The Lie Tree is a figuration of zoe-centric agency that emerges in between human/nonhuman, organic/inorganic, and male/female, while Faith's becoming-with the tree proves inseparable from a gendered becoming: barred from masculinised scientific authority, she navigates minor channels of knowledge-making that are at once tactical and fraught, suggesting how the production of "truth" is also the production of collateral. *The Lie Tree* forces us to reflect on a posthuman cartography in which vegetal agency, gendered knowledge-making, and epistemic ethics reframe what it means to know—and to be responsible—in more-than-human worlds.

The Limits of Artificial Reproduction in Contemporary British Fiction

María Alonso Alonso (University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain)

Within a society that is apparently moving towards the normalisation of surrogacy, Helen Sedgwick's *The Growing Season* (2017) works as a catalyst to consider the representation of the limits of artificial reproduction in contemporary literature. In this particular



case, dystopic speculative fiction and philosophical transhumanism intertwine in a text that challenges the alleged fallacy of female liberation thanks to mechanical wombs where genetically selected babies grow outside the maternal body. Sedgwick, who has a PhD in physics herself, imagines a future where science and technology allows men and women to reproduce and grow their ideal baby by choosing a number of accessories and a data of delivery of their choice. Within this fictional world, science has allowed to produce healthy and affordable babies without the risks that a natural birth entails. Therefore, transhumanism is the theory that contextualises the novel. Accordingly, philosophical transhumanism advocates for the need to modify the human condition in order to enhance the species by scientific or technological means (Toffoletti, 2007, Haraway 2014, González Arribas 2021, Preciado 2022, among others). Transhumanism, thus, defends the legitimacy of human beings to modify themselves, which implies, as in the case of Sedgwick's novel, a step further in the artificial selection of the species. The connection between transhumanism and speculative fiction is obvious; however, most of the texts that explore this connection end up criticizing technophile messianism, moving towards a more bioconservative vision of the actual application of science and technology in our current society. This paper will explore the hypothetical realm of reproduction present in *The Growing Season* so as to bridge the gap between philosophical transhumanism and contemporary literary production. This approach will hopefully suggest that the boundary between science and fiction in the novel is of particular relevance when speculating about the limits of artificial reproduction.



S32.- Reconsidering Naturalism

This proposal for an ESSE seminar aims to bring together scholars to reconsider our understanding of the literary movement of naturalism. Anglophone literary history has often treated naturalism as a European movement (initiated by Zola) that was merely a precursor to modernism proper, or as a cultural form that was superseded by later movements such as Expressionism or Impressionism. However, more recent work has begun to revise this judgement, with Simon Joyce, for example, arguing that naturalism was an important presence in the development of modernist fiction (Joyce 2015). Recent tendencies in literary and cultural theory can also help us to look at naturalist fiction and drama in a new light. For example, affect and atmosphere studies (Bégou 2020; Böhme 2017; Gumbrecht 2012) offers a new way to understand interiority in naturalist drama or social determinism in naturalist fiction. Work on recognition theory (Honneth 1995) can shed new light on the significance of concepts of heredity and family within naturalism. Finally, the growing work on ecocriticism, the Anthropocene, and environmental humanities could also lead to the study of a 'green naturalism', where threats to the environment are central to novels influenced by naturalism



such as E. M. Forster's *Howards End* or D. H. Lawrence's *Women in Love*. The main objective of the seminar is to interrogate the relevance of such critical propositions (among others) to reassess naturalist fiction and its core definitions (for instance in novels by Sarah Grand, George Moore or George Gissing), but also its influence on modernist, post-realist, postmodernist and contemporary literature. This seminar thus calls for contributions that explore how we understand naturalism today. These can address naturalist fiction or drama and can draw upon British or American literature. Papers that also consider the ongoing impact of naturalist models upon contemporary literature are also welcome.

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Session #1

2 September, 17:30–19:30

‘...he would get through his life better if he remained rude and untaught’: Identity Politics and the Limits of Social Mobility in George Gissing’s *Workers in the Dawn*

John D. Attridge (Regent College London, United Kingdom)

Since the 1990s, identity politics has reshaped how people see themselves and how they interact with the world around them. Our personal identity and its markers – often encompassing our sex and gender identity, sexuality, ethnicity, inherent dis/abilities, and class and racial background – have become a conduit for navigating life’s challenges and pitfalls, and as the forms and methods of systemic and structural prejudice which shape how these identity markers are received by others continue to be unearthed, critically analysed and increasingly accepted as part of the natural order of things, the similarities between identity politics and naturalism come into greater focus. Both highlight and interrogate the illusion of free will; examine the possibilities of objective progress; and question the extent to which we can alter or even escape a fate defined by the circumstances in which we were born.

Frameworks for understanding identity politics and rereading identity might consequently be deployed to reconsider representations of fate and progress in naturalist texts. In this paper, I posit that in his very first published novel, *Workers in the Dawn* (1880), George Gissing was particularly attuned to the restraints of class and the limits of social mobility in a manner that reflects twenty-first century concerns around identity politics. Taking into account the novel’s partially autobiographical nature, its lukewarm critical reception, and Gissing’s own uncertainty over the book’s moral message, I will demonstrate how late-



nineteenth century naturalist outlooks are shaped by a pessimistic determinism not unlike the pragmatic cynicism that pervades discussions on identity politics today. Additionally, I will highlight how these debates grant us the opportunity to challenge the confusion or indignance with which many naturalist texts, including *Workers in the Dawn*, were first confronted with upon their initial publication – permitting us to view the outputs of literary naturalism from a distinctly twenty-first century social and cultural perspective.

Modernizing the Tale of Natural Inheritance: Sarah Grand and Thomas Hardy

Nathalie Saudo-Welby (University of Picardie Jules Verne, France)

An interest in heredity was a hallmark of the naturalist movement, and one of its distinctive features within the realist mode. Naturalist characterization typically involves a conflict between hereditary determinations and external circumstances. However, in England in particular, the idea of heredity had itself inherited a literary legacy, shaped by Gothic tropes (the gallery of ancestors, the family tree and mansion, the curse...). As heredity belonged to and drew on a past literary tradition, it needed to be adapted to express new notions, scientific and pseudoscientific, and realities, social and political. In the context of August Weismann's theory of germ-plasm, the rise of eugenics and worries about racial degeneration, the idea of heredity was a central late Victorian concern; however, it was becoming apparent that these new understandings of the laws of nature and evolution, together with recent social transformations – the rise of the lower-middle class, women's emancipation, changes in marriage laws and patterns – represented a serious challenge to both traditional ideas of heredity and their literary manifestations such as the inheritance plot. How did the literary discourse on heredity articulate the modernist emphasis on individualism, subjectivity and unpredictability?

My paper will examine two late-Victorian naturalist writers who transformed and renewed the tale of naturalist inheritance, in particular by interrogating the role played by women. One answer was eugenics: in Sarah Grand's "Eugenia" the heroine is able to break the family curse that causes women to "lack determination in the choice of men". Her natural instincts play a crucial role in the resolution of the marriage plot. Another way of negotiating the modernist turn was to expose the detrimental effects of social and genealogical constraints on the individual, while building new patterns emphasizing personal initiative. This can be felt in the fiction of Thomas Hardy, who attacked "genealogical passion" (*Tess*) and replaced the conservative flow of succeeding generations with significant "phases" and cases in individual lives (*A Group of Noble Dames*, *The Well-Beloved*).



Session #2

3 September, 9:30–11:30

Interiority and Atmosphere in George Moore's *A Mummer's Wife* (1885)**Fabienne Gaspari (University of Pau and Pays de l'Adour, France)**

Regarded as one of the works representing «triumphant naturalism» («le naturalisme triomphant», Chevrel, 1982), *A Mummer's Wife* by George Moore includes essential characteristics that define this movement and stands as a seminal work, not just in the career of its author, but also in the history of naturalism in England. Moore's years in Paris in the 1870s brought him into close contact with French artists and their works. His discovery of Zola's naturalist method was a source of inspiration for his first novels and, in a letter to the French writer, Moore declared that he was bent on becoming «*un ricochet de Zola en Angleterre*» (Frazier, 2000). In the same period, the Anglo-Irish young man became an enthusiastic follower of Impressionism and wrote essays in which he analysed and defended this new style of painting. In *A Mummer's Wife*, we find the staple tropes of naturalism defined by Simon Joyce as «environmental determinism, urban squalor, the absence of agency» (Joyce, 2015). Yet, through its emphasis on intense physicality and its attention to the effects of the environment on Kate Ede, the protagonist, this work offers an interesting exploration of interiority and atmosphere. My purpose is to show that such a focus on the encounters between her body and her physical environment (both in its harsh materiality and enveloping atmospheres and moods) could lead us to consider Moore as one of these late nineteenth-century novelists foregrounding the instantaneous («romanciers de l'instantané», Chevrel) and a «sensuous impressionism» (Joyce). Through a study of some «moments of being» in *A Mummer's Wife*, I aim to reassess Moore's work in the light of Simon Joyce's claim about naturalism's «positive and active role in shaping the forms» of modernist writing.

From Supernatural to Naturalistic: Nature as an Adversary in Crime Fiction**Bojana Acamovic (Institute for Literature and Arts, Belgrade, Serbia)**

Crime fiction is one of the genres appropriating various aspects of naturalism, which can be traced in the adopted themes,



representation of the environment and characterization. While the naturalistic features are commonly found in those segments of crime and noir literature which depict the grittiness of urban life, they can also be spotted in the representations of the natural surroundings and nonhuman world. This is arguably due to a common influence – Darwin’s evolutionary theory and its subsequent interpretations, which prompted the de-hierarchization of the living world and presented man as a natural creature driven by animalistic instincts, and also the scientific examination of reality, which developed in different directions and largely affected literary imagination. All this is reflected in both works of naturalism and detective and crime fiction of the same period. The proposed paper aims to examine naturalistic features in works of the early-20th-century detective/crime fiction, focusing primarily on the representations of nature and the nonhuman. For this purpose, we will turn to a classic piece, Arthur Conan Doyle’s *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, a work which predates Jack London’s major novels by a few years and also highlights the tension between the supernatural and natural as different ways of responding to the unknown and frightening. Doyle’s work presents a shift from the belief in supernatural phenomena to the realization of the power of natural forces, which are often an invincible adversary. To elucidate the points connecting naturalism and the development of crime fiction, we will draw on the relevant works of ecocriticism (animal studies, econarratology) as well as those examining the relation of literature and life sciences.

Session #3

3 September, 15:00–17:00

Reconsidering Naturalism: An Ecodramaturgical Reading of Environment in Ibsen’s Plays

Jovana Pavicevic (University of Kragujevac, Serbia)

In contemporary theatre discourse, naturalism is most often associated with convention in its pejorative sense: as something ‘seen as no more than an old rule, or somebody else’s rule, which it was proper and often necessary to disregard’ (Raymond Williams 1977, 173). The emphasis on naturalism’s conventionality has become so entrenched that it is difficult to imagine how provocative Henrik Ibsen’s plays – set in recognizably bourgeois interiors – appeared to their first audiences. Attempts to ‘revitalise’ Ibsen and make his plays challenging again have therefore frequently involved distancing his work from what later



came to be dismissed as the banality of surfaces of everyday life. Toril Moi (2006, 19), for example, argues for freeing Ibsen from aesthetic terms that have accrued negative connotations – naturalism, realism, romantic drama, and melodramatic theatricality – and, as she quotes Michael Billington, from the ‘tyranny of furniture’. This paper proposes a different strategy. Drawing on ecocritical approaches to theatre, particularly Una Chaudhuri’s programmatic turn towards reading the environment literally rather than symbolically, articulated in her seminal article “‘There Must Be a Lot of Fish in That Lake’: Toward an Ecological Theater’, it argues that naturalism’s environments can be rethought as sites of ecological and material significance. Focusing on Ibsen’s plays from different phases of his creative work, the paper examines a wide range of ecological realities – landscapes, wilderness, flowers and plants, the sea and rivers, and mountains – not as mere backdrop but as active agents within the dramatic world. By attending to these elements, the paper seeks to demonstrate that conventions are not simply matters of taste but social, historical, and material mechanisms through which inclusion, exclusion, and meaning are organised.

The Everlasting Struggle: American Naturalism as National Form

Maja Daniel (University of the Basque Country, Spain)

American Naturalism has long resisted stable definition, appearing, as Charles Child Walcutt observes, in forms that continually “slip through the fingers and reappear in another shape” (21). This paper argues that such instability is not a critical weakness but a defining feature of a distinctly American and enduring literary tradition. Rather than a closed movement confined to the late nineteenth century or a derivative of European models, American Naturalism constitutes a persistent mode that has remained central to American literature because of its responsiveness to lived experience.

Adopting a genre-study methodology, the first part of the paper offers a historical and critical overview of American Naturalism, emphasizing its indigenous character. As Frank Norris insisted, naturalism in America is “a school by itself” (1101), shaped by national experiences of industrialization, westward expansion, capitalism, and social inequality. Drawing on Donald Pizer’s work, the paper examines why American naturalism, unlike its European counterpart, survived and continued to flourish. Although early American naturalists display certain Zolaesque features, Pizer stresses that each writer “is very much his own man,” and that Zola served less as a model than as an impulse toward truthful representation of “all ranges of life” (5–6). Central to this



tradition is a commitment to truth grounded in lived reality. As Theodore Dreiser declared, “tell the truth” is the core of both art and morality, and truth is simply “what is” (482); since “life is a tragedy,” the ordinariness of existence itself becomes the proper subject of serious fiction (Notman 482–83).

The second part focuses on the fiction of Annie Proulx as a contemporary manifestation of this tradition. In line with Donna Campbell’s view that naturalism should be understood “less as an artifact of literary history to be recovered than as a vital means of interpreting texts across several decades” (3), Proulx’s narratives - shaped by environmental determinism, economic pressure, and ecological crisis - demonstrate that American Naturalism remains profoundly national and enduring.

Willa Cather’s Vision of the American West between Sublimity and Desublimation

Jelena Sesnic (University of Zagreb, Croatia)

I will be particularly interested in Cather’s US Western novels, set in typically Western environments (the prairie, the agricultural land, the semi-wilderness) in which Cather places her action and her characters. Even while she constructs intricate plots involving different generations of characters, families and their genealogies, characters of different social and ethnic types, men and women and their respective reactions to the West, Cather still manages an illusion of a loose, flowing plot. Just as she manages an effect of fluid characters, whose motivations are not entirely deterministic or plausibly explained, creating a surplus usually associated with modernist techniques. Yet, at second glance, this fluidity and opaqueness is underlined by what we might call desublimating procedures – since it might be argued that Cather participates in a discursive universe of the turn of the 20th century and its early stage by buying into or subtly perpetuating the narratives of land, territory, nationhood, and race. These arguably had their bearing in very unsublimated ideas of the social, economic, and cultural provenance underlying the poeticized notions of the frontier, the pioneer experience, survival, adaptation, and progress. Cather’s Western novels, particularly *O Pioneers!* (1913) and *My Ántonia* (1918), thus participate in the ongoing cultural debate about the idea of the national identity in the making on the Western expanse. It is perhaps the very instability of the process itself that requires the wavering in Cather’s text between the sublimity of nature (in its various forms) and the naturalistic determinants that interfere with that layer. The aspects of these intertwining modes of representation in Cather’s novels, tentatively marked as “naturalism” and “symbolism” (and modernism) will be addressed.





S33.- Early Crime Narratives

While sensation fiction in England is often associated with the 1860s—marked by works such as Wilkie Collins’s *The Woman in White* (1860) and Mary Elizabeth Braddon’s *Lady Audley’s Secret* (1862)—the narrative structures and thematic concerns of crime fiction have a much older lineage. This seminar explores the early roots of English and Irish crime writing by tracing its presence in pre-nineteenth-century literature, including rogue novels, translated Spanish picaresque fiction, Gothic tales, and the Newgate novel. These earlier forms frequently centered on criminal protagonists, featured morally complex narratives, and introduced rudimentary yet significant elements of detection and investigation.

Seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century rogue literature, such as Irish writer Richard Head’s *The English Rogue* (1665), depicted a vibrant criminal underworld and delighted in tales of deception and disguise—offering valuable insights into the genre’s pre-history. The picaresque tradition, notably represented by Daniel Defoe’s *Moll Flanders* (1722) and *Roxana* (1724), explored themes of social mobility, criminality, and survival through the eyes of cunning and resourceful protagonists. Equally influential were the Newgate Calendars—popular compilations of criminal biographies drawn from court records and moral commentary—including *The Malefactor’s Register* (1774) and *The Newgate Calendar*.

We welcome papers that explore any form of detection, punishment, or legal narrative in pre-nineteenth-century texts, as well as the role of the emerging novel form in shaping early crime writing. We particularly encourage discussions of early critical reception and moral framing.

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Session #1

31 August, 16:00–18:00



“Wild Rovers”: Irish Fortune-hunter and Neo-picaresque Narratives from the Eighteenth Century

David M. Clark (University of A Coruña, Spain)

In Irish narratives from the eighteenth century, features of the picaresque can be found in the “fortune hunter” or “ramble” novels, featuring Irish characters who seek a good match in order to revive family fortunes. Examples of the “fortune hunter” novel include the anonymous work *The Adventures of Shelim O’Blunder, Esq., The Irish Beau* (1751), William Chaigneau’s *The Adventures of Dick Hazard* (1754), Edward Kimber’s *The Juvenile Adventures of David Ranger* (1756), the anonymous *The Fortune Hunter; or History of Jack Fitzpatrick* (1762) and John Oakman’s *The Life and Adventures of Benjamin Brass: an Irish Fortune Hunter* (1765). While these novels continued to use the picaresque mode, they also made use of a stereotype of the Irish gentleman looking for a wealthy woman to marry as “a figure of contempt due to his status as much as his nationality”.

An interesting variation on the picaresque narrative can be found in *The Life of John Buncle, Esq., Containing Various Observations and Reflections Made in Several Parts of the World; and Many Extraordinary Relations* by Thomas Amory (c. 1691-1788). Although superficially related to the “fortune hunter” model, *The Life of John Buncle* openly challenges many of the conventions of the format. This anti-picaresque can also be found in the three volumes of *The Adventures of Anthony Varnish; or, a Peep at the Manners of Society* (1786) by Charles Johnstone (1719-1800).

The maturity of the Irish picaresque can be found in William Chaigneau’s *The History of Jack Connor* (1752), which has a contemporary setting – the narrative starts around 1720 – and, according to Aileen Douglas, exudes a “mood of Enlightenment optimism” which has more in common with Tobias Smollett’s *Roderick Random* than with Fielding’s *Tom Jones*, despite the “elaborate complements” paid to the latter. Certainly, in common with Smollett, Chaigneau is interested in the liminal status of his protagonist and explores, like the Scottish writer, questions of national identity in both overt and covert fashion.

Francis Kirkman and Edmund Curll as Two Rogue Booksellers: The Role of Early Modern Print Market on the Formation of Crime Narratives

Joanna Maciulewicz (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poland)



In the study of pre-history of crime fiction it seems crucial that we should look at the development of the genre in the larger context of print market which engendered its diverse literary forms. The subject of crime and the figure of the rogue, as Lena Liapi recently described it in *Roguary in Print* (2019, Boydell and Brewer), were endlessly fascinating for early modern English readers which created a huge demand for publications for crime stories. This could not but be seen as an opportunity for publishers/booksellers who knew how to capitalize on the readers' tastes. The aim of this paper is to look at the roles of two early modern booksellers, Francis Kirkman (1632-1680) and Edmund Curll (1675-1747), in the development and popularization of fiction on crime. Kirkman's career showcases the many ways in which publisher/bookseller could influence the genre: he translated foreign fiction, he co-authored continuation of Richard Head's *The English Rogue* and wrote his own autobiography after the fashion of a picaresque narrative. Curll's publishing practices, his search for material in newspaper reports, rogue pamphlets, trial records and other public sources, and the ways he fashioned them into narratives, illustrate how the logic of the market shaped the conventions that were later used by authors of crime narratives. The closer look at the writing and publishing careers of the two booksellers will shed light on the impact of print market on the process of formation of early crime narratives.

The Strategy of Criminalization in *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*

Mizuki Tsutsui (Waseda University, Japan)

This paper focuses on the rhetoric of criminalization as a form of political propaganda in James Hogg's 1824 novel *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, which is considered a foundational work in the tradition of Scottish crime fiction (Plain 2007). The central crime in the first half of the narrative—namely, the murder of the Jacobite George Colwan by the Whig Robert Wringhim and Gil-Martin, a devil clad in tartan who also evokes “a potentate of some foreign land” (Hogg 1824)—can be interpreted as an allegory critical of the Anglo-Scottish Union. Considering that the demonization of political enemies was a technique frequently employed in eighteenth-century Jacobite songs, and that the novel was published two years after George IV's tartan-clad visit to Scotland, it seems possible to discern an anti-Hanoverian political stance in the characterization of Gil-Martin. In contrast, the latter half of the novel allows for the extraction of a pro-Union ideology, insofar as the doctrine of antinomianism (the belief that those chosen by God are not subject to any moral code), which Gil-Martin employs to draw Robert into a life of crime, can be seen as analogous to the divine right of kings traditionally associated with the monarchs of the Stuart dynasty. This paper argues that



while Hogg's work belongs to the lineage of Henry Fielding's *Jonathan Wild*, which satirizes the prime minister of the day, Robert Walpole, by linking him to the legendary criminal Jonathan Wild, it also presents an indeterminate coexistence of Whig and Tory positions, thereby revealing the possibility of a more complex relationship between crime and politics.

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Session #2

1 September, 17:00–19:00

True Crime and Gothic Imagination in Early American Crime Writing: Sympathy and the Law in Stephen Mix Mitchell's *Narrative of the Life of William Beadle* (1783) and Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland* (1789)

Renáta Zsámba (Eszterházy Károly Catholic University, Hungary)

In the twenty-first century, true crime narratives have reached unprecedented success in the United States. Serialized television shows, podcasts, books, and documentaries are being launched on a daily basis. Nevertheless, the increasing popularity of the true crime genre has raised serious moral dilemmas regarding the representation of crime and criminals in the media, which is often accused of arousing sympathy for brutal killers. This phenomenon, however, is not new in Anglophone literature and culture; crime writing in the United States has its roots in seventeenth-century Puritan sermons, eighteenth-century historical accounts, and popular literary forms such as sensational true crime stories or the Gothic novel. These narratives place criminals and the question of sympathy at their centre. Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland: or, The Transformation*, regarded as the first American Gothic novel, contributed to the ongoing debate on sympathy by attempting to understand the "unnatural murderer" rather than portraying him as a diabolical monster. Brown's Gothic tale, however, has been more widely appreciated for establishing American



Gothic conventions than for its engagement with its source text, Stephen Mix Mitchell's *A Narrative of the Life of William Beadle* (1783), which describes Beadle's massacre of his family and himself. Thus, *Wieland* is not "just" a Gothic tale but a hybrid text that heavily relies on contemporary and earlier models of crime writing. This is especially significant because twentieth-century academic criticism of crime fiction adopted a rather delimiting approach, concentrating mainly on the whodunit and the hard-boiled types. Early crime writing, however, demonstrates that crime fiction has always absorbed a diversity of literary forms and styles in order to address the mysterious nature of the human psyche and to engage with moral transgression. Therefore, this paper explores how Brown exploits Mitchell's narrative to initiate a dialogue about sympathy, complicate the categories of right and wrong, and introduce the failure of the justice system in U.S. crime fiction.

"Circumstantial Evidence": Female Detectives and the 1840s Crime Writing of Catherine Crowe

Ruth Heholt (Falmouth University, Cornwall, United Kingdom)

In 1841, four months before Edgar Allan Poe, the so-called "father of detective fiction" published "The Murders in the Rue Morgue", an innovative crime novel appeared. This was the debut novel by 51-year-old writer Catherine Crowe. Best known for her "ghost hunting book" *The Night Side of Nature*, her first foray into fiction, *Susan Hopley: Or Circumstantial Evidence*, is a rollicking tale which begins with a murder and continues to have three distinct female detective figures. These women who all start with the disadvantages of servitude, poverty, victimhood, and in one case, disability, eventually solve the crimes and achieve justice for the wrongs done to them and their families through their own detective skills, their tenacity and resilience in the face of the Victorian patriarchy. All of Crowe's crime fiction brims with sub-plots and there are murders, mayhem, theft, betrayal, sexual peccadillos, false marriages, and cross-dressing. Not only are the novels great fun, but they also mark an important part in proto-feminist detective and crime fiction. Crowe's work is pioneering, exploring forensics, ballistics, post-mortems, courtroom drama, and even venturing into the very male domain of the Newgate Novel. This paper looks at three examples of Crowe's early crime fiction, *Susan Hopley*, *Men and Women*, and *Lily Dawson*, and argues that in each novel, it is the women who save the day.



“Monster Mothers” and “The Shame of Bastardy”: The Narratives of Condemned Women in the Ordinary of Newgate’s Accounts

Michela Giordano (University of Cagliari, Italy)

This study examines the “confession” narratives of women condemned for infanticide in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century London, as recorded in the *Ordinary of Newgate’s Accounts* (1676-1772). The research is grounded in historical pragmatics and courtroom discourse (Culpeper, Kytö 2000; Cecconi 2010), and extends prior work on infanticide, birth concealing, and witness testimony in the Old Bailey Proceedings (Giordano 2012, 2015, 2016; Giordano, Marongiu 2025). It applies a similar framework to the chaplain’s Accounts, to analyse how social expectations about motherhood, sexuality, and repentance were dialogically negotiated in the women’s discursive construction of the self at the point of execution.

An *ad hoc* corpus comprises 39 texts: the chaplain of Newgate prison, adopting a first-person preaching voice in a scaffold sermon, frames the third-person accounts introducing them through “the Behaviour, Confession, and Dying Words” formula. Close linguistic analysis of the condemned women’s accounts focuses on metadiscursive markers introducing reported speech (“she confessed that”, “she obstinately deny’d”), thematic scrutiny of justificative *topoi* (shame, poverty, youthful ignorance, seduction by a man). The contrastive analysis of the prisoners’ reported speeches determines whether the adherence to the required script of repentance or recalcitrant claims of innocence result in penitent versus resistant narrative postures, in a spectrum of self-representation.

Preliminary findings reveal the interaction between the Ordinary’s moral framing and the reported voices of the condemned in the mediated narratives. The grammar of guilt and of confession within the constrained genre of the dying speech, uncovers women’s attempt to contextualise their “odious sin of Whoredom” and their crime within a framework of prior good character and desperate circumstances, thereby challenging the “monster” archetype and the gendered social norms. Female criminality was shaped, contested, sensationalised or moralised as an aberration from ‘normal’ gendered behaviour. ‘Unnaturally’ violent women or infanticidal mothers (Walker 2003) explain the crucial intersection of gender, crime, and narrative agency in early modern England.



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S34.- The Poetics of Affect – Literary Perspectives

This panel explores "The Poetics of Affect" across media, genres, and socio-political contexts, tracing primarily the intersections between affect theory and aesthetic form in literature. Building on the foundational work by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (*Touching Feeling* 2003), Sara Ahmed (*The Cultural Politics of Emotion* 2004), Sianne Ngai (*Ugly Feelings* 2005), Lauren Berlant (*The Female Complaint* 2008), and Eva Illouz (*Why Love Hurts* 2012), this panel aims to investigate how affects, feelings, and emotions shape and transform aesthetic, generic, and medial forms. Recent studies such as John Brenkman's *Mood and Trope: The Rhetoric and Poetics of Affect* (2020) demonstrate how fruitful and still underdeveloped this line of research is. Indeed, literary poetics and affect need to be thought together more carefully, and the critical reflections on the epistemological frameworks they raise deserve more attention.



This panel addresses how Anglophone works of literature codify affects as literary form in their critical discussions of the climate crisis, the excesses of neo-liberal capitalism, and the mainstreaming of right-wing populist rhetoric across the globe. We are particularly interested in affects like ‘affective ekphrasis’ (Neumann/Rippl 2020), ‘dis/affection’ (Behluli 2022), ‘bewilderment’ (Rippl forthcoming), ‘digital affect’ (Pardey 2023), ‘solastalgia’ (Albrecht 2005), and alternative forms of nostalgia, and how they can im/mobilize ethical reflections. Using a wide array of reading strategies – formalist, surface, reparative, close, and comparative readings – our panel traces the connections and disconnections between affective functions in eco-novels and sentimental novels, world literature, as well as other media like video games and shorts/reels.

We welcome contributions that cross disciplinary and medial boundaries, and that bring minor, marginalized, or unexpected feelings and affects to the forefront. By engaging diverse texts and critical traditions, this panel invites a generative conversation on what it means to feel—and to theorize feeling as poetics—across different socio-political contexts, genres, and media.

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Session #1

31 August, 16:00–18:00

Introduction: The Poetics of Affect

Birgit Neumann (Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf, Germany)

Gabriele Rippl (University of Bern, Switzerland)

Our panel explores “The Poetics of Affect” across media, genres, and socio-political contexts, tracing primarily the intersections between affect theory and aesthetic form in literature. Building on the foundational work by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (*Touching Feeling* 2003), Sara Ahmed (*The Cultural Politics of Emotion* 2004), Sianne Ngai (*Ugly Feelings* 2005), and Lauren Berlant (*The Female Complaint* 2008), our panelists investigate how affects, feelings, and emotions shape and transform aesthetic and medial forms. The talks address how Anglophone works of literature codify affects as literary and medial forms in their critical discussions of the climate crisis, the excesses of neo-liberal capitalism and contemporary labour, and the mainstreaming of right-wing populist rhetoric across the globe. Using a wide array of reading strategies – formalist, differential, surface, reparative, close, and comparative readings – our panel traces the connections and disconnections between affective functions in Anglophone literatures, as well as other media.



Sticking the Fragments Together in the Party: Objects of Emotions and Affect in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*

Ayşen Demir Kılıç (Osmaniye Korkut Ata University, Türkiye)

This paper aims to explore material objects in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) through interwoven lenses of thing theory and affect theory by interrogating how “affect” circulates dynamically among the novel's characters. In her *Diary*, Woolf describes her writing process in *Mrs Dalloway* as a “tunnelling process”, stating that she “dig[s] out beautiful caves behind [her] characters... The idea is that the caves shall connect, and each comes to daylight at the present moment” (Woolf *Diary*, p. 263). The objects in the novel function not only as symbolic props but as mediums for the circulation of emotions through these tunnels. Each character's encounters with “objects of emotions”, such as the motorcar, Big Ben, Clarissa's green dress, Elizabeth's pink dress, Peter's pocketknife or Rezia's hats generates emotions, sticking them together in/to Clarissa's party, which becomes a “happy object” for all, as an offering; to combine, to create” (Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway*, p. 89). Sara Ahmed argues that emotions do not simply reside within the subject. They are generated through the interactions, the “contact zone” between bodies and things, creating value and shaping the surfaces. Ahmed describes these objects as sticky and the stickiness results from this “surfacing”. In this respect, certain objects in the novel create stickiness by functioning to “bind” characters together in a shared moment, “in the daylight, in the present moment” (Woolf, *Diary*, p. 263). In the end, the circulation of emotions through the tunnels culminates in Clarissa's party, which becomes a sticky “affective object”, a site of “personal and social tension” that gathers people through shared affective “impressions” (Ahmed, p. 6). Consequently, this paper will trace the circulation of emotions to Clarissa's party, which is intended as an offer “to combine” the fragmented post-war society of London, which becomes a binding agent as a “happy object” (Ahmed, p. 218).

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Domestic Surveillance and the Dis/Affects of Transparency in A. S. Byatt's *Babel Tower*

Patricia García Santos (University of Córdoba, Spain)



Babel Tower (1996), A. S. Byatt's third novel of the 'Frederica Quartet', continues the story of Frederica Potter in *The Virgin in the Garden* (1978) and *Still Life* (1985). This paper studies how this novel articulates disaffection as a structurally produced affect that emerges from the entanglement of *Babel Tower's* female protagonist's private life and public institutional and social expectations in late-modern Britain. Drawing on seminal works of affect studies, from Sara Ahmed (2004) and Sianne Ngai (2005) to Lauren Berlant (2011), as well as recent discussions of literary apathy and dis/affection (Behluli 2022), I argue that Byatt mobilizes an affective withdrawal in Frederica not as emotional emptiness or neoliberal detachment, but as a consequence of coercive forms of community, language, and surveillance.

Focusing on Frederica's experience of marriage, motherhood, and legal struggle, this paper reads disaffection and affective exhaustion as responses to what Lauren Berlant describes as the failure of normative promises attached to intimacy and social belonging (*Cruel Optimism* 3). Unlike contemporary narratives of apathy grounded in late capitalism, such as recent American fiction like Ottessa Moshfegh's *My Year of Rest and Relaxation* (2018) or Spanish author Beatriz Serrano's *Discontent* (2023), *Babel Tower* situates disaffection within a British context shaped by post-1960s cultural and intellectual emancipation. Under this light, Frederica's affective impasse is not a retreat from agency, but a symptom of structural surveillance, represented in the novel through domestic spaces that demand transparency and legibility from her.

Ultimately, the novel's fragmented narration, shifting focalization, use of letters, and novel-within-the-novel technique portray and formally produce Frederica's affective state. Byatt's experimental form mirrors the oscillation between affect and disaffect, care and refusal, that characterizes Frederica's attempt to escape the enforcement of transparency that fractures her sense of privacy. Dis/affection theory thus becomes productive insofar as it enables Frederica's reorientation of agency toward writing, self-redefinition, and a newly acquired sense of privacy and independence beyond the familiar household.

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Let Them Read Chaos: Reading Affect Differentially in Kae Tempest's Poetry

Martin Riedelsheimer (Newcastle University, United Kingdom)

This paper aims to contribute towards a better understanding of a poetics of affect by exploring the various textual strategies at work in creating a poem's affective potential. It seeks to show how affect may unfold between readers and texts in the process of reading and how a text carries affect through the entanglement of its form, materiality and performativity. Following Brian Massumi's observation that language "function[s] differentially in relation to [affect]" (2002: 25), I want to further develop a way of reading (for) affect called "differential reading" (Riedelsheimer 2024: 278–281). Reading differentially means to read closely for the affective surplus beyond and beside a text's meaning, to be attuned to the affective affordances of form and materiality or texture, as well as to how language itself may performatively express affect. As such, differential reading takes up and integrates the work of critics that have found affect in a text's form (Brinkema 2014; Brenkman 2020), texture (Sedgwick 2003) or textual performativity (Riley 2000, 2005).

This will be put to the test in a differential reading of Kae Tempest's long poem and performance *Let Them Eat Chaos* (2016a, 2016b), which maps the reactions of seven lonely Londoners to various political and private crises, including the climate catastrophe, drug addiction, gentrification, violent crime and what George Legg has called the "digital affects of neoliberalism" (2025), and culminates in a cathartic moment where the seven protagonists are brought together out of their isolation due to a violent thunderstorm. In particular, a differential reading of the poem will investigate how the poem's form (changes in rhythm and repetitive patterns), materiality and texture (including the typesetting) transport the protagonists' isolation and sense of being overwhelmed by the world they live in and how the intermediality of the accompanying performance adds to the poem's metonymic exploration of loneliness and desperation, where London and its seven protagonists stand for humanity in the twenty-first century.

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Session #2

1 September, 9:00–11:00

Empathy vs. Overload: Affective Circulation and Digital Mediation in *Hotel Reverie* and *Host*

Chiara Frescofiore (University of Naples "L'Orientale", Italy)

This paper explores how contemporary digital narratives shape the circulation of affect within posthuman and technologically mediated environments through a comparative reading of *Black Mirror's Hotel Reverie* (Charlie Brooker 2025) and *Host* (Rob Savage 2020). Both works construct affective experience within different screen-based narrative systems that distribute perception and emotional intensity across human and non-human actors, activating media-specific storyworlds in which immersion and affect emerge through layered mediation (Ryan and Thon 2014). Drawing on affect theory (Ahmed 2004; Ngai 2005; Berlant 2011), alongside accounts of affective circulation in digital media (Dean 2010; Pardey 2023), the paper argues that similar narrative logics can generate divergent affective regimes depending on how circulation is structured. In *Hotel Reverie*, affect circulates through temporal extension and narrative coherence. Immersive simulation allows affective intensities to stabilise over time, enabling posthuman empathy to emerge as a mediated form of relationality across human and non-human actors (Braidotti 2013). Affective experience unfolds coherently within the narrative environment.

In *Host*, affect circulates through simultaneity, fragmentation, and constant exposure. The Zoom interface accelerates affective



transmission while preventing sedimentation. Intensities accumulate rapidly but remain unprocessed, producing saturation and resulting in overload and disaffection for both characters and viewers.

Through a comparative analysis of *Hotel Reverie* and *Host*, the paper examines how affect circulates through double mediation, as digital interfaces and positions of spectatorship actively modulate how affect moves, accumulates, or stabilises. Similar configurations shape distinct affective orientations, suggesting that posthuman narrative environments may foster empathic engagement or lead to affective exhaustion.

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Other People's Pain: Emotional Labor in Charles Yu's "Standard Loneliness Package" (2012)

Michael Boog (University of Bern, Germany)

Charles Yu's short story "Standard Loneliness Package" (2012) imagines a type of service job where employees in Bangalore, India, are employed to feel the physical pain and emotional anguish of affluent customers from the Global North. As the author himself has explained in an interview, he had hoped that "the story might be able to explore some of the socio-economic and psychological consequences of exporting our crappiest jobs to people on the other side of the world" (Stocks n. pag). This paper



takes its cue from these descriptions of the story as a reflection of the customer service industry in global contexts. In considering this story as an instance of critical realism (Löwy; WReC), my aims are twofold. Firstly, the paper discusses how Yu's realism attaches to what sociologist Arlie Hochschild defines as 'emotional labor,' that is, the display and management of emotions in customer-centred service relations (Hochschild 1983; 2012). Specifically, I consider how the story's realism is legible as an abstraction of emotional tasks vis-à-vis physical ones. It thus puts into sharp relief the commodification of emotions on which the tertiary sector in its customer relations critically relies. Connected to this, the paper secondly considers a globalizing gesture whereby Yu's story situates this emotional labor in a global division of labor marked by an unequal emotional-economic exchange such that positionality within a global capitalist economy is highlighted as a determining factor in the exploitation of emotional work. Here I am particularly interested in how the text relies on an interplay between concrete experience – the emotions felt by the employees – and abstract representations of their services as they are rendered, in the story, as TV advertisements. Global economic dynamics thus come to be both immediately effective on an emotional level, and yet perplexingly indiscernible on a semiotic one.

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The Affective Dynamics of Ecological Crisis in Visual Eco-dystopian Narratives

Tuğçe Alkış (Recep Tayyip Erdogan University, Türkiye)

This paper examines Helen Ward and Marc Craste's picture book *Varmints* and Gints Zilbalodis's wordless animated feature film *Flow* as eco-dystopian narratives to explore ecological crisis through affective conditions of environmental materiality



and ecological engagement. In these visual mediums, the atmospheric elements such as colour palette, silence, framing, and rhythm materialise affective conditions that shape the aesthetic composition, making ecological disaster perceptible in relational networks of the ecological environment. Both works depict damaged ecosystems. While *Varmints* portrays the environmental deterioration caused by the rapid expansion of industrial systems, *Flow* displays the ecological disruption and instability shaped by flooding. The ruined landscapes and shifting environmental forces are illustrated through the displacement of animal characters, embedded as affective dynamics rather than as the symbolic unhomeliness of human beings. Focusing on more than human world through the non-human embodiment of animal figures, these award-winning works present affect as ecological engagement beyond reductive human exceptionalism and as ongoing circulation through transcorporeal interconnections between bodies, materials and landscapes. This critical posthumanist perspective points out that the concerns of ecological crisis cannot be limited to human needs and survival; instead, the responsiveness to such disasters embraces the material and affective intra-actions of more than human assemblages. Furthermore, the non-human resistance and endurance to the environmental breakdown call for the understanding of shared agency and constant becomings across all forms of life, subverting anthropocentric assumptions. At the intersection of affect theory and posthuman ecocriticism, this paper aims to analyse *Varmints* and *Flow* as eco-dystopian narratives which articulate affective processes and dynamics within the eco-material connectivity and attunement to explore ecological crisis beyond the human-centred experience. In this context, ecological affective conditions emerge through the atmospheric elements of these visual narratives in which aesthetic composition is not symbolic but relational and material.

“Pure Longing”: Reparative Ekphrasis in Ali Smith’s *So in the Spruce Forest*

Maite Escudero-Álías (University of Zaragoza, Spain)

Ali Smith’s *So in the Spruce Forest* (2025) came out between the publication of her duology *Gliff* (2024) and *Glyph* (2026). Remarkably, this is her piece of fiction that most blatantly relies on ekphrasis as the main literary vehicle to delve into both an intimate conversation with her deceased mother and a genuine concern about art and nature. This fictional essay constitutes an exceptional literary homage to Norwegian painter Edvard Munch, as the autodiegetic narrator (or implied author) engages in a profound aesthetic and ethical dialogue with nineteen paintings by Munch, fittingly reproduced in an artistry edition. Although the conversational tone is notoriously Smithian, embedded with doses of irony and linguistic playfulness that enrich readers’ knowledge about culture and art, the main content revolves around the symbolism of trees in Munch’s work, “often graced with circles like they have eyes or mouths” (36).



It is my contention that, with this narrative of “lifeforce and deathdrive” (36), as the narrator puts it, Smith is weaving together an affective reflection on ecology and politics through trees and stones charged with life and the “pure longing” (12, 26) felt by the narrator towards her mother as well as by some characters in Munch paintings. Moreover, such a kaleidoscopic array of light, darkness, brightness, freshness, toughness, neatness, renewal and germ is evoked by the Norwegian translation of “Spruce” as “Gran” (8-9). This polysemous word becomes the narrative excuse to explore the power of nature and art in the transformation of our present reality through imaginary stories that are rooted in those paintings. By looking at the unexpected sources of the paintings’ elements and persons, Smith’s text attests to her political engagement with the importance of roots, both literal and metaphorical, in the quest of individual and social cohesion. For this purpose, my proposal draws from Eve K. Sedgwick’s notion of reparative reading (2003) as a critical stance to build alternative affective attachments like curiosity, attention and reimagined collectivity in times of destruction, alienation, social exclusion and natural exhaustion. Reparative readings help nourish not only our sense of self, but also our ethical relationship to the world at large.

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Session #3

1 September, 17:00–19:00

The Affects of Dreaming in Zakes Mda’s Fiction

Katherine Hallemeier (University of Geneva, Switzerland)

This paper builds on scholarship that presents the fiction of South African writer Zakes Mda as particularly timely for comprehending uncertain times. It also contributes to the project of describing what is so bracing about the distinctive narrative form Mda deploys to imagine impasses and futures characterized by extreme precarity. I focus on one of Mda’s most-cited novels, *The Whale Caller* (2005), which exemplifies a dreamlike narrative form in which the psychological and physical toll of colonial capitalist violence is continuously condensed and displaced. The critical project of the novel perhaps inescapably includes



a revelatory one in which permeating societal trauma and the profound effects of extreme inequality manifest to the reader. Yet, the revelation of intolerable precarity, the novel makes clear, is no revelation for those who live through it. Drawing on the methodologies of affect theory, I propose an approach to understanding Mda's formal instantiations of the dreamlike whereby narrative interpretation yields to attentive description of the affects and effects of dreaming. The critical project of revelation in Mda's novel, I suggest, is outweighed by the fiction's meditation on the embodied necessity of ongoing dreaming, which is to say on the corporeally felt necessity of condensing and displacing traumatic realities. Mda's narrative form, I argue, can be read as facilitating the conditions for sleep that have been systematically eliminated in scenes of acute deprivation. There is, in other words, a therapeutic dimension to the relation between form and content, but one that productively supplements a psychoanalytic literary tradition that finds in both dreams and literature narrative forms ripe for interpretation and the elucidation of a shared reality. Mda's novels suggest how literature, like dreams, also facilitates a necessary, life-giving retreat from the world, such as becomes accessible in dreamless sleep.

Exploring Impasse, Disappointment, and Nostalgia: Dis/Affection in the Works of Nthikeng Mohlele

Marek Pawlicki (University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland)

In a 1992 interview, Nadine Gordimer discussed “the crisis of expectation” (142) that the liberation movement faced in the post-apartheid era. Over thirty years after this interview, the term remains relevant in South Africa, as both writers and scholars continue to discuss the disappointment and frustration with the new dispensation. One of those authors is Rita Barnard, who, in a 2019 collection of essays, writes about “the conditions of waiting, stuckness, disappointment, and nostalgia [...] in postapartheid literature” (7). Andrew van der Vlies refers to this disappointment as “a state of impasse,” “an enduring of something (some condition) other than that for which one has hoped” (15). Barnard's and van der Vlies's comments enable a deeper insight into the affective experience of living in postapartheid South Africa, in which lingering hopes for a more just dispensation clash with attitudes of frustration, resignation, and desperation. In my paper, I propose to examine this structure of feeling by focusing on the works of the South African writer Nthikeng Mohlele. In his short story collections *A Little Light* and *The Discovery of Love*, and his most recent novel *Revolutionaries' House*, Mohlele explores the condition of impasse from a variety of perspectives – from those who have not benefited from the economic transformation to those who, for various reasons, have opted out of the



privileges conferred upon them by the system. I will argue that the reactions of Mohlele's protagonists can be analyzed as forms of dis/affection that convey their ambivalent attitude toward the socio-political vision that accompanied the country's transition to democracy. My goal is to consider the notion of dis/affection, as defined by Jeremy Gilbert, Helen F. Wilson, Ben Anderson, and Sofie Behluli, in the context of Barnard's and van der Vlies's comments on impasse, disappointment, and nostalgia.

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Feeling Afloat: Nineteenth-Century Sailor Writing as Affective Practice

Hannah Pardey (Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf, Germany)

My paper approaches nineteenth-century Anglophone sailors as literary agents whose writing negotiates affect – i.e., "visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally *other than* conscious knowing [...] insisting beyond emotion" (Seigworth and Gregg 1) – through literary form. Central to imperial and commercial trade, seafarers were routinely subjected to 'emotional regimes', "normative emotions and the official rituals, practices, and emotives that express and inculcate them" (Reddy 129), including



religious tracts, conduct manuals but also travel narratives and novels (Blum). While maritime charities widely distributed these texts among sailors to cultivate ‘emotion management’ (Hochschild) and thus foster economic productivity and heteronormative masculinity (Downing et al.; Kelley), sailors’ texts mobilise and unsettle them, creating distinct affective patterns shaped by “*forces of encounter*” (Seigworth and Gregg 2), the creation of collectivities, shared physical labour and proximity to the sea. The ship – at once harsh hierarchy and mobile microcosm – functions as an affective laboratory in which working-class bodies experiment with alternative affective poetics and politics.

Drawing on archival research at the Caird Library and Archive, I present two generic case studies. First, shipboard diaries (Richard Cotten, Sidney Smith) reorganise the genre’s spatio-temporal conventions to resist middle-class emotion management. They encode in literary form – atmosphere, rhythm, sound – what defies expression in standard(ised) emotional categories, forging affective ties to communities on ship and shore and registering environmental sensibility. Second, shipboard magazines (*The Daily Liar*, *The Young Idea*), by foregrounding the collective dimensions of authorship and affect as well as intermedial practices, will be conceptualised as “palimpsest[s] of force-encounters traversing the ebbs and swells of intensities that pass” and create resonances “between ‘bodies’” (Seigworth and Gregg 2).

Combining theories of affect and genre, the paper argues that literary form encodes intensities and relationalities that resist absorption into normative emotional regimes. Moreover, it reads sailor writing in terms of a subversive history of affect, suggesting how the distinction between affect and emotion serves to consolidate affect studies alongside the history of emotions, including new approaches to “the performativity of emotional practices” (Martín-Moruno and Pichel) through historically and socially conditioned bodies (Rosenwein and Cristiani; Scheer).

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Fear as a Spatialising Affect in Digital Theatre: Sudha Bhuchar's *Touchstone Tales*

Neshen Isavea-Gyunesh (Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany)

This paper examines fear as an affective force that reorganises bodies, spaces, and relations in Sudha Bhuchar's *Touchstone Tales*, a series of Zoom-based monologues and a duologue developed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Drawing primarily on Sara Ahmed's "The Affective Politics of Fear," the paper argues that fear in these digital performances does not merely register trauma or vulnerability but actively shapes spatial orientation, proximity, and the conditions of embodied presence.

Focusing on scenes of gendered and racialized violence, childhood abuse, and public harassment, the paper traces how fear circulates through bodies and environments, producing what Ahmed describes as a "shrinking" of the body while simultaneously reorganising space around it. In *Touchstone Tales*, fear operates as a spatialising affect: it contracts movement, redraws boundaries of safety, and transforms familiar places – such as streets, homes, and community spaces – into sites of threat and withdrawal. Yet fear does not function solely as paralysis. In moments of collective recognition and solidarity, it also enables alternative spatial configurations in which bodies reclaim presence, visibility, and agency.

The digital stage of Zoom plays a crucial role in this affective reconfiguration. Rather than flattening emotional experience, the mediated space intensifies affective proximity, allowing fear to circulate across screens while foregrounding the relational dynamics of distance, exposure, and co-presence. By bringing together affect theory, relational spatial thinking, and performance analysis, the paper demonstrates how Bhuchar's digital dramaturgy articulates fear as both an embodied sensation and a force that produces spatial relations.



Ultimately, the paper contributes to debates on the poetics of affect by showing how fear functions not only as a thematic concern but as an affect that shapes aesthetic form, spatial imagination, and modes of relationality within contemporary digital theatre.

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S35.- British Women Writers and Travel Writing (1770-1910): Hybridity, Transcultural Contributions and Pilgrimage

Clifford Siskin has identified the reasons that caused women writers' posthumous invisibility in the nineteenth century: "During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries many women wrote in many different genres with a considerable degree of popular and often critical success. On the other hand, we have also examined the narrowing of the notion of literature in Britain. [...], these acts of narrowing [...], took writing out of the "hands" of women" (Siskin, *The Work of Writing*, 195).

The seminar will focus on reversing British women writers' posthumous invisibility and identify their contribution to cultural mediation in the long nineteenth century. Following the first women writers, namely Mary Wortley Montagu's *Letters* (1763) and Mary Wollstonecraft's *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark* (1796), women travellers were able to contribute to the new genre and become successful published writers: from Mariana Starke's *Letters from Italy* (1800), to Mary Shelley's *Rambles in Germany and in Italy in 1840, 1842 and 1843* (1844), Lady Morgan's *Italy* (1821), or Sarah Stickney Ellis's *Summer and Winter in the Pyrenees* (1843), Nineteenth-century women writers became producers as well as readers of travelogues. Conversely, the views they shared on the sites/places they visited largely influenced later generations of Anglophone visitors or pilgrims. How did women's travelogues frame contemporary discourse or respond to dominant or ideological views? What dimension did they foreground that was perhaps not quite so present in travel writing authored by men? How did the experience of travelling, walking (or "rambling"), help empower them to become published authors?

The panel convenors invite papers that will reflect on any aspect showing the intersection between women's travel writing and



contemporary culture or emphasizing the circulation of ideas, visual tropes and rhetorical stances. In particular, papers addressing the notion of “pilgrimage” – understood as much as a spiritual endeavour as an introspective experience are welcome. Travel writing will be analyzed as a polyphonic, hybrid narrative that draws from many voices, experiences and sources, including translations. Contributions may focus on travelogues written in the form of letters, journals, memoirs, diaries, in published or manuscript form.

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Session #1: Outside Europe

3 September, 9:30–11:30

Transcultural Forms of Travel Writing: The Cases of Isabella Bird and Elizabeth Amelia Sharp

Giuseppe Capalbo (University of Rome Tor Vergata, Italy)

This paper examines how women writers in the late nineteenth century expanded travel writing through hybrid and mediated forms. First, it offers a reading of Isabella Bird's *A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains* (1879) as a text that moves between travelogue and illness narrative, drawing on the Medical Humanities and Disability Studies. Recounting her 1873 journey, Bird imagines Colorado as "the most remarkable sanatorium in the world", a state where "consumptives, asthmatics, dyspeptics, and sufferers from nervous diseases" either try "the 'camp cure' for three or four months, or settl[e] here permanently" (Bird 2009, 48). In doing so, Bird figures illness as a condition that, rather than limiting the individual, fosters mobility. The second part turns to Elizabeth Amelia Sharp, considering her translation of Heinrich Heine's *Italian Travel Sketches* (1892) alongside her unpublished *Travels in Africa* diary (1893), a manuscript I have recently rediscovered among the William Sharp's papers held at the University of California, Berkeley. Read together, these two ways of engaging with travel writing – mediating a male author's Italian journey and recording her own African travels – demonstrate how translation could function "as a kind of writer's apprenticeship for women" (Simon 1996, 2), before authoring a travelogue of their own. In both cases, the paper highlights women's agency in appropriating, transforming, and expanding the formal and cultural possibilities of travel writing, understood as a transcultural genre shaped by many voices, sources, and devices.

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British Women in India as Cultural Explorers and Commentators

Thomas Kullmann (University of Osnabrück, Germany)

Among nineteenth-century English writing on India, diaries and letters edited and published by women are of particular interest, as European women in India found access to areas of Indian life into which European men could not penetrate. My contribution will focus on three of these accounts: Mrs. Meer Hassan Ali's *Observations on the Mussulmans of India* (1832), Helen Mackenzie's *Life in the Mission, the Camp and the Zenana* (1855) and Emily Eden's *Up the Country* (written in 1839, published in 1866).

Mrs. Ali was an Englishwoman who accompanied her Indian husband to India and published her account after her return to England six years later. Mrs. Mackenzie accompanied her officer husband who commandeered a Sepoy regiment in Ludhiana in the Punjab, and Emily Eden travelled India in the company of her brother the Earl of Auckland, the governor-general.

While the three authors differ from one another in terms of political, occupational and religious backgrounds, their writing displays significant similarities. All of them interacted with native Indians a lot, and availed of the privilege of having the freedom of both the male and the female quarters. The three accounts are characterized by respectful curiosity, and an attempt to do justice to foreign customs, even if these customs, like polygamy and seclusion of women, ran counter to what the European ladies believed in. These publications also display definable generic features: In their prefaces the authors draw attention to the subjective quality of their accounts, but also claim that their subjectivity might be an asset, as it conveyed the spontaneity of their experiences. By means of this genre of edited letters or diary, women writers significantly contributed to the various discursive strands of British colonialism.



From Colonialist Representation to Transcultural Mediation. The Malayan Travel Writing of Isabella Bird (1883) and Emily Innes (1885)

Marijke Denger (University of Bern, Switzerland)

In this paper, I compare the travelogues of two late-nineteenth-century British women writers whose work introduced the Malay Peninsula, then on the cusp of being incorporated into the British Empire, to a metropolitan audience: Isabella Bird's *The Golden Chersonese and the Way Thither* (1883), based on letters sent from the region, and Emily Innes' *The Chersonese with the Gilding Off* (1885), a memoir written "in contradistinction, but with no aim of contradiction" to Bird's account (Doran 175). Bird was an avid traveller and writer who was widely read during her lifetime and continues to be published. By contrast, the work of Innes, the wife of a junior civil servant in Malaya, has largely "faded into obscurity" (Tay 31). Furthermore, whereas Bird celebrates the Peninsula as a profitable commodity for the Empire, Innes foregrounds the price to be paid for imperial expansion, in particular by British women. Drawing on Elleke Boehmer's concept of colonialist discourse, I first explore the role played by both travelogues in framing contemporary discourses on Malaya and thus in supposedly legitimising its colonisation. Subsequently, I engage with Mary Louise Pratt's notion of the contact zone to show how Bird's and Innes' writing complicates the visual tropes and rhetorical stances on which the construction of colonial authority for a large part rested. In both texts, I argue, Malaya becomes a site of pilgrimage for the authors, that is, a location where they can contemplate their subject-position as British women travellers and writers, and draw on moments of introspection to rethink, however fleetingly, their relation to the peoples being subjected to British rule. Ultimately, both travelogues, precisely because they were authored by women, showcase a development from colonialist representation to transcultural mediation, thus creating new intersections between literature and the geopolitical reality with which it is intertwined.

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The Politics of Stealth in Ella C. Sykes's *Through Persia on a Side-Saddle* (1897)

Isabelle Gadoin (Sorbonne Nouvelle University, France)

Whilst Iran became a vital pawn and/or partner in the international politics of the Great Game in the second half of the 19th century, and attracted numerous travellers, British « ladies » going through the country and narrating their trip were still few and far between. After Mary Sheil, who drew her 1856 narrative *Glimpses of Life and Manners in Persia* from the four years she spent in the country with her husband, an army officer posted there, the first notable female narratives, including Gertrude Bell's famous *Persian Pictures* (1894) were not published before the mid or late 1890s. Ella C. Sykes's *Through Persia on a Side-Saddle* (1897) offers an interesting example of a full-scope narrative written by a « lady-traveller », which may be contrasted with the later account of the same stay by her brother Sir Percy Sykes, *Ten Thousand Miles in Persia* (1902). The paper will focus on the travellers' approach of the country's cultural riches, and on their appropriative and collective practices, which may be discerned under often thinly-veiled allusions. Interestingly, Ella Sykes raises the question of possession and property in a humorous, and even comedic chapter dedicated to her servants in Kerman, denouncing their thievish tendencies—which will allow us to investigate European travellers' conception of personal vs national property, from both a cultural and political point of view.

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Session #2: Mediation: Europe and Beyond

3 September, 15:00–17:00

Between Letters and Landscapes: Female Authorship and Hybridity through Women Travel Accounts

Carla Tempestoso (University of Calabria, Italy)

At a moment when travel accounts were becoming a key instrument for shaping taste, knowledge, and cultural authority, eighteenth-century women travellers entered the field from its margins and by reappropriating those margins, transforming them into productive spaces of innovation and cultural authority. Indeed, women's travel writing in this period participated in the formation of travelogue culture and contributed to a wider rearticulation of literary authority (O'Loughlin 2018). Developing alongside Enlightenment culture and the practices of the Grand Tour, the travel narrative became a privileged medium for empirically grounded description, comparative observation, and the articulation of social and cultural difference. Yet this was also a space in which women negotiated access, credibility, and authorship through distinctive rhetorical strategies: they mobilized sociability, sensibility, and embodied experience to claim interpretive authority, while foregrounding domestic, interpersonal, and affective dimensions that complicate the period's ideals of detached scrutiny. As a result, women's travel texts challenged both dominant discourses of place and nation and the relations between private voice and public address.

My contribution concentrates on figures such as Elizabeth Montagu, Mary Hamilton, and Hester Lynch Piozzi, showing how their travel writings mirror a complex hybridity. By operating at the intersection of letters, journals, and memoirs, and by cultivating a choral voice in which observation is continually inflected by dialogue, quotation, and situational responsiveness



(Batchelor, Kaplan 2005), I argue that their travel accounts become a site of negotiation between observation and self-writing, documentation and performance. Such writing resists the linear authority of a single, unified narrator, presenting experience as mediated and relational, shaped through movement across linguistic, social, and cultural thresholds. In this sense, travel becomes both a geographical practice and a textual one, enabling women to negotiate the boundaries between intimacy and publicity and, through forms of female authorship, to leverage this opportunity into new modes of visibility—testing the limits of what can be claimed, recorded, or transmitted.

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British Women Travel Writers as Cultural Mediators in the Nineteenth Century

Angelia Subin (The West University of Timișoara, Romania)

Marius-Mircea Crișan (The West University of Timișoara, Romania)

This paper examines the travelogues, diaries, sketches, and novels of five largely overlooked British women writers—Sarah Stickney Ellis, Mary Boddington, Louisa Stuart Costello, Elizabeth Mazzuchelli, and Emily Gerard—to explain their central role as cultural mediators in the nineteenth century. It focuses on how women contributed to the travel writing genre, producing hybrid narratives that circulated ideas, values, and visual tropes across geographical, national, and cultural boundaries.

Based on travelogues written in various forms, the paper shows how these women redefined the genre as a form of experiential knowledge through personal observation, social commentary, and introspection. Their texts foreground dimensions often marginal in male-authored travel writing, including domestic spaces, everyday practices, moral reflection, and the affective experience of movement. Thus, they responded to dominant ideological discourses, particularly those surrounding nationality, religion, and gender, without much noise and in a very subtle manner.



The paper further explores the notion of travel as a pilgrimage, understood not only as a spiritual journey but also as an introspective and personal reflection through which women writers shed light on mobility, authorship, and authority. Walking, rambling, climbing mountains, and living abroad for an extended time emerge as empowering practices that enabled these writers to claim acknowledgement and public voice.

By recovering these writers from posthumous invisibility, the paper argues for a re-evaluation of the British women's travel writing as a crucial landmark in cultural mediation. It highlights how women's travelogues functioned as dynamic, intertextual spaces in which cultural knowledge was produced, translated, and circulated for an Anglophone readership.

Mary Gordon (Mrs. Disney Leith) and Iceland: Travel, Pilgrimage, and Cultural Mediation

Ingibjörg Ágústsdóttir (University of Iceland, Iceland)

The Scottish writer Mary Charlotte Julia Gordon, or Mrs Disney Leith (1840–1926), came from a wealthy aristocratic background and developed a fascination with Icelandic history and culture from a young age. Yet it was only in 1894, at the age of fifty-four and recently widowed, that she first travelled to Iceland, having by that time taught herself Icelandic. This marked the beginning of a sustained engagement with the country: Gordon would travel to Iceland nineteen times, the last of these journeys taking place in 1914, as World War I was breaking out. Her travel writing, poetry, and translations position her as a significant, though largely overlooked, contributor to British women's travel writing at the turn of the century.

Gordon's fascination with the Icelandic sagas shaped much of her engagement with the country. In her book for young readers *Peeps at Many Lands: Iceland* (1908), she famously remarks that “The Iceland of to-day is not very unlike that of the saga times” (16). Janet Powney and Jeremy Mitchell have described Gordon's journeys to Iceland as northern pilgrimages, emphasising her desire for first-hand contact with a cultural heritage rooted in the Viking age (3). Indeed, Gordon travelled extensively to saga sites, wrote poetry inspired by saga narratives, and translated several of the Bishop's Sagas into English.

However, this paper argues that Gordon's traveller identity cannot be reduced to that of a saga pilgrim alone. Alongside her engagement with medieval literature, Gordon wrote poetry attentive to Icelandic landscapes and everyday life, cultivated close friendships with Icelandic writers and intellectuals, and acted as a cultural mediator through her translations of contemporary Icelandic poetry, including the work of Grímur Thomsen. Read together, Gordon's travel writing, poetry, and translations reveal



a hybrid, polyphonic body of work that combines pilgrimage, authorship, and transcultural exchange. In doing so, her writings exemplify how British women's travel writing functioned not only as personal or spiritual exploration, but as a means of shaping cross-cultural understanding in the long nineteenth century.

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Gender, Faith & Mobility in Catherine Exley's and Sophia Barnard's Memoirs

Fernando Apolinar-Rodríguez (University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain)

As the British Empire expanded, travel writing became one of the most popular subgenres of the nineteenth century (Kilbride, 341), providing the public with descriptions of both close and distant places, people and customs. The Napoleonic Wars saw an increase in the number of published travelogues as participants decided to publish their memoirs of the conflict (Ramsey, 81). Despite the increase in the number of publications, female experiences of the war are scarce, and the extant ones are often overshadowed by their male counterparts. Among these texts of female authorship, it is possible to highlight Catherine Exley's Peninsular War diary (1923) and Sophia Barnard's travelogue *Travels in Algiers* (1820).

This paper will examine Catherine Exley's experience as an army wife during the Peninsular War and Sophia Barnard's travelogue in Algeria as examples of travel writing by empowered women. Although both authors initially travelled in the company of their husbands, they ultimately carried out their journeys alone, a novel sense of independence that allowed them to move beyond the restrictive social order present in their home country (Bassnett, 233-234). This change advanced a distinct sense of female agency particularly in contexts of solitude and war, further encouraged by an extensive collaboration network of female friends and anonymous women, thus highlighting the crucial role of female sorority in these times of danger and vulnerability (Cardoza in Probert, 129).

In addition, the paper will also explore how Exley and Barnard experienced their travels as introspective spiritual pilgrimages. Religion occupies an ambiguous space in these narratives, as prayer constitutes their main coping mechanism in response to



hardships and adversities (Pullin in Probert, 79), thus finding the necessary encouragement to persist in their journeys amid war (Gifra-Adroher, 158), but, on the other hand, religion also acts as a process of out-group isolation from the community (Pullin in Probert, 80).

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Session #3: Travel and Sociability

3 September, 17:30–19:30

"Chronicling the 'Great Disembedding': British Women Travellers in Revolutionary France

Kimberley Page-Jones (University of Brest, France)

This paper aims to look at the contribution of British loyalist women in writing and analysing the French Revolution in their travel letters. Their journalistic recordings, published as travelogues in their own times, were indeed republished by French historians in the late 19th century.

As argued by Haim Burstin, what was remarkable in the early days of the Revolution was less the resistance to revolutionary ideas and change than the rapidity with which new ideas spread and were endorsed by large segments of the population. A new



“revolutionary sociability” was key to the dissemination of new values and to a new sense of participation in the *polis*. As mentioned by Louis-Sébastien Mercier in 1791, a number of British “distinguished writers”, including Helen Maria Williams, took a very active part in the diffusion of revolutionary ideas across the Channel to “produce a 14th of July in England”. The contributions of Williams or Mary Wollstonecraft to the pamphlet war have been well-documented, but less so that of loyalist writers who resided in France during the Revolution and had an acute eye on the social effects of revolutionary innovations. Some of them traced revolutionary ideas to the early Enlightenment writings of Shaftesbury, most influential for thinking the autonomy of civil society.

Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor has used the expression “the Great Disembedding” to refer to the process that was ushered in by Enlightenment theories of sociability and greatly accelerated by the Revolution. According to Taylor, from the late seventeenth century, moral philosophy over-determined the role of freedom, reason and affections in shaping ‘society’, gradually unshackling the self from its spiritual and social embeddedness. In the eighteenth century, the rise of the public sphere, new modes of consumption and new elaborations of civil society entrenched “a new self-understanding of our social existence, one that gave an unprecedented primacy to the individual”. Taylor argues that, prior to the advent of the new moral order, the understanding of the self was embedded in society: “From the standpoint of the individual’s sense of self, it meant the inability to imagine oneself outside a certain matrix”. The fulfilment of the self was indeed inextricably tied up to a sense of belonging to a community that venerated higher sacred principles. What loyalist women recorded while in France was the rapid dismantling of religious life, practices and places, especially during the Jacobin era, and its social and psychological effects on the people. Interestingly, their analysis of revolutionary France echoed the thoughts of Mary Astell in *Bart’lemy Fair: or, An Enquiry After Wit* (1709, 1722), a pamphlet that she wrote against Shaftesbury’s call to de-Christianise social affections.

The paper also aims to look at the presence of loyalist women’s writings in the late 19th-century French historiography. Their socio-psychological analysis of revolutionary France enjoyed a posthumous renaissance in the writings of some French social historians, who selected and published part of their travel letters. We will look at the historians’ selections and discuss the contribution of these women to the French historiography of the Revolution.

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Traveller of the Empire: Julia Clara Byrne's Imperialist Portrayal of Spanish Women as an Oriental Other in *Cosas de España* (1866)

Eduardo Sánchez Palencia (University of Valladolid, Spain)

According to Antoinette Burton (1994), a large number of proto-feminist movements that emerged in Great Britain during the second half of the nineteenth century were influenced by the imperialistic ideals that dominated Victorian society. The growing concern of middle-class proto-feminist groups about the situation of women in India was related to the "civilising mission" on which the nationalist discourse in defence of the British empire was based. By portraying Indian women as helpless victims of an Oriental and backward culture, these middle-class women created a colonised Other through which they could demonstrate their



moral authority and their aptness to be considered relevant contributors to the missionary objectives of the British empire. Thus, they created an inferior Other that they could civilise in an attempt to put an end to their own image as Other in British culture and society (Burton, 1994, p. 35).

Julia Clara Byrne's representation of Spanish women in *Cosas de España* (1866) resembles these proto-feminist discourses on Indian women. The traveller claims that it is because of Spain's Oriental tradition that Spanish women are considered inferior to men and mistreated as mere "domestic machines" (p. 20). In a markedly condescending tone, Byrne describes the precarious situation of Spanish women, paying special attention to their limited education and the "unwomanly work" to which they are "condemned" (p. 61). Therefore, it seems that Byrne's trip to Spain functioned as an ideological pilgrimage that allowed her to reaffirm her imperialist ideals through depictions of Spanish women as intellectually and morally inferior. The purpose of this paper is to determine whether Byrne portrays Spanish women as an Oriental Other to demonstrate the superiority of British society and legitimise her civilising role as agent of the empire.

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The Antiquarian Imagination: Anna Maria Hall's Travel Writing on Ireland and the Development of the "Irish play" in the Nineteenth Century

Patricia Smyth (University of Exeter, United Kingdom)

This paper looks at the travel writing of the Irish author and playwright Anna-Maria Hall and considers its role in determining key motifs of the 'Irish play' (plays set in Ireland and claiming to represent the nation, often marketed to international metropolitan audiences). Hall's tourist guide co-written with her husband, S. C. Hall, *Ireland: its Scenery, Character, & Co* (1841-3), presented British and international readers with an image of Ireland in which picturesque ruins, wild scenery, 'exotic' folk customs, and tales of the supernatural predominate. I first examine the key motifs and tropes of the book that helped to establish a conception of Irish national identity internationally before looking at some examples of drama in which the influence of Hall's work is apparent. First among these is *The Groves of Blarney*, Hall's own play of 1838 that premiered at the Adelphi theatre, London. I also look at more canonical playwrights such as Dion Boucicault to consider how far his work drew on Hall's example. The significance of ruins in



Boucicault's Irish plays is examined, but I also look at traditional folk practices such as keening, the sung performance of lament poetry by native Irish women as part of the death ritual. This tradition was closely described and illustrated in Hall's travel book and later featured in Boucicault's *The Shaughraun* (1875), prompting questions about how much the male playwright drew from Hall and whether her role in the development of Irish drama should be reassessed.



S36.- Discourses of Crisis in Anglophone Fiction from Modernism to Postmodernism – and Beyond

Reinhart Koselleck observed back in 2006 that from the nineteenth century on, the word 'crisis' has acquired a plethora of new meanings (397), yet its growing imprecision did not stop it from becoming a "key concept" at the beginning of the twentieth century in various fields, for instance, in humanities and social sciences (399). Not surprisingly, introduced into the discourse of modernism, among others, by Fredric Jameson, 'crisis' also plays a pivotal role in the definitions of the term (Sheppard 6; cf. Lewis 1–3) – and thus, indirectly, in our understanding of late modernism, (post-) postmodernism, metamodernism, etc. Indeed, in his survey of the "four interpretative possibilities" of 'crisis,' Koselleck reaches the conclusion that they all "reveal attempts to develop a single concept limited to the present with which to capture a new era that may have various temporal beginnings and whose unknown future seems to give free scope to all sorts of wishes and anxieties, fears and hope. 'Crisis' becomes a structural signature of modernity." (371–72)

Since Koselleck's observations, recent developments have only heightened the relevance of the concept of crisis, drawing attention to how literature responds to global shifts actively (cf. Sheppard 4–6), attempting to facilitate an understanding of the hitherto inexplicable. Hence, this seminar will focus on representations of crises in Anglophone fiction from the 20th and 21st centuries. We invite potential participants to discuss literary explorations of various types of crises – medical, economic, (geo)political, ecological, etc.

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Session #1

31 August, 16:00–18:00

Historical Crises through the Prism of Art in Pat Barker's *Life Class* Trilogy (2007–15)

Angelika Reichmann (Eszterházy Károly Catholic University, Eger, Hungary)

Pat Barker's *Life Class* Trilogy (2007–15) focuses on the intertwined lives of three artists, Elinor Brooke, Paul Tarrant and Kit Neville, starting their respective careers in the Slade School of Art during the Edwardian Twilight. The first two volumes (*Life Class*, 2007, *Toby's Room*, 2012) take them through the historical crisis of the Great War, while the third one (*Noonday*, 2015) revisits them at the time of the Second World War. As the focus on artist figures as well as the prominent echo of Virginia Woolf's first experiment with modernist narrative technique, *Jacob's Room* (1922), highlights, the trilogy consciously interrogates the role of art – both visual and literary – in the contemporary, simultaneous interpretation of inexplicable moments of historical crises and in the (re)construction of said crises in cultural memory. In my discussion of the novels, I aim to focus on how Barker showcases the inseparability of modernist art from the major paradigm shift culminating in the historical crisis of the Great War. The diverging artistic approaches of the three central figures represent recognisable modernist trends, while their lives evoke the biographies and/or characters of actual modernists. They are caught up in various – domestic, class, political, etc. – tensions whose roots go back to the Victorian era and trigger their modernist break with its conventions, artistic or otherwise. Their varied



artistic responses are symptoms of the crises, tentative attempts to map out of suddenly unfamiliar realities, as well as memorial acts. Thus, the painters' artistic quests and solutions thematise issues concerning the psychological and social functions of art, as well as its role in the (re)construction of events in cultural memory. Thereby, they add a metafictional, self-reflexive layer to the narratives, which comments on the possibilities and ethical limitations of the fictional recreation of historical crises.

Storytelling in Uncertain Times: Margaret Atwood Responds to Global Crises

Elena Butoescu (University of Craiova, Romania)

All historical periods have been marked by crisis. Each historical era has been riddled with famines, migrations and invasions and has perceived its geopolitical crisis as unprecedented; and yet, humanity's attempt to seize supreme power lies at the root of the greatest global crises. The pursuit of power and dominance, two of the most persistent vices attributed to human nature, has led to devastating consequences that have affected the course of history and still haunt global order today. It is often stated that contemporary generations should learn from past mistakes to prevent their repetition, but the truth is that the structural recurrence of crisis proves that this is not a random, isolated event. Rather than being a historical exception, crisis is one of its defining conditions, an enduring feature of human experience and a persistent historical pattern. The Third Century Crisis of the Roman Empire, The Great Depression of the 1930s, the Two World Wars, the War in Ukraine and the rise of autocracy in the US have all been turning points reflecting recurrent geopolitical instability worldwide. How are we to make sense of these crises? Writers and artists have undertaken to respond to them actively, by turning them into narratives with a view to helping us understand and come to terms with them. In Margaret Atwood's work, the structural recurrence of crisis becomes a narrative pattern through which the interplay of power, control and resistance reveals that crises are not fictional political landscapes, but real playgrounds that warn against religious extremism, conservative political movements, erosion of individual freedoms and the fragility of women's rights. This article explores the political dimensions of literature in Atwood's narrative and analyses her literary responses to the contemporary global crises to uncover strategies of survival.

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Crisis and Simulation in Isaac Asimov's "The Last Question"

Norbert Gyuris (University of Pécs, Hungary/Eszterházy Károly Catholic University, Hungary)

The paper applies Jean Baudrillard's theory of the simulacrum and hyperreality to Isaac Asimov's short story "The Last Question" (1956) in order to analyze the interconnected psychological and environmental crises represented in the text. While the story is often interpreted as a meditation on entropy and technological progress, this study argues that Asimov anticipates a Baudrillardian logic in which simulation replaces both nature and humanity itself. The environmental crisis in the story is framed as the cosmic problem of entropy, the irreversible decline of usable energy leading to the heat death of the universe. Parallel to this is a psychological crisis characterized by human anxiety about mortality, extinction, and the loss of meaning. These crises are not resolved materially but are instead displaced onto the supercomputer Multivac, which gradually becomes a simulacrum of divine intelligence and ultimate authority.

Drawing on Baudrillard, the paper demonstrates how Multivac functions not merely as a tool but as a hyperreal system that simulates control over entropy. The belief that the machine will eventually provide an answer substitutes for real engagement with physical limits. As humanity increasingly delegates knowledge, agency, and responsibility to Multivac, human existence itself becomes dematerialized, evolving into disembodied consciousness and finally disappearing altogether. At this stage, both nature and humanity persist only as informational constructs within the system. The final act, in which the computer recreates the universe, represents the ultimate simulacrum: reality generated by a model without any original referent.

The paper concludes that "The Last Question" dramatizes a Baudrillardian trajectory in which the psychological need to escape death and finitude produces a technological simulation that masks environmental collapse while simultaneously erasing the human subject. Asimov's story thus anticipates contemporary concerns about artificial intelligence, ecological crisis, and the replacement of material reality by digital systems. Through a postmodern theoretical lens, the text does not reveal triumph of technology, but showcases a profound transformation in which simulation becomes more real than reality itself.



Writing the Twenty-first Century Self: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie *Dream Count* (2025) as a Post-Black Bildungsroman

Katarína Rendošová (Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice, Slovakia / University of the Balearic Islands, Spain)

This presentation will analyze Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's novel *Dream Count* (2025) as a post-Black Bildungsroman that emerges from a crisis of formation characteristic of post-postmodern Anglophone fiction. Drawing on Reinhart Koselleck's (2006) understanding of crisis as a defining condition of modernity, this presentation argues that *Dream Count* reconceptualizes the Bildung not as linear development ending in social integration but as an open-ended, relational, and affect-driven process of becoming. Formally and thematically, the selected text replaces the teleological trajectory of development with a mode of introspection. Chiamaka's practice of "counting" her emotional attachments, past relationships, and unrealized desires functions as a narrative strategy that foregrounds reflection over resolution. Rather than marking progress towards adulthood or closure, these moments of retrospection expose formation as provisional, recursive, and emotionally contingent. This model of formation aligns with Nicoline Timmer's (2010) account of post-postmodern fiction as privileging affect, ethical engagement, and renewed relationality in response to the exhaustion of postmodern irony. Replacing postmodern fragmentation with emotional sincerity, *Dream Count* constructs a "shared framework of reality" (Timmer 2010, 361) rooted in vulnerability and relational meaning-making.

The presentation further situates Adichie's novel within the framework of the post-Black Bildungsroman as theorized by Marlon Lieber (2017). Rather than abandoning racial and historical consciousness, Adichie's novel foregrounds what Lieber conceptualizes as a mode of formation that resists essentialist identity models. Within this framework, crisis functions not as a temporary rupture, but as a permanent structural condition—a state in which formation unfolds under the intersecting pressures of gendered expectation, global mobility, and inherited constraint. By maintaining crisis as the foundational site of self-construction rather than a hurdle to be overcome, *Dream Count* redefines the Bildungsroman, demonstrating how contemporary fiction transforms the search for identity into a permanent, historically grounded process of becoming.

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Session #2

1 September, 9:00–11:00

A Post-postmodern Crisis of Mental Health: A Case Study of Hal Incandenza in *Infinite Jest* by David Foster Wallace

Łukasz Barciński (University of Rzeszów, Poland)

The presentation deals with *Infinite Jest*, a novel written by the American writer David Foster Wallace, often inscribed in the literary current of New Sincerity. The talk explores the role of language as both a stabilizing force and a mechanism of dissociation, drawing on the figure of the main character, Hal Incandenza as a case study. Hal's encyclopedic vocabulary and obsession with linguistic precision illustrate how language can become a form of defensive armor—a way to intellectualize trauma and distance oneself from authentic experience. His inability to communicate, despite perfect comprehension, encapsulates the paradox of modern communication: the more articulate we become, the less we may truly connect. By situating Hal's crisis of language within broader discourses of crisis communication, this talk argues that Wallace exposes the limits of linguistic mastery as a response to existential instability. Ultimately, *Infinite Jest* presents a world where language functions simultaneously as symptom and strategy—a tool for managing crisis that risks becoming its own form of isolation.

Objectives

- To analyze how David Foster Wallace employs encyclopedic language as a representation of psychological crisis in the character of Hal Incandenza
- To examine the relationship between linguistic hypercompetence and emotional dissociation
- To explore encyclopedic discourse as a defense mechanism against authentic experience and connection



Research Question(s)

Primary

- How does Hal Incandenza's encyclopedic language function as both symptom and mechanism of his personal crisis?

Secondary

- What is the relationship between verbal facility and emotional authenticity in Hal's characterization?
- How does Wallace use linguistic style to dramatize the failure of intellectualization as a coping strategy?
- In what ways does Hal's crisis reflect broader themes of communication breakdown in post-postmodern culture?

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Queer Feminist Narratives of the AIDS Crisis: Mueller, Myles, and Schulman's Affective Depictions of 1980s–90s New York

Loida Hernandez-Benito (University of Murcia, Spain)

The HIV/AIDS pandemic, the most devastating medical crisis of the late 20th century, was far from an ideologically neutral catastrophe, as it was exacerbated in the United States due to governmental neglect inflected by homophobic moral regulation. This paper examines queer feminist fictionalizations of the AIDS crisis in the 1980s and early 1990s as an intervention in the male-centered narratives that came to dominate its cultural representations. Focusing on Cookie Mueller, Eileen Myles, and Sarah Schulman, three writers embedded in downtown Manhattan's artistic and literary scenes who were greatly affected by the pandemic, this paper foregrounds queer women's accounts that have remained marginal within AIDS literary criticism in order



to uncover alternative visions. Through close readings of a short story in Mueller's collection *Walking Through Clear Water in a Pool Painted Black* (1990), Myles's experimental prose in *Chelsea Girls* (1994) and *Inferno* (2010), and Schulman's novels *People in Trouble* (1990) and *Empathy* (1992), this paper elucidates how the crisis is narrated in ways that actively refuse victimization and moralism. Analyzed through the lens of affect theory (Ahmed 2004; Cvetkovich 2003), and with background afforded by queer AIDS historiography (Schulman 2012; 2021), these texts foreground the homogeneous emotional responses that coexist within the lived experiences of the pandemic: from anger and grief to disaffection or desire. In fact, across these texts, the sexuality that was condemned in this period of political and ideological conservatism is neither stigmatized nor denied but critically emerges as a defiant, passionate insistence on life and pleasure amid mass death. Ultimately, by reading Mueller, Myles, and Schulman together, this paper expands AIDS literary criticism by insisting on queer feminist narrativizations of the crisis that unsettle simplistic heroic or tragic scripts and present the HIV/AIDS pandemic as a collective, politicized and affective struggle.

A Hopeful Response to Modernist Crisis: *The Crisis* Magazine and Locke's Anthology *The New Negro*

Carles Granell Sales (National University for Distance Education, Spain)

Crisis has long been recognised as a defining condition of modernism. As Levenson states, "crisis is inevitably the central term of art in discussions of this turbulent cultural moment" (4), signalling not only rupture and instability but also the emergence of new cultural forms and practices. This paper situates crisis as both a destructive and generative force within modernist culture, focusing on the role of collective artistic production as a response to the dislocations of modernity.

In *Collecting as Modernist Practice*, Braddock argues that the modernist collection is closely associated with the "crises and possibilities" characteristic of the period (2). His concept of the collective work as a "provisional institution" contests narratives of modernist private subjectivity. In turn, it redefines multi-authored works as active agents within the cultural economy that shape reception and aesthetic expectation while bearing witness to broader social and artistic crises.

Through an examination of *The Crisis* magazine (focusing on the years 1918-1926, when Fauset was the editor) and Locke's anthology *The New Negro*, the paper foregrounds African American modernism as a particularly salient opportunity for responding to crisis. These collective projects challenge entrenched dynamics of cultural economics and canonical authority, opening new spaces for literary production and consumption that had previously been inaccessible. Their significance lies not



only in their selections but also in their processes of compilation, circulation, and audience formation. In this sense, crisis becomes a catalyst for collective organisation and institutional innovation rather than mere fragmentation.

Drawing on Sheppard's enumeration of nine responses to the crisis of modernity, the paper proposes an additional category: "a hopeful response" grounded in collective enterprise and social aspiration. By reframing crisis as an opportunity for communal authorship and cultural reconstitution, *The Crisis* and *The New Negro* articulate a modernism oriented toward inclusion, futurity, and transformative possibility.

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Crises as Data: A Reading of Jim Carrey and Dana Vachon's *Memoirs and Misinformation*

Armela Panajoti (University of the Balearic Islands, Spain)

In this paper, I propose a reading of Jim Carrey and Dana Vachon's *Memoirs and Misinformation* as a satire on contemporary crises, cultural, social, and ecological. Coincidentally published in 2020, the year of the COVID-19 pandemic, the novel features Jim Carrey as the protagonist and includes many other celebrities as characters who appear in various episodes in the novel to stage past and present histories, such as the Neanderthals, Pompeii, the Play-Doh Fun Factory Project, and Mao's regime that reflect modern anxieties caused by rising ecological, technological, and ethical concerns in an age mediated by algorithms. Illustrating Koselleck's concept of crisis as the "structural signature of modernity" (2006, 374), which lends it a historical and philosophical



dimension, the novel draws on a metafictional blend of horror, satire, farce, apocalypse, celebrity, and romance to reenact a series of crises – personal, cultural, technological, ecological, and social – that reveal their ontological nature. It ultimately shows that in our era of deepfakes and “essences,” memory, information, knowledge, authorship, and the human body are perceived as data that can be acquired, manipulated, or commodified.

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S37.- Hope in Times of Fear (19th – 21st Centuries)

Today, the future seems to frighten us rather than inspire hope (Alan and Pol-Droit, 2016). In many western countries, mental health problems, suicide rates and drug addiction reveal a “crisis of despair” (Graham 2023), attributed partly to a sense that democracy is in retreat, and that authoritarianism is on the rise (Goldman 2022). This feeling of hopelessness may also stem from structural and cyclical “sets of fears” (Delumeau 1978) such as fear of nuclear power, of cancer or diseases linked to ageing, of economic crisis, and of climate change. Though by no means identical to them, some of these recent fears can be related to fears of the past, like terror of the ocean, of cholera, or religious fears, including the end of the world. From a range of literary and historical perspectives on the period reaching from the 19th to the 21st century, or age of the anthropocene, this panel will explore the relation between fear and hope. We will revisit this relation through literature, bearing in mind Goldman’s calls for a reconceptualization of hope that moves away from grand notions of progress and optimism to embrace uncertainty and the possibility of failure, in an attempt to come to terms with fear and despair (2022).

We aim to show how, within a rich multidisciplinary research landscape on the connections between fear and hope, literature can capitalize on the positive dimensions of fear, while handling the complexities and paradoxes of hope. We will explore the possibilities of new individual and collective narratives involving fear and hope that literature provides, for instance narratives around human rights and/or resistance and resilience.

Papers are invited on topics exploring ways in which literature addresses the relation between fear and hope when it comes to the environment, the economy, communication and the media, technology, politics, health/care, or apocalyptic scenarios.



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Session #1: Climate Fiction

1 September, 9:00–11:00



Fear and Hope in the Posthuman Landscapes of *In Ascension* by Martin MacInnes

Celia Aijmer Rydsjö (University West, Trollhättan, Sweden)

This presentation explores how Martin MacInnes's novel *In Ascension* (2023) stages fear and hope as responses to encounters with phenomena that inspire awe and exceed human comprehension: oceanic abysses, geological timescales, and the vastness of outer space. These encounters challenge the anthropocentric assumption that humans are sovereign knowers and masters of uncertainty. Fear in *In Ascension* arises less from immediate threat than from exposure to what resists explanation and thus also relates to an epistemic crisis.

Following marine biologist Leigh on voyages that carry her across the Atlantic and then up beyond the limits of the solar system, the novel subverts the narrative of ascent suggested by its title. Leigh's movement forward in space and time draws her into memories of her own past rather than toward transcendence or mastery of life. Knowledge in MacInnes' novel is thus not cumulative or elevating but recursive and destabilizing.

Yet this destabilization does not culminate in despair. Instead, *In Ascension* intertwines fear with a tentative, posthuman hope that avoids simplistic resolutions. In an ecologically and morally compromised world, hope transforms from optimism into endurance: the willingness to persist, take risks, and remain open to coexistence with both human and non-human others. This hope exists within the very systems of exploitation and technological power that provoke both activism and investment in the future. Hope, therefore, is not framed through a simple inside/outside binary but emerges from entangled posthuman assemblages. This presentation argues that these assemblages deterritorialize conventional narratives of agency and responsibility, suggesting ethically complex directions for imagining hope in contemporary posthuman fiction.

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Nature, Culture, and the Restoration of Hope in James Hilton’s *Lost Horizon*

Şeyma Dinç Tosun (Istanbul Aydın University, Fatih Sultan Mehmet Vakıf University, Türkiye)

This paper explores the disappearing relationship between nature and culture through an analysis of James Hilton’s 1933 novel, *Lost Horizon*. Set during the modernist era, the novel establishes a clear nature-culture binary that develops and feeds its utopian vision. Following a plane hijacking, Conway finds refuge in the secluded valley of Shangri-La. Within this peaceful lamasery, the valley’s harmonious culture offers him a rare opportunity to heal from the profound “hopelessness” and trauma of the Great War. Nature and culture are depicted within Shangri-La as distinct yet interdependent forces; the wild yet fascinating landscape of the Himalayas acts as a therapeutic backdrop to the peaceful, slow culture of the lamas. To examine this relationship, this study employs Fredric Jameson’s framework, which asserts that postmodernism arises when “nature is gone for good” and fully absorbed into culture. By juxtaposing Hilton’s utopian equilibrium with the postmodern flux, this research exposes a troubling erosion of the boundaries between nature and culture—a process that ultimately threatens to collapse both categories entirely. The relevance of revisiting this 1933 text lies in its depiction of a world in which nature and culture still had the agency to provide healing and hope. Conway arrives as a man resigned to a life of emotional numbness. For him, Shangri-La is not just a sanctuary. It is a startling reminder that he is still capable of hope and psychological health. By analyzing his journey through a contemporary lens, this paper argues that turning back to early 20th-century utopianism is vital for a dying planet today. As our ecological context blurs toward disappearance, *Lost Horizon* offers a perspective through examining what must gain significance in today’s illusory world.

“Strange Analogies”: Poisonous Becomings in Kimiko Hahn’s *Toxic Flora*

Paula Curras Prada (University of Barcelona, Spain)

Antithetical to the domesticated, *still* taxonomy of a traditional herbarium, Kimiko Hahn’s poetry collection *Toxic Flora* (2010) invokes uglier affects, such as fear, deceit and toxicity, to create a menacing compendium of plants, animals, and strange outer-space



bodies. Woven together by an extended—yet visually fragmented—reflection on Darwinian sexual selection, these poems function as living organisms able to conjure entanglements between humans and non-humans, (natural) history and autobiography. In her collection, Hahn returns to the mud, like Donna Haraway, to remind the reader of the earthly, bodily nature of the human, but she also systematically *steals* entire passages from educational articles in the *Science Times* to make that return a linguistically experimental one. Through its vast array of venomous transformations, what *Toxic* evinces is a marked attention to the “odd narratives” (Personal interview 2023) brought about by the creatures that inhabit it, and a consequent reflection on the power of fear and toxicity to approximate human and nonhuman lives.

A remarkably atypical bestiary and field guide, *Toxic Flora* is a wave of *becomings*, a poetic turn towards death and poison that ends up beaming with life and hope. Toxicity, Hahn’s collection reminds the reader, provides fertile ground for the discussion of human and nonhuman rapport. For oppressed subjects, toxicity may signify regaining *power*: accounts of mother-daughter relations and patriarchal subversions entangle here with (animal) sexual cannibalism and other quirks of evolution. All in all, from this perspective, Hahn’s post-anthropocentric poems display a valuable reflection on resistance, language and the undeniable linkages that connect *all that is*.

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Hoping against hope: Samantha Harvey’s *Orbital* (2023)

Jagna Oltarzewska (Sorbonne University, France)

In Harvey’s novella *Orbital*, hope emerges as a tentative yet dominant affect against a background of carefully calibrated emotions:



those of the six-strong astronaut crew of the International Space Station orbiting Earth. It is hope, shorn of naïveté, that underlies the longevity of the ISS, its mission and repeated orbits; it is hope that animates the sensuous lyricism of Harvey's *pastorale* and its descriptive *tours de force*; it is hope that ultimately asserts itself in a momentary climactic unison that defies the cacophony of a "wild and lilting world" (Harvey 136). Hope, it has been suggested, is a desire informed by the probability of attainment (van den Heuvel, v). I contend that Harvey's novella is shot through with hope in dialectical entanglement with the sombre affects of our time: awe, foreboding, grief. Described as an "Anthropocene novel resistant to doom" (Harris, 2023), Harvey's work is nevertheless alive to the alarming trajectory of a planet exhausted by the infinity of human wants. Eluding generic classification, this novella embodies an aesthetic which blends elements of the postmodern and the ecocritical, responding to the uncertainties of our conjuncture. It registers shifts in affect – desire splitting and morphing into insatiable drive, on the one hand, and tenuous hope, on the other, a hope which becomes a place-holder around which a new political imaginary may come, in time, to seed itself, although this future is by no means assured. Finally, hope resides in a surprise interpretation of Velázquez's masterwork, *Las Meninas* (1656): it is the dog, pictured in a spacious foreground, that holds the key to the painting. This reading foregrounds the *other-than-human*, questioning both the "matrix of vanities" (Harvey 105) showcased in the painting's endless play of gaze and reflection, and our self-conscious positioning as spectators, pursuing anthropocentric paths to understanding.

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Between Dystopia and Hope in David Aja and Ann Nocenti's Graphic Novel *The Seeds*

Justyna Galant (University of Gdańsk, Poland)

The rich scholarly thought on the costs of anthropocentrism and stories and conquest or progress inspired by contemporary concerns with climate change aims to expose the negative consequences of our cognitive schemata and to suggest a way forward which, unavoidably, involves a radical change in perception and the ensuing axiological re-evaluation. Among the growing variety of texts of culture that undertake to galvanize these changes and reconsiderations comics stand out as a medium that encourages



unique mechanisms of perception. As a postapocalyptic climate-change dystopia, Ann Nocenti's and David Aja's graphic novel *The Seeds* (2018-2020) makes extensive use of the familiar generic building blocks of dystopia, yet constructs an ambitious narrative that seems to engage with a number of ecocritical concerns, using the comics medium to suggest ways of seeing and constructing stories that consciously depart from anthropocentric logic and perception. The analysis of *The Seeds*, with special emphasis on panel functions and plot construction, aims to discuss the text as a work exploring the tension between doom and hope, and also to exemplify the potential of the comic medium to take a meaningful part in the broader cultural evolution within the ecocritical paradigm.

Session #2: (After) The End of the World

1 September, 17:00–19:00

“Coming to Grips with the End of the World” – Resignation as Resistance in Lydia Millet’s *A Children’s Bible*

Ulrika Andersson Hval (University West, Sweden)

While child figures are traditionally associated with hope and new beginnings in Western literature, in Lydia Millet’s dystopian, yet darkly humorous, climate fiction novel *A Children’s Bible* (2020) the child protagonists rather represent the need to let go of cherished ideas of progress and irrational hopes of technological salvation. The novel centers around a group of children vacationing at a rented estate with their parents, old childhood friends who all ignore both their children’s whereabouts and activities as well as the chaos the outside world is clearly descending into. Not even offering a pretense of prioritizing their children’s future, the adults engage in drinking and flirting, leaving the children to handle the consequences of what, in the words of the narrator, Eve, had been “a done deal before we were born” (27). The parents’ hedonism and “denial of reality” is contrasted with the children’s sober and unsentimental reckoning as Eve flatly observes that she is “coming to grips with the end of the world” (27-28).

Resignation, or “coming to grips”, might appear an unconstructive reaction to a world falling apart, but as Eve and her friends navigate their new reality, they soon realize that the unfounded, or false, hope their parents represent is the true adversary. Rather, hope is rooted in fully acknowledging the inherent flaws of human nature and in confronting the dizzying fear arising from the loss of all dependable figures of authority. Without either parents, gods, or fate to rely on, a new sense of responsibility for the future emerges,



in a manner reminiscent of observations made in climate psychology of the importance of agency and action (Ojala 2015). That future, however, may not be one where man is the center of a universe he can control, but where the perspective shifts to fully encompass the natural world – “The clouds the moon. The dirt the rocks the water and the wind” (224). This presentation will examine the implications of such a shift, where hope can be seen to reside in the acceptance that humanity is finite, with the fear and loss this acceptance entails, but also with a new appreciation of the world that exists.

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The Apocalypse as Posthuman Hope in Margaret Atwood’s *MaddAddam* Trilogy

Vera Benczik (Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary)

The end of the world as a narrative template has been part of human culture since the beginnings of literature and has become



one of the most prominent subgenres of science fiction (SF) by the second half of the 20th century. “Terminal visions,” to use Warren Wagar’s term, saturate all aspects of contemporary culture: SF in print, visual media, and video games frequently relies on an eschatological approach to its world building, providing outlets and answers to the collective anxieties of the Anthropocene, centring on topics like pandemics, nuclear war, and more recently on the anthropogenic intervention into the natural environment and its wide-reaching consequences for the whole ecosphere.

The *MaddAddam* trilogy by Margaret Atwood marks one of the forays of the Canadian author into SF. Set in the near future, its pre-world (Caracciolo) is depicted as a bleak dystopia ruled by capitalist corporations, which is destroyed by a pandemic unleashed by the first novel’s titular Crake, resulting in a post-apocalyptic wasteland largely devoid of human beings. The post-world of the trilogy, while showing the struggles of the few human survivors, also explores the possibility of hope in the future of its bioengineered posthuman species, the Crakers (and to a lesser extent also the Pigoons). The present paper will investigate topics like the utopian potential of ecopositive posthuman hybridization, the human – posthuman opposition, and the role trauma, memory and narrativization as a vehicle of hope within the novel trilogy.

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“I’m Stuffed”: Hope after Hope in Franny Choi’s *The World Keeps Ending, and the World Goes On*

Martín Praga (University of A Coruña, Spain)

Across the early decades of the twenty-first century, violence, ecological devastation, political repression, and dispossession increasingly appear not as exceptional crises but as overlapping and normalized conditions. This historical moment has been accompanied by a persistent discourse of hope structured around resilience, optimism, and futurity. Yet critics including Lauren Berlant, Mark Fisher, and Slavoj Žižek have warned that under such conditions hope risks becoming a compulsory affect: an attachment sustained despite diminishing expectations of structural change.

Speculative literature has long provided a space for imagining temporalities that do not culminate in progress or resolution. In *The*



World Keeps Ending, and the World Goes On (2022), Franny Choi figures catastrophe not as a singular apocalyptic event but as a serial and ongoing condition. The collection moves across cosmological time, planetary collapse, colonial and racialized violence, and intimate histories of personal and inherited trauma. Speculation functions here to collapse past hopes, present impasses, and imagined futures into a shared temporal frame, placing human histories in continuity with nonhuman life. In a world that “keeps ending,” hope appears not as horizon or promise but as something ironic, excessive, and bodily depleted: “No, thank you, / I’m stuffed, I couldn’t possibly have more hope,” explains the voice in “Celebrate Good Times.”

This paper argues that Choi articulates a conception of hope structured by a double “after”: hope as what follows the exhaustion of futurity, and hope as what nevertheless returns despite that exhaustion. Rather than offering redemption or optimism, the poems stage hope as a diminished attachment that persists with full awareness of its limits. Lines such as “I know I should want to be torn open / by the failures of hope, but here’s what I want: / a tight circle around everyone I love; / a stove that doesn’t burn” articulate a form of hope grounded in maintenance, care, and survival rather than transformation. Through serial forms, repetition, and everyday scenes like shopping, cooking, keeping warm, Choi frames fear and catastrophe as ongoing conditions rather than future threats. Hope emerges not as belief in change but as speculative endurance: a practice of continuation shaped by contradiction, knowledge, and necessity. In this way, the collection offers a literary model of hope attuned to uncertainty and failure, aligning with recent calls to reconceptualize hope beyond narratives of progress while remaining responsive to fear, attachment, and collective survival in the present.

Matter, Waste, Assemblage: Urban Ecology of Hope in Kate A. Hardy’s *Londonia*

Marta Komsta (Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, Poland)

A viable reading of Kate A. Hardy’s debut novel *Londonia* (2020) is that of a dystopian exploration of London, depicted as a city struggling in the wake of the so-called Final Curtain, a cataclysm that has rendered modern technology obsolete, leading to the division of the former metropolis into two separate districts, *Londonia* and the Cincture, which come to represent the new socio-economic order in the post-apocalyptic reality. Aware of *Londonia*’s cultural debt to other seminal urban dystopias, I attempt to investigate the novel’s urbanscape through the interrelated concepts of materiality and waste as key symbolic points of reference in Hardy’s work, contextualized in relation to human and non-human as well as living and non-living characters. In this sense, the



characters and their environment come to represent “the unwanted surplus” (Edensor 315) as well as the “rejected and neglected matter” (Edensor 325) that both reflect and subvert the harrowing experience of societal collapse, facilitating at the same time the multifaceted process of individual and collective rejuvenation. In effect, the emergent, ecological model of the assemblage, the “living, throbbing confederations that are able to function despite the persistent presence of energies that confound them from within” (Bennett 23–24), functions as the novel’s foundational semiotic paradigm that accounts for the reclamation of agency and a tentative sense of hope in Hardy’s picaresque dystopia.

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Session #3: Digital Realities

2 September, 9:00–11:00

Data Neither Lies nor Tells the Truth: Hope, Resonance and the Ethics of Disappropriation in *Dream Hotel* by Laila Lalami

Eugenia Ossana (University of Zaragoza, Spain)

Dream Hotel, the latest novel by Laila Lalami, depicts a recognisable future in which individuals are preemptively deprived of their freedom on the basis of predictive surveillance data, including access to their dreams. Although she has no criminal record, the protagonist, Sara Hussein, is detained in a privately run detention centre. What is initially framed as a twenty-three-day precautionary stay gradually extends into a year-long reclusion. Ironically and strategically, the plot is interspersed with bureaucratic and commercial texts—personnel meeting minutes, official audio transcripts, complaint emails, medical reports, surveys, advertisements, and detainees’ reports. Gradually, Sara’s initial anger and shock at the loss of her freedom evolve into an obsessive attempt to adapt to the system, which ultimately triggers collective resistance in the face of its insurmountable injustice. Set against a backdrop of ecological crises—wildfires, oil spills, droughts, and floods—Sara and her community of female



detainees organise a strike aimed at preserving their dignity while reclaiming agency. This article analyses *Dream Hotel* through the theoretical lenses of hope, resonance, and the ethics of disappropriation. The novel's ethos closely aligns with Byung-Chul Han's conception of hope as an active disposition rooted in listening, contemplation, and eventually, collective action (2024). This framework dovetails with Hartmut Rosa's theory of resonance, which emphasises relational connection and the capacity to be transformed through engagement with one's social and material environment (2019). Concurrently, Achille Mbembe's notion of the ethics of disappropriation illuminates the novel's vision of a plural, unpredictable, and interdependent earthly assemblage (2024). Analysed together, these perspectives place *Dream Hotel* as a critique of oppressive data-driven capitalism and a timely literary speculation on collective resistance.

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Nihilist Hope and Identity Failure in the Anthropocene: Gary Owen's *Killology*

Susana Nicolás Román (University of Almería, Spain)

Addressing the contemporary crisis of meaning, this paper examines how narratives construct a paradoxical convergence between nihilistic despair and structured aspiration linked to the integral formation of modern identity in the anthropocene. Gary Owen's dramaturgy suggests that contemporary capitalist and digital structures often fail to provide robust, positive frameworks for identity, instead offering destructive substitutes that enhance nihilism as a productive, achievable goal. This failure aligns with scholarly critique on the self's dependency on performative, mediated roles (Chandler, 2024). *Killology* (2017) critiques the commodification of trauma and violence through the lens of a hyper-realistic video game in which the deliberate fusion of a destructive identity—the 'killer'—with a teleological drive operates as a meticulously designed reward loop that compels endless, self-destructive performance (Han, 2015). This loop offers the player not salvation or social integration, but a clearly defined,



measurable, and ultimately terminal objective: the achievement of maximum cruelty. The three central characters of the play—Alan, Davey, and Paul—function as a critique of the pervasive trend of fractured relationships, demonstrating how personal and social failure precipitates different forms of nihilistic identity in the modern world.

Drawing on theories of the reconceptualization of hope (Goldman, 2022; Kwong, 2024) and mediated identity construction (Anderson et al., 2010; Chandler, 2024), the central argument of my analysis engages with *Killology* as a counter-narrative to modern media consumption by assuming mechanisms of social and moral meaninglessness in the characters' behaviours. Uncoupling nihilist hope from the resulting identity shapes Owen's diagnosis of how video games consumption and social isolation transform existential despair into directed, performative violence. Conclusively, the play alludes to immediate interpersonal responsibility confronting fear and despair by offering a potential path for individuals to rebuild moral relationships in the wake of the nihilistic void.

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Engineering Hope: The Posthuman Politics of Affect in Contemporary Posthuman Texts

Patrycja Podgajna (Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Poland)

Technologies increasingly shape human emotions—from algorithmically curated social interactions to AI-mediated intimacy and pharmacological interventions. In speculative media, they do more than influence affect: they determine, structure, and



optimize it, circulating emotion across human and technological networks in ways that challenge our understanding of what is purely human.

Posthumanist theory provides a critical lens for examining these processes. Sara Ahmed emphasizes that emotions “do not reside in subjects or objects, but are produced as effects of circulation” (8), highlighting that affect is relational, socially distributed, and shaped by material environments. Rosi Braidotti similarly argues that in posthuman assemblages, subjectivity and affect are co-constituted by human and nonhuman actors, emphasizing the transformative potential of technologically mediated environments (50). Likewise, N. Katherine Hayles notes that posthuman cognition and affect emerge “through interactions between bodies and informational systems” (4), suggesting that emotional experience can be distributed across biological, technological, and social networks.

This paper examines texts that explore these mediated emotional processes. In *Black Mirror*, algorithmic systems shape social evaluation, belonging, and happiness, producing what might be called algorithmic emotions. *Her* and *Klara and the Sun* explore AI companionship, showing how artificial agents can generate care, intimacy, and emotional support, while *Zoe* portrays pharmacological emotional enhancement. Together, these works suggest that hope and other positive affects are not simply felt—they are engineered, circulated, and optimized, making emotional life a site of design, transformation, and intervention. In doing so, they also expose the social, ethical, and existential costs of technologically mediated feelings.

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Digital hopes and fears in Neal Stephenson’s *Fall; or Dodge in Hell*

Urszula Terentowicz-Fotyga (Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, Poland)

Technology has long served as a catalyst for both utopian hopes and dystopian fears. The development of the internet was driven by optimistic visions of enhanced equality, connectivity, and civic engagement. Early advocates hoped that social media would enable



individuals to build global networks, exchange ideas, and mobilize collectively in support of civic engagement and democratic advancement. Similarly, transhumanist perspectives imagine the potential for human enhancement and the extension of human life through digital means. However, contemporary realities increasingly diverge from these early ideals. The internet is now largely controlled by a small group of billionaires, who deploy it primarily to advance their economic interests, weaponizing it against its users and undermining their autonomy. Social media platforms, once heralded as tools of empowerment, are frequently criticized for exacerbating social polarization, contributing to democratic erosion and intensifying experiences of loneliness and alienation. Artificial intelligence is quickly redefining all aspects of our lives and posing new risks related to misinformation, surveillance, and the further consolidation of power in the hands of digital moguls.

These themes interweave in Neal Stephenson's 2019 grand speculative novel *Fall; or Dodge in Hell*. Set in a technologically advanced late twenty-first century, the narrative follows a billionaire game developer who, after becoming brain-dead, undergoes a period of cryonic preservation before being digitally reconstructed within a virtual environment. The story unfolds along two intertwined trajectories: one traces the evolution of contemporary America, increasingly marked by political polarization and the weaponization of the internet and social media; the other explores the emergence and development of a virtual afterlife, initially inhabited by Dodge and gradually joined by other uploaded minds, who collectively begin to shape a newly constructed digital realm of existence. The paper explores the ways Stephenson's novel stages the complex interweaving of hopes and fears about the digital realm and its impact on our contemporaneity.

Session #4: History

2 September, 15:00–17:00

(Post)war Shakespeares: Rewriting *Hamlet* and *The Merchant of Venice* in Search of Hope

Przemysław Pożar (University of Warsaw, Poland)

The paper aims to shed light on two adaptations of Shakespearean drama which explore the theme of hope. First, I would like to present Roman Brandstaetter's *Merchant of Warsaw* – a poignant remark on the antisemitism of the interwar period written



between 1939–1941 which does not, however, emulate the original ending (condemnation of Shakespeare’s Shylock) but proposes instead to render the concluding scene charged with hope for a tolerant and peaceful future. Having obtained access to the previously unpublished manuscript of Brandstaetter’s *Merchant*, a translation from Polish to Hebrew by Moshe Indelman, I intend to underscore the manifestation of hope in the concluding trial scene of the drama and analyse it along with its elaborate political contexts. Second, I would like to delve into Alfred Döblin’s novel *Hamlet oder Die lange Nacht nimmt ein Ende* (1956) where the story of the Shakespearean prince is set to function as a paradigmatic tale of finding (and recuperating) oneself in the wake of traumatic war experience. Replete with motifs from English literature, it uses the theme of story-telling as a therapeutic pursuit of the Allison family to heal the wounded protagonist, Edward. Döblin’s novel, itself an answer to the hopes and fears of postwar Germany, will serve as a transition towards the concluding remarks on another Brandstaetter’s colloquy with Shakespeare, this time via translation. The biographies of both writers will also be discussed briefly to call attention to their life stories as Jewish exiles.

This paper incorporates the research results of the state-funded project “The foremost focal point, Hamlet”: William Shakespeare in the archives, translations, and works of Roman Brandstaetter (1906–1987) (NCN Preludium 22, 2023/49/N/HS2/00480).

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A Kierkegaardian Reading: Anxiety and the Leap of Faith in the Work of Anaïs Nin

Kevin Wolke (Åbo Akademi University, Finland)

Due to her unconventional narration of self-exploration, French-born American writer Anaïs Nin is nowadays considered a seminal diarist of the twentieth century. Her impact on second-wave feminism is directly linked to the publication of the first



volume of *The Diary of Anaïs Nin* (1966). While contemporary scholarship mainly engages in psychoanalytical, modernist, and feminist readings (e.g. Rosemary Ho (2025), Shreya & Dr. Narender Kumar (2024), Ruth Charnock (2011), Helen Tookey (2003), and Diane Richard-Allerdyce (1998)), there are hardly any philosophical studies of her work. This is surprising, given her stay in Paris from 1924 to 1939. By then, the city had attracted novelists and philosophers articulating existentialist perspectives on life in an apocalyptic era. Due to her literary connections to writers like Henry Miller or Lawrence Durrell, it is my aim to situate Nin in an interdisciplinary sphere called *late modernist existentialism* which I establish in my dissertation.

For my proposed paper, I will tie the first volume of her *Diary* and the largely convergent *Henry and June* (1986) to the philosophy of Søren Kierkegaard. The Danish forefather of existentialism had greatly impacted French thinkers like Jean-Paul Sartre or Albert Camus who, like Nin, lived in Paris around World War Two. It appears that her literary project of self-development is born out of an anxiety which works as a creative force, as it breaks moral shackles and intensifies sensuality. Reflections must lead to actions. Her experimentation with social masks and crises of identity relate to Kierkegaard's treatises on facing dread about existence to attain faith. By applying concepts taken from his *Fear and Trembling* (1843), *The Concept of Anxiety* (1844), and *The Sickness Unto Death* (1849), the proposed paper scrutinizes the potential of Nin's hope rooted in self-doubt through a late modernist and existentialist lens in the apocalyptic interwar era.

Traumatic Past and Hope for a Future in Emma Donoghue's *The Wonder*

Barbara Klonowska (The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland)

Emma Donoghue's acclaimed historical novel *The Wonder* (2016) set in the post-Famine Ireland offers a detailed and nuanced representation of the traumatic effects of hunger but also of fear and cultural oppression experienced in the Famine's aftermath both at an individual and the national level. The novel, however, also shows the ways of emerging out of trauma and overcoming fear, possible due to the resources of hope nursed by the victims and mobilised in critical moments in order to survive. Drawing on Jonathan Lear's concept of radical hope and Rebecca Solnit's reflections expressed in *Hope in the Dark*, the proposed paper analyses Donoghue's novel not only as a response to and working through trauma but shows the possibility of the so-called post-traumatic growth, in which hope is instrumental. In the case of the story presented in the novel, it is the hope for not perhaps a utopian future but any future at all, for overcoming the fear, survival and thriving after the natural and cultural catastrophe.



A Ray of Hope to Alleviate the Fear of Poverty: Combining Literature and Poor Economics

Nathalie Vanfasse (LERMA, Aix-Marseille University, France)

Could the combination of literature and poor economics provide a ray of hope in the fight against poverty and the fear that it causes? Imagining a world without poverty may sadly seem pure utopia. But this paper will argue that economic and literary narratives may come together to make this happen. A transhistorical interdisciplinary dialogue between nineteenth-century novels and poor economics and its forerunners can transform what may seem a utopian dream into something more feasible, by addressing practical sub-questions such as whether there are ways for the poor to improve their lives, and what is preventing them from doing so. Through a conversation between literature and economics, we will devise what historian Rutger Bregman calls a “realist utopia” (2017) – in the wake of philosopher John Rawls’s idea of “realistic utopia” (1999). We also draw upon Ruth Levitas’s idea of utopia as method (2013).

Session #5: Dystopia/Science Fiction

2 September, 17:30–19:30

Hope from Fear? Contemporary Central European Dystopias

Kenneth Hanshew (University of Regensburg, Germany)

Dystopian literature long ago supplanted the bright visions of better ways of being in the fictional worlds provided by classic literary utopias of the nineteenth century and before. Depictions of apocalypse, climate catastrophe, totalitarian societies, thought control and willing brutality pervade contemporary literature, and even more clearly, film. The fears current dystopian visions evoke too frequently have been decoupled from the warnings and calls to action of older dystopias, leaving some to question their value beyond entertainment. Their perceived lack of motivational function and negative gratuity caused Vandana Singh to coin the now popular term “dystopia porn” to label texts which pique interest by confirming and playing on fears in graphic detail.



Yet there could be more to dystopia, namely, that which follows it. “Dystopia has done its job,” notes K.S. Robinson. “It’s old news now, perhaps it’s self-indulgence to stay stuck in that place any more. Next thought: utopia. Realistic or not, and perhaps especially if not” (“Dystopias now,” 2018). Expanding on Robinson’s thought, dystopia can serve as a first step toward utopia. Dystopian fears can be a wake up call for action, a challenge to find solutions and reinvent our social way of being. This paper questions the dim view of the critical function of dystopia by examining literature on the Central European periphery of utopian studies. An analysis of Czech post-apocalyptic texts such as Václav Kahuda’s duology *Vítr, tma, přítomnost* [Wind, Darkness, the Present] (2014) and *Bytost* [Being] (2017) as well as David Zabranský’s *Logoz* and a glance at similar texts from Jacek Dukaj should offer at least a preliminary answer.

Hope and Fear in Journeys through Time and Space: H. G. Wells’ *The Time Machine* and *First Men in the Moon* as Archetypes of Contradictory Impulses in SF

Károly Pintér (Pázmány Péter Catholic University, Hungary)

Among contemporary genres of popular literature, science fiction (SF) is perhaps most closely associated with articulating humanity’s hopes and fears in a wide variety of fictional scenarios. Some – maybe most – SF narratives are dominated by one of these contradictory impulses, resulting in what is popularly called “optimistic” or “pessimistic” works of fiction. In more subtle texts, however, hope and fear manifest themselves in complex and nuanced ways, more faithfully modelling real-life human experience.

In my paper, I wish to present two classic texts by the founder of modern SF, H. G. Wells. *The Time Machine* (1895) and *First Men in the Moon* (1901) both belong to his early “scientific romance” phase, when he systematically explored fantastic themes that later became fundamental narrative topoi of the genre. One particularly striking aspect of these texts is how successfully Wells captures the uncertainty of the experience of the improbable journey (space travel was almost as inconceivable at the time as voyage through time) as well as the fluctuating emotional states of the travellers, falling from one extreme of hope and excitement to the other of terror and panic. Both journeys result in encounters with alien or quasi-alien species (the Eloi and the Morlocks in TTM, the Selenites in FMITM) whose perplexing existence and social organization present the travellers with difficult mysteries to unravel. The ultimate challenge of both narratives is how they confront readers with possible future or alternative developments



for humanity that can be scrutinized with both hope and fear, represented by the contradictory perspectives of the fictional narrators, which may produce different interpretations based on the affective lens through which the narrative is viewed.

Networks of “Unbelievable Believable Hope” in Ali Smith’s *Gliff* (2024)

Laura Aldeguer (University of Oviedo, Spain)

This paper examines Ali Smith’s latest dystopian novel, *Gliff* (2024), through the lens of network theory and aesthetics, focusing on how its characters recover and sustain networks of collective survival. This proves crucial for the young and bright sisters Briar and Rose, who are classified as unverifiable and thus subjected to the state’s blatant physical and symbolic violence. Within this hostile context, itself a manifestation of global economies of fear (Ahmed 2004), my analysis considers how the sisters, alone and away from home, survive by forging networks of interdependence and care with strangers and with the natural world —its animals and plants.

To do so, this paper draws on Jagoda’s definition of networks as simultaneously expansive and intimately concrete, manifesting in totalising structures of societal order —in which fear determines social space (Ahmed 2000)— and in everyday practices that sustain human and more-than-human relations. Additionally, Levine’s framework of *formal survival* will serve to further illuminate how these structures, in concert, mutually reinforced one another leading to an infrastructure of *collective continuance*. The analysis will argue that *Gliff* operates on the intimate and the governmental, showing how gestures and habits can foster forms of interdependence that not only sustain human and natural life but serve to contest broader systems of control.

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Networks of Hope: Pandemic Fear and Survival in Val McDermid's *Resistance*

María Jesús Sánchez García (University of Oviedo, Spain)

Communicable diseases have a long historical trajectory, yet the outbreak of Covid-19 brought them forcefully to the forefront of contemporary concerns, reminding us that they are not confined to the past and highlighting that they also remain profoundly fear-inducing. Science-fiction literature has long provided a space for imagining end-of-the-world scenarios, and pandemic literature in particular –in which pathogens emerge as the agents of humanity's downfall— may be read as a narrative through which the near extinction of humanity can nonetheless retain a glimmer of hope. While this literary corpus articulates collective anxieties around biological vulnerability, medical failure, and social collapse, it simultaneously opens up possibilities for survival and renewal.

This paper focuses on Val McDermid's graphic novel *Resistance* (2021), adapted from her 2017 radio drama of the same title, which depicts a world devastated by a bacterium rendered resistant to antibiotics. This backdrop allows for an analysis of a form of slow violence, in Rob Nixon's terms, rooted in the interference of human activity that adds to our biological vulnerability and eventually leads to the threat of extinction. At the same time, *Resistance* offers insight into the emergence of networks that not only counter isolation but also enable the formation of redefined communities grounded in cooperation. Central to this analysis are, therefore, the interrelated axes of fear, hope and resilience, and the creation of relational structures that lead to communal survival.

S38.- Performing Shakespeare in Transition Societies in the 21st Century

Shakespeare's works have emerged as powerful vehicles for social commentary and cultural negotiation in societies undergoing political, economic, and social transitions in the 21st century. This is particularly evident in the fragmented yet culturally rich Western Balkans, where post-conflict reconciliation and nation-building efforts have found unique expression through Shakespearean adaptation. Shakespeare's plays are also vibrant with new political and social challenges that post-Soviet countries face after the shift from socialist economies and decentralisation of governance in all spheres of societal organization. Directors



and theatre companies from these as well from other parts of a new Europe have reimagined the Bard's plays to reflect local contexts while preserving their universal themes of power, justice, and human dignity.

These productions often serve as safe spaces to process collective traumas, challenge emerging power structures, or preserve cultural identity during periods of rapid change. The 21st century theatrical productions of Shakespeare's plays prove to be a "field of struggles", where their iconic value is effectively challenged by means of subtle meta-theatrical and meta-cultural strategies (Massai, 2005: 8). By adapting classical Western texts through indigenous performance traditions, contemporary staging techniques, and multilingual presentations, these interpretations of Shakespeare not only demonstrate the remarkable adaptability of his works but also create vital platforms for communities to examine their past, confront their present challenges, and imagine possible futures during periods of profound societal transformation.

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Session #1

4 September, 9:30–11:30

Shakespeare in the Shipyard: Space, Memory, and Political Commentary in Jan Klata's *H*

Anna Suwalska-Kołecka (The Mazovian University in Płock, Poland)

More than twenty years have passed since Jan Klata's site-specific *Hamlet* adaptation, *H.*, was staged at the Gdańsk Shipyard, an



event that has since achieved legendary status. This paper discusses the production in detail, focusing on the spatial dimension of the performance and its role in articulating social and political commentary.

Jan Klata, one of the most distinguished Polish theatre directors of his generation, is widely recognised as a bold commentator on political and social issues. His work frequently challenges national symbols and confronts unresolved national traumas. Consequently, when he decided to stage *Hamlet*, Klata sought a space capable of concentrating the spirit of the nation and bearing witness to the making of European history. He therefore abandoned the conventional theatrical venue and chose a site imbued with exceptional historical and symbolic significance: the Gdańsk Shipyard, where the Solidarity Trade Union was founded by Lech Wałęsa, an event that ultimately contributed to the fall of communism in Poland.

Once regarded as a sacred space of heroic deeds, the shipyard has since fallen into ruin, with only commemorative plaques on its walls recalling its former importance. Klata made powerful and deliberate use of this abandoned and derelict setting to articulate the fury, frustration, and disillusionment of his generation. In *H.*, space functions not merely as a backdrop, but as an active agent that carries and produces meanings related to national identity, collective memory, and historical continuity.

Owing to this creative and resourceful use of site-specific space, *Hamlet* once again proves, following Jan Kott's famous observation in *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*, to be "like a sponge," readily absorbing the most pressing problems of modern times, reflecting societies in flux and responding to moments of profound global and geopolitical transformation.

Guns N' Roses: Reading Ophelia's Death in Hindi Film Adaptations of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*

Ayushi Sikka (Banaras Hindu University, India)

The tragic circumstances of Ophelia's death in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* lay in stark juxtaposition to the glamorous, beautified and "mermaid-like" aesthetics of her corpse as evoked by Gertrude in Act IV, Scene VII of the play. Although the violent event originally takes place off-stage, invisible to the eyes of Elizabethan spectators, it has immortalised Ophelia as an unsung Shakespearean heroine and a scapegoat of masculo-phallic corruption. Diametrically contrasting studies have been generated to either view her as an oppressed woman who, in an attempt to elude the burdens of patriarchy, succumbed to a rather feminine death, or to concomitantly establish Ophelia's corporeal demise as an ultimate act of defiance against authority. However, despite being



crucial to the plot, the aesthetic and circumstantial portrayal of Ophelia's death remain ever-changing in the subsequent Hindi film adaptations of *Hamlet*, perhaps due to the ambiguous manner of her death and a difference in socio-cultural contexts of the source text and the target text. This paper intends to read and compare Ophelia's death in Kishore Sahu's *Hamlet* (1954) and Vishal Bhardwaj's *Haider* (2014) with the original script of the play penned between 1599 and 1601. Both Sahu and Bhardwaj invoke their artistic license by deviating from the original draft of the play; while Sahu portrays the death scene on-camera rather than simply appointing Gertrude as the sole eyewitness, Bhardwaj altogether alters the aesthetics of Ophelia/Arshi's demise. Moreover, Bhardwaj's choice of death seems to be more masculine (a gun) than the feminine act of drowning with violets. My paper aims to deconstruct the imagery and circumstances of Ophelia's death and further focus on how early modern on-stage violence has transformed itself while travelling through cultures and time zones.

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S39.- Electrofiction, Ecocides and Southern Epistemologies

The term "petrofiction", coined by Amitav Ghosh in 1992, has brought attention to the need for non-Western perspectives in emerging theories like eco-criticism. However, the inclusive approach has pitfalls, as coloniality, described as an "extractive machine par excellence" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2024) continues to empower the Global North at the expense of the Global South through the extraction of resources like copper, cobalt, and lithium for modern technologies. Simultaneously, the Global North



is reacting to climate migration, but overlooking the impacts of mass colonizing migration, including epistemicide, linguicide, and ecocide ending in genocides. Thus, this seminar moves beyond the traditional Eurocentric criticism of Eurocentrism and transcends the established “waves” in eco-criticism. It views the environmental crisis as a product of colonial modernity and recognizes its inseparability from other ongoing crises, including capitalist, racist, sexist, and epistemic issues.

The postulation requires an epistemic disobedience and denial of liberal paternalism, as environmental damage is seen as a colonial wound. With the Global North responsible for a significant portion of CO₂ emissions since 1850, decolonial healing becomes unimaginable within the logocentric, optiocentric, and dichotomic modernist episteme. Acknowledging the Global North’s incapacity to solve the problems it has created, this seminar advocates for indigenous knowledge and introduces the concept of *electrofiction*. Thus, the seminar aims to explore mineral extraction in the global electric industry, focusing on fiction from the Global South and the South of the Global North, fostering a South-to-South dialogue for a transmodern solution. Participants will explore Southern epistemologies such as Pachamama, buen vivir, and vincularidad to cultivate a planetary consciousness and relearn decoupled interspecies relations for a new worlding, guided by the belief that “another possible is possible” (Escobar 2020).

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Session #1

4 September, 9:30–11:30

The Unsettling Ecology of Far Away: Ecophobia and the Collapse of Boundaries

Dilara Erdem (Batman University, Türkiye)



This study examines Caryl Churchill's dystopian play *Far Away* (2000), a seminal work in contemporary British theatre, through the lenses of posthumanist theory and ecocriticism. The study analyzes how Churchill's chaotic world depicts the collapse of boundaries between human and nonhuman entities, where nature is not a passive backdrop but instead becomes an active, political agent in a global conflict.

The theoretical framework of this research is built upon Simon C. Estok's ecophobia hypothesis, Karen Barad's concept of "intra-action" and Timothy Morton's theories of "the mesh" and "dark ecology". The first section explores ecophobia, defined by Estok as the irrational fear and desire to dominate nature. In *Far Away*, the fact that rivers, animals, and even the weather "take sides" in war is presented as a critique of Cartesian dualism, which traditionally separates and elevates humanity above the natural world.

The second section utilizes Karen Barad's agential realism to argue that agency is not an exclusively human trait but emerges from a complex web of "intra-acting" entities. The politicization of objects and animals in the play shatters human-exceptionalist perspectives, portraying a world of radical entanglement. The final section analyzes the closing scene of the play through Timothy Morton's "dark ecology". Joan's uncertainty regarding the river's intent as she steps into it symbolizes the loss of the illusion of human control and the necessity of coexisting with ecological unknowability.

In conclusion, this study demonstrates how *Far Away* problematizes human exceptionalism in an era of ecological collapse and invites the audience to radically reconceive the relationship between humanity and the environment.

Transgressive Posthumanities: Ontological Liminalities and Biological Assemblages in Jeff VanderMeer's *Southern Reach* Tetralogy (2014-2024)

Amaya Fernández Menicucci (University of the Basque Country, Spain)

In the *Southern Reach* tetralogy (2014–2024), Jeff VanderMeer imagines Area X, a region cut off from the rest of the planet by a mysterious "Border" on the US southern East Coast, where ecological, biological, and epistemic norms are persistently destabilized. To use China Miéville's term, Area X is home to the "abcanny", a weird Petri dish on whose surface the human/non-human/abhuman continuum is reconfigured into a network of relational subjectivities. One of these is the invisible wall-like creature that roams Area X after the emergence of the Border. Both invisible, the Border and the Wall-Creature are, nevertheless, fundamentally different in that the former is imperceptible except as a change in the ontological state of those who go through it,



while the latter is constructed as a solid, breathing, living agent. Another creature, which some characters call “the Tower”, while others see as a vertical tunnel spiraling underground, is also described as a hybrid between architectural structure, spatial conduit and an organic womb-like creature. I approach the representation of Area X in general and, in particular, of these three entities from the combined perspectives of Rosi Braidotti’s and Francesca Ferrando’s philosophical posthumanism and of Paul Pulé’s and Asmae Ourkiya’s queer ecocriticism in order to read the Border not as a boundary, but as an ontological liminality, and the Wall-Creature and Tower/Tunnel as organic membranes that invite osmotic transgressions, interactive cross-pollination and new biological assemblages. According to this reading, the Border, the Wall and the Tower/Tunnel embody the dynamic and relational form of embedment in material reality that is experienced by both the organic and the inorganic according to philosophical posthumanism. I contend that VanderMeer achieves this by queering and ecologising bodies, spaces and subjectivities beyond the constraints of anthropocentric, dualist thinking.

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The Last Generation: Decoloniality, Intersectionality, and Chicana Feminist Writings

Nicole Haring (University of Graz, Austria)

Following Escobar’s (2020) demand that “another possible is possible”, this paper aims at presenting a decolonial feminist reading Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherrie Moraga’s works. To highlight that the environmental crisis is a product of colonial modernity and to recognize its inseparability from other ongoing crises, including capitalist, racist, sexist, and epistemic issues, the prose and poetry of these two queer Chicana feminists will present alternative poetic displays to navigate the complexities of our current



times. Both thinkers and writers have strongly influenced today's notion of 'intersectional environmentalism' and have thus early on poetically described the interdependencies and the deep colonial history of today's environmental degradation. Thus, this talk will use the works of Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherrie Moraga to negotiate an intersectional and decolonial understanding of the climate crises that highlights storytelling practices and problematizes the human-nature entanglements in all its complexities and relationalities.



S40.- Powers of Fiction or, What Is Fiction Good For, Now?

"I only read non-fiction." "Novels never changed anything." Such assertions have long histories in the cultural reception of novels and short stories and have renewed currency in our times. Against this backdrop, this seminar discusses evolving attitudes to print fiction (literary *and* otherwise) and what fiction can actually do for readers – individually and to/for communities. Its primary interest is in representation of those attitudes *within the text of print fiction*. What debates with its own aesthetics, affects, political engagement and continued relevance are articulated *in* fiction? What insights emerge from such articulations? How do they nuance related concerns across literary studies? What is the distinctiveness, hold and power of *print* fiction in present times, in comparison with fiction's multi-levelled presence in nonprint media and (for good or ill) in public/private discourse?

The convenors welcome proposals for papers addressing these questions through close reading of contemporary English-language narrative. 'Contemporary' will be taken to mean post-2000, but comparative reference to fiction from other periods is welcome.

Papers might discuss, but not be limited to, themes/examples like the following: narratives unsettling the fiction/nonfiction binary (e.g. Samantha Harvey's *Orbital*); or reworking the poetics of rewriting (e.g. Percival Everett's *James*, Em X. Liu's *The Death I Gave Him*) or of reimagined histories (e.g. Zadie Smith's *The Fraud*); or engaging with (cultural) politics (e.g. Hisham Matar's *My Friends*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Dream Count*); or probing/satirising 'the contemporary' (e.g. Tom McCarthy's *Satin Island*, Dave Eggers' *The Every*, Ali Smith's Seasons quartet); or testing fiction's forms and reach (e.g. Mark Z. Danielewski's *Only Revolutions*, Eimear McBride's *A Girl Is a Half-Formed Thing*, Lucy Ellman's *Ducks, Newburyport*, small/independent presses' fiction lists, works within genre fiction). What affirms print fiction's place in changing times? Reference (whether sympathetic or countering) to critical perspectives exemplified by the indicative studies below is suggested.

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Session #1

2 September, 15:00–17:00

Introduction to the Seminar: Powers of Fiction: or, What Is Fiction Good For Now?

Armelle Parey (University of Caen Normandy, France)
Ivan Callus (University of Malta, Malta)



In their Introduction to the Seminar, the Convenors will be expanding on the rationale in the original Call for Papers, as represented in this extract:

“I only read non-fiction.” “Novels never changed anything.” Such assertions have long histories in the cultural reception of novels and short stories and have renewed currency in our times. Against this backdrop, this seminar discusses evolving attitudes to print fiction (literary *and* otherwise) and what fiction can actually do for readers – individually and to/for communities. Its primary interest is in representation of those attitudes *within the text of print fiction*. What debates with its own aesthetics, affects, political engagement and continued relevance are articulated *in* fiction? What insights emerge from such articulations? How do they nuance related concerns across literary studies? What is the distinctiveness, hold and power of *print* fiction in present times, in comparison with fiction’s multi-levelled presence in nonprint media and (for good or ill) in public/private discourse?’

Why are these questions urgent now, and how are they being (re)articulated, correspondingly or differently, in contemporary critique – including in studies published since the publication of the original Call for Papers? The Convenors will offer a preliminary response to these questions. They will also preview the content and positions of the Seminar papers and anticipate issues that will be returned to in the Seminar’s final roundtable.

From Jim to James: Percival Everett’s *James*, a Critical Recentring of the Narrative of Mark Twain’s *Huckleberry Finn*

Isabelle Roblin (University of the Littoral Opal Coast, France)

‘[*James*] is a masterpiece that will help redefine one of the classics of American literature, while also being a major achievement on its own’, wrote a reviewer from the *Chicago Tribune* about Percival Everett’s 2024 Pulitzer Prize rewriting of Mark Twain’s *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885) from the point-of-view of Jim, the runaway slave. This quotation could be a relevant summary of what Everett’s novel has brought about in terms of literary re-vision by ‘entering an old text from a new critical direction’ (Adrienne Rich). *James* is indeed not only a coquel of Twain’s celebrated novel, retelling in its own way many of the narrative set pieces of its hypotext, and inventing new ones as well, but it also provides 21st-century readers with different approaches that can change the way in which they read or re-read this (problematic) classic of American literature.



(Un)exhausted Worlds: Sara Baume's Art of Erosion and the Powers of Fiction

Lea Sinoimeri (University of the Littoral Opal Coast, France)

In 2015, in his book *The Value of the Novel*, Peter Boxall located the value and power of the novel in its unique ability to give expression to the relationship between matter and nothingness, between the real world and our fictional representations of possible realities. “The novel”, he argued, ‘conducts the most precise, the most intimate examination of the movement of mind in matter, of the stirring of possible bodies within the bodies that we simply are’ (Boxall 92). His influential book *The Prosthetic Imagination* further developed this argument into a thorough exploration of the utopian impulse proper to the form of the novel, one particularly attuned to the contemporary moment marked by anxieties of a global environmental, economic and political collapse.

If, following Boxall, we are to think of the contemporary novel as a powerfully prosthetic form that allows us to imagine new ways of inhabiting our bodies in space and time, how are we to read the growing tendency of the contemporary novel to go against itself, so to speak, to erode and exhaust the very features that have constituted it as a literary form since its genesis? (Armstrong 2020, Vermeulen 2015). Namely, how does the unsettling of the fiction/non-fiction binary and the pervasive ‘reality hunger’ (Shields 2010) that characterise the work of many contemporary writers, reconfigure the relation between mimesis and prosthesis?

To answer this question, this paper will turn to an analysis of Sara Baume’s third novel *Seven Steeples* (2022). Written alongside her first non-fiction work *Handiwork* (2020), *Seven Steeples* is a highly hybrid work that sits uneasily between the genres of the novel, autofiction and the lyrical essay. It offers an illuminating example of a new form of contemporary Irish experimental realism, which draws attention to the slow, invisible erosion and degradation processes of everyday life, while constantly blurring the barriers between fact and fiction and between mimesis and prosthesis. Countering an aesthetics of ‘lastness’ and ‘limitlessness’, Sara Baume’s writing captures the nuanced, imperceptible transitions of daily life and the common processes of erosion and degradation that shape ordinary routines, while at the same time resisting narratives of erosion as a metaphor for human extinction.

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Print Fiction in the Digital Age: Metafictional Construction of the Hyperreal in Anthony Doerr's *Cloud Cuckoo Land* (2021)

Mojca Krevel (University of Ljubljana, Slovenia)

The vantage point of this paper is that fiction today remains good for what it has always been good for – its inherent power to nurture empathy and compassion through identification with alternative realities and identities. Drawing on N. Katherine Hayles' concept of embodied information, I contend that the physical book is a material site that must actively grapple with its socio-historical and technological environment in order to exercise this power fully. Within the emerging epoch of postmodernity, contemporary print fiction can therefore maintain ontological relevance by internalizing the epoch's core metaphysical premises, most succinctly articulated through Baudrillard's concepts of the hyperreal and the fractal. These principles are also implicit in the functioning of the current dominant medium – the hypertext. Following McLuhan, I propose that contemporary print fiction sustains its cultural role by formally accommodating the structural logic of hypertext.

Due to its inherent self-referentiality, the literary strategy of metafiction is a convenient means for configuring a contemporary work of fiction as a self-referential totality that enacts the principles of hyperreal fractality even within a decidedly linear medium. Moreover, within the current ontological lay-out, metafictional references function as Baudrillardian signs with the potential to participate in the construction of worlds and identities. Using Anthony Doerr's *Cloud Cuckoo Land* as a case study, I demonstrate how the reliance of the novel's worlds and protagonists on an ancient codex allows the text to operate through associative 'links', rather than traditional chronology. Historical record, futuristic simulation, and myth collapse into the interconnected simultaneity of potential iterations of the codex, which is typical of the hyperreal. The assertion of the fundamental interconnectedness of everything across space and time is precisely what charges Doerr's narrative with contemporary ethical relevance: it exposes empathy as a vital necessity for navigating our existence in a seemingly irreparably fractured world.

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Rehabilitating Richard III in Popular Historical Fiction of the 2010s

Marine de Rocca Serra (Independent Scholar)

The Ricardian movement was launched in the early twentieth century in Liverpool (1924). However, its intellectual roots can be traced back from the post-Tudor era, when James I's Master of Revels, Sir George Buck, sought to defend Richard III's legacy. In his *The History and Life and Reign of Richard the Third* (1619), Buck set out to challenge Tudor propaganda and argued for Richard III's rehabilitation, addressing issues of his physical appearance, moral character, and kingship. Through a comparative strategy, Sir George Buck subtly opposed Henry VII to Richard III in order to defend the latter, in contrast to Tudor Historiographers who had depicted Richard III as an evil tyrant and Henry VII as a divinely sanctioned ruler. This interpretative framework would be revived several centuries later by novelists likewise intent on rehabilitating Richard III's reputation through fictional narrative: Philippa Gregory and Sandra Worth. This raises the question of whether historical fiction is more effective than non-fiction in shaping and vindicating the posthumous reputation of a historical figure. This paper seeks to address this issue by focusing on the Ricardian Movement and its impact on Philippa Gregory's and Sandra Worth's novel series. Furthermore, it will show the strengths and the limits of popular historical fiction in defending a controversial figure as Richard III.

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Session #2

2 September, 17:30–19:30

Facts, Fiction, Feminist and Cultural Politics in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Dream Count* (2025)

Christine Lorre (University of Caen Normandy, France)

Dream Count, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's 2025 novel, depicts the intersected stories of four African women and is set between Africa and the United States. These four women's personal lives and dreams are related in five parts. Chiamaka is from a wealthy Nigerian family who frequently travels to the US. She is a travel writer, in search of a romantic relationship. Her friend Zikora is a lawyer who gives birth to a boy whose father has left her. Kadiatou is Guinean and is sponsored to emigrate to the US with her daughter Binta by her long-standing but elusive fiancé Amadou. She first works for Chiamaka, and then as a maid in a hotel where



she is sexually assaulted by a white man. The event implicitly refers to the French politician Dominique Strauss-Kahn's sexual assault of Nafissatou Diallo in 2011. Omelogor is Chiamaka's cousin, who works in banking and runs a blog of advice for men. The narrative closes by returning to Chiamaka, who, as the main link between the other characters, frames the narrative.

Adichie's novel explores some of the key elements that shape the emotions and identity of these four women – embedded patriarchy, the search for heterosexual love (or not), relations among women, be they mother, daughter, aunties or friends. These themes are treated in a realistic way that includes non-print forms of writing such as blogging, which Adichie used before in *Americanah* (2013); Ifemelu, the central character, is a Nigerian who during her years out of Nigeria writes a humorous blog about romantic pursuits and being an African in the US. Adichie's style also revisits the now controversial genre of chick lit, which first emerged in American women's fiction in the 1990s and became, 'by the turn of the century, a humorous subset of women's literature, journalism, and advice manuals' (Harzewski 2011) that African writers, among others, have appropriated (Spencer 2018). This paper proposes to analyse Adichie's novel as a composition of voices, genres and styles that, taken together, enables her to offer her global readers an African, post-feminist light on the criminal case of *New York vs. Strauss-Kahn*.

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“Turning fact into truth”: Identification in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Dream Count*

Daria Tunca (University of Liège, Belgium)

In one of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's lesser-known lectures, entitled “To Instruct and Delight: A Case for Realist Literature,” the Nigerian author makes the claim that “realist fiction is, above all, the process of turning fact into truth.” Indeed, Adichie maintains that this literary genre “seeks to infuse the real with meaning,” an attribute that explains its propensity to generate a form of emotional recognition that may lead readers to act in the real world. Adichie's views on the power of literature find echoes



in the concept of attachment theorized by Rita Felski in *Hooked: Art and Attachment* (2020), as Felski, similarly to Adichie, shows how art “slices across boundaries between reason and feeling” (ix); Felski further investigates “what [bonds] create and make possible” (ix).

About a year before delivering the abovementioned lecture, Adichie had written a journalistic piece about the case of Nafissatou Diallo, the Guinean housekeeper who was assaulted by then IMF director Dominique Strauss-Kahn in New York (“The Year’s Biggest ‘He Said, She Said’”). Over a decade later, the writer was still haunted by the story, and included a fictionalized version of this incident in her novel *Dream Count* (2025), otherwise inventing a life for the Guinean woman, now renamed Kadiatou.

Taking its cue from Felski and Adichie, this paper seeks to address the question of how fiction may foster readerly identification, specifically in relation to Kadiatou’s narrative in *Dream Count*. It aims to do so by combining Felski’s conceptual framework – especially her different “strands of identification” (94-111) – with a micro-level analysis of the assault scene and its aftermath in Adichie’s novel, so as to determine whether the novel’s narrative and stylistic features encourage a sense of attachment in the reader – a connection that may, in turn, suggest that literature still has an emotional and political role to play in the twenty-first century.

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Fiction as Living Truth: Narrative Authenticity and Political Reality in Pakistani Anglophone Literature

Raheen Fatima Khan (The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan)

Drawing on theories of power, censorship, and cultural resistance, this paper conceptualizes fiction as a counter-discursive space through which silenced histories and dissenting political imaginaries are articulated. Fiction has long served as a crucial medium for articulating dissent, bearing witness to war atrocities, exposing societal injustices, and amplifying marginalized voices,



particularly in contexts where direct political expression is constrained. In authoritarian, semi-authoritarian, or otherwise restrictive societies, where state surveillance, censorship, and coercive control limit journalistic and scholarly discourse, fiction provides a uniquely resilient platform for resistance. By operating through metaphor, allegory, and narrative indirection, fictional writing often evades governmental curtailment while simultaneously fostering public consciousness and collective memory. This study foregrounds Pakistani fiction as a case study to illustrate this dynamic, with particular emphasis on literary responses to the 1971 war that culminated in the secession of East Pakistan and the creation of Bangladesh, demonstrating how narrative fiction functions as a site of counter-memory and epistemic resistance. This research engages with the works of Tariq Rahman, Adam Zameendad and others, to argue that fiction, by capturing lived experience and suppressed realities, proves more authentic than both official histories and journalistic narratives of the period.

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Roundtable Discussion: The Powers of Fiction; or, What Is Fiction Good For Now?

Armelle Parey (University of Caen Normandy, France)

Ivan Callus (University of Malta, Malta)

Convenors and panellists come together for a final roundtable discussion to review issues around the Seminar's overriding concern: narrativization and critique around rearticulations of the powers of fiction across contemporary sensibilities and cultures. The roundtable discussion uses the papers as prompts for debate. It also draws in broader critical perspectives anticipated in the Introduction to the Seminar in Panel 1, in consideration also of relevant fictional work that may not have featured within the two panels. The Convenors will also bring in views from the audience as well as from invited discussants with whom the Convenors are currently in collaboration on the Seminar's themes.



s41.- 'New Wildernesses' in Contemporary Anglophone Literature

[I]t seemed everyone now lived in the City. Whether they wanted to or not. So while a couple of those twenty had gone to the Wilderness for adventure, and a couple for knowledge, most fled there because they believed in some way their lives depended on it. (Cook, 51)

Diane Cook's novel *The New Wilderness* (2020) follows a small group of people who choose to migrate from an unnamed City, which has fallen victim to climate change, to go "back to nature": to "the Wilderness," ostensibly the last remaining untouched land in a near-future America. Their nomadic journey represents a physical displacement of course, but at the same time a figurative quest for a "rewilding" of the self, whatever that might mean to each member of the survivalist group. This notion of a "new wilderness" has been emerging as a trope in contemporary literature, not only as the material setting of the fiction, of course, but as a symbolic figuration of space which makes room for the revaluation—and perhaps the re- or trans-formation—of human and more-than-human relationalities. Considering the idea of "new wilderness" in the broadest terms (see, for example, Ferdinand; Hernandez; Nelson and Callicott; Woods), our seminar seeks to answer how contemporary Anglophone literature devises and assesses "new wildernesses," attempting to theorize what such wildernesses can be and do. The issues we will address include, but are not limited to: the poetics of wilderness, old and new; digital wildernesses; supernatural/spiritual wildernesses; the ocean as wilderness; ethical/eco approaches to wilderness; philosophical theoretical frameworks of wilderness/wildness; psychological wildernesses; orientation and reorientation in wildernesses; queer wildernesses; gender/sexuality and/in the wilderness; cartography of/and wilderness; post/transhuman wildernesses – as featured in contemporary Anglophone literature.

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Session #1

2 September, 15:00–17:00

Introduction

Jennifer A. Wagner-Lawlor (Penn State University, United States)

Esther Peeren (University of Amsterdam, Netherlands)

Merve Sarıkaya-Şen (Middle East Technical University, Türkiye)

Rethinking Wilderness in David Mitchell's *Black Swan Green*: The Quotidian, the Conflictual, the Embodied

Gülşah Göçmen (Aksaray University, Türkiye)

This paper aims to analyze contemporary British author David Mitchell's semi-autobiographical, Bildungsroman *Black Swan Green* (2006) in order to display how the novel articulates new wildernesses grounded in coexistence, conflict, and embodied experiences rather than in physical separation from human life. Set in the fictional village of Black Swan Green (inspired by Hanley Swan in Worcestershire), the novel presents one formative year in the life of a young poet-to-be, Jason Taylor, and vividly portrays the junctures of multiple forms of wildernesses, resisting both essentialist conceptualizations and holistic idealizations of the wild. This paper argues that Mitchell's disrupted narration in thirteen chapters playfully traces the tensions between conservation and co-existence of the wild areas surrounding its 13-year-old protagonist, Jason. The wilderness in the novel sometimes appears



as a frozen lake, offering an exquisite playtime for children as well as a potential danger of being swallowed to death. It also becomes all the negative reflections the village people associate with the gypsies and their lifestyle since they engage in a heated debate about sharing the land with them. Moreover, the wilderness acts as an inspiring source for the young poet, igniting his imagination with innumerable countryside phenomena that yield themselves to no uniformity but embodied experiences of wilderness (Barker) for the boy. The novel reminds us the idea that wilderness is not a singled-out concept that exists outside the human contact but “interdependent upon humans” as well as humans are “dependent upon it” (Bartel and Branagan 2). Drawing on contemporary debates on wilderness and focusing on close textual analyses, this paper will conclude that Mitchell’s novel contributes to the theorization of a quotidian wilderness that aptly defies any restrictive classifications and envisions a fruitful conversation between human communities and the wild spaces that they inhabit.

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Crafting a ‘New Wilderness’ in Jesmyn Ward’s “Mother Swamp” (2022) and *Let Us Descend* (2023)

Vanessa Lado-Pazos (University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain)

The topic of marronage, once seemingly marginalized in critical literary studies, has gained increasing traction in contemporary literature as a means of configuring alternative historical narratives. This is the case for critically acclaimed African American author Jesmyn Ward. In her 2022 short story “Mother Swamp” and her 2023 novel *Let Us Descend*, Ward revisits the subject in a renewed and nuanced fashion. The latter is a neo-slave narrative that revolves around Annis, a young, enslaved woman in a plantation in the Carolinas and the journey on which she embarks after, first her mother, and then herself, are sold separately, prompting her eventual escape into the swamps. Functioning as a kind of sequel to this novel, “Mother Swamp” embarks on the historical reconstruction of a fictional, all-female maroon settlement through the character of Afice, a girl coming of age amid the devastation of her community. This paper seeks to explore how these two literary works develop a new notion of wilderness through the reworking of maroon mythology. I will contend that they do so by first elaborating on the binary opposites that have defined the received idea of wilderness and informed the construction of Otherness-namely, civilization v. nature and their



ramifications, human v. animal, master v. slave-and then deconstruct it by offering an alternative model. This approach will rest on the examination of three central elements through which Ward articulates her rewriting: the status of invisibility, gender and storytelling. The stories that Annis and Afice pass on to their daughters operate as repositories of a cultural memory, foregrounding community and interdependence as the cornerstones of survival and as mechanisms for nurturing future generations living in the afterlives of slavery. These interconnected works offer a reconceptualization of wilderness that resists androcentric, imperialist cartographies; one that bears witness to human struggle and resistance.

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Wilderness "Changelings" in African-American Literature

Jennifer A. Wagner-Lawlor (Penn State University, United States)

Contemporary speculative literature is peopling the world with some "strange children": Dianne Cook's *The New Wilderness* gives us one such example in the figure of Agnes. This presentation, however, focuses on texts written by African-American writers. The history of African-Americans' relationship with "wilderness" is altogether distinct from that of white settlers, and scholars have begun tracing those distinctions. Holding that in the background, I touch on texts in which "human" children are *gestated* in wilderness environments that play a role — a sort of queer epigenetic role—in their bodymindmattering into what Karin Murris calls "the posthuman child." I think of these children as "changelings," insofar as wilderness seems to play a role in informing



their being. I am interested in the “plasticity” of these children born “outside” conventionally “human” boundaries, in a more anarchic milieu that can be spiritual, or psychological, or indeed—if we look to the merchildren born of African-American mythology—oceanic. What precisely is this new child “inheriting” from the anarchy of that wilderness? Narratively speaking, a breaking of the narrative: a Blochian *novum*. In each example—Nalo Hopkinson’s *Midnight Robber* and *In the Arms of the New Moon*; Nnedi Okorafor’s *Who Fears Death*; and Rivers Solomon’s *Sorrowland* (2021)—the wilderness mobilizes the gestation and birth of children who represent not sameness but radical difference—offering a new story, a new history.

Session #2

2 September, 17:30–19:30

Waves of Orientation: Networks, Renewal and the Orcadian Wilderness in Amy Liptrot’s *The Outrun*

Carla Rodríguez González (University of Oviedo, Spain)

This paper examines Amy Liptrot’s *The Outrun* (2016) as a reconfiguration of “new wilderness” grounded in practices of orientation and networked renewal. Set in the Orkney Islands, the memoir mobilises insular ecologies —sea, wind, tides and seasonal rhythms— as active forces that intra-act with processes of recovery. Wilderness is thus studied as a relational topology in which human and more-than-human agencies are continually reconfigured. Drawing on Tim Ingold’s notion of the *wayfarer* (2011), the paper analyses how the narrating subject moves across land- and seascapes, producing forms of situated knowledge that unfold through rhythmic engagement with the environment. Her return to Orkney is read as a necessary reorientation, through which embodied vulnerability and environmental transformations become mutually attuned, presenting wilderness as a site of constant negotiation. The analysis further draws on Karen Barad’s concept of *diffraction* (2007) to analyse the portrayal of addiction and recovery. As such, addiction is approached as an obstructive force that produces a rupture or gap, through which alternative relational patterns become possible, whereas recovery is understood as a diffractive process in which emotional, bodily and ecological energies are re-routed into new wave-patterns shaped by insular rhythms. Diffractive (self)care emerges as a mode of orientation in wilderness, encompassing the management of bodily “tremors” and cultivated response-ability to non-



human cycles such as tides, bird migrations and stellar movements. Finally, the paper situates *The Outrun* within contemporary network theory. Following Jagoda (2016), Latour (2005) and Levine (2023), Orkney is read as a peripheral yet resilient network in which human, ecological and technological actants co-produce infrastructures of continuance. It is concluded that Liptrot's engagement with conservation work, digital labour and local communities exemplifies how heterogeneous, non-uniform network architectures facilitate processes of transformation and accountability in entangled worlds.

The New Wildernesses of the Space Age: Nostalgia, Pastoralism and the Anthropocene in Samantha Harvey's *Orbital*

Sergio López-Sande (University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain)

The pastoral, which might at first glance appear a perfectly straightforward genre form, has been met with numerous formalist attempts at marrying its specificity with the plurality and permutability that characterise its modern developments (cf. Marinelli 1971, Ettin 1984, Alpers 1996, Gifford [1999]2019). The present contribution sets out to analyse Samantha Harvey's *Orbital*, which the author conceptualises as a 'space pastoral', in light of this history. To do so, this analysis pits the narrative against readings of the modern eclogue as astropastoralist (Tabas 2021) and postpastoralist (Gifford 2013, [1999]2019). Contrasting the specificity of Harvey's narrative with existing approaches to bucolism and the pastoral, I examine the pertinence of the 'space pastoral' label, its connection to the Anthropocene hypothesis, and to what extent the generic developments that it aspires to encompass may betray a more widespread tonal shift away from the poetics of exaltation that has long accompanied literary pastoralism. This paper thus proposes a conceptualisation of Harvey's narrative as one that revels in the dichotomies at the heart of the eclogue, but does so without instituting a sense of verticality, engaging, rather, in the nostalgic, existentialist contemplation of both humanity's impact on the earth's futures, and our collective, changing journey into the wildernesses beyond.

Community and Kinship across Wilderness, Countryside and City in Diane Cook's *The New Wilderness* and Lulu Allison's *Salt Lick*

Esther Peeren (University of Amsterdam, Netherlands)

This paper explores how new wildernesses relate to countrysides and cities in the dystopian societies – undone by flooding, pollution and disease – of Diane Cook's *The New Wilderness* (2020) and Lulu Allison's *Salt Lick* (2021). I argue that these relations



challenge received ideas about the forms of community and kinship each of these geographies can sustain. In Cook's novel, as urban life has become unbearable, the opportunity is given to some to live without any impact on the environment in the wilderness. This life of rewilding, though in some ways restorative, turns out to be challenging, as the first "Community" regularly loses members and needs to be constantly surveilled to keep them from adopting ways that are rural rather than wild. In Allison's novel, the cities at first are refuges, as rural and wilderness areas prove more susceptible to flooding. Later on, different groups retreat to the rural and wilderness, some striving for ecological self-sufficiency and others setting up ethnonationalist communities. Both model their way of life on the rural idyll, but the latter also invoke Phil A. Neel's notion of the far hinterland as a partisan realm "driven ... by the oath" (53). Both novels envision wilderness, countryside and city not as separate in function and affective charge, but as all capable of fostering harmonious multi-species conviviality and becoming an abandoned hinterland seething with resentment. In a comparative close reading, I ask how this shared capability affects the types of communities and kinship fostered and foreclosed by the new wilderness (and the new countryside and the new city).

Sarah Hall's *Helm* (2025): Resonances and Constellations of Wild(er)ness

Merve Sarıkaya-Şen (Middle East Technical University, Türkiye)

Drawing on Roderick Nash's conceptualization of wilderness as "not so much a place as a feeling about a place—a perceived reality, a state of mind" (xviii), Debbie Lee treats wilderness as a cultural phenomenon shaped by our memories, perceptions, imaginations and stories rather than defined solely by geography and, thus, "loaded with spiritual and emotional resonance[s]" (66). Starting from this premise, I ask how Sarah Hall's latest novel *Helm* (2025) portrays such affective and symbolic resonances of wild(er)ness by interweaving diverse stories spanning from the Neolithic and Medieval periods to the Victorian Age and the twentieth century and into the present day. In the novel, *Helm*, the wind local to Cumbria, is anthropomorphised as a character whose voice connects these narratives of idiosyncratic encounters with it. Acting as a self-willed force that displays its wildness and resists human control, the *Helm* wind is mythologized, worshipped, feared or scientifically analysed across the centuries—blamed for headaches and even chaos by some, yet deeply loved and revered by others. By focusing on the networked connections among different temporalities articulated through the wild(er)ness of *Helm* and analysing them through relationality (see, for example, Agamben; Edwards; Gilligan) and wilderness theories (see, for example, Woods; Plumwood; Gaitanidis, Bainbridge & Mighetto), this paper explores how plural voices in the novel relate to one another and to *Helm*'s wild(er)ness. I argue that



this constellation, produced through the blending of historical, environmental, networked and mosaic fiction, generates a new poetics of wild(er)ness that is uniquely positioned to reflect on the paradoxical (im)possibility of wild(er)ness in the twenty-first century.



s42.- Voice and Sound in Literature

At the beginning of the 20th century, after a very long time dominated by print culture, a renewed sensibility towards the sound/musicality of literature emerged especially thanks to the birth of the radio medium and the advent of a “second orality” (Ong 1982). If radio recuperated the spell of a language that, as Rudolph Arnheim (1936) had pointed out, was above all sound and expression, not meaning, James Joyce’s memorable experiments with sonorisation turned writing into a “voice machine” (Frasca 2005). The genre of radio drama itself, experimented by a number of well-known poets, novelists and playwrights of the 20th century, allowed writers to retain, in Angela Carter’s words, “some of the authority of the most antique tellers of tales” and to affect listeners with the same “atavistic power” (Carter 1985). This aspect is even intensified in our contemporary world, in which we are witnessing the growing diffusion of new reading practices (audiobooks, podcasts) in which the acoustic aspect is increasingly central, not least for the immersivity and mighty impact of sound and silence on the listener’s mind, emotions and imagination. As Walter Ong (1982) wrote, “sight isolates, sound incorporates. [...] You can immerse yourself in hearing, in sound. There is no way to immerse yourself similarly in sight”.

The seminar seeks contributions from scholars and researchers interested in the exploration of the oral/aural dimensions of literature, including the latter’s continuous relationships, negotiations and hybridizations with other expressive codes such as that of music, on which interart and intermedial studies have been concentrating their attention (Wolf 1999). Other areas of inquiry could include the aural aspects of literary space and geography, so far underprivileged in comparison with the visual aspects of landscape and setting, as the lack of appropriate critical terminology testifies, while terms such as auralisation, point of audition, auscultation, and diffusion could increase the “recognition of an aural dimension to literary geography” (Hones 2015).

We welcome submissions across a spectrum of themes, including but not limited to:

- The oral nature of literature as storytelling
- Hearing and its connection with human interiority



- Listening as an intersubjective activity
- Literature and the emotional power of music
- The expressiveness of silence
- The aural dimension of literary space/geography
- The 'second orality' of electric and digital media
- Synaesthesia and multisensory literary experiences
- Literature's intermedial references to sound arts

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Session #1

31 August, 16:00–18:00

The New Orality and the Old Orality: Broadcast Poetry and the Bardic Tradition

David Nowell Smith (University of East Anglia, United Kingdom)

With the birth of radio, many poets and broadcasters believed that the nascent technology would herald a ‘new poetry for the new audience’. Yet what is striking is how often this new orality was grounded in a nostalgic vision of bygone oral traditions, from Scots ballads to Icelandic bards to Homeric Greece. In part, this was about restoring the unity of voice itself: Rudolf Arnheim thus proposed that the wireless would return us to ‘that *primeval age* where the word was still sound, the sound still word’. However, many poets hoped that radio would reassert poetry’s significance as a mode of public speech. The Poet Laureate, John Masefield, argued that radio allowed ‘poetry to *resume* its ancient place as the joy of the people’; similarly, Harriet Monroe, editor of *Poetry*, wrote that ‘the radio will bring *back* its audience’, while the poet and critic Herbert Read claimed that radio would bring poetry ‘*back* into circulation’.

My paper will explore the interplay between radio’s technological newness and its promise of return to a prior orality. My focus is the tension between early radio poetry’s sonic innovation, notably its interweaving of disembodied voices and sound effects,



and its engagement with archaic poetic genres and popular forms. To this end I document two works by the BBC poet-producer DG Bridson: *The March of the 45* (1936), a polyphonic narrative poem in ballad metre, broadcast live from both Glasgow and Manchester, and *Steel* (1937), an ‘Industrial Symphony’ that was partly recorded in a steel foundry, and employed passages of alliterative verse. Then I turn to Louis MacNeice’s earliest broadcast writing, *The Stones Cry Out* (1941), which I read as intertextual and sonic collage. How might these experiments enrich both our theoretical understanding of poetic voice, and, more specifically, of the voices of literary modernism?

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Louis MacNeice, *The Stones Cry Out: St Paul’s Cathedral*, broadcast 21 September 1941, BBC Home Service

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Wisdom, Community and Aurality: Eliot’s war-time broadcasts to India

Sara Pallante (University of Naples Federico II, Italy)

During World War II, T. S. Eliot delivered over ten broadcasts for the BBC Eastern Service reading his own poetry and discussing various literary topics. According to Coyle (1999, 345), Eliot’s talks to India “remain one of the unstudied puzzles of modern history”. Why, at the height of his meditations on European unity, would Eliot address an Indian audience? This paper’s aim is to contextualize these war-time broadcasts drawing on Eliot’s lifelong engagement with Indic traditions, on his conception of “wisdom”, and on his profound sensitivity to aurality. In her study on Eliot’s ties to Indic philosophy, Kearns (1987) draws attention to his process of “identification and detachment” when dealing with literature involved with philosophical ideas which may or may not coincide with the reader’s beliefs. For Eliot, this exercise of “surrender and recovery” can have a public and communal dimension: “there is something more in the greatest poetry than “ideas” of a kind that we must either accept or reject [...] there is the Wisdom that we can all accept”. In fact, for Eliot, wisdom “is the same for all men everywhere. If it were not so,



what profit could a European gain from the Upanishads, or the Buddhist Nikayas?”. More importantly, wisdom is nondiscursive and circumvents language and logical propositions. Only “the language of poetry is the language most capable of communicating wisdom” (Eliot, 2019, 80). The emphasis on this latter aspect should then make us alert to his reflections on sound and sense in poetry (Clark Lectures, 1926), and especially to his deliberate involvement with the medium of radio, whose aural and communal dimensions he, both as a broadcaster and as the publisher of Arnheim, understood particularly well.

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Tom Stoppard’s Ethico-political Speculations in Words and Music

Lucia Esposito (Roma Tre University, Italy)

The paper examines the evolution of radio as a medium for dramatic representation within today’s “transmedial constellations” (Rippl 2015: 2). It focuses particularly on recent uses of radio for adapting literary, theatrical, and musical works, while also engaging in dense dialogue with other arts and media through “intermedial references” (Rajewsky 2005: 52 *et seq.*). The case study will examine the work of Tom Stoppard, one of the greatest contemporary British playwrights. Beginning in the 1960s, he wrote original radioplays and adapted his own and other authors’ dramas for the BBC. The paper will focus on two recent musical adaptations that, together with a highly evocative use of the human voice, operate a “double assault on the emotions”, as the director of Samuel Beckett’s early radioplays, Donald McWhinnie, put it (McWhinnie 1959: 65). Music in radioplays has always



been used more for its emotional immediacy than for its semantic potential. According to producer and critic Martin Esslin, music “portrays and represents the ebb and flow of emotions” (Esslin 1975: 125). In fact, as also philosopher Martha Nussbaum points out, music seems to be “eminently connected to our emotional life”, capable of expressing what lies beneath conscious understanding and of going “to the bottom of things” (Nussbaum 2001: 254, 268). Stoppard’s first radioplay under analysis will be a transposition of his latest drama, *Rock ‘n’ Roll* (2006), which is set in Prague in 1968 and features a prestigious soundtrack by artists such as Syd Barrett, Bob Dylan, the Beach Boys and the Czech band Plastic People of the Universe. The second, *Darkside* (2013), translates Pink Floyd’s album *The Dark Side of the Moon* into the “theatre of the mind”, to use Esslin’s well-known definition of the highly imaginative potential of radio’s acoustic-only dimension. In both cases, the focus is on radio’s unique ability to combine the languages of acting, narration and sound, as well as on Stoppard’s skill in weaving together political and ethical issues by harnessing the emotional impact of the voice and organised sound.

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Voice, Sound and Dissidence in Brian Friel’s Radio Drama Adaptations

Virginie Roche-Tiengo (Artois University, France)

Voice and sound in Brian Friel’s radio drama adaptations from *A Sort of Freedom* (1958), his first radio drama produced for the BBC Northern Ireland Home Service to the latest 2025 podcasts and radio drama adaptations on RTÉ, BBC Radio 4 create an aesthetic of dissent (from Latin *dissidens*, *dis-sedere*, to sit aside) as they are situated outside the theatre space at the intersection of the human and the ethereal, of stillness and instability. Nietzsche’s concepts of the Apolline and the Dionysiac will help us explore



voice, sound and dissidence in Brian Friel's radio drama adaptations, which either record or replicate a theatrical production and engage in a creative process. We contend that Friel's radio drama adaptations dramatize artistic creation as an eminently dissenting process and show that they achieve this by soliciting the two competing paradigms of diegetic sounds and disembodied voices. The question of the voice in Brian Friel's drama, whether embodied or disembodied encompasses issues related to the contributions of sound reinforcement techniques, involving various devices such, as for example, tape recorders, baby alarms in *Aristocrats* (1979), microphones, amplifiers, or loudspeakers. All sources of vocal performance are invisible to the listeners, who, confined to the privacy of their own space, have no visual elements with which to engage. Radio drama offers the possibility, as Jean Tardieu pointed out, of making "the musicality of language" audible, and it eliminates the actor's physical presence. Listening to Brian Friel's radio drama adaptations requires an ear wide open, inviting voices of many hues and accents to resonate and radiate, mingling with the buzzing of synesthetic sounds: these whispers engage in a hushed dialogue with ourselves, to escape the silent and sclerosing soliloquy. Friel's radio drama adaptations expose the power and potential of the voice and sounds to foster dissidence and explore the fragile traces of memory left behind by the sound, music and voices, becoming a ringing bell haunting our mind in the silence of our reflection.

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Session #2

1 September, 9:00–11:00

“Man Preach Revolution, but Woman Carry its Sound”: Echo, Dub Aesthetics, and Black Feminism in Jacqueline Crooks’s *Fire Rush* (2023)

Anne-Elise Pinzaru (Normal Superior School of Lyon, France)

In “Feminism and Sound”, Ella Finer challenges the understanding of echo as sterile repetition, arguing instead that it is a subversive and uncontrollable sonic process that “confuses repetition”, occupies space and time and enables the articulation of a feminist epistemology. This paper explores how Jacqueline Crooks’s *Fire Rush* resonates with Finer’s argument by foregrounding the feminist potentialities of echo through dub reggae and its literary aesthetics.

Set in 1980s Britain amid race riots and police brutality targeting Caribbean communities, the novel follows Yamaye, a young woman who discovers the agentive possibilities of dub as an echoing form. The delays, overlays and overlaps characteristic of dub reggae counter the dominant acoustic regime of Babylon, the British system figured as violent and silencing, and carve out a temporary space of existence for the community. At the same time, dub’s reverberations establish lines of communication with feminine ancestral legacies of care, opening possibilities for lasting emancipation from both colonial and patriarchal norms.

As Yamaye taps into reverberations linking her to Nanny of the Maroons, to her mother and to caring men such as her deceased lover Moose, she gradually finds her voice and comes into her own as the DJ and singer Sonix Dominatrix. This sonic empowerment allows her not only to break with Babylon as an oppressive source of echo, but also to confront and ultimately destroy the patriarchal afterlives of Babylon that persist within the Caribbean context.



Situating *Fire Rush* within Black feminist traditions of love-politics concerned with transforming the public sphere through care ethics, this paper argues that Crooks's novel explores how sonic echo can enact such transformation. Through dub's echoing dynamics, *Fire Rush* creates an audiotopia in the sense proposed by Josh Kun, an "auditory somewhere" that does not only project change but actively participates in its enactment.

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Sound, Voice, and Resistance: The Acoustic Archive of Gilead in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*

C. Maria Laudando (University of Naples L'Orientale, Italy)

Alessandra Ruggiero (University of Teramo, Italy)

The contemporary resurgence of listening practices – from podcasts to audiobooks – has foregrounded the acoustic dimension of literature and revived what Walter J. Ong famously defined as the "second orality" of electronic culture. This renewed attention



to voice also invites reflection on the political stakes of speaking and listening, particularly in narratives where the control of language becomes a form of power. In dystopian regimes, language is often regulated and dissenting voices are silenced; yet literature preserves those voices through narrative memory. In this context, the work of Margaret Atwood – and particularly *The Handmaid's Tale* – offers a compelling example of how storytelling can function as an acoustic archive, transmitted through voice, recording, and listening.

This paper examines Atwood's broader interest in voice, storytelling, and narrative performance as relational acts that presuppose both a speaker and a listener. Building on this perspective, it analyses the 2017 Special Edition audiobook (Audible), narrated by Claire Danes with contributions from Atwood and others. Drawing on theories of remediation developed by Jay D. Bolter and Richard Grusin (1999), as well as the philosophy of voice articulated by Adriana Cavarero (2005), the paper argues that the audiobook does not merely reproduce the novel but reconfigures its textual materiality through sound, performance, and intermedial commentary.

Particular attention is given to the edition's polyphonic narration and to supplementary materials – including Atwood's recorded postscript, a critical essay by Valerie Martin, and an additional performative scene extending the "Historical Notes". These elements extend the diegesis and construct a meta-narrative dialogue between author, critic, and listener. Through pauses, silence, and layered voices, the audiobook foregrounds Offred's testimony as a site of embodied presence, resistance, and survival, making the listener a co-archivist of dystopian memory.

Combining sound studies, intermedial theory, and narrative analysis, this paper aims at demonstrating how Atwood's audiobook adaptation amplifies the affective, political, and sonic dimensions of her narrative, transforming listening into a critical and participatory act that preserves and reconfigures marginalized voices within Gilead.

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Listening to the Archive: Curatorial Aesthetics and Textual Flânerie in *The Night Circus*

Sanaz Tabrizi (Istanbul Aydin University, Türkiye)

Monire Fallah (Istanbul Aydin University, Türkiye)

Erin Morgenstern's *The Night Circus* (2011) reimagines the contemporary novel as a resonant zone of atmosphere, where narrative unfolds through silence, rhythm, and spatial affect rather than linear progression. This paper examines how Morgenstern transforms the act of reading into an immersive, auditory experience that oscillates between presence and hush. Through the lens of curatorial aesthetics, the 'Cirque des Rêves' emerges not as a 'dead museum' of static spectacle but as a Live Museum, a phantasmagoria of sound and stillness in which magic functions as both medium and rhythm of psychogeographic control. Adopting a spatial and aural hermeneutic informed by intermedial analysis, the study investigates how meticulously organised environments, most notably the Wunschtraum Clock, translate temporal motion into silent choreography, where mechanical precision becomes a form of muted resonance. The novel's architecture of quiet atmospheres and suspended gestures transforms reading into a mode of listening, attuning the reader to what Susan Sontag calls 'the aesthetics of silence'. Central to this inquiry is a redefinition of the flâneur as listener: a subject whose wandering through the flickering topography of the circus activates meaning through attentiveness and rhythm rather than sight alone. The novel's refusal of narrative closure, its lingering echoes, and its characters' incorporeal persistence sustain the circus as an infinite, affective installation that resists finality. Ultimately, *The Night Circus* exemplifies a poetics of resonance, where the writer-as-curator constructs an acoustic architecture of feeling, an atmospheric text that only comes fully alive through the reader's silent, participatory listening.

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Listening to the Eerie. Audio Essays and Speculative Aesthetics

Tymon Adamczewski (Kazimierz Wielki University, Poland)

Over a little more than the last decade, the audio essay has emerged as an experimental literary form that extends narrative and essayistic traditions beyond the printed page. Combining voice, music and field recordings, audio essays reorganize literary textuality as a time-based, performative structure in which meaning unfolds through listening rather than reading (cf. Barton, Kronic, Goodman 2024). My paper will examine the format of the audio essay as a speculative mode of literary writing particularly suited to articulating post-apocalyptic sensibilities and environmental unease. It will focus on *On Vanishing Land* (2013), an audio essay by Mark Fisher and Justin Barton that mobilizes narrative voice, sonic montage and digressive reflection to explore the underbelly of late capitalism through the seemingly tranquil landscapes of south-eastern England. Sites such as the Felixstowe container port, the Anglo-Saxon burial ground at Sutton Hoo and the eroding Suffolk coastline are woven into a literary geography shaped by memory, speculation and theoretical critical commentary. Through layered soundscapes, the work enacts what Mark Fisher theorizes as the *eerie*: the unsettling presence of "something where there should be nothing, or nothing where there should be something" (2016: 65).

Read through the lens of speculative aesthetics (cf. Mackay, Pendrell, Trafford 2014), *On Vanishing Land* constructs a post-apocalyptic narrative dispersed across contemporary space rather than projected into a distant future. Its attention to coastal plants, resilient nonhuman organisms and material traces of industrial infrastructure allows the audio essay to stage landscape as an affective text, written through sound and temporal drift. The form's reliance on repetition, pacing and tonal modulation foregrounds literary techniques traditionally associated with prose and lyric writing, now reconfigured through sonic means. By foregrounding listening as a mode of literary engagement and a seemingly immaterial literary form, the paper will argue that the audio essay constitutes a form of experimental text, producing a speculative modality through which environmental crisis and post-apocalyptic imaginaries can be narrated, sensed and imagined otherwise.



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s43.- Theatre in Times of Authoritarian Regimes and Constitutional Crises

The rise of authoritarian regimes across the globe, the resulting constitutional crises and the current political conjuncture have undoubtedly prompted us to reconsider the importance and function of theatre as an art form. In addition to the traditional questions regarding the function and primary aim of political theatre as well as theatre's role in holding a mirror to society, this seminar seeks to focus on the current situation of English-speaking theatre to explore how it navigates, resists, or negotiates with authoritarian regimes and neoliberal policies. It will encourage participants to critically examine the historical, theoretical, and methodological aspects of theatre in authoritarian contexts and investigate how theatre might serve as a locus of resilience, dissent, or complicity. Possible topics may include but are not limited to the following: Authoritarian regimes, constitutional crises and cultural policies in theatre; problems of representation on stage; censorship/self-censorship; resilience as a way of artistic expression; hegemony, cultural resistance; totalitarianism, the crisis of the political; theatre as a site of tribunal/public forum; theatre as a site of political/cultural propaganda; adaptation/appropriation of plays; innovative forms; epic theatre; immersive theatre; documentary/verbatim theatre; theatre of the oppressed, participatory aesthetics; performativity, vulnerability, resistance; performativity/transformation in performance; and utopian performative.

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Session #1

31 August, 16:00–18:00

Ecodrama as Political Theatre: Performing Institutional Silencing and Resisting Neo-liberal Environmental Policies

Mónica Bru Cantero (University of Valencia, Spain)

For ecodrama scholars such as Theresa J. May, Wendy Arons or Una Chaudhuri, environmental issues remained marginal both on stage and in academia. However, the worsening of the current ecological crisis as a product of neo-liberal U.S. policies has resulted in a growing theatrical and scholarly exploration of the already-palpable consequences of environmental injustice. This presentation will analyze Erika Dickerson-Despenza's *cullud wattah* (2021), a response to the Flint, Michigan water crisis, in order to evaluate environmental dramas in the light of the tradition of politically-engaged theatre. I will employ Joe Kelleher's *Theatre & Politics* (2007) and his suggestion that the theater's political power is found in its unreliability, repeatability and tendency to untruth as a starting point to analyze *cullud wattah*'s political potential, with a focus on its use of silence. By setting its action in the midst of one of the country's most controversial environmental crises, Dickerson-Despenza defines institutional silence as a political and corporate tool against oppressed and precarious communities in the U.S. Like many political plays, *cullud wattah* employs non-realist techniques to fracture the illusion of theatre and expose its machinery, inviting therefore a questioning not only of how the spectator fits within the theater, but also where they stand in the larger political operation performed. The all-female members of the family in *cullud wattah* employ and own silence as a way to push for answers and hold each other accountable. During the intermission, a time when spectators escape to breathe, when the room is empty of witnesses, the play stages a pollution-induced abortion, thus underscoring the silent and silenced tragedy faced by communities of color in the U.S., who are overly exposed to environmental harm. Through my analysis, I will argue that *cullud wattah*'s political potential lies in its separation from realism and its double depiction of silence: as a weapon of environmental oppression and as a tool of resistance.

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On (Military) Conflict and Its Impact: The Relevance of Suzan-Lori Parks's *Father Comes Home from the Wars* and *Book of Grace*

Ludmila Martanovschi (Ovidius University of Constanța, Romania)

Considering that (constitutional) crises often have direct or indirect connections with various forms of violence and even warfare, the current paper aims to analyze Suzan-Lori Parks's engagement with the theme of (military) conflict in two of her plays: *Father Comes Home from the Wars* and *Book of Grace*. More specifically, this essay will focus on the playwright's perspective on the ways in which wars impact not only the men taking part in them, but also women's (domestic) lives. Illustrating innovative theatrical



methods of approaching these sensitive topics, Parks's works re-present the trauma that affects both the soldiers directly involved in various forms of war and their wives, who are caught in the whirlwind of violence, but who respond differently to it.

Intervening in a rich conversation on the representation of (military) conflict in contemporary American drama, Parks is remarkably articulate in her invitation for her audience to grapple both with the legacy of the Civil War (*Father Comes Home from the Wars*) and with the effects of recent wars that the United States has been involved in abroad (*Book of Grace*). Relying on theoretical contributions that illuminate Black feminism (Patricia Hill Collins, bell hooks, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Jennifer Nash) and the multifaceted relationship between theatre and war (Jeanne Colleran, Sharon Friedman) as well as criticism that clarifies Parks's place in the history of American drama (Deborah Geis, Jennifer Larson), this essay aims to provide a fresh analysis of the primary sources, to prove the relevance of Parks's themes and techniques today, and hopefully contribute to the much-needed mobilization against the idea of military force as a solution in contemporaneity.

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Staging Crisis: Performativity, Blackness and Ethical Encounter in the Theatre of Branden Jacobs-Jenkins

Denisa Alexandra Mircea (University of Zaragoza, Spain)

Contemporary English-language theatre has increasingly favored performative and formal experimental strategies to interrogate the conditions under which representation operates. Such strategies do not provide mere moralized narratives, but they make visible the mechanisms through which power and identity are constructed. Focusing on Branden Jacobs-Jenkins' *An Octoroon*



(2017) and *Appropriate* (2019), the paper argues that these plays illustrate performativity as a mode of subtle political critique, revealing how the racial, familial and historical identities are constructed and reproduced. Therefore, theatre emerges as a space in which political crisis is not resolved but rendered visible, producing a site of ethical encounter and critical reflection.

Both plays interrogate the rules imposed by authoritarian regimes and hegemonic systems in relation to property, historical memory and race. In addition to the thematic concerns, the use of metatheatrical strategies, genre parody, role instability and direct address allows Jacobs-Jenkins to stage Blackness as a performative process shaped by repetitions, surveillance, and inherited violence. In this way, the formal innovation unsettles representational authority and exposes the mechanisms through which hegemonic narratives are sustained. Moreover, the audience is repositioned as active participants who confront the afterlives of racial violence and their own complicity within dominant power structures. In doing so, both works cultivate an environment of personal and collective responsibility by unsettling hegemonic narratives and implicating the audience in the process they witness.

Grounded in the framework of Black performance theory and in Christina Sharpe's *Wake Studies* (2016), this paper situates Jacobs-Jenkins' plays within debates on performativity, vulnerability and resistance through the representation of Blackness within the contemporary context and the use of formal experimentation to reveal and challenge systemic racial and cultural biases, demonstrating how the theatre can function as a critical site of ethical reflection in the contemporary crisis.

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Resonance Created through Metanarrative and Epic Techniques in Mona Mansour's *Urge for Going*

Claus-Peter Neumann (University of Zaragoza, Spain)

Lebanese-American playwright Mona Mansour's *Urge for Going*, originally staged in 2011 and re-elaborated into the third part of her *Vagrant Trilogy* in 2017, deals with the lives and aspirations of a Palestinian family in a Lebanese refugee camp in 2003.



Portraying the refugees' lack of civil rights, dire living conditions and discriminatory, sometimes even violent, treatment, the camp becomes a metonymy for life under an authoritarian regime, with its repercussions and limitations on people's agency, immersing them into a state of alienation (vid. Rosa, 2019).

Mansour's play exposes how authoritarian regimes are upheld not only through repressive measures but also through the discourses and narratives circulating in a society (which can be considered to form part of Althusser's ideological state apparatuses, see Beetz, Herzog and Maesse, 2021), which naturalize apparently fixed truths, imposing these on a heterogeneous reality. By employing innovative formal devices and strategies typical of epic theatre, such as direct audience address, as well as the above-mentioned metanarrative strategies, Mansour's play pierces through the ideological bubble created by othering discourses, thereby deconstructing them. This questioning of official, discriminatory discourse and narratives is implicitly expanded to gender- and class-related issues, turning the play into an intersectional analysis of systematic social oppression. At the same time, by satirizing Western media's construction of Middle-Eastern identity, the play moves beyond local issues and evokes global power structures and colonialist histories as a cultural frame of discrimination.

In terms of philosopher Hartmut Rosa, the play's epic breaking of the fourth wall, directly implicating the audience, turns its performance into a "collective resonance event" (Rosa, 2019), counteracting the above-mentioned alienation experienced by the characters and creating what Jill Dolan has termed moments of the "utopian performative" (Dolan, 2005), encouraging the audience's "civic engagement" and insinuating, without being ingenuously optimistic about a happy future, that a better world is possible.

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Session #2

1 September, 9:00–11:00

From Vulnerability to Resistance: Appropriating McCafferty's Post-Troubles Theatre in Post-Dictatorship Brazil**Fernanda Verçosa (Kore University of Enna, Italy)**

This paper begins by examining the post-conflict theatre of Northern Irish playwright Owen McCafferty. While often compared to J. M. Synge and Seán O'Casey for the poeticism and musicality of his stage language, McCafferty's originality lies in his refusal of overt political narration. Rather, his theatre foregrounds the affective textures of working-class life in Belfast, allowing the Troubles—an ethno-nationalist conflict shaped by authoritarian practices that subordinated civil rights to military control—to register as atmosphere.

The paper then traces the reception of McCafferty's work across an igneous triad of contexts with intertwined yet uneven histories: Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, and England. Read comparatively, these responses articulate positions of resilience, dissent, and complicity, revealing how reception, in addition to production, is a political question, actively shaped by geopolitical embeddedness, institutional traditions, and dominant narratives and positionalities.

Lastly, the paper turns to the question of adaptation within the Brazilian context. Although far removed from the Troubles, Brazil remains marked by the unresolved legacies of a thirty-year military dictatorship and the contemporary resurgence of a polarising authoritarian discourse. Anticipating a *horizon of expectations* (Jauss, 1982) that privileges affect, the paper proposes appropriation as a critical response grounded in a tradition that already understands *domestication*, as opposed to *foreignisation* (Venuti, 1995) as a resistant cultural practice (Vieira, 1994; Milton, 2010). Drawing on Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), where man is the unfinished subject of their own reality, and Augusto Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979), where theatre is unfinished until the final subjectification of the audience, the paper argues for a participatory improvisation that turns theatre into a tribunal. By raising the stakes of Bertolt Brecht's Epic Theatre and by transforming the original's vulnerability into the translation's resistant praxis, this approach invites audiences beyond critical reflection to intervene, rehearse alternatives, and embody resistance on and off the stage.



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Bog Women, Blood Lines and Embodied Myths: Female Corporeality as Epistemological Counter-Narrative in the Plays of Marina Carr

Aoileann Judith Lyons (University of A Coruña, Spain)

Ireland's modern history has been characterised by its tacit and normalised exclusion of women and female knowledge and experience from the national narrative. The nationalist mythologisation of woman as virginal mother of the Irish nation and the constitutionally sanctioned sequestering of actual mothers to the home led to the marginalisation of ordinary women from all sectors of public life and creative literary expression for decades following independence. The emergence of the playwright Marina Carr in the 1990s marked a definitive break in the Irish context with the masculine signifying economy of male subject and female object/other (Irigaray 1985). Carr's female-centred, often matricentric dramas highlight the inconsistencies and omissions in the modern cultural narrative of Ireland and beyond, question the role and perception of women in contemporary society, and map the genealogy of female corporeal experience. Significantly, her work spans the whole period of post-nationalism in Ireland, which saw a loosening of (but not release from) Catholic morality and a shift in emphasis from the country's postcolonial legacy to its growing neoliberalisation. This paper examines how the embodied epistemology of female corporeality in Carr's plays challenges masculinist neoliberalism's amnesiac abstraction, commodification and disconnection of human beings and the natural world by reintroducing the body, vulnerability and contextually lived experience as central to subjectivity and social relations (Barbour 2018). The analysis explores Carr's refusal of the neoliberal pedagogy of fear and domination (Giroux 2022,



2026) in four plays from different stages in her career so far: *By the Bog of Cats...* (1998), *Woman and Scarecrow* (2006), *Hecuba* (2015) and *iGirl* (2021). I argue that hers is a theatre that makes us “think critically, act courageously, and recognize injustice when it appears” (Giroux 2026), capacities essential against the disguises, distortions, divisions and deprivations of neoliberalism today.

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Neoliberal Spectacle and the Aestheticization of Authoritarianism in Lucy Kirkwood’s *Chimerica*

Sibel İzmir (Atılım University, Türkiye)

Lucy Kirkwood’s 2013 play entitled *Chimerica* offers a powerful examination of how contemporary authoritarianism and neoliberal capitalism have formed an inseparable relationship with one another. Drawing its title from the concept of Chimerica coined by Niall Ferguson and Moritz Schularick, the play, just like its title, points to the relationship between China and America and their predominance in world politics.

Set against the backdrop of the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests in China which emerged due to the death of the general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party, the play visualises the story of the “Tank Man”, who, in reality, stood in front of the military tanks during the protests. The play takes this image of the “Tank Man” and investigates how political truth is manufactured and sold in a globalized world. In the play, the paths of Joe Schofield, the journalist who had shot the photo of the Tank Man and



Chinese English teacher Zhang Lin, who joined the protests in 1989, cross. Zhang Lin decides to help Joe find the Tank Man and audiences/readers find themselves imagining the haunting presence of history, feeling as if nothing has changed at all.

The play in this respect aligns with what Jacques Rancière claims in *The Emancipated Spectator* as “we need images of action, images of the true reality or images that can immediately be inverted into their true reality, in order to show us that the mere fact of being a spectator, the mere fact of viewing images, is a bad thing. Action is presented as the only answer to the evil of the image and the guilt of the spectator” (88) and *Chimerica* achieves this by trying to erase the distance between personal intimacy and geopolitical power structures. The iconic image of the Tank Man ambivalently functions as a symbol of raw defiance and a high-value commodity circulating within global networks of spectatorship. Thus, Kirkwood’s work challenges the audience to confront their own role as consumers of mediated political stories. This paper argues that Kirkwood moves beyond a simple critique of Chinese state surveillance and shows the logic of authoritarianism and market-driven media claiming that authoritarianism is not simply subverted or resisted on stage, it is also reproduced and aestheticized.

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s44.- Indigenous and Oceanic Identities and Cultures in Contemporary Indigenous Literatures in English

In recent years, there has been a growing scholarly interest in Indigenous literatures in English, including Native American, First Nations (Canadian), Australian Aboriginal, Hawaiian, and other related literary traditions. More recently, the term *Oceanic Literatures* has gained traction among critics to describe the literary production of the Pacific Islands, encompassing regions such as New Zealand, Hawai‘i, Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, and others. These literatures reflect the complex processes through which “Oceanic” cultural identities are formed—shaped by Indigenous worldviews and interwoven with the legacies of colonialism, postcolonialism, migration, and global cultural flows - as present in the works of Albert Wendt, Epeli Hau‘ofa, Patricia Grace, Witi Ihimaera, Keri Hulme, Grace Mera Molisa, John Pule, W.S. Merwin, and others.

This session invites papers that engage with—but are not limited to—Indigenous and Oceanic literatures and cultures, particularly



those that explore the multifaceted nature of cultural identity, belonging, and resistance. We welcome contributions that examine how these literatures depict the negotiation of Indigenous and Oceanic sensibilities in relation to colonial histories, postcolonial realities, modern technologies, popular culture, and broader social, ethnic, and historical frameworks.

Submissions may address topics such as:

- Hybridity and the negotiation of Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultural influences
- Representation of land, sea, and ecological knowledge
- Language revitalization and cultural preservation
- Memory, trauma, and historical reconciliation
- Identity and community in the diaspora and digital age

We particularly encourage interdisciplinary approaches and comparative analyses that engage with both literary and cultural theory, human geography, environmental studies and others.

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Session #1

3 September, 9:30–11:30

Naming and Revealing: Traces of Literary Resistance in the Early Works of Patricia Grace

Sonia Félix-Naix (University of Angers, France)

This paper explores the early works of Māori writer Patricia Grace as acts of literary resistance within postcolonial New Zealand. Focusing on *Mutuwhenua* (1978) and short stories from *Into the World of Light* (1982), it examines how Grace gives voice to silenced



Indigenous perspectives and challenges colonial narratives. Situated within the Māori Renaissance, Grace's writing foregrounds identity negotiation, cultural survival, and resistance by naming the unsaid and revealing the untold. Drawing on postcolonial theory, the paper argues that her work reclaims narrative authority and redefines Māori identity in twentieth-century Aotearoa.

Performing Hope and Resilience in 1939

Jacqueline Petropoulos (York University, Toronto, Canada)

This paper analyses *1939* by Jani Lauzon and Kaitlyn Riordan in the context of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Reimagining Shakespeare's *All's Well That Ends Well* through Indigenous children rehearsing a play at a residential school, the work seeks to reclaim Indigenous identity through performance. While initially celebrated for its message of hope and resilience, the play later became controversial due to allegations of Pretendianism. Through close textual and contextual analysis, the paper interrogates whether the play's emphasis on resilience risks reinscribing colonial power relations. The paper situates *1939* within debates on cross-cultural collaboration and the limits of using Shakespeare in Indigenous contexts.

Otherness and Cultural Challenge in Agneta Pleijel's *Lord Nevermore*

Dana Sala (University of Oradea, Romania)

Agneta Pleijel's *Lord Nevermore* (2000) explores conscience, culture, and modernity through a juxtaposition of Europe and Oceania. Influenced by late Romanticism and fin-de-siècle philosophy, two young European men—Stan and Bronyo (Bronisław Malinowski)—undertake a transformative journey that challenges their dichotomous worldviews.

Set against the backdrop of World War I and Malinowski's emerging anthropological practice, the novel stages a dialogical European conscience confronted with Indigenous epistemologies. Through encounters in the Trobriand Islands, the protagonists confront alternative modes of being that resist abstraction, patriarchy, and metaphysical detachment.

The paper argues that *Lord Nevermore* uses alterity and cultural encounter to critique European modernity and to foreground relational, life-affirming worldviews beyond colonial epistemological dominance.



Session #2

3 September, 15:00–17:00

Cartographies of Hope and Environmental Wisdom in Shalan Joudry's *Ecopoetics***Leonor María Martínez Serrano (University of Córdoba, Spain)**

This paper examines the poetry of Mi'kmaq writer Shalan Joudry, focusing on *Generations Re-merging* (2014), through the lenses of decolonial hope and ecophilosophy. Drawing on theories of hope and environmental thought, the paper argues that Joudry's *ecopoetics* articulate resilience and cultural affirmation in response to the ecological crises of the Capitalocene.

Her poetry foregrounds non-hegemonic epistemologies, critiques colonial and capitalist extractivism, and affirms Indigenous relationality with land. Through the integration of Mi'kmaq language and ancestral knowledge, Joudry's work seeks to decolonise language and resist slow violence, displacement, and ecological destruction.

The paper positions Joudry's *ecopoetry* as a form of resistance that envisions sustainability, cultural continuity, and planetary solidarity grounded in Indigenous wisdom.

Samoan and Māori Cultures and Identities in Albert Wendt's *Robocop in Long Bay* and Witi Ihimaera's *We'll Always Have Paris* (Hawai'i)**Jaroslav Kušnír (University of Prešov, Slovakia)**

This paper offers a comparative analysis of selected works by Samoan author Albert Wendt and Māori author Witi Ihimaera, focusing on representations of Indigenous identity formation within diasporic and postcolonial contexts. Examining *Robocop in Long Bay* and *We'll Always Have Paris* (Hawai'i), the paper explores Indigenous characters shaped by migration, cultural displacement, and global modernity. Drawing on Bill Ashcroft's concept of the "transnation," the analysis argues that both authors depict Indigenous identities as fluid and hybrid, continuously renegotiated through cultural translation rather than fixed



or essentialised. The paper further demonstrates how irony, intertextuality, and popular culture are used to critique colonial legacies and contemporary cultural commodification, while affirming Indigenous values, memory, and relationality.

Teaching Environmental Responsibility through Māori Fiction: An Ecocritical Reading of Witi Ihimaera

Valentina Napoli (University of Auckland, New Zealand)

This paper examines ecocritical perspectives in selected works by Māori writer Witi Ihimaera, highlighting their pedagogical potential for teaching environmental responsibility. Analysing short stories and novels such as *The Whale Rider*, *Sky Dancer*, and *Bulibasha*, the study demonstrates how Māori cosmology foregrounds sustainable relationships between humans and the natural world. The paper argues that Ihimaera's fiction integrates environmental ethics with Māori resistance to colonial dispossession. Positioned at the intersection of postcolonial and ecocritical studies, the analysis underscores literature's capacity to cultivate ecological awareness and cultural responsibility.

Session #3

3 September, 17:30–19:30

Indigenous, Decolonial Ecofeminism in Louise B. Halfe's and Joséphine Bacon's Poetry

Véronique Voyer (Independent Scholar)

Núria Mina-Riera (University of Lleida, Spain)

Louise Bernice Halfe (Cree) and Joséphine Bacon (Innu) are two highly acclaimed Indigenous Canadian poets whose work foregrounds the interrelationship between First Nations identity and kinship with nature from distinct female perspectives. Their poetry is situated within the context of parcolonial Canada, understood as the continuation of colonial structures into the postcolonial era. Drawing on decolonial, postcolonial, ecocritical, and ecofeminist frameworks, this paper explores Halfe's and Bacon's poetry as narratives of survivance, articulating resistance and survival in the face of dispossession, displacement, and



the legacy of residential schools. The analysis argues that their poetry centres the non-human world within Indigenous female identity and promotes an ecofeminist ethics of care grounded in relationality, sustainability, and the reclamation of silenced histories.

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Cartographies of Belonging in Silko's *Ceremony* and Ihimaera's *The Whale Rider*

Daniel Tia (Félix Houphouët-Boigny University, Ivory Coast)

This paper examines the ontological cartographies of identity in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* and Witi Ihimaera's *The Whale Rider*, focusing on the interrelation of self, place, and culture. It argues that both texts destabilise Western paradigms of place by presenting land as an active agent in the formation of Indigenous identity. Drawing on transcultural philosophy and postcolonial theory, the analysis explores how ancestral memory, hybridity, and resistance shape Indigenous subjectivity amid globalisation, while remaining attentive to the risks of epistemic ventriloquism when interpreting Indigenous cosmologies. The study concludes that both novels position literature as a site of epistemic decolonisation and ontological resistance.

Ruined Identities and Half-Caste Land in Tony Birch's *The White Girl*

Amanda Cámara Gamazo (University of Zaragoza, Spain)

This paper analyses Tony Birch's *The White Girl* (2019) in the context of Australian assimilation policies and their enduring impact on Aboriginal identity. The novel employs the ruined landscape as a metaphor for the negotiation of half-caste identity, embodied in the character of Sissy. Through the coexistence of decaying colonial structures and resurgent Indigenous presence, the landscape mirrors fractured identity, memory, and survival. Read through Indigenous women's experiences, land becomes a sensorial and memorial archive where colonial violence and Indigenous resilience converge. The paper highlights how Birch's narrative foregrounds the ongoing entanglement of colonial history with contemporary Indigenous belonging.



Sea of Islands and the Tidalectic: Language, Water, and Identity in Caribbean and Oceanic Poetry

Bryan Banker (TOBB University of Economics and Technology, Ankara, Türkiye)

This paper compares Caribbean and Oceanic postcolonial poetry through ocean-centred epistemologies that challenge continental models of identity. Drawing on Kamau Brathwaite's concept of the "tidalectic" and Oceanic thought by Epeli Hau-ofa and Albert Wendt, the study argues that identity emerges through movement, relation, and encounter. By analysing poetry by Brathwaite, NourbeSe Philip, Keri Hulme, and Robert Sullivan, the paper demonstrates how language, water, and island geographies function as dynamic forces of cultural formation. The paper concludes that oceanic poetics provide a transformative response to colonial rupture by grounding identity in Indigenous relational ontologies.

s45.- Narrative Journalism / Literary Reportage and Political Populism

Narrative journalism or literary reportage are genres of nonfiction writing that frequently gather momentum at times of historical crises. Europe is currently experiencing such a moment fueled by a rise in populist nationalism. From Brexit in 2020 to the re-election of Donald Trump to the Presidency of the United States four years later, populism and political disingenuousness have disrupted or, at the very least, sent shock waves throughout the continent, if not the world. Changes in political paradigms, as well as of the radicalization and polarization of views, constitute essential material for nonfiction writers, narrative journalists, and literary reporters. Such commotions impact those who conduct research on the study of English, since linguistic imperialism may inevitably lurk as a threatening force.

This seminar hopes to draw contributions from scholars that foreground the role of English as an essential language of communication in nonfiction in times of political dis/unrest. We are thus looking for contributions that discuss the stakes of these historical and political transformations in nonfiction and literary journalistic works originally published in the English language or studied in translation. Crucial is the creation of a space within the ESSE for such discussions. We welcome proposals that probe nonfiction, narrative, and journalistic texts – published in books, but also in magazines and newspapers – that help us assess what is at stake in the world today, and more specifically in the European space. Seismic changes have always been best captured in nonfiction, because creative, albeit factual, texts tell the stories of our times, written with style. Since the English language may suffer from the fallout of political challenges (e.g., cancel culture vs. the removal of DEI statutes), it is vital to bring critics together who will reaffirm the importance of English in such debates.



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Session #1

4 September, 9:30–11:30

Narrative Journalism in Times of Political Unrest: Graham Greene's *Reflections* and the Contemporary Stakes of (Dis) Information

Beatriz Valverde Jiménez (University of Jaén, Spain)

Throughout his life, Graham Greene maintained a sustained engagement with journalism that preceded and accompanied his career as a celebrated novelist. Beginning in the late 1920s as a contributor to *The Times*, *The Spectator*, and other British periodicals, Greene worked as a correspondent, reviewer and reporter in Europe and later across Asia, Africa and Latin America. His reporting from zones of political instability and ideological conflict shaped not only his fiction—with a vast array of journalists in his novels—but also a lifelong reflection on the ethical responsibilities of journalism. Journalism, for Greene, was a practice grounded in first-hand observation, independence from power and skepticism toward official narratives.

This paper proposes a reassessment of Greene's non-fiction reportage, with particular focus on *Reflections* (1990), in order to examine how his conception of ethical journalism can illuminate contemporary debates on disinformation and polarization. Often overshadowed by his novels, Greene's journalistic writings articulate a coherent ethical framework centered on factual verification, moral responsibility and resistance to propaganda. In *Reflections*, Greene explicitly defends a form of narrative journalism that combines stylistic sophistication with an insistence on truth-telling at moments of historical crisis.

Situating *Reflections* within the tradition of literary reportage, this contribution argues that Greene's reflections on journalism offer a critical lens through which to assess the challenges confronting today's media ecosystem. His distrust of ideological simplification and manufactured consensus resonates strongly in a contemporary context marked by algorithmic amplification



of falsehoods, the erosion of shared factual grounds and the instrumentalization of information by populist movements. By revisiting Greene's non-fiction, this paper contends that literary reportage remains a vital resource for assessing what is at stake in the transmission of (dis)information today, reaffirming the relevance of ethically grounded narrative journalism as a counterforce to polarization and political disingenuousness.

Orwell, Linguistic Responsibility and English-Language Nonfiction during Political Crisis

Ana Valverde González (University of Jaén, Spain)

During political crises, narrative journalism and literary reportage gain relevance, with language itself being questioned and manipulated. This paper argues that George Orwell's nonfiction anticipates current concerns with populist deceit and linguistic imperialism, showing how English-language reportage can function as a vehicle for ethical and political resistance across cultural and linguistic borders. Reading *The Road to Wigan Pier* together with essays such as "Politics and the English Language", "Why I Write", "The Prevention of Literature", and "Writers and Leviathan", the paper presents Orwell as a key example for understanding the importance of English nonfiction in times of polarisation on an international level.

Orwell inherits techniques from the British tradition of undercover journalism, in which immersive reporting often framed poverty through suspicion and spectacle. The analysis shows how earlier journalistic reportage depicted beggars as actors performing labour, reinforcing stereotypes that appear later in popular fiction. In *The Road to Wigan Pier*, Orwell's immersion as a miner, instead of exposing moral weaknesses in individuals, directs attention toward structural injustices, and his attention to language challenges abstraction, euphemism, and exaggeration, which are the tools of political distortion. By linking immersive journalism to linguistic critique, the paper argues that Orwell redefines nonfiction as a form of political intervention, underscoring the enduring importance of English-language journalism in diagnosing social injustice and resisting ideological distortion in times of political unrest.

"No Victor, No Vanquished": War Journalism and Genocide in Nigeria-Biafra War

Paula García-Ramírez (University of Jaén, Spain)



During the latter half of the twentieth century, postcolonial conflicts arose as a result of deficient decolonization processes. Africa exemplifies the failures of colonization, as postcolonial wars erupted throughout the continent. The Nigeria-Biafra War serves as a significant case in which international journalism influenced public perceptions of the conflict, frequently oversimplifying the region's complexities and ethnic diversity.

Media coverage emphasized the plight of children and families affected by the conflict, prompting numerous international organizations to launch humanitarian efforts aimed at assisting Biafran children. Following the war, General Yakubu Gowon, leader of the Nigerian Federal Government, delivered a radio address advocating reconciliation. The phrase “No Victor, No Vanquished” became the guiding slogan for the reintegration of the Igbos into Nigeria. Nevertheless, the war's thirty-month duration and its profound psychological and social consequences for the Igbos contributed to the emergence of alternative narratives that diverged from the official discourse.

The international press served as a channel for the conflict, broadcasting televised and photographic coverage to Western audiences. Numerous European journalists travelled to Nigeria to report directly on the unfolding events. Notable among these accounts are Frederick Forsyth's *The Biafra Story: The Making of an African Legend* (1969), published before the war concluded, and John St. Jorre's *The Nigerian Civil War* (1972). Both works endeavour for objectivity in their depiction of the conflict. However, it is necessary to examine whether these correspondents merely describe events or whether their narratives reflect personal perspectives and interests. This analysis will focus on these two prominent examples.

From Rupture to Routine: Crisis Narratives from 9/11 to Contemporary American Literary Journalism

Mikel Barea Pérez (University of the Basque Country / EHU, Spain)

American literary journalism in the wake of September 11, 2001 forged narrative conventions centered on shared trauma, moral certainty, and a sense of national victimhood. Early post-9/11 essays and reportage – exemplified by writers like Don DeLillo, Susan Sontag, and Tom Junod – grappled with unprecedented terror by invoking collective grief and clear ethical binaries. The



attacks were portrayed as a singular rupture in history, demanding solidarity and “moral clarity” in framing an innocent America versus an evil enemy. In this mode, literary narratives often read the event through the lens of profound personal and national trauma, reinforcing a story of America as both wounded and united.

Two decades later, contemporary long-form journalism has repurposed these conventions to depict crisis as a perpetual condition rather than an isolated shock. Writers such as Luke Mogelson, Jennifer Senior, Jonathan Haidt, and Derek Thompson portray crises – from terrorism and war to pandemics and political upheaval – as ongoing features of daily life. Their narratives weave themes of fear, conspiracy, and uncertainty into accounts of a society for whom “shock and disaster” have become commonplace. Trauma is no longer an unexpected rupture but a normalized backdrop; indeed, critical discourse notes that the cultural preoccupation with “trauma” has given way to a focus on “denial” and continual emergency in the past decade.

This shift in storytelling underpins today’s polarized, populist political imaginaries. The framing of unending crisis nurtures an us versus them mentality, echoing early post-9/11 moral binaries but now fragmenting them across partisan lines. Perpetual crisis becomes the narrative glue for populism, which thrives on a constant sense of existential threat and national peril. In sum, the rhetoric of trauma and moral clarity born after 9/11 has evolved into a cultural mindset of normalized crisis – one that fuels division and shapes the imaginative landscape of American politics in the 2020s.

s46.- Reimagining Fantasy: Tradition and Innovation in Anglophone Literatures

The seminar invites the participants to explore the dynamic relationship between traditional fantasy and its modern reimaginings within Anglophone literatures. From the mythic structures and medieval echoes of early fantasy to the genre-bending narratives of contemporary authors, fantasy has continually negotiated the boundaries between the familiar and the fantastic, the inherited and the innovative. The seminar aims to examine how foundational elements – such as the hero’s journey, enchanted landscapes, moral binaries – are preserved, subverted, or transformed in modern fantasy writing. Drawing on a range of texts, from canonical figures like J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis to contemporary voices in adult, children’s and YA fiction, we will consider how fantasy reflects evolving cultural, political, and philosophical concerns. Attention can be given to postmodern, postcolonial and feminist interventions in the genre, as well as to hybrid forms that blur the lines between fantasy, science fiction, and realism. Encouraging interdisciplinary dialogue and comparative approaches, this seminar seeks to reassess the ethical, pedagogical and critical value of fantasy literature. It offers a space for participants to focus on specific texts, authors, theoretical frameworks, or teaching



practices that illuminate how fantasy continues to shape and respond to contemporary cultural narratives.

We invite contributions that explore not only fantasy as a literary tradition, but also the function and significance of fantasy elements in selected works of Anglophone literatures. The following topics can be discussed: elements of fantasy in Anglophone literatures; the genre of fantasy; fantasy and imagination in children's literature; mythology and religious symbolism; the uncanny and the supernatural; and the role of imagination in literature, culture, and philosophy.

CONVENORS:

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Session #1

3 September, 15:00–17:00

Reimagining Alterity in Contemporary Fantasy

Aylin Dilek Walder (Technical University of Braunschweig, Germany)

Although monstrous alterities are often depicted as negatively disrupting heteronormativity—a disruption resolved by a return to the status quo—contemporary fantasy increasingly envisions eco-queer ways of being that prioritize ‘being as being-with’ and affinity over the moral binarism of alterity. Drawing on my PhD thesis, *“Beyond Alterity: The Fantastic Dawn of Affinities in Contemporary Speculative Fiction,”* this paper introduces affinity as a mode of identity and relationality resisting the logic of selfing through othering (Powell and Menedian), and demonstrates how contemporary fantasy foregrounds a materiality of identity binding Self and other Selves across time and space (queer be-longing), ultimately reimagining alterity.

Using New Materialism (Bennett), Queer studies (Bradway and Freeman), and Indigenous theory (Rosiek et al.), close readings of Das’s *The Devourers*, Jemisin’s *Broken Earth* series, Mohamed’s *The Butcher of the Forest*, and Solomon’s *The Deep* show how fantasy



increasingly transcends the traditional Self/Other moral binary. From portrayals of love as material enmeshment to fantasies of Nature striking back, thus foregrounding human dependency, these texts favor affinitive identity formations—a transpersonality (Sahlins) extending identity's boundaries, whether by queering romantic relationships with the monstrous, emphasizing material enmeshments, or both. Focusing on the narrativization of being-with, I argue that studying affinity in fantasy offers insights for new modes of living that prioritize solidarity, rejecting as well as problematizing a return to the status quo.

From Monomyth to Collective Agency: Girlhood in the Fantasy Fiction of Kiran Millwood Hargrave

Coralline Dupuy (University of Galway, Ireland)

This paper examines how the young adult fantasy of Kiran Millwood Hargrave reconfigures the traditional quest narrative by foregrounding girlhood and collective forms of agency. Drawing on Joseph Campbell's theorization of the monomyth in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949), as well as perspectives from feminist criticism and girlhood studies, the analysis explores how Hargrave's narratives both engage with and transform the conventions of the heroic journey.

While her heroines' trajectories initially appear to follow the familiar structure of the Campbellian quest, Hargrave's novels complicate this paradigm by emphasizing sisterhood, communal responsibility, and resistance to gendered constraints. In doing so, the focus shifts from individual heroic exceptionalism to relational and collective forms of agency. Through close readings of selected novels, this paper argues that Hargrave's fiction reimagines the quest narrative by centering young female protagonists whose journeys articulate alternative models of identity, belonging, and social responsibility within contemporary young adult fantasy.

Rewriting the Hero's Journey through Psychosis and Trauma in Anthony Neilson's *The Wonderful World of Dissocia*

Ali Bal (Erzurum Technical University, Türkiye)

This paper examines how Anthony Neilson's *The Wonderful World of Dissocia* (2004) reconfigures the traditional hero's journey through the lens of psychosis and trauma. At first glance, the play appears to follow a familiar fantasy narrative of departure,



quest, and return, drawing on structures associated with the Hero's Journey as theorised by Joseph Campbell. However, Neilson ultimately subverts this narrative model by presenting fantasy not as a transformative path toward growth or self-knowledge but as a temporary psychological refuge from mental suffering.

In the first act, the land of Dissocia is introduced as a vibrant and surreal fantasy world where the protagonist Lisa encounters eccentric allies, trials, and strange landscapes typical of quest narratives. Gradually, however, this fantastical realm is revealed to reflect Lisa's fragmented mental state. Rather than enabling heroic development, Dissocia functions as a dissociative mechanism that shields Lisa from anxiety, trauma, and the pressures of reality. Consequently, the anticipated redemptive outcome of the heroic quest collapses. By reworking foundational fantasy motifs through the framework of mental illness, Neilson challenges the psychological promises often associated with escapist narratives. The play ultimately presents fantasy as an unstable survival strategy that offers temporary relief but cannot secure genuine recovery, thereby questioning the relevance of traditional heroic structures for representing contemporary experiences of trauma and subjectivity.

Session #2

3 September, 17:30–19:30

Spatial Psychasthenia and the Supermundane in Algernon Blackwood's Nature Stories

Irene Lens-Fernández (University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain)

Departing from readings that situate English author Algernon Blackwood—and weird fiction more generally—within supernatural or fantastic literature, this paper examines Blackwood's nature-centred weird fiction through the concept of the “supermundane” (Wilken 2025). Rather than depicting the intrusion of supernatural phenomena, Blackwood's stories present plausible settings disrupted by supermundane forces that challenge anthropocentric epistemological frameworks. In tune with weird fiction's concerns, these narratives do not portray fantasy “worlds that are entirely different from ours” (Fisher 2016, 19), but instead evoke a form of weird realism (Harman 2012) that foregrounds the immanent strangeness of natural phenomena, producing a fantastic effect without supernatural causality. Weird tales thus “present their weirdness as natural,” compelling human characters to “revise their assumptions about their world” (Alder 2017, 1088).



Drawing on Patricia García's notion of "spatial psychasthenia" (García 2021), defined as the "fusion of the body with its surrounding material space" (43), the paper explores the ecocritical potential of Blackwood's stories, including "*The Willows*" (1907) and "*The Man Whom the Trees Loved*" (1912). The bodily dissolutions into space depicted in these texts blur boundaries between the human and the nonhuman, challenging the culture/nature divide and questioning human exceptionalism. Such figurations resonate with posthumanist and new materialist thought (Jane Bennett 2010; Timothy Morton 2011), which foreground human–nonhuman assemblages. The paper ultimately proposes the supermundane as a critical category for understanding how weird fiction negotiates tradition and innovation.

Liminality in Shirley Jackson's *Hangsamen*: The Anguish of Conformity in the America of the 1950s.

Astrid Lozano Villó (Autonomous University of Barcelona, Spain)

Jackson's body of fiction repeatedly presents us with characters that slowly transition from a state of wakefulness to an altered state of consciousness. Immersed in this hypnagogic condition (the in-between state between sleeping and waking, rationality and madness, reality and imagination), and finding themselves at a crosspoint in their lives that marks their transition into becoming "profitable" members of their community, Jackson's characters inhabit what we can call a liminal state. Following the concept of liminality first described by Arnold van Gennep in his work *Rites of Passage* (1908), later popularized by Victor Turner's *The Forest of Symbols* (1964) and its application to literary studies (Aguirre, Quance and Stutton 2000, Jacobson and Bode 2018) and gender studies (Mukherji, S. 2011, Edmundson 2013, Thomassen 2014, Jacobson, K. J., Allukian, K., Legleitner, R. A., & Allison, L. 2018, K.J, Rosso 2021), I aim at analysing the ways in which liminality in Jackson's *Hangsamen* (1951) addresses gender identity issues surrounding the discourse of the nuclear family in the America of the 1950s. Jackson's protagonist, Natalie Waite, experiences a progressive alienation from the family, the community and society at large that leads her to retreat to a liminal state, what she calls "her own dear home of a mind" (Jackson 2013, 69). With her campus narrative, Jackson presents "an anatomy of our [her] times" (Hyman 1996, 5) that discusses how the family, the educational institutions and the community exercise an identity control that prevents the individual from developing a sense of self. Writing years before the publication of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) and the second wave of feminism, Jackson is incapable of foreseeing the development of her characters into a new, empowered self. Instead, she mirrors the gender anxiety that many women experienced in 1950s suburban America, which, by its gender-role structure, provided a context that could likely damage the female self. (Warner 1987, 215)



Between Imagination and Reality: The Gothic Encounter with Evil in *Young Goodman Brown* and *A Series of Unfortunate Events*

Kamila Vránková (University of South Bohemia, Czech Republic)

This article presents a comparative analysis of the representation of evil and moral development in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Young Goodman Brown* and Lemony Snicket's *A Series of Unfortunate Events*. Focusing on the young protagonists' encounters with danger, uncertainty, and loss, the study draws on the concept of the sublime as theorized by Edmund Burke and Jean-François Lyotard, alongside the anthropological framework of rites of passage proposed by Arnold van Gennep. The analysis argues that in both texts the confrontation with evil unfolds at the unstable boundary between imagination and reality, a characteristic device of Gothic narrative. The protagonists' uncertainty regarding the source of evil—embodied in Hawthorne's devil and in Count Olaf—is accompanied by epiphanic moments that mark a transition from innocence to experience. However, the two works offer contrasting outcomes of this process. In Snicket's narrative, imagination functions as a creative and restorative faculty that enables the protagonists to uncover hidden truths and negotiate adversity. By contrast, Hawthorne depicts imagination as vulnerable to fear and manipulation, leading to moral disillusionment and the protagonist's failure to achieve mature ethical insight.

7 S47.- Reframing, Visibilizing, Depathologizing: Narratives of Neurodivergence in Contemporary Anglophone Prose Writing

There has been a notable upsurge in the numbers of literary texts featuring neurodivergent characters in recent years, many of which offer innovative aesthetic and narrative styles and which work hard to render visible, without pathologizing, the challenges and joys experienced by neurodivergent individuals living in a neurotypical world. This panel aims to bring together scholars working on prose writing in English from any geographical area to discuss the philosophy and ethics of neurodevelopmental diversity as these are tackled in contemporary fiction and life writing. The goal of the panel will be to identify, far beyond mere character studies or the realm of psychology, the emergent aesthetics of neurodivergence, and to discuss the various regional, national, and global frictions and connections in the representation of the broad spectrum of its manifestations (Autism, ADHD, dyspraxia etc.).



Robert Chapman (2023) has shown that what he calls “neurodivergent liberation” will only come about in the event of a “shift ... away from the dominant ‘pathology paradigm’ (5) and the “Empire of Normality”, an “apparatus of scientific, administrative, cultural, and legal impositions” (17). Gabor and Daniel Maté make a similar point in *The Myth of Normal* (2022) while Steve Silberman reminds us in *Neurotribes* (2015) that autism “is not a single unified entity but a cluster of underlying conditions [... which] produce a distinctive constellation of behaviour and needs that manifest in different ways” (510). He suggests no longer “viewing this gift” as “a puzzle to be solved and eliminated” and rather “as a valuable part of humanity’s genetic legacy” (511). This panel will investigate the ways in which contemporary Anglophone writers actively work to reframe, render visible, and depathologize neurodivergence in recent prose narratives, with specific attention to the aesthetic innovations this gives rise to.

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Silberman, Steve, *Neurotribes. The Legacy of Autism and the Future of Neurodiversity*. London: Allen & Unwin, 2016.

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Session #1

3 September, 9:30–11:30

Autistic Rhetoricity and Reclaimed (Post)Humanity in Rivers Solomon’s *An Unkindness of Ghosts*

Mónica Calvo-Pascual (University of Zaragoza, Spain)

Drawing on the theories developed by Yergeau (2018), Walker (2021) and Stenning (2024), this paper purports to enquire into the narrative strategies that come into play in Rivers Solomon’s debut novel *An Unkindness of Ghosts* (2017) in its representation of the



epistemological specificities of its protagonist's thought processes and socio-affective relations with other human and nonhuman beings. My claim is that, through the interplay of internal focalization and a heterodiegetic narrator whose omniscient voice progressively resonates with that of the Asperger protagonist (named Aster), Solomon's novel counters the medical discourses on the involuntariness of autistics that deny them a sense of agency and narrative subjecthood. The protagonist's converging axes of difference as a black, lesbian, Asperger quasi-slave in a futuristic self-contained world that replicates the social structures and oppressions of antebellum USA point to the need for an intersectional approach to neurodivergence. With a total absence of labels, Aster is not categorized or medicalized; rather, she is represented in a contextualized way, with a clear focus on her agency and self-awareness.

The aesthetic challenge of the novel lies in the fact that Aster's train of thought is reproduced in a natural way. This permits the neurodivergent reader to readily identify with the protagonist, giving us centrality and a vantage point, while enabling the neurotypical reader to swiftly move from initial alienation to identification without naming Aster's identity or othering and stereotyping her as a series of behaviours –as allistic texts on autism tend to do.

It is my contention that, by endowing Aster with a full-on rhetoricity of her own, often marked by profuse and nuanced –sometimes even scientific– detail, her humanity and agency are reclaimed from a linguistic point of view in parallel with the novel's focus on the liberation of her black, lesbian, chastised body from the inhumane oppression of biopolitical normalcy.

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Reframing, Visibilizing, Depathologizing: Critical Neurodiversity Studies within English Literary Studies Collaborative Workshop

Fiona McCann (Sorbonne University, France)

Dilâra Yilmaz (Kiel University, Germany)



Robert Chapman (2023) has shown that what he calls “neurodivergent liberation” will only come about in the event of a “shift ... away from the dominant ‘pathology paradigm’ (5) and the “Empire of Normality”, an “apparatus of scientific, administrative, cultural, and legal impositions” (17). Gabor and Daniel Maté make a similar point in *The Myth of Normal* (2022), while Steve Silberman reminds us in *Neurotribes* (2015) that autism “is not a single unified entity but a cluster of underlying conditions [... which] produce a distinctive constellation of behaviour and needs that manifest in different ways” (510). He suggests no longer “viewing this gift” as “a puzzle to be solved and eliminated” but rather “as a valuable part of humanity’s genetic legacy” (511).

This workshop will foster a discussion among scholars interested in Anglophone literary and cultural studies about how the philosophy and ethics of neurodevelopmental diversity are tackled in contemporary fiction, media, and (literary) culture. Since there has been a surge in literary texts, film and series featuring neurodivergent characters in recent years, many of which offer innovative aesthetic and narrative styles and which render visible the challenges and joys experienced by neurodivergent individuals living in neurotypical societies. The goal of the workshop will be to collectively identify and negotiate emergent aesthetics of neurodivergence, and point out the frictions and connections in the representation of the broad spectrum of its manifestations (Autism, ADHD, dyspraxia etc.). The convenors of the workshop will provide exemplary case studies to work on collaboratively. The discussion will evaluate and extend the premises of current positions within Critical Neurodiversity Studies noted above, and will ultimately address questions on how to further integrate representations and aesthetics of neurodivergence into the field of literary and cultural studies.

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S48.- British Fiction in the 1750s

The ten years between the publication of Henry Fielding’s *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling* in 1749 and the first two volumes of Laurence Sterne’s *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* in 1759 were long considered a decade where little of importance happened as far as the development of the novel in Britain was concerned. With imitations (in the manner of Samuel



Richardson, Tobias Smollett or Fielding); scandalous stories told by lap-dogs, black coats or slippers; subterranean memoirs of a man 'swallowed up' in an earthquake; narratives featuring winged or feathered women, fish-like humanoids or hairy inhabitants of the moon; it is no wonder that criticism would initially take such narratives with a pinch of salt. The fiction of the 1750s is more fully acknowledged in more recent critical approaches to the period, though the language of denigration on the grounds of 'literary quality' is not entirely lost. This proposed seminar on *British Fiction in the 1750s* seeks to contribute to a reshaping of our understanding of this literary tradition: it will suspend established barriers between so-called canonical and lesser-known works and offer a more inclusive perspective on the literary landscape of the time. We welcome focused readings of individual texts as well as discussions of broader phenomena. For example, addressing questions of authorship – including pseudonymity and anonymity – can help underscore how far critical narratives based on 'big name' authors, or well-known titles, have skewed richer appreciation of the diversity of creative activity in this period. Another field worth scrutinising is magazine fiction in the 1750s, typically seen as derivative and low-quality. Magazines were vital spaces for innovation, offering opportunities for anonymous and marginalised authors who might not have found a platform elsewhere. *British Fiction in the 1750s* aims to transform our knowledge of the decade's literary output, fostering a broader appreciation of its role in the wider contexts of eighteenth-century literature and culture.

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Session #1

3 September, 15:00–17:00



History within History – Henry Fielding’s *Amelia*

Yuka Hiromoto (Institute for Liberal Arts at the Institute of Science Tokyo, Japan)

Henry Fielding’s *Amelia* (1751) is replete with ‘history’ operating across multiple levels. Here, ‘history’ is used in its older, broader sense, almost interchangeable with ‘story’. Although the novel’s title does not include the term ‘history’, unlike *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling* (1749), the narrator repeatedly refers to the narrative as ‘History’. The very first chapter title reads: ‘The History sets out.’ What renders this reiteration distinctive – beyond an eighteenth-century literary habit – is that the novel is not only ‘History’ in itself but also contains a series of ‘Histories’. Both Mr Booth, Amelia’s husband, and Mrs Matthews, his seducer, relate their own ‘Histories’. The relation of inclusion between the novel and inserted anecdotes, and between the whole and its parts, is destabilised.

It is a novelistic cliché at the time that a character recounts his or her history – typically tragic or melancholic – which is intended to elicit sympathy and heighten the listener’s sensibility. Such histories are characteristically lengthy, to the extent that they threaten to overturn the presumed primacy of the outer novel over them. On the other, in *Amelia*, the narrator, rather than challenging such a structural hierarchy, even allows readers to bypass inserted histories. When Mr Booth narrates how he tearfully took leave of his wife to join the army, the narrator asks readers to ‘pass over’ the ‘tender’ scene as they please. In *Amelia*, histories within history are detachable, like mechanical components. *Amelia* as a literary work functions without those removable parts, just as Amelia is still beautiful for Mr Booth without her nose – a physical feature of the heroine that made the novel largely unpopular among eighteenth-century critics. This paper examines how Fielding experiments with the convention of such history and novelistic structure through the geometrical oddity of history including histories.

“The Ruin of Female Honour”: The Marriage Plot in John Shebbeare’s *The Marriage Act*

Gabriella Hartvig (University of Pécs, Hungary)



In the wake of Lord Hardwicke's Marriage Act of 1753, Lisa O'Connell identifies two novels that articulate sustained opposition to the legislation: John Shebbeare's *The Marriage Act* (1754) and Oliver Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766). Both works, she argues, express particular concerns about the Act's consequences for women. She describes Shebbeare's text as an explicitly polemical intervention, using fiction as a form of resistance to the new law. The three editions of Shebbeare's novel in the 1750s attest to its contemporary success. Responding to the legal constraints placed on women's consent, *The Marriage Act* also functions as a source for later Gothic modes of representing ruined female characters in domestic novels such as *Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph* by Frances Sheridan or Mary Wollstonecraft's *Maria: or, The Wrongs of Woman*. The reframing of the "ruin of female honour" motif also paved the way for important subplots in Victorian sensation novels such as Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* and Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret*. Through a close reading of Shebbeare's novel, this paper argues that the work can also be read as an early example of a crime narrative within the history of the political novel.

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The Rise of the Children's Novel: Sarah Fielding's *The Governess; or, The Little Female Academy*

Dragoș Ivana (University of Bucharest, Romania)

The rise of the novel in England has conventionally been dated to the 1740s due to the literary productions penned by Samuel Richardson and Henry Fielding. In the same period, however, the genre of children's literature – which began to be popularised by the famous publisher John Newbery – was predicated on some of the fundamental generic features underlying the novel and, furthermore, on John Locke's pedagogical theories about experiential education. In this context, fictional realism – the liaison between the two genres – was deep-seated in the power of example imposed by character, didacticism, instruction and, ultimately, the reader's moral delight.

Published in 1749, the year when her brother Henry Fielding published *Tom Jones*, Sarah Fielding's *The Governess* follows in the footsteps of John Newbery's *A Little Pretty Pocket-Book* (1744), being labelled as the first novel for children by critics such as Deborah



Downs-Miers. My paper focuses on Miers's statement and seeks to explain why Sarah Fielding's collection of stories initiated a modern approach to education based on self-regulating behaviour patterned after the development of novelistic characters who, according to Samuel Johnson, must have "a relation to practice or to life" (*The Rambler* 23). In doing so, I shall insist on the way in which each autobiographical story told by the female students – who also learn how to interpret fictional stories properly – is structured so as to show that the teaching model proposed by Mrs. Teachum truly reveals a pedagogical theory attuned to Locke's, Newbery's and Johnson's normative discourse on education. Last but not least, I argue that, similar to most novels of the time, the digressive dimension of *The Governess* does strengthen its didactic mission by foregrounding the moral tale as a pivotal means of educating virtue, benevolence and reflective thinking. Cast in the mould of the new yet formally uncrystallised species of writing, i.e. the novel, *The Governess* functions as a moral tale which foregrounds the school story, a modern form of narrative whose success rippled out in children's literature until the late nineteenth century.

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Tobias Smollett as an Art Critic: Between Iconoclastic Spleen and National Canon Formation

Jakub Lipski (Kazimierz Wielki University, Poland)

Tobias Smollett was a man of many literary talents. As for his interest in the arts, there existed well-established preconceptions about his alleged ignorance, formed on the basis of his rather controversial aesthetic judgments articulated in *Travels through*



France and Italy (1766). Laurence Sterne's rather unfair label of "the learned Smelfungus" in *A Sentimental Journey* (1768) was a starting point, as it combined Smollett's travelling mode with his lack of taste. This view on Smollett's knowledge of the arts spread well into the twentieth century. Robert Etheridge Moore in *Hogarth's Literary Relationships* simply writes that Smollett "knew literally nothing about any other painter" than Hogarth. However, as more recent studies of the novelist show, Smollett demonstrated considerable expertise in the arts. Richard Jones locates the novelist in the centre of aesthetic and philosophical debates in mid-eighteenth-century Glasgow and points to his periodical contributions. In the *Critical Review* (1756-1763), Smollett published a number of essays on the fine arts and reviewed contemporary works, whereas in the *British Magazine*, he supported the Society for the Improvement of the Arts and took part in the current debates on aesthetics and artistic issues. For Jones, the bold aesthetic statements in *Travels through France and Italy* were an extension of the practice of reviewing. William Gibson, in turn, prioritises Smollett's responses to art in various literary media and argues that the novelist's at times radical judgments were a form of iconoclasm – a way of going beyond the widespread preconceptions and conventional connoisseurship with the intention of articulating authentic critical remarks. The proposed paper will be a formal survey of Smollett's art-centred reviews and entries in his travelogue, which will establish the key stylistic and conceptual strategies adopted by the writer that reconciled the conflicted attempts at iconoclasm and canon formation.

Session #2

3 September, 17:30–19:30

Before the Canon: Gothic Narratives in 1750s Novels and Magazines

Dominique Marrone (University of Konstanz, Germany)

Although the definition of the Gothic as a cultural phenomenon (Clery and Miles 2002, Spooner 2021) is now widely recognized, critical attention is still scarce toward the less canonical eighteenth-century narratives (Baker 2021) that may have shaped the genre's imaginary prior to 1764. Yet, as early as 1751, *The Rambler* defines the feeling of fear as necessary, as a "preservative from evil"; between 1752 and 1754 Hawkesworth, in his journal *The Adventurer*, describes in "the Eastern Story" protagonists in the moonlight, recluses, and cats that devour characters still alive; ghosts and apparitions are protagonists of issues 5 and 11 of *The*



Entertainer of 1754, in which an analysis of Shakespearean *Hamlet* and a rewriting of Lucian set in London support the idea of a country “much more addicted to folly and superstition, than any other whatever”. Furthermore, even before the publication of Burke’s *Enquiry* (1757), the idea of the sublime seems anticipated by a story in *The Student* of 1751 in which the protagonist appears “amaz’d [sic] at the dark unfathomable womb”. While, regarding novels, Sarah Scott’s *The History of Cornelia* (1750) already seems to explore “the ‘gothic’ nature of everyday female experience” (Haggerty 1992). Researching Gothic elements in magazines and lesser-known novels of the ’50s in favor of a cultural vision of the genre, my aim is, on one hand, to validate the idea of “mobility of the Gothic” recently proposed by Punter (2019) to underline the impossibility of identifying a true “beginning” of the phenomenon, and on the other, to recognize the literary autonomy of works long considered secondary or imitative (King 2020), recasting them as laboratories in which terror and the sublime already acted as a pervasive sensibility.

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The 1750s as a Literary Decade: Drawn from Lady Montagu's Correspondence

Roslyn Joy Irving (Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz, Germany)

One way to build a more complete impression of the 1750s as a literary decade is, of course, to focus on the fictions published in that period; another is to search for impressions of that literary moment, and I contend that Lady Wortley Montagu's lesser-known letters, which were collected and published in the early nineteenth century, offer one such opportunity. While living in Italy, Montagu was supplied with the latest publications circulating in England by her daughter, Mary Stuart, Countess of Bute. In a letter to her daughter, dated February 1752, Montagu sketches her impressions of several works including Smollett's *The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle* (1751), the anonymously published *The History of Charlotte Summers, the Fortunate Parish Girl* (1750), and *The History of Pompey the Little* (1750). Of the last in this list, she would write, '[i]t was a real and exact representation of life, as it is now acted in London, as it was in my time, and as it will be (I do not doubt) a hundred years hence, with some little variation of dress, and perhaps government'. In a letter some three years later, Montagu will assert that 'The Rambler is certainly a strong misnomer; [as] he always plods in the beaten road of his predecessors', and that 'Sally [Fielding] has mended her style' in the final volume of *The Adventures of David Simple*. Literature is an essential point of orientation in Montagu's correspondence with her daughter in the 1750s, and indeed, her connection to England in that same decade. In this paper, I use Montagu's impressions as a way to think through the variety of fictions available to readers in the 1750s, a surprising period in which a novel centred on a lap-dog, for instance, might offer an exacting representation of the bustle of urban life in the mid eighteenth century.

From Lawrence Lazy to Dick Hazard: New Comic Characters on the 1750s Scene

Mary Newbould (Kazimierz Wielki University, Poland)

The 1750s marked a decade of fictive experimentation, in narrative methods and in the development of comic styles, including the formation of distinctive character types. Building on the precedent of popular and successful fictions such as Tobias Smollett's *Roderick Random* (1748), authors of the following decade invented new comic scenarios and personages that tested the bounds of frivolity, and which pushed against the arguments for seriousness that some sought to establish in relation to the novel as an emerging genre. This paper considers the development of comic modes in the fiction of the 1750s, using examples such as the anonymous short fiction *The History of Lawrence Lazy* (1750) and *The Adventures of Dick Hazard* (1755), to explore how new



comic protagonists entered the scene to energise narrative inventiveness. It will also address fictions of the same decade, such as *The Sedan: A Novel* (1757), to reflect on the parallel growth of it-narratives, with object-focussed stories creating ‘histories’ of inanimate or non-human animals. The paper will examine how this seminal decade for the development of comic fiction laid the groundwork for subsequent prose works that elaborated on the vein of frivolous and fun humour while incorporating new fictive trends and tastes.

S49.- Advances and Limits of Auto/Biography: Old and New Perspectives

Given the ongoing repositioning of auto/biography and life writing within literary, social and cultural context there have been many recent attempts to reconceptualise and remap the limits of auto/biography, as well as to explore its advances. In line with these tendencies the aim of this seminar is to rethink the limits of auto/biography and life writing from various perspectives, throughout historical periods, across different disciplines and cultures, as well as to discuss advances in auto/biographical writing. We welcome contributions on this timely topic from a range of different perspectives. They can include approaches that will add new insights on auto/biography and life writing by exploring the limits between literature and factual writing, between narrative as literary device and as lived experience as well as more diversified approaches that address various limits of self-fashioning and self-representation in autobiographical writing and crossing of those limits. They can re-examine some key concepts that underlie autobiographical writing and discuss e.g. the limits of autobiographical self and varied constructions of the self, ‘writing the self’, the limits of memory, the limits of truth and authenticity, the limits of identity, time and temporality, referentiality, relationality, etc.. Advances and limits of auto/biography can be explored by considering the expanding boundaries of the genre of auto/biography and life writing, the concept of hybridity, the convergence of ‘traditional’ genres and the proliferation of new emerging genres of life writing (e.g. biopics, biodramas, graphic memoirs, digital life writing, etc.), as well as autobiographical representations of marginalized lives. We also welcome papers that address advances and limits of auto/biography and life writing in relation to various ‘turns’ in literary studies and in the humanities in general e.g. ‘narrative turn’, ‘spatial turn’, ‘ethical turn’, ‘ecological turn’, ‘personal turn’ in historiography, ‘affective turn’, ‘posthuman turn’, etc. in order to illustrate how conceptualizing the limits (and crossing the limits) of auto/biography has been changing and is vital to understanding the current boom of auto/biographical narrative which continues apace.



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Session #1

2 September, 15:00–17:00

To “re-create the father who created me”: Writing Paternal Identity in Contemporary Narratives of Filiation

Sara Villamarín-Freire (University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain)

Amid the host of narratives published under the umbrella of the ‘memoir boom,’ patriography (Couser 2011), or life writing centered on father figures and father-child relationships, has steadily garnered critical attention throughout the years. Inspired by Paul John Eakin’s work on relationality (1999), G. Thomas Couser has coined the term “narratives of filiation” to designate those life narratives displaying a clear “intent or tendency to assert or enact some kind of engagement with the father” and notably “written out of a certain sense of need or lack” experienced by the (now) narrating child (2005, 635). Whilst Couser points out the genre’s “obvious roots in patriarchy and in patrilineality” (637), he does not elaborate on the intricate connections linking said paternal portrayals and the dominant fiction, i.e., the narrativized conflation of individual fathers, paternity, and patriarchy (see Silverman 1992; Shostak 2020). My presentation hypothesizes that narratives of filiation may inadvertently reproduce the tenets of the dominant fiction by staging a filial quest for control over the family narrative as these narrating children attempt to fashion both the paternal figure’s identity and their own. Using examples from Paul Auster’s *The Invention of Solitude* (1982), Philip Roth’s *Patrimony* (1991), and Alison Bechdel’s *Fun Home* (2006), I scrutinize the affordances of rhetorical strategies such as filial ventriloquism (Adams 2000) and character assassination (Kraglund 2024) as well as the complex ethical consequences that emerge from their use. Likewise, I ponder on whether these strategies could undermine the dominant fiction’s emphasis on authority—specifically, by drawing attention to the impossibility of representing and memorializing the father’s self without falsifying it to some extent.



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Rewriting the Self through the Limits of Pain: The Loss of a Child in Memoir Writing

Sandra Pinasco E. (University of Antonio Ruiz de Montoya, Peru)

Losing a child is something that shouldn't happen. There is a double void in that kind of loss: it is the experience of the unthinkable happening intensified by the lack of a word to name a surviving parent after that kind of loss. Grief memoirs are the only genre that seeks to understand or at least cope with that kind of unnamed loss and so dwell in the limits between narrative as literary device and as lived experience

The function of autobiographical memory is to fit memories into a story line, some topic or motif. Personal recollections are only the raw material; they need an interpretation from a retrospective point of view to make them come alive (Draaisma 2006), just as it happens in memoir writing, rendering the power of literary discourse to give voice to a silenced trauma and to allow



the reconstruction of the “assumptive world” (Neimeyer 2001, 2002) through the rewriting of the self (Eakin 1999, 2008), which provides a sense of security, continuity, and meaning in life.

Jayson Greene (1981-) is an American music critic and editor who in 2015 wrote *Once More We Saw Stars*, a grief memoir about the accidental death of his two-year-old daughter. Despite being his first book (last year he published his first novel), it was met with critical acclaim. Structured as a classical grief memoir, the book allows revisiting the subgenre to examine its central features but also enables a deeper examination of the restorative mechanisms that memoir writing sanctions.

With a close reading of this grief memoir linked to the mental, emotional, and social aspects explained by grief theory and memory studies, this paper will try to answer the following question: How do grief memoirs mediate a traumatic experience of complicated grief and through it the author faces the unthinkable and incorporates his loss into his life narrative to experience again coherence and security.

Autobiographies in List Form

Wojciech Drąg (University of Wrocław, Poland)

Although the list is one of the most established literary devices – as exemplified by the seemingly never-ending catalogue of ships in the *Iliad* – its role in life writing was long confined to occasional uses of embedded enumeration in diaries and travel writing. Arguably, the first book-length autobiography that employs the list as a structural principle was Joe Brainard’s *I Remember* (1975) – an assemblage of just over 1,500 short unconnected entries, each beginning with the words “I remember...” Thanks to Georges Perec’s *Je me souviens* (1978), Brainard’s disarmingly simple formula gained a much greater audience. Fifty years on, the “I remember” format is more popular than ever. Over the last decade, close to a dozen book-length works – in English, Spanish, Polish, among others – have appeared, acknowledging their debt to Brainard and/or Perec.

The proposed paper aims to examine the capacity of the list in general and Brainard’s model in particular to convey autobiographical information – its potential as well as its limitations. I shall begin by defining the list as a literary device, following the recent work of Roman Alexander Barton, Eva von Contzen and Anne Rüggeheimer. I will then briefly present a selection of recent autobiographies in list form, including Linda Rosenkrantz’s *My Life as a List* (1999) and Édouard Levé’s *Autoportrait* (2005/2012). The central part of the paper will be concerned with Brainard’s *I Remember*, Piotr Stankiewicz’s *Pamiętam* (2021) and Rona Cran’s



I Remember Kim (2023). Concluding, I will consider the emergence and popularity of the list format as a kind of formal “advance” and an attempt to expand the “limit” of what constitutes autobiography.

Session #2

2 September, 17:30–19:30

Narrating the Self through Others: Novelized Biographies and the Limits of Auto/biography

Elisabeth ARTI Wulandari (Clarkson University, United States)

This paper examines the limits—and productive transgressions—of auto/biography through an analysis of *Cahaya di Penjuru Hati* (Light from the Heart) by Indonesian writer Alberthiene Endah. *Cahaya* exemplifies what may be termed a “novelized glamor biography”: a narrative based on the life of a high-profile, economically successful individual, written by a professional author who is publicly credited, while the life subject remains officially unacknowledged as author or co-author. Drawing on life materials supplied by the subject, the writer transforms biographical testimony into a novelistic form. This genre thus separates “author” (the life subject and source of the narrative) from “writer” (the credited literary producer), complicating conventional distinctions between autobiography, biography, and fiction. Unlike ghostwritten autobiography, *Cahaya* is presented as a novel, aligning it most closely with celebrity biography while simultaneously invoking the conventions of fiction. The paper situates this hybrid form alongside related Indonesian genres, such as fictionalized autobiography and autofiction, including commercially successful works like Andrea Hirata’s *Laskar Pelangi* (The Rainbow Troops). I argue that these composite genres reveal how contemporary Indonesian life writing destabilizes the presumed opposition between autobiography and fiction, exposing the porous boundaries of authorship, authority, and narrative truth.

Between Feminist Icon and Mistress of the House: Woolf in Alicia Giménez Bartlett’s *Una habitación ajena* (1997)

Paula Martínez Vega (University of Valencia, Spain)



Virginia Woolf, the Mad; Virginia Woolf, the Sapphist; Virginia Woolf, the Feminist. Countless biofictional accounts have attempted to infuse with life Woolf's posthumous persona, as they explore her multifaceted, still intriguing personality and bring her legacy closer to the contemporary public. Her romantic liaisons, her depressive episodes and her progressive writings are just some of the key issues that biofiction has covered regarding her literary afterlife. However, one area remains largely overlooked by both biofiction and biopics: her dynamics with members of her household as an upper-middle class woman whose freedom was partially sustained by often-invisible labour.

Alicia Giménez Bartlett's biofiction, *Una habitación ajena* (1997), brings Nellie Boxall (1890-1965) to the forefront, highlighting the importance of her decade-long domestic labour in the Woolfs' household and the impact that her services had on Virginia's daily routines. Significantly, Bartlett explores in detail a still underexplored aspect of Woolf's life: her role as mistress of the house, a personal dimension that gives a glimpse of her domestic self within her "room of one's own", narrated from Boxall's viewpoint.

This paper seeks to examine Bartlett's divergent portrayal of Woolf as seen through Boxall, as she provides an in-depth portrayal of their everyday life in Hogarth House and Monk's House. How is Woolf (re)imagined when seen through a working-class woman? How do her gender-progressive values differ from her attitude towards her domestic labour? What are the limits between her feminist ideals and her position as the mistress of the house?

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Feminist Impersonality: Fictionality and Life Writing

Laura de la Parra Fernández (Complutense University of Madrid, Spain)

This paper will explore the turn towards impersonality as a feminist strategy in recent life writing. Specifically, the paper will examine the use of “local fictionality” (Phelan, 2016) as a rhetorical and non-representational feature in Claire Vaye Watkins’s “Ghosts, Cowboys” (2009) and Catherine Lacey’s *The Möbius Book* (2025), otherwise non-fictional texts dealing with grief and break-up, respectively, to argue that they challenge the assumption that the self in life writing must be rendered coherent, teleological and, therefore, fully legible and knowable. Against this epistemology of the individual, feminist impersonality understands the self as “impersonal” insofar as it is “generic” and relational, partaking of collective experience and “structures of feeling” (Berlant, 2015). Hence, impersonality refuses neoliberal individualistic narratives and blurs boundaries between internal and external feelings, thoughts, or lived experience (Stacey, 2023). Meaning thus becomes contingent and collaborative, dependent on readers’ interpretations, rather than on authorial control. This paper contends that the use of fictionality as an impersonal strategy in Watkins’s and Lacey’s texts eschews notions of female personal “oversharing” (Sykes, 2017), of which women authors of life writing have been accused, and reshapes the idea of fiction as truthfulness, providing a gendered critique of confessional modes of life writing.

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Living Beyond Closure: Rethinking Autobiography through Serial Life Writing in Deborah Levy's *The Cost of Living*

Eleonora Maio (University of Palermo, Italy)

This paper examines *The Cost of Living* (2018), the second volume of Deborah Levy's "Living Autobiography" trilogy, focusing on how serial *life writing* redefines autobiography through fragmentation, materiality, and ongoing self-revision. Extending the autobiographical project initiated in *Things I Don't Want to Know* (2013)—a text positioned at the intersection of memoir, essay, and *autotheory*—*The Cost of Living* intertwines personal *narrative* with feminist reflection, using lived experience to interrogate socially prescribed roles and the gendered rituals through which female identity is organised and constrained.

This paper argues that it is the serial structure that enables Levy to move beyond autobiography conceived as a unified and conclusive narrative: seriality allows *life writing* to remain open, provisional, and responsive to change, resisting both narrative closure and the stabilisation of identity presupposed by canonical, largely androcentric models of autobiography.

Written in the wake of the end of Levy's marriage, *The Cost of Living* redefines autobiographical writing as a practice embedded in material constraints and everyday negotiations. Issues such as housing, money, care, and access to space become central to the articulation of selfhood, foregrounding dimensions of experience often marginalised in traditional life narratives. Autobiography here is no longer oriented toward retrospective coherence, but toward the registration of ongoing transformation. Through close textual analysis, this paper will examine how *The Cost of Living* foregrounds seriality, fragmentation, and attention to material life to reconceptualise autobiography as an open-ended practice rather than a conclusive life account. In doing so, it will show how Levy both extends and interrogates contemporary autobiographical writing, exposing its formal and conceptual limits while proposing serial life writing as a mode capable of registering change, vulnerability, and lived experience beyond definitive self-narration.

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W. B. Yeats’s *Autobiographies*: Exploring the Boundaries of Autobiography

Irena Grubica (University of Rijeka, Croatia)

Yeats wrote his *Autobiographies* at different times in his life and they render different and at times even contested aspects of his intimate individual self and his public persona, negotiating between personal and collective history and challenging the traditional boundaries of autobiography. They stage various attempts at a coherent self-representation and self-fashioning, and at the same time undermine it. At one point in his *Autobiographies* Yeats wrote: „I have described what image – always opposite to the natural self or the natural world – Wilde, Henley, Morris copied or tried to copy, but I have not said if I found an image for myself. I know very little about myself and much less of that anti-self” (Yeats 1999: 151). In *Autobiographies* Yeats is focused on a constant search for his true self obstructed by various challenges. This also manifests in various interactions between “that age-long memoried self” and the “daily self” and invites us to revisit his considerations of the self and anti-self. Publication history and constant editing of the texts that constitute Yeats’s *Autobiographies* also reflect on the complexity of his life narrative. With all that in view, my paper aims at examining the boundaries of autobiography manifested in Yeats’s narrative in relation to the making of the self,



writing the self and the role of memory in this process problematized by Yeats's occasional disregard for factual accuracy, as well as his crossing of these boundaries and challenging the limits of autobiography.

S51.- Prequels, Sequels and the Formation of Literary Canons

The convenors of the seminar *Prequels and Sequels and the Formation of Literary Canons* invite papers that address the adaptation and recreation of literary classics across various literary genres and modes of media through temporal and spatial continuity in the form of prequels and sequels.

Adaptation theory has historically tended to exclude prequels and sequels from its scope; they were treated as marginal or at least separate from 'regular' adaptations mainly because, as Linda Hutcheon (2006) pinpoints, building on Marjorie Garber (2003), "[t]here is a difference between never wanting a story to end [...] and wanting to retell the same story over and over in different ways" (Garber qtd. in Hutcheon, 9). Yet, precisely this fascination with not wanting, and thus not letting a story end seems to be behind the modalities in which sequel and prequel adaptations retell and reinterpret stories. Although the prequel/sequel might not temporally merge with the plotline of the canonical or classic text, it recreates plots, refocuses narrative perspectives, and refreshes interpretations – maybe more so than the more "standard" or "regular" adaptations would. The recontextualization of canonical/classical cultural content in (re)defined temporalities impresses with unprecedented popularity. The number of works in any media that are continually created in the prequel/sequel mode invite researchers to expand the scope of adaptation studies. We welcome abstracts of cca 300 words accompanied by a biographical note and resonating with one or more of (but not restricted to) the following:

- the story as continuum
- re-canonising narratives by prequels and sequels
- classic literary works begun and continued in multimedial forms
- the challenges of beginning and ending canonically cemented narratives
- the theory of preceding and following already existing and influential works and narratives
- temporal and spatial repositioning/reframing of various narratives
- classics reframed
- perspectives on transmedia universes; storyverses based on well-known narratives



- backstories and spinoffs and their (challenging) canonisation
- history and storylines challenged and disrupted
- prequels and sequels and/as anachronisms
- prequels and sequels of classics in the context of paratextuality

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Session #1

3 September, 15:00–17:00

Perspectives on Sequels, Prequels and Literary Canons: Theories and Practices

Márta Minier (University of South Wales, Wales, United Kingdom)

This introductory presentation will explore theoretical approaches to prequels and sequels as they are discussed in adaptation theory and beyond. As concepts that capture a plethora of cultural products across a wide range of media and forms, prequels and sequels have been with us for long and we might say they have gained even more traction with the proliferation of new and newer media and multiplatform regimes of production. Digging for those new/earlier beginnings and not wanting a story to end seem



to impress with unprecedented popularity and carry the potential to provide yet more layers to telling the same stories over and over again. While literary canons have become less rigid with various paradigm shifts in 20th and 21st century scholarship, ‘core texts’ of world literature enjoy intriguingly expanded and extended (after)lives and fresh refractions due to the richness of the prequel/sequel phenomenon, among other factors. This talk will address some of the key scholarly avenues in discussing prequels and sequels, widening the scope to a gamut of cultural products only to bring the discourse back to literature and distil learnings applicable to literary canons. The presentation will also highlight recent developments in the field by drawing attention to JAFP 19: 2-3 (forthcoming), a thematic double issue of the *Journal of Adaptation in Film & Performance*, co-edited by Annamária Fábíán and Márta Minier on prequels and sequels.

“If he tells me to sing one more time, I think I might bite him”: Vindicating the Voices of Women in Natalie Haynes’ *A Thousand Ships* (2015)

Nora Júlia Levická (Masaryk University, Czech Republic)

The need to narrate our experience, transmit knowledge, and create familiarity is one of the defining and foundational cornerstones of human identity. Myths represent some of the most crucial narrative frameworks employed in this process, with Greek and Roman mythologies serving as foundations for some of the key defining principles of the West: democracy, justice, and social order. Societal expectations, especially those tied to gendered expressions, are deeply rooted precisely because narratives such as myths aid in their fusion with the very soil of our shared subconscious, acting as Jungian “projection of the collective unconscious” (1969: 152).

Contemporary literary production has been witnessing a rising trend in the popularity of retellings of ancient mythology in the last decade. Such mythic adaptations can be seen as examples of palimpsestic writings. As Linda Hutcheon points out, we should approach adaptations as “palimpsestuous” works, haunted at all times by their adapted texts” (2006: 6). The contemporary adaptations remain conscious of their predecessors, but they are also “derivation without being derivative – a work that is second without being secondary” (Ibid 2006: 9). Retellings rise above the idea of mere adaptation, since they often provide perspectives previously unaccounted for, delving deeper into the previously unvisited parts of the ‘original’ version(s), predating or building upon them, and providing their female characters with more agency and, most importantly, voice.



In this paper, it is my intention to delve into the intricacies of how these retellings serve as refreshing reinterpretations and ramifications of their ancient versions, employing Natalie Haynes's *A Thousand Ships* (2015) as a case study. Haynes's use of an entirely female cast of narrators in her retelling of the Trojan war serves as proof of the feminist myth revisionism's intention to provide women with their own voice. Drawing on Kristeva, Cixous, but also Hutcheon and Genette, I will demonstrate the specific ways in which retellings not only revisit but reinvigorate the ancient 'originals.'

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Redeeming the Girls: The Expiation of Lucy Westenra and Carmilla in Contemporary Retellings

Elisa Xamena Flexas (University of Barcelona, Spain)

In both Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1872) and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), the ritualised deaths of Carmilla and Lucy, respectively, represent the destruction of the subversive femininity. In both narratives, the elimination of these monstrous figures is executed by a group of men, signalling a violent re-imposition of the patriarchy. This demonisation of women was frequent in 19th-century texts (Davison, 2014, p. 136); however, in the 21st century it seems readers and writers are no longer satisfied with the unforgiving nature of Victorian authors regarding the punishment of these 'monsters.' This patriarchal imposition found in Stoker and Le Fanu is precisely what Neo-Victorian fiction aims to challenge. Modern writers give life to Victorian subalterns, such as women, dissidents, and outsiders who were once threats to the social order.

Drawing primarily on the works by Ellison and Erll, the concept of 'literary afterlife' will be examined through the journeys and reconfigurations of Lucy and Carmilla in the texts *Lucy Undying* (2024) by Kiersten White and *An Education in Malice* (2023) by S. T. Gibson. Both authors, it will be argued, reimagine the stories of these vampires and give them alternative, expiatory endings. *Lucy Undying* is a sequel to *Dracula* which begins during the timeline of Stoker's novel and advances into the 21st century. Contrastively, *An Education in Malice* is a retelling of *Carmilla* set in 1968 because the main characters, Laura and Carmilla, are young adults in



university and human at the beginning, a fact that implies that the story of Le Fanu is reconfigured from a modern perspective. Regardless, both novels can be said to reexamine 19th century narratives and give voice to silenced “monsters.” Finally, this work will expose that, through the adaptation of 19th century novels, canonical works are re-examined and reshaped to adapt a more modern and open-minded society.

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Session #2

3 September, 17:30–19:30

Serialising Modernism and Ethnicity: The Case of Viet Thanh Nguyen’s *The Sympathizer* and its Adaptation for Television

Sári B. László (University of Pécs, Hungary)

Viet Thanh Nguyen’s *The Sympathizer* is often read as its author’s attempt to fictionally perform what he outlined as the ambitious project of just memory and forgetting in his essay collection *Nothing Ever Dies: Vietnam and the Memory of War*.



When doing so, Nguyen relies on a serialisation of Modernist narratives (Esty 2023) as parts of a Western industry of war. In turn, the novel's televisual adaptation engages with the serialised visual representation of ethnicity by featuring Robert Downey Jr. in multiple roles: he plays Claude, the CIA agent, Professor Hammer, the orientalist, Congressman Ned Godwin, Nicos Damianos, the film director, and the French Catholic priest, the narrator's father. Reversing the racist and xenophobic gaze incapable of distinguishing individuals only perceived as representing the Other, the TV-series dramatizes sameness in a functional manner: all the roles played by the actor are presented as colonising agents, whose very identity is dependent on recognising the individual actor playing them all. Thus, I will argue that visual representation in the adaptation ironically complicates the novel's serialisation of Modernist texts by insisting on a dynamic of recognising and denying individuality within/outside the colonial framework.

Afterlives of Chekhov – Contemporary Sequel Plays by Irish Playwrights Brian Friel and Lauren Jones

Zsuzsa Csikai (University of Pécs, Hungary)

This paper examines contemporary sequel plays *Afterplay* (2002) by Brian Friel and *Konstantin* (2025) by Lauren Jones that revisit and reimagine the afterlives of Anton Chekhov's dramatic worlds. Friel's *Afterplay* creates a chance encounter in a cafe between two Chekhov characters from two different plays – Andrey from *Three Sisters*, and Sonya from *Uncle Vanya* twenty years later, while Jones's *Konstantin* (2025) transposes the characters of *The Seagull* in a hospital room today, imagining the aftermath of the last scene of the Chekhov play.

Drawing on adaptation theory and concepts of sequelization, heterotopia and theatrical haunting, this paper argues that Friel's and Jones's sequel plays function less as linear continuations of narrative “not wanting a story to end” than as acts of appropriation and repurposing whereby the authors capture elements of the original for their own use and enter into a critical dialogue with the original author. Rather than extending Chekhov's plays through plot-driven narrative continuation, both works return to the characters of the plays and situate them in moments of temporal and psychological suspension in heterotopic spaces. By placing the characters in stripped-down, self-reflexive spaces, Friel and Jones reframe Chekhov's characters in order to engage with themes of shared significance for the adaptors and the original author. Such themes include living “lives based on selected fictions” (Pine, 2002) for Friel and artistic failure, authorship, artist's legacy for Jones, themes central to Chekhov in the first place, and also foregrounded in the adaptors' own works.



Chekhov's open endings invite the treatment of sequelization, but the real achievement of these two sequel plays is that their use of heterotopia and anachronism create a distance from the original while they also rely on it for their complex treatment of various themes, including metatheatrical ones. I argue, therefore, that these sequel plays show us that the sequel has the potential to surpass mere narrative continuation and instead functions as a complex work of intertextuality that approaches the status of a stand-alone work embodying in an explicit manner theatre's hauntedness (Carlson 2001).

Ghost Absence and Sequel Mode Continuation in the Harry Potter Storyworld

Xinyan Wang (University of East Anglia, United Kingdom)

This paper examines how prequel and sequel mode continuities can be generated through paratextual circulation, and how such continuities participate in the recanonisation of a literary classic across media. Linda Hutcheon frames adaptation theory's longstanding unease toward prequels and sequels through Marjorie Garber's distinction between extending a story and retelling it differently. Yet this binary overlooks a distinct mode of continuation operative in transmedia franchises. I argue that character absence within dominant film adaptations can itself generate sequel mode continuation, particularly when paratextual media refuse narrative closure.

Focusing on Peeves in the Harry Potter adaptations, I trace how his consistent absence across all eight films coexists with his sustained presence across licensed and paratextual media. Peeves was scripted, cast, and filmed for *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, yet was cut during post-production and does not appear in the released film series. This cut produced a structural void rendered perceptible through paratextual disclosure, including production memories and public remarks. Drawing on hauntological thinking associated with Derrida and Mark Fisher, I develop the concept of Ghost Absence to theorise how this void remains active through paratext rather than receding into the past. Crucially, Ghost Absence continues to influence both the construction of the Wizarding World across media and the canonical authority of the film adaptation. This persistence enables subsequent paratextual works to reopen narrative spaces the films appeared to foreclose.

Licensed LEGO texts and video games mobilise Peeves's Ghost Absence as sequel mode continuation. These paratextual works extend narrative possibilities the films leave unrealised by repositioning Peeves as a recurring presence within the storyworld.



In doing so, they complicate the authority of the film series as the definitive visual canon, demonstrating how sequel mode continuation operates through remediation rather than chronological plot development.

Session #3

4 September, 9:30–11:30

Before and After the Stars Cross: *Romeo and Juliet* and the Paradox of “Shaquelling” the Tragedy

Annamária Fábián (Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary)

Romeo and Juliet is possibly Shakespeare’s best-known play. Consequently, it boasts probably the most impressive number of various adaptations in the Shakespearean universe ranging from film to fine arts and from games to memes. There are numerous literary rewritings about and around it as well, many of which challenge the true-love-at-first-sight topos and/or the un-happily ever-after conclusion of the narrative, that is: the times around/before the birth of this overwhelming love affair, and around/after the demise of “true love” and the young lovers.

“Shaquels” (the term I introduced to label prequels and sequels challenging a Shakespearean narrative) are – somewhat ironically – also abundant around the story. In my contribution to this seminar, I would like to reveal the particularities and the intensity of how “Shaquels” are the unusually potent manifestations of the paradoxical “double gesture”-nature of adaptations (Bradley: 2012) as both dependent on and subversive partakers in the Shakespearean canon in general. On a more concrete level, I would also like to subsequently illustrate this by focusing on how “Shaquels” to *Romeo and Juliet* are able to reframe the play’s central theme of “overwhelming love” as a social or psychological construct rather than a transcendental force if the focus is shifted on the timeframe itself.

I will include 3 “Shaquels” in the framework of this analysis, a prequel focusing on a side-character (Lady Capulet by Melissa Bell), and 2 sequels, one comedic take on the what-if-they-stayed-alive narrative by Perry Pontac (a radio play, *Fatal Loins*), and one quite tragic sequel by Hungarian playwright Erik Novák (*Romeo and Juliet 2* or *The Palace of Pleasures*).



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Sequels of Sequels: on Richard Graves's *The Spiritual Quixote* (1773) and Other Sequels

Fernando Galván (University of Alcalá, Spain)

Don Quixote was initially published in 1605 and translated into English in 1612. Cervantes published a sequel in 1615, which was also translated soon after, in 1620. However, an apocryphal sequel appeared in Spanish before Cervantes's, in 1614, authored by someone using the pseudonym Alonso Fernández de Avellaneda. This sequel was put into English in 1705 and in 1784, from a French version generally attributed to Lessage (1704).

An original sequel was produced by Fielding, in the form of a musical comedy, *Don Quixote in England* (1734), in which the Don and Sancho Panza visited England during a parliamentary election. But, as is well known, Fielding's debt to Cervantes is usually associated with his novel *Joseph Andrews* (1742), subtitled "Written in imitation of the manner of Cervantes, author of *Don Quixote*". However, *Joseph Andrews* and his later work *Tom Jones* (1749) are adaptations or imitations, not sequels. Rather, *Joseph Andrews* could be considered as a sequel to Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740), because its hero is Pamela's brother, and the character of Mr B in Richardson's novel is also linked by family ties to Lady Booby, another character in *Joseph Andrews*. In fact, Fielding had written another satirical sequel to *Pamela* the year before: *Shamela* (1741).

Following Fielding's example, adaptations of Cervantes's work were written in English and other European languages during the 18th and 19th centuries. One of the lesser-known novels in English is *The Spiritual Quixote, or The Summer's Ramble of Mr. Geoffry Wildgoose*, authored by Richard Graves in 1773. This novel was very popular in the late 18th and early 19th century, to the extent that other adaptations and sequels were published, one of which was the anonymous *The Spiritual Quixote, Geoffry Wildgoose, in Cheltenham: or, a Dis-Course on a Race-Course* (1827).



This paper purports to study the configurations of these (direct and indirect) sequels, which somehow coalesce into *The Spiritual Quixote*, as well as their role in the formation and transmission of *Don Quixote* as a canonical work in English.

The Authority of the Arabian Nights' Translators over the Reception and Retelling of the Canon

Sara Yahya Hamed (University of Edinburgh, Scotland, United Kingdom)

This paper examines Robert Southey's 1801 *Thalaba the Destroyer* to interrogate how this epic poem reframes the classic canon: *A Thousand and One Nights*. *Thalaba* is a poem that evokes borrowings from two translations: Antoine Galland's *Arabian Nights Entertainments* (ANE) and Robert Heron's *Continuation of the Arabian Nights Entertainments*. Strikingly, Southey chooses to exclude citing the *Nights* from his extensive *Notes to Thalaba*, which strictly cite Orientalist non-fictional sources.

The split that Southey creates between knowledge and fiction within the poem and *Notes* is a way in which he exercises his authority and authorship over the text, which mirrors the authority that translators exercise over the anonymous canon *A Thousand and One Nights*. *Thalaba* consequently mirrors the fiction Galland presents in ANE and the knowledge Heron presents in the *Continuation*.

In his preface to the translation of the *Continuation*, Heron claims that readers can find value in the knowledge his 1792 translation provides over its fiction because he presents the tales for the second time to an audience now accustomed to the supernatural fiction in Galland's 1704-1717 edition. Heron claims his version is an authentic representative of Arabian culture, unlike Galland's, for which he was accused of fabrication.

While my paper questions the authenticity of both, I also note that readers' perceptions are influenced by the translator's claims. Sure enough, Heron's edition is perceived as a source of knowledge about the Orient which is taught at schools in Scotland. On the other hand, Galland's is perceived as a source of exotic fiction full of supernaturality and magic, which no longer surprises readers in the 1790s.

The ambiguity around the *Nights*' origins, its foreign language, and its anonymous authorship grants space for translators to present how the canon is perceived. This, in turn, is mirrored in the way *Thalaba* reframes the medieval Arabian canon and approaches both translations from different lenses.





S52.- In Search of Hope in the Anglosphere: Narratives and Cultural Practices of Resilience and Transformation

In an age increasingly defined by what Byung-Chul Han terms “the spectrum of fear” (2024), we invite contributions that explore how Anglophone literature and culture respond to, imagine, and articulate hope. Our contemporary moment is marked by polycrises and a shift from “achievement” and “burnout” society to a “survival society” (Han 2024). Against this backdrop, hope emerges not as naïve optimism but as a radical act—a movement, a resistance, and a re-imagining.

This seminar seeks to examine how hope manifests across Anglophone cultural productions and critical thought, engaging with Han’s assertion that “the subject of hope is We”. We position hope not as a fixed state, but as an ongoing, transformational process—what Dickinson et al. (2023) describe as “a becoming, an act of resisting reification... the opposite of being done. It is being doing.” Hope, in this view, embraces complexity, discomfort, and disorientation, insisting that truth emerges from a dynamic interplay between theory, context, and evidence. Drawing on Paulo Freire’s understanding of hope as a communal and incomplete search carried out “in communion with others” (2010), we also foreground the importance of critical empathy—a willingness to be “broken open” by difference and dialogue, and to commit to action that fosters relationship, transformation, and human flourishing.

We invite explorations of hope as an experiential, imaginative, and ethical force that resists despair and cultivates new ways of seeing, being, and creating; papers that explore hope through diverse lenses—philosophical, aesthetic, pedagogical, political—and investigate its presence and potential in various genres, periods, and contexts. Topics include but are not limited to:

- Literary form, stylistic innovation and the affective dynamics of hope
- Temporal reimaginings: past, present, and future in hope-centered narratives
- Hope and healing in health narratives
- Queer, feminist, and decolonial futurities
- The literary imagination of environmental futures
- Utopian/dystopian speculation and the politics of hope
- Protest and activist literature and the aesthetics of resistance
- Melancholy, burnout, and the poetics of slow hope
- The spiritual, existential and material dimensions of hope
- Teaching as an exercise in critical hope and empathy



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Session #1

1 September, 9:00–11:00

Introduction

Chiara Battisti (University of Verona, Italy)

Julia Kuznetski (Tallinn University, Estonia)

Silvia Pellicer-Ortín (University of Zaragoza, Spain)

Between Nostalgia and Hope: A Gadamerian Reading of James Joyce's "The Dead"

Małgorzata Hołda (University of Łódź, Poland)

This paper aims to explore the profound and subtle interweaving of nostalgia and hope in James Joyce's story, "The Dead." Reflecting on the Irish insularity and nationalism, the story invites us, simultaneously, to enter into a vaster and more universal



arena of emotions pertaining to the human condition (*conditio humana*). Joyce's narrative is structured around multilayered embodiments of hope: Gabriel's hope to thrive in giving a Christmas speech, his being hopeful of marital intimacy, and his desire to move westward, to go beyond the strongly disavowed narrow-mindedness and xenophobia. Joyce potently evokes the truth about human existence as stranded between two apparently separate and contradictory poles: hopeful looking forward and nostalgic looking backward. Hope, in Joyce's narrative, resides in the indispensability of communal connection (a joyous Christmas gathering), even if being hopeful is frail and somewhat superficial, as well as in the exigency of a private ambition to live a life that would transcend the limitations of one's cultural milieu. Hope in Joyce's story remains in the shadow of nostalgia and is closely entwined with it, since, paradoxically, the pathway to debunking parochial and chauvinistic tendencies leads precisely via a meaningful return to the positivity of tradition as the core of one's identity. Gabriel's reflections on the unexplored and highly anticipated future invariably reference tradition as the source of authenticity. To examine the aforementioned and other intersections of hope and nostalgia in "The Dead," I shall draw on Hans-Georg Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics and his conceptualization of hope as a human propensity to stay open to future understandings that transcend the present, inevitably incomplete and imperfect ones. More specifically, I shall use Gadamer's notion of the fusion of horizons (*Horizontverschmelzung*) and his understanding of tradition as passing over (*Überlieferung*) to investigate how Gabriel's nostalgic summoning of the past serves as a possibility to develop his vision of the future.

Affective Relationality, Hopeful Incompleteness and Collective Repair in Sally Rooney's *Intermezzo* (2024)

Elsa Adán (University of Zaragoza, Spain)

The main purpose of this paper is to analyse how, both at structural and thematic levels, Sally Rooney's *Intermezzo* (2024) articulates interdependent forms of steady, relational hope emerging from grief and rupture. By following the processes of Ivan and Peter, two brothers who have recently suffered a significant loss, the novel dives into non-linear and rather complex processes that highlight the importance of resilience and bonding as powerful means of continuing after a hard blow.

Formally, Rooney shows her mastery in crafting a fragmented and introspective narrative that alternates between the two protagonists' perspectives, at times making use of the stream-of-consciousness technique, brilliantly mirroring the emotional



disorientation and non-linear temporality of grief. The novel's structure, full of gaps, interruptions, and dissonant rhythms, cleverly echoes its title, pointing at the temporary pause and moment of uncertain transition in the characters' lives.

This structural polyphony is further reflected in the way grief is approached throughout the novel, understood not as an isolating force but as a relational condition. Although each protagonist navigates loss differently, both brothers prove that resilience and uncertainty about the future are more bearable when endured together. This perspective aligns with Corine Pelluchon's *Éthique de la considération*, which emphasises that we do not exist as isolated subjects but as beings exposed to others and shaped by interdependence, an idea that also echoes Ahmed's affect theory and Butler's conception of vulnerability as a shared human condition that binds individuals together. Resultantly, *Intermezzo* presents resilient relationality as a tentative effort to rebuild life after loss. In so doing, Rooney portrays hope as a fragile, ongoing practice embedded in everyday human gestures of care, interdependence and attention.

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Hope and Relational Resilience: The Response of New-Millennium US Ethnic Fiction to a Time of Permacrisis

Laura Roldán Sevillano (University of Zaragoza, Spain)

For philosopher Byung-Chul Han, the contemporary context of “multiple crises” (2024, 1) has produced a pervasive “climate of fear” (2) that erodes solidarity and “blocks off the future” by foreclosing what is possible or new (3). Against this paralysis, hope emerges as a “searching movement” that ventures “into [...] *what-is-not-yet*” (5) and enables “the imagination” and narration of “new forms of action” (27) uniting individuals into a shared “We” (13). Building on this philosophical perspective, literary scholar Gero Bauer (2024) has identified a trend in contemporary fiction in which hope is embedded in *present* relationality rather than future projection. Bauer draws on a philosophy (see Berardi 2011) which postulates that, in the current cultural moment



of “an ongoing state of crisis” and an uncertain or unsustainable future, hope emerges through a turn to “the here and now,” to “slowness,” “caresses” (Bauer 2024, 2) and to “social solidarity” and “human empathy” (Berardi quoted in Bauer 2024, 2). Precisely, framed within the so-called turn to realism, sincerity and authenticity in contemporary fiction (see Roldán-Sevillano 2026) and recent claims for a more “reparative” critical reading (Sedgwick 2003), Bauer identifies a trend among some “hopeful” new-millennium literary narratives which are responding to today’s “pervading cultural pessimism” (2011, 7) with plots where hope is located in the present and materialised in care practices within the family and/or improvised, chosen or queerer forms of kinship. Interestingly enough, these relational configurations align with key tenets of the ethics of care, particularly its emphasis on interconnection, interdependence and attention as a counterforce to current (neo)liberal individualism (see Held 2006; Tronto 2013). In this respect, given the prominent role of extreme individualism in today’s US culture, and this country’s prolonged scenario of permacrisis since the turn of the millennium, the aim of this paper is to examine a set of 21st-century novels by US ethnic writers (e.g. Toni Morrison’s *God Help the Child* (2015), Ibi Zoboi’s *American Street* (2017), Kelly Yang’s *Parachutes* (2020)) in order to show how, in line with the tendency identified by Bauer, these works respond to a paralysing context—especially for the subaltern—, not with pessimism and individualism, but with forms of relational hope and resilience emerging from practices of care and normative and/or non-normative kinship ties.

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Session #2

1 September, 17:00–19:00

Towards a Hopeful Politics of Refugee Memory and Resilience in Souvankham Thammavongsa's *How to Pronounce Knife* and Ocean Vuong's *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous***Celia Cores Antepazo (University of Salamanca, Spain)**

In the final lines of “Randy Travis”, one of the fourteen short stories in Souvankham Thammavongsa’s *How to Pronounce Knife*, the narrator tells readers about her mother’s addiction: “She sat up close as those [slot] machines lit up her face and swallowed her *hope* coin by coin. . . I knew my mother was no stranger to hoping; it’s how we all ended up here in this country in the first place” (2020, 53). In Ocean Vuong’s *On Earth We’re Briefly Gorgeous*, the narrator describes his grandparents’ wedding picture: “In the couple’s *hopeful* smiles, it’s hard to imagine the photo was snapped during one of the most brutal years of the war” (2019, part I). Hope, memory, and resilience puncture through Thammavongsa and Vuong’s works, both of which center on multiple generations of Vietnam War refugees in Anglo North America.

Both authors show how the younger generation endures their family’s vulnerability while bearing witness to the exploitation of “the wishful hopes of individuals living under oppressive conditions” (Stockdale 2021, 80). This paper, then, departs from the idea that “hope is about the future,” and consequently, its grounds “lie in the records and recollections of the past” (Solnit 2016, xix). Thammavongsa delivers this paradox through passed-down, subtle memories, whereas Vuong conveys it through an overt testimony in epistolary format. In both cases, children carry forward memories of war and flight as residues that quietly organize what can be hoped for.

I observe memory as a strategic resource employed by settler-colonial nation-states in the struggle for power (V. T. Nguyen 2016). Accordingly, in the context of “organized forgetting” (Espiritu 2014) propelled by Canada and the U.S. after the Vietnam War, Thammavongsa and Vuong critique neoliberal resilience (Evans and Reid 2014, Fraile-Marcos 2020). By centering generation-specific notions of refugee hope that discard loss as the defining feature of refugee experiences, they offer new, more hopeful politics of persisting and remembering (V. Nguyen 2023) life in refuge.



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Hope Beyond the State: Community and Care in Angie Cruz's Narrative

Macarena Martín Martínez (University of Seville, Spain)

Angie Cruz's *How Not to Drown in a Glass of Water* (2022) narrates the life of Cara Romero, a middle-aged Dominican immigrant in New York, entirely through transcripts of employment-readiness sessions. What begins as a bureaucratic requirement to access welfare benefits gradually becomes a space of testimony, revealing the communal dimensions of survival under neoliberal precarity. This paper reads Cruz's novel as a meditation on hope as a practice grounded in care, community, and resistance.

The novel exposes the limits of the state even under progressive regimes, as the narrative unfolds against the backdrop of Obama-era discourses of hope and welfare. Cruz shows how institutions—through their own administrative forms—systematically fail to provide support to precarized communities by devaluing affective and reproductive labor. Cara's lived histories of migration and care work do not fit institutional templates and are therefore rendered illegible, revealing how neoliberalism reduces value to what can be quantified (Calderón 2021, Fraser 2016, Sayegh 2019, Waring 1988). Against this institutional failure and echoing



conceptualizations of hope as a collective practice (Han 2024, hooks 2003, Muñoz 2009), the novel foregrounds alternative economies of care and mutual support that emerge not through normative family structures—marked instead by estrangement and gendered violence—but through chosen, fragile bonds continually threatened by gentrification and economic dispossession. Formally, the novel provides an aesthetic of resistance by repurposing administrative documents through flashbacks, simultaneity, and digressive testimony, queering institutional timelines and regimes of value. Linguistically, the novel further unsettles dominant economies of worth. The protagonist’s name, *Cara*, evokes both “cost” and “care”—the latter etymology revealing that care names relation itself as a response to sorrow. Resistance also emerges through the use of Spanish within an English-language administrative context, particularly the idiom *ahogarse en un vaso de agua*, which Cruz uses to critique the neoliberal appropriation of resilience: Cara is expected to cope endlessly without support, yet is marked as weak when she cannot. Against this logic, the novel reclaims *desahogarse* as relational relief—hope not through individual fortitude, but through communal care and a refusal to individualize structural violence.

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“Here I dare to be myself”: Louise Dickinson Rich’s Audacious Hope in the Maine Woods

Lisa Botshon (University of Maine at Augusta, United States)

In the 1930s, former English teacher Louise Dickinson Rich moved to the Rangeley Lakes region in the state of Maine to a ramshackle dwelling in the middle of the woods without electricity or running water; it was reachable only by waterways. Her



1942 memoir of this experience, *We Took to the Woods*, became a literary touchstone, garnering serialization in the pages of the *Atlantic*, selection by the Book-of-the-Month Club, multiple translations and re-issues, and even a WWII Army edition. Writing against the backdrop of war and global instability, Rich documents an existence that might be misread as the ultimate escape from modern societal and economic constraints. However, I argue that *We Took to the Woods* provides her readers with a hopeful reimagining of the “good life,” positioning the wilderness as a space for intentional flourishing.

Central to this promise are the dozens of iterations of the word “hope” throughout the text. These range from the quotidian, such as her perennial pursuit of an “enormous old trout” (281), to a more profound existential longing to be restored to the earth upon her death. This conviction culminates toward the end of her memoir, where Rich reflects: “Certainly I am happier than I was then. Certainly I am more at home in this world... than ever I was in that vast and confusing maelstrom that we call civilization. Here I dare to be myself” (319). By documenting her life in the Maine wilderness, Rich provides a template for resisting the era’s pervasive despair; I contend that she understands the woods not as a hiding place, but as a site of radical optimism where she might “make the best contributions within [her] power” (256), transforming her individual experience into a deliberate act of resilience and a hopeful reclamation of the human spirit.

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“Humans are not just destroyers. We’re makers”: Storytelling, Resonance and Relational Hope in Tim Winton’s *Juice*

Bárbara Arizti (University of Zaragoza, Spain)

Winton’s first foray into futuristic Australian cli-fi imagines hope through a redefinition of energy. While the novel’s title evokes oil and the extractive logic of fossil capitalism, it also signals a different kind of “juice”: a relational vitality generated through storytelling, listening, and response. This paper argues that the novel articulates hope not as optimism or political resolution, but as a fragile, potentially resonant relation amid violence, scarcity, and uncertainty.

Drawing on contemporary hope theory and Hartmut Rosa’s concept of resonance, *Juice* is analysed as staging a tension between instrumental action and relational openness. The unnamed protagonist’s involvement in the Service—a paramilitary resistance organisation targeting climate criminals—embodies an ethics of violent retribution aligned with the logic of capitalism:



acceleration, extraction, and disregard for collateral damage. By contrast, the novel's narrative present unfolds in relative stillness, structured as a sustained act of storytelling in which the protagonist recounts his story and that of his people to a largely silent listener, a man armed with a crossbow. Like a modern Scheherazade, the narrator tells in order to defer death; yet, more significantly, he tells in the hope of establishing a resonant relation that resists violence. Rosa's theory of resonance—defined by voice, deep listening, affectability, and the possibility of mutual transformation—illuminates the hopeful force of this narrative structure. The addressee's rare interventions, and the suggestion in the closing pages that he may tell his own story, open the possibility of dialogue rather than domination. The novel's inconclusive ending ultimately refuses redemptive certainty. In doing so, *Juice* resonates with Byung-Chul Han's claim that hope does not equal resolution, but a "passion for the possible", a state of mind attuned to the signs of "what is coming, what-is-not-yet born". The silent, traumatised, girl under the protagonist's protection further exemplifies the relational nature of hope in the novel, confirming Han's idea that the subject of hope is always a "We".

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Session #3

2 September, 9:00–11:00

Weaving the Threads of Hope: Textures of Resistance in Contemporary Black British Art Carolina Sánchez-Palencia Carazo (University of Seville, Spain)

While textile work has historically been a communal practice often involving expressions of hope and resistance, it has a long history of marginalisation within the high art world due to its association with female domesticity, ancestral traditions, and class activism. This paper discusses how contemporary Black British artists Lubaina Himid, Yinka Shonibare and Enam Gbwonyo embrace this



political power of textiles as their work gestures towards a historical consciousness connecting colonial pasts with decolonial futures embedded with imaginative possibility and transformative action.

Both Himid and Shonibare employ the Dutch wax fabrics as their *oeuvre*'s hallmark on account of these materials' complex transnational pedigree. Himid articulates a continuing flow of labour, trade and money while exploring how clothing is *woven* within histories of colonisation, migration and globalisation. Likewise, these wax prints imbue Shonibare's artwork with a subversive critique of empires and are often fashioned into period costumes dressing headless mannequins mimicking classic scenes from art history. Through her deconstructive use of hosiery, Gbewonyo investigates the oppressive systems of racism and sexism while advocating for the healing benefits of slow-paced craft against the accelerated production characterizing the Capitalocene.

Though acknowledging the legacies of embodied violence inherent to colonialism, their *artivism* is anchored in positive envisionings of reparative justice, thus aligning with contemporary approximations to hope that prioritize relational agency and collective purpose over individualistic ethos (Bloch 1986; Han 2024).

I ultimately argue that, as Afro-diasporic artists, they create spaces of utopianism beyond Western modernity insofar as their textile art represents intersectionally marginalized bodies and identities suggesting the possibility of social transformation against a pervasive culture of fear. They conceive utopia not as naïve optimism, but as a pedagogy (Grattan 2017) in its showing us hopeful alternatives that we otherwise would not see, but that are to be found in small, micropolitical "stitches" of resistance.

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- Violent Awakening: Hope Fueled by Aggression in Crimes of *The Future* (2022) and *The Substance* (2024)**

Iveta Aare (Tallinn University, Estonia)

In a society that hurtles headlong in the direction of unrealistic perfectionism, fueled by the ever-expanding power of social media, celebrity culture and narcissism epidemic (Coeckelbergh 2022), individuals tend to lose aspirations for rebellion and resistance (Han 2010). Depressive attitudes and a "loser" stance become the new norm, which reflects the formation of a modified *Übermensch*



conception - becoming the ultimate *animal laborans* (Arendt 1958) that operates on self-exploitation and auto-aggression (Han 2010, 2020). Desperate times notoriously call for desperate measures, and the reality of the *survival society* (Han 2024) requires a pivotal reconfiguration of hope. Hope always carries an antagonistic nature, it is a breaking movement against binding, which does not stem solely from absence and deficiency but is triggered by the refusal to accept the insufferable (Holloway 2022). Hope is a scream, a disruption of suffocating social cohesion (Holloway 2022) and, apparently, artistic reflections of the *survival society* demand a gaudy expression of hope. The latest trend in body horror cinema, which I theorize as its *new wave*, seems to be one of the most illustrative examples of the current “revolution of hope” in the entertainment industry. The sensational success of the latest body horror films by David Cronenberg (*Crimes of the Future*, 2022) and Coralie Fargeat (*The Substance*, 2024) demonstrate societal yearning for a violent awakening achieved through hope fueled by aggression. Protagonists that transform self

harming practices into a tool of survival and artistic expression become the new heroes of our time. This paper aims to analyze the visual representation of the violent awakening in body horror cinema and explore how aversion for oneself can turn into an unconventional reconfiguration of the human construct. Relying on the above-mentioned works by Cronenberg and Fargeat, I will explore how demolition and complete annihilation of the human body can become a symbol of hope for the society that got stuck in the loop of self-improvement and destructive narcissism.

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Queer(ing) Digital Counter-Publics and the Politics of Laughter: A Study of Select Works of Transgender Performance Poets from the Global South

Pratishtha Kharbanda (Banaras Hindu University, India)



This paper will analyse the role of social media platforms like YouTube and Instagram in the creation of queer assemblages and queer counter-publics that aim to not just acknowledge but also resist the colonial character of victimhood through (digital) performance poetry and other modes of queer performance art, especially through the works of transgender artists and poets like Vivek Shraya, Alok Vaid Menon, Janani Balasubramanian, Andrea Abi-Karam, among others. The paper will delve into how digital spaces offered by social media platforms act as counter-publics and spaces of and for queer resistance, and how these spaces juxtaposed with the form of queer performance art including poetry and songs, also work as forms of resisting what Achille Mbembe in *Necropolitics* called “death-worlds,” in the post-Internet age.

Referring to postcolonial and decolonial critics, the paper will attempt to foreground the symbiotic relationship between the tragedy of victimhood/victimry and the colonial and imperial structures of oppression, with a specific focus on South Asian diasporic and Arab-American trans identities - delineating how affect not just shapes but also drives oppression and how certain affective responses to oppression aid its continuance. Lastly, using the methodologies of discourse analysis and textual analysis, the paper will look at queer laughter and creation of hope through digital media as twenty-first century affective forms and practices of queer resistance against these colonial-imperial structures of oppression and queerphobia, especially referring to Vaid-Menon’s “Biology!” among other performers and performances. The paper will refer to and draw on scholarship from the disciplines of postcolonial/decolonial thought, affect theory, and queer theory.

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Quitting as Rebirth: Crisis, Resilience, and Hope in Social Media Narratives of the Great Resignation

Laura Tommaso (University of Eastern Piedmont, Italy)

Marianna Lya Zummo (University of Palermo, Italy)

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Great Resignation emerged as both an economic and cultural rupture, marking a profound moment of crisis in the relationship between individuals and work. Confronted with burnout, precarity, and disillusionment, many American employees chose to resign voluntarily, transforming personal loss and instability into opportunities for renewal. This study investigates the linguistic construction of crisis, resilience, and hope in the self-narratives of so-called "quitters" who share their experiences on social media platforms. Through a mixed-methods approach that combines sentiment analysis and corpus-informed techniques with qualitative discourse analysis rooted in critical discourse studies, the research reveals how speakers reframe quitting as an act of emotional survival and self-determination. Rather than narratives of defeat, these digital testimonies articulate resilience through linguistic markers of agency, optimism, and moral reorientation. Quitting is portrayed not as withdrawal from labour, but as a hopeful reimagining of life and value beyond exploitative structures.

The findings suggest that, in times of systemic crisis, personal narratives of leaving work can serve as powerful discursive spaces



in which despair is transformed into collective resilience, and the language of hope operates as a means of reclaiming meaning, dignity, and a sense of futurity.

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Session #4

2 September, 15:00–17:00

“Perhaps it’s time to end this story”: Afropessimism and the Question of Hope in Natasha Brown’s *Assembly*

Teresa García Salcedo (University of Córdoba, Spain)

Amidst a permanent state of crisis and fear, numerous scholars underline a generalised attitude of hopelessness towards the future (Eagleton 2015). Yet, simplistic understandings of hope as naïve utopianism fall short of the complex socio-affective dynamics



imbricated within the practice of hoping. For the purpose of focus, this paper examines the often-unavowed interrelation between hope, despair and resistance. It explores the epistemological, affective and ethico-political potential of this triadic constellation in *Assembly* (2021), a novella by black British author Natasha Brown. The textual analysis thus blends contributions from Afropessimism (Wilderson III 2020), affect theory (Berlant 2011) and postcolonial studies (Gilroy 1993). In the selected narrative, the unnamed narrator, a high-flying black British woman that epitomises neoliberal discourses, reflects on the performative nature of her success and the interlocking systems of oppression underpinning politics of assimilation in the colonial present. The destructive and alienating effects of race politics and anti-Black discourses are metaphorized via the narrator's development of cancer. Through an Afropessimistic lens, her illness is indicative of her social death as a structurally induced position (Wilderson III 2020). Therefore, the narrator contemplates the rejection of treatment as a form of agency and resistance against the inescapability of colonial capitalism. While *Assembly* depicts a rather bleak, hostile and hopeless landscape, I argue that it also mobilises alternative forms of hope (epistemological, affective, ontological) both on a diegetic and extradiegetic level. The narrator's pessimism and despair hold diagnostic potential to unveil, contest and resist the colonial logics of global capitalism. Some of the "hopeful" possibilities envisioned in the narrative—the rejection of treatment—prove deeply problematic, yet they ultimately gesture towards a praxis of hope that embraces affective complexity, discomfort and uncertainty. Despite its (Afro) pessimistic tone, the novella concludes on an open-ended note, exposing the uncertainty of the future, which can be read in itself as a source of hope.

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Fear as Social Architecture: Dystopia and Non-Utopian Hope in Edward Bond's *Chair Plays*

Ugur Ada (Tokat Gaziosmanpasa University, Türkiye)

This paper proposes an analysis of Edward Bond's *Chair Plays* - *Have I None*, *The Under Room*, and *Chair* - as a sustained theatrical exploration of dystopia in which fear operates not as an exceptional condition but as a structuring principle of everyday life. Set in an



unspecified near future, the trilogy depicts societies governed by security, surveillance, and enforced conformity, where political power penetrates domestic space, memory, language, and interpersonal relations. Dystopia in Bond's work is neither spectacular nor technologically extravagant; it is banal, intimate, and normalised. The paper argues that the *Chair Plays* conceptualise fear as a form of social architecture that organises behaviour, limits ethical imagination, and reshapes relational life. Forgetting, compliance, and emotional restraint emerge as survival strategies within systems that present control as protection. Through minimal staging and reduced theatrical means, Bond exposes how authority sustains itself by internalising fear, transforming ordinary gestures - hospitality, remembrance, care - into acts of potential risk. At the same time, the paper identifies a distinctive mode of non-utopian hope embedded within the trilogy. Bond does not offer visions of alternative futures or political resolution. Instead, hope appears as fragile ethical insistence: moments in which characters choose responsibility, recognition, or care despite the absence of institutional support or future guarantees. These gestures do not dismantle dystopia, yet they interrupt its totalising logic by affirming ethical agency within conditions of coercion. By framing the *Chair Plays*, the paper contributes to contemporary discussions of dystopia, fear, and hope by demonstrating how theatre can stage ethical endurance rather than redemption. It suggests that Bond's work offers a critical model for understanding how hope may persist without optimism, futurity, or transcendence in societies organised around permanent insecurity.

“Not hope exactly, something less than hope, or a precursor to hope”: Exploring the Possibility of a Caring World in *The Last White Man*

Miquel Pomar Amer (University of the Balearic Islands, Spain)

What would happen if white people woke up one day and they had become black? This is the premise of Mohsin Hamid's latest novel, *The Last White Man* (2022), which opens with the unexpected transformation of Anders into a black man and his struggle to cope with his new self in a mostly white town. Although more cases are gradually reported, he strongly feels a lurking hostility fuelled by “totalitarian, nationalistic and authoritarian logics that rearticulate and reorient our caring inclinations towards ‘people like us’” (The Care Collective 2020, 4) and decides to protect himself by relying only on two persons with whom Anders establishes a strong relationship of mutual care: his terminally ill father, and Oona, his love interest, who is also handling a difficult situation at home after the death by suicide of her twin brother.



As Sara Ahmed asserts, “we have a tendency to endure our struggles in the present by deferring our hope for happiness to some future point” (2010, 183) and this is strongly felt by both Oona and Anders as the eventual realisation that there is no way back to whiteness becomes in Oona’s words “a precursor to hope, which is to say a possibility [that] suggested life” (2022, 98). Against a climate of fear and uncertainty, echoing the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the novel suggests that the erasing of ethnic differences paves the way for a new paradigm of care based on a commitment to both self-care and care for others.

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Rewriting Her Story or Reproducing His Structure: Is *Circe* (2018) by Madeline Miller a Feminist Narrative?

Irache Osés San Martín (University of Zaragoza, Spain)

In the last decades, there has been a proliferation of novels focusing on the revitalisation and reimagining of classical mythology in contemporary fiction by Anglophone women writers. Authors such as, Pat Barker, Natalie Haynes or Madeline Miller approach classical texts not only as sources of creative inspiration but as tools for critique and social intervention (Nisa & Moreno, 2025) in the context of current global crises. Although there is a significant overlap on thematic and methodological levels with the feminist retellings from the 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, transmodern rewritings address a broad spectrum of post-9/11, post-Brexit, post-pandemic and post-#MeToo concerns. Contemporary female authors inscribed within this rewriting turn place a stronger emphasis on intersectionality, incorporating gender, violence, war, sexual abuse, trauma and other identity-related issues into their rewritings (idem.).

This paper analyses the novel *Circe* (2018) by Madeline Miller, a novel that gives voice to the (her)story of this marginalised and villainised sorceress. It is my contention that this novel can be analysed from two different critical frameworks. On the one hand, *Circe* has often been interpreted as a narrative of female emancipation and agency, empowerment and sorority building (Etiz, 2023; Díaz, 2020; Cuevas & Velasco-Montiel, 2025) *Circe*’s gradual withdrawal from Olympian patriarchy enables the development



of her magical abilities with herbs, resisting divine and male authority. Moreover, the novel emphasises sorority, vulnerability and interconnectedness through Circe's relationship with Penelope and her son Telegonus.

On the other hand, *Circe* reproduces key ideological assumptions underlying the masculine Bildungsroman (Fernández-Barroso, 2019; Spacciante, 2024). Circe's individual experience is defined by romance and she is ultimately excluded from the social scene and confined to the private dimension. Furthermore, her behaviour simultaneously replicates the misogynistic logic and abusive attitude which she criticises. This is exemplified in her encounters with Pasiphaë and Medea, or her need to recall male figures of authority, such as Prometheus or Zeus, to shape her own identity.

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Coerced Hope: Migration, Precarity, and the Politics of Survival in Anglophone Literature

Carla Martínez del Barrio (Independent Scholar)

In what Byung-Chul Han describes as a contemporary climate of fear, hope can no longer be understood as naïve optimism or individual resilience. This paper engages with the panel's framing of hope as a relational, transformative process by proposing the new concept of the *diaspora of coerced hope*. Building on Arjun Appadurai's notion of the "diaspora of hope," I reconceptualise hope as a structurally produced necessity rather than a voluntary or aspirational disposition. Focusing on the novel *Two Caravans* by Marina Lewycka, the paper examines how precarious economic migrants embody a form of hope that emerges under conditions



of exploitation, instability, and constrained mobility. Through the character of Irina, a Ukrainian 19-year-old, I argue that hope operates not as a sign of opportunity, but as a survival strategy compelled by systemic inequality. Her experience in the UK reveals how hope and despair coexist, challenges affective binaries that structure migration discourse and, as a result, complicates distinctions between voluntary and forced migration. In line with the panel's theme, I draw on Paulo Freire's understanding of hope as a collective and dialogic practice to further situate coerced hope as a relational process shaped within diasporic communities. In this sense, hope becomes a condition of survival, a potential site of resistance and an ongoing negotiation between structural constraint and imagined futures. By reframing hope as coerced rather than chosen, this paper contributes to broader discussions of Han's "survival society" by highlighting how resilience is often produced through precarity rather than through any genuine overcoming of hardship. It also demonstrates how Anglophone literature not only represents but critically reimagines hope as an ambivalent, necessary, and politically charged force within contemporary migration contexts.

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S53.- Food and Women in Anglophone Literature and Film from the 1950s to the Present

Women have long been associated with food as nurturing cooks preparing meals in domestic settings, cultural authorities shaping dietary norms and dictating “proper” table manners, or transgressors of socially acceptable behaviour by consuming massive amounts of food or completely abstaining from eating and becoming victims of food-related disorders. Additionally, there is the figure of the miracle-working cook, who connects with ancient traditions and can use her intuitive knowledge to influence people in the present. On a more mundane note, there is the highly aware female consumer who can always make the “right” food choices while avoiding the excesses of the puritanical vegan/vegetarian, who is frequently gendered feminine. Yet another shift of perspective reveals the horror of *women as food*, as the victims of monsters who can re-make them in their own image after feeding on them. To this rich thematic mix, we can add the shift in the gendering of cooking and food consumption, with the rise of the male celebrity chef and the wary male consumer who watches what he eats.

Participants are encouraged to explore representations of food and women in Anglophone literature and cinematography over a time period of more than seventy years, which has seen many significant social, cultural, and political changes. Key critical texts include *Food and Femininity* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), *Food and Literature* (CUP, 2018), and *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Food* (2018).

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Session #1

31 August, 16:00–18:00



Introduction

Ludmilla Kostova (University of Veliko Turnovo St. Cyril and St. Methodius, Bulgaria)
Oana Cogeanu-Haraga (Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi, Romania)

Translating Taste: Culinary Mediation in Contemporary Women's Travelogues to Romania

Oana Cogeanu-Haraga (Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi, Romania)

This paper approaches culinary description as an act of cultural translation. It integrates food studies and translation studies to read scenes of cooking, eating, and hospitality in selected women's travelogues about Romania after 1950. If food studies have shown that cuisine encodes identity, gendered labour, and relations of power, translation studies help to conceptualise these culinary representations as acts of cultural mediation: ingredients, dishes, and eating habits are named, compared, domesticated, or deliberately preserved as foreign within the Anglophone text. The main case study is Olivia Manning's *The Balkan Trilogy* (1960–1965), whose portrayal of Bucharest consistently stages meals as sites of intercultural observation. Romanian cuisine is rendered through analogy and selective explanation, producing a controlled representation of difference that contains the foreign. Food marks class, instability, excess, and hospitality, shaping the image of an Eastern European periphery. As a contemporary point of comparison, the paper turns to recent travelogues, including Arabella McIntyre-Brown's *Romania: Carpathian Mountains and Transylvania* (2019), which foregrounds shared cooking and women's domestic expertise. Here, culinary translation shifts from detached mediation to participatory encounter. Read together, these texts reveal how women's writing moves from framing an edible "other" to negotiating a space of shared taste. Culinary scenes thus emerge as gendered contact zones where taste is continuously reconfigured.

Fig Diet: An Analysis of Food Imagery in *The Bell Jar*

Ana-Maria Brustureanu (Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi, Romania)

Since its publication in 1963, Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* has only grown in popularity, generating intense discourse among academics and the general public alike. However, only after the 2000s did scholars start to scrutinise the very thing that naturally lies under a



bell jar: food. Previous articles on this topic provide useful context, but certain hermeneutic gaps warrant further analysis. Thus, they either fail to engage with the novel as a whole and highlight only major food-related moments (Baldwin 2004, Dowbnia 2014) or focus on biography rather than textual analysis (Bundtzen 2020). Containing both extended eating scenes, such as the Ladies Day luncheon or the bar scene with Lenny Shepherd, and sporadic mentions of food, the novel creates a web of interconnected, recurring images that got lost in previous works. This study analyses how the network of cooking and eating imagery mirrors Esther Greenwood's process of understanding the world and her role in society. Drawing on Betty Friedan's *Feminine Mystique* and Claude Fischler's "Food, Self and Identity", this paper parallels Esther's struggles as a woman in the 1950s with her inherent status as an omnivore, showing how the two overlap, particularly in the famous fig metaphor. She is an illustration of women's complex relationship with food, serving as both an avid consumer and a "commodity" to be consumed.

Who Eats a Woman? Food and Desire in Margaret Atwood's *The Edible Woman*

Ljubica Matek (University of Osijek, Croatia)

Margaret Atwood's debut novel, *The Edible Woman* (1969), seems to have outlined the novelist's career-long interest in women's issues, in particular the limited roles available to women and the pressure to conform. Despite the novel's prescient themes, which include power, gender, desire, and consumerism, it has remained relatively understudied, which this paper attempts to amend. The focus of my talk is the novel's representation of the relationship between consumption and domination, both of which define patriarchal capitalist and carnist society. According to Carol J. Adams's *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, male dominance over women resembles animals' oppression in that both women and animals are objectified and treated as suitable for compliance and consumption. The protagonist Marian's relationship with Peter, who is represented as a stern, humourless man, mimics this dynamic. Once they become engaged, her formal commitment to a traditional marriage and the role of a submissive wife triggers an identity crisis manifested in the form of an eating disorder resembling anorexia. Marian's rejection of food, particularly meat, symbolises her rejection of consumption as a gendered sociocultural practice. Patriarchal society consumes women by discursively turning them into desirable flesh, that is, by rendering them "edible" and powerless, discounting or sabotaging women's own desires. Marian attempts to regain control of her life by controlling her food intake and observing the unorthodox lifestyle of her friends Ainsley and Duncan, who unsettle gender stereotypes by making life choices that make them happy, ultimately enabling



her liberation. In line with the novel's gastronomic preoccupations, her liberation occurs in the form of a baking ritual. Marian bakes a cake in the shape of a woman and then consumes it, symbolically rejecting the role of a passive, "edible" woman, and reclaiming her agency by assuming the role of the metaphorical cannibal.

Session #2

1 September, 9:00–11:00

Resistance and Transition: Bodies, Food, and Reclaimed Femininity in Molly Keane's *Good Behaviour*

Kübra Kangüleç Coşkun (TOBB University of Economics and Technology, Türkiye)

Anglo-Irish author Molly Keane's novel *Good Behaviour* (1981), adapted for television in 1983, is set in 1920s Ireland during the decline of Anglo-Irish colonial power. Keane's novel tells the story of Aroon St. Charles, a neglected Anglo-Irish child whose struggle for identity is shaped by her hatred for her distant, oppressive mother. This conflict is most evident in the bodily contrast between Aroon and her mother, as Aroon's "large" body stands against her mother's slender figure. While their daily struggles are mainly played out through food, Aroon resists her mother's oppression through emotional eating.

Keane establishes a connection between food and femininity, portraying the mother's critique of Aroon's excessive eating habits and her strict control over food as reflecting her own failed femininity and motherhood, embodied in her emotional and physical distance from both her children and her husband. In contrast, Keane portrays Aroon's father as engaged in new recipes and cooking following his physical injury during the First World War. His growing interest reveals his emotional and sexual hunger, as well as his process of feminisation as a failed patriarch. This contrasts with his wife's detachment from domestic responsibilities and the kitchen. Furthermore, the Catholic governess and the cook, who are also associated with food, serve as examples of traditional femininity as nurturers and caregivers for the St. Charles family, thereby inviting a postcolonial reading of the text. In this respect, this paper will study Keane's text as a transitional work, positioned between tradition and modernity in the 20th century. And the relationship between food, cooking, and the female body will be analysed in parallel with the societal changes triggered by the World Wars, as exemplified by Keane in the Irish context.



Culinary Geographies of Migration: Food, Space, and Transnational Belonging in Romanian Women's Post-Communist Novels

Monica Manolachi (University of Bucharest, Romania)

One of the key factors shaping contemporary practices of food production, processing, consumption, and ecology is the spatial organisation of these activities. How is this aspect reflected in literature? The concept of space also plays a decisive role in food-oriented literary studies, which range from nationalist and traditionalist approaches to multicultural perspectives that emphasise diversity and assimilation, as well as ethnic studies focused on cultural dynamics in contact zones between nation and diaspora. In the decades surrounding Herta Müller's Nobel Prize for Literature in 2009, a growing number of Romanian women writers have gained international visibility by publishing for broader audiences and through translation. In the Anglophone world, novels by Domnica Rădulescu, Carmen-Francesca Banciu, Maria Elena Sandovici, Alta Ifland, and others chronicle the migration of ethnic Romanians to Western countries over the past half-century. This paper examines how food and drink function in these works, with particular attention to concepts such as culinary nostalgia, culinary hybridity, culinary passing, literary cannibalism, and literary gastropolitics. The analysis also maps selected push and pull factors of migration in contexts of both voluntary and involuntary mobility, highlighting how culinary practices and food-related settings articulate diverse emotional, cultural, and social sensibilities. From a metacritical perspective, the paper explores hybrid narrative forms that integrate autobiography, fiction, history, archival material, popular culture, and media discourse associated with border crossing. Finally, it considers the reception of these novels—through reviews, translations, interviews, and academic research—to examine how transnational literary communities have been formed and sustained in recent decades.

Controlling Appetites: Food, Women, and the Mechanics of Exclusion in Literature in English from the Indian Subcontinent

Shweta Ramsay (University of Montpellier Paul-Valéry, France)

We have often seen food in literary studies through the lenses of authenticity and comfort, celebrating culinary practices as markers of cultural identity, nostalgia, and belonging. While such approaches are valuable, they risk obscuring the ways in which food



also functions as a site of violence and exclusion—particularly for women and marginalised communities. In my presentation, I'll depart from celebratory readings of food to examine moments where eating becomes ethically troubled, coercive, or dangerous, and where refusal, disgust, and deprivation reveal deep-rooted structures of power.

This paper explores how food practices in cooking, serving, and eating can impose an ethical burden on women and evoke culturally acquired disgust in specific social groups, thereby shaping exclusion along lines of gender, caste, and community. The central argument of this paper is that food operates as a key ethical and social mechanism through which gendered, caste-based, and communal hierarchies are maintained and regulated. Women emerge as both objects of control and custodians of edible boundaries, responsible for maintaining cultural continuity and purity through food.

Methodologically, the paper undertakes a close analysis of literary texts and films from the Indian subcontinent, reading food practices as sites where power is challenged and contested, with particular attention to the under-explored intersection of caste and gender, showing how caste hierarchies shape both food regimes and gendered norms. The corpus includes Anita Nair's *The Ladies Coupé*, Anita Desai's *Fasting and Feasting*, and the film *The Great Indian Kitchen*. Across these works, hospitality, purity, and restraint mask everyday violence enacted through food. At the same time, the paper focuses on moments of transgression in which women's engagement with food becomes a form of revolt – expressing forbidden desire, taking revenge for microaggressions, and resisting systems that seek to control female bodies by regulating appetite.

Edible Bodies: Animal, Woman, and Food in Moira Buffini's *Dinner*

Tuğba Aygan (Atatürk University, Türkiye)

This paper explores the intersections of women, food, and animal representation in Moira Buffini's 2002 play *Dinner*, drawing on Carol Adams's *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, which connects gendered violence to meat consumption. The play centres around female protagonist Paige's extraordinary dinner party to celebrate her husband's new bestselling book. The dinner becomes a grotesque spectacle with bizarre courses such as primordial soup for starters and frozen waste for dessert. The main course is also unsettling, as Paige serves live lobster and wants her guests to boil their own food. In patriarchal cultures, cooking is an imposed task on women as a form of service to men. Buffini reimagines this task as an act of rebellion, and with Paige's unconventional



and disturbing meals, she rejects the idea of a woman who feeds, pleases, and sustains male bodies. Besides, references to various kinds of violence against animals and serving live lobsters mirror the subjugation of Paige and other women, highlighting how animals' and women's bodies and labour are consumed alike in the patriarchal culture. By engaging Adams's theoretical insights on the absent referent and politics of consumption, this paper aims to connect the oppression of women and animals within patriarchal systems of consumption, discussing how both are rendered invisible by being reduced to bodies to be consumed, and how violence against them is justified.

Session #3

1 September, 17:00–19:00

Gender and Genre in Food Film Studies: The Case of *Julie and Julia* (2009)

Alexandra Simón López (University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain)

Ever since the long-neglected topic of food and culinary practices began to attract academic interest (see Lévi-Strauss 1969; Barthes 1979; Douglas 1996), scholars have increasingly addressed the significance of food as a means of constructing and expressing individual and communal identity. This also holds true for studies of culinary practices in the film medium (Ferry 2003; Bower 2004; Mahar 2010; Hertweck 2015). Besides shedding light on the integral role of food in cinema since its beginnings, these works have also foregrounded how films have exploited the potential of the culinary to render “abstract cultural processes, such as class, race, gender, (...), as well as more subjective conditions, such as obsession, indifference, (...) carnal desire, and love” (Keller 2006). While some scholars have explored how gender roles and women's relationships to culinary practices are represented in film (Crouch 2015), studies that focus specifically on food-centred films as a distinct genre (Keller 2006; Lindenfeld and Parasecoli 2017, 2018) have only briefly touched on gender roles and women's experiences. Such studies usually focus on defining the genre's characteristics and its potential for representation. Situated at the intersections of food, film, and gender studies, the present paper seeks to build on previous criticism of the genre of “food films” by examining how some food-centred films have used the culinary to problematise gender roles and revise the position of women in a traditionally male-dominated realm. To this end, a brief review of the genre will lead to an in-depth study of gender matters in the food film *Julie and Julia* (2009), illustrating the potential and limitations of Hollywood's early interactions with the genre.



The Women Behind a Great Chef

Michaela Mudure (Babeş-Bolyai University, Romania)

Although culinary studies seem to give greater relevance to women and their unpaid and insufficiently valorised work, the art of cooking is still very much a masculine domain. This paper examines women's representation in *The Hundred-Foot Journey*, a popular culinary novel by the American-Canadian novelist Richard C. Morais, published in 2010. Hassan Haji, the main character, makes a huge leap from his native Bombay to England, and then to France, where he is the first "alien" to receive a Michelin star. Morais follows the pattern of eighteenth-century novels, hiding behind the main character, who is also the narrator. Willing to accept his karma, the Muslim Hassan will return to his native India, where he plans to start a new business: a chain of French restaurants. The novel's open ending suggests a difficult-to-oppose optimism about the multicultural future of our contemporary world.

However, Hassan's evolution would not have been possible without the happy interference of women in his destiny. His mother, his sister, and his amours all guide him towards his ultimate success. In spite of the present-day acclaimed and reclaimed equality between genders, the world of haute cuisine remains very much a man's world, where Hassan's French Egeria, Mme Mallory, is an exception, and the great chefs' wives are influential only behind the scenes. A comparison with the 2014 movie inspired by this novel will spice my analysis.

Six Women Poets and Their Food Poetry

Dana Badulescu (Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi, Romania)

This study aims to examine how six women poets writing in English, from Anne Sexton to the present day, alchemically transmute their food consumption, cooking, and brewing into poetry. While looking into this alchemy, it also charts women's transgressive appetites and desires across decades and cultures. The journey starts with Anne Sexton's witchcraft in "Her Kind" (*To Bedlam and Part Way Back*, 1960), through Catherine Byron's "Coco de Mer" and "Coffin. Crypt, Consumption" (*The Getting of Vellum*,



2000; also translated into Romanian as *Vellum* by Dana Bădulescu & Radu Andriescu, Editura T, Iași, 2007), Carol Ann Duffy's "Tea" (*Rapture*, 2005), Patty Seyburn's "On Cooking a Symbol at 400 Degrees" (2010), Marcela Sulak's "Poem: Cabbage, a Love Song" (*Immigrant*, 2010), to complete its itinerary with Mihaela Moscaliuc's "Deep Cut", "Lovage", "By Chocolate" and "In Praise of Fungi" (*Heartmoor*, 2026). This literary map of transgressive feminine poetry in English spans vast territory, both metaphorically and literally. It starts in America and it returns to the same continent, connecting it with other feminised spaces across the Atlantic: Byron's meat-farming in Scotland, Duffy's tea harvested on the slopes of Mount Wu-Yi, Texas-born Sulak's garden in Ramat Gan, and Mihaela Moscaliuc's memories of Romania morphing in time into a home away from home. Concepts like Federico García Lorca's *duende*, which taps into the mysterious zones of Thanatos, where it sometimes couples with Eros; "food femininities" (Cairns & Johnston, 2015) and "meat constructs" (Bain, 2018) underpin the thesis of this study, namely that, since the 1960s to the present day, the poetry written by women has been shaped by the poets' essential connection with all forms of nourishment, from culinary to erotic, embodying them, transgressing norms and alchemically transforming food, cooking, brewing, and the tastes and desires associated with them into art. Knowing 4 of the 6 poets tackled here, the author of this study will also interview those 4 poets.

Session #4

2 September, 9:00–11:00

The Woman Who Does Not Eat: Anorexia in Sarah Gilmartin's *Dinner Party: A Tragedy*

Ludmilla Kostova (University of Veliko Turnovo St. Cyril and St. Methodius, Bulgaria)

I begin with an examination of representations of women in several folkloric and literary traditions who refrain from eating for various reasons. Such representations span a wide range, including European and Asian folk tales and portrayals of vampires and other monsters in Victorian and later literature. My paper's primary focus is on Sarah Gilmartin's debut novel *Dinner Party: A Tragedy* (2021). Set in Ireland in the late 1990s, the 2000s, and the 2010s, the novel tells the story of the Gleeson family, whose lives are disrupted by the loss of two family members: the father and one of a pair of twin sisters. The narrative is filtered through the consciousness of the remaining twin, Kate Gleeson, whose reaction to family tragedy is expressed in a serious eating disorder, drinking bouts, and toxic personal relationships.



The narrative's non-linear temporal structure shifts from a Halloween dinner party in 2018 to earlier times and ends with the aftermath of yet another Halloween dinner in 2019. The family dinners are failed commensal events as the Gleesons cannot forget the losses that they have experienced and the resentment over past misfortunes. In contrast, Kate and her brother Ray enjoy real closeness over an impromptu meal after the last Halloween dinner.

Kate and her siblings blame their mother, Bernadette Gleeson, for the family's failures. They resent her attempts to control them, although they eventually admit, albeit reluctantly, that she was not, after all, "a monster" but a woman trying to cope with the difficulties of family life.

My reading explores the complexity of familial relationships in the novel, some of which is conveyed through the symbolism of food, cooking, and eating, or refusal to do so.

Hunger, Cannibalism, and Abject Motherhood in Lucy Rose's *The Lamb* (2025)

Rayna Rosenova (Sofia University, Bulgaria)

In recent years, there has been a surge in contemporary fiction by women writers in the Gothic/Horror mode that explores female identity and experience, motherhood, and gender politics, by drawing on the symbolic affordances of food and eating, particularly the hunger for raw meat and human flesh. Such novels employ the visceral intensity of body horror and its graphic imagery to both interrogate and challenge traditional expectations of femininity by portraying animalistic desire and appetite that render women monstrous. This paper will focus on Lucy Rose's tragic coming-of-age Gothic horror novel *The Lamb* (2025) to discuss the symbolic meanings of insatiable hunger and cannibalism in the text and how these are used to explore themes of loss, suppressed anger, female identity, queer sexuality, and motherhood. Although the story is told from the perspective of eleven-year-old Margot, the sacrificial lamb of the title, the paper will focus on her mother's representation as an embodiment of the abject woman, whose cannibalistic appetites reflect her contempt for traditional feminine roles, such as the submissive wife and the nurturing mother, and articulate a sense of loss of personal identity and an attempt to return to it.





S54.- Bordering and Rebordering the Land: Ecocrisis, Migrancy and Border Fortifications in Contemporary Literature and Culture

In recent years, questions of bordering and rebordering have become prominent in cultural discourse. Politicians across the globe talk of ‘building walls’ to protect their respective territories, the migrant crisis is becoming bigger by the month. Climate change contributes to all of this, with many migrants now fleeing from increasingly uninhabitable spaces to find security elsewhere. In literature, ‘borders’ – both physical ones between countries but also social ones, such as between different social classes – have always featured prominently, with examples going back to Graham Greene’s *Stamboul Train* (1932) Bruce Chatwin’s *On the Black Hill* (1982) or Cormack McCarthy’s *The Crossing* (1994). More recently, fiction has been reflecting new geopolitical developments in connection with climate change, for instance John Lanchester’s *The Wall* (2019) which sees the UK surrounded by a highly protective wall, or also Ali Smith’s Seasonal quartet (2016 – 2020) that engages with building walls or establishing migrant detention centres. This panel seeks to investigate the notion of bordering and (re)bordering in times of climate and migrant crises in order to assess how literature raises awareness of geopolitical crises and realities in the context of increasing global apathy to those issues. Papers could cover the following themes:

- Bordering and rebordering
- Border vulnerabilities
- Migrant crisis
- Climate fiction
- Brexit literature
- National identities in the contexts of bordering and rebordering
- National and personal identities in the context of migrancy.

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Session #1

2 September, 9:00–11:00

Borders and Barriers through the Lens of Dystopia: The Case of John Lanchester's *The Wall***Juan F. Elices (University of Alcalá, Spain)**

After Donald Trump's two elections as US president, back in November 2016 and 2025, the idea of erecting barriers and walls—both physical and metaphorical— has gradually expanded as a symbol of protection from external, unprecedented and, sometimes, imaginary menaces.

Immigrants seen as little more than rapists and drug dealers, refugees who are left wandering aimlessly in European waters and Latin American migrants, who are criminalised simply for pursuing a better future for themselves and their families, have become targets for the new wave of far-right political parties that have progressively taken over power in recent years. Their protectionist and somehow insular reactions to these population movements have led a number of First-World countries to close off their frontiers and to implement extremely tough measures to control this incessant flow of people, while, at the same time, claiming territorial sovereignty over overseas lands. At a time when anti-immigration policies are not only implemented but also normalised in the discourse of many Western leaders, dystopian fiction is now an arena of critical discussion that seeks to tackle this and other similar issues from a satirical perspective. Many current literary and academic voices argue that we are living in the age of dystopia, a period in which the publication of these narratives emerges as a response to the turbulent atmosphere we are all witnessing on an almost day-to-day basis.

In 2019, John Lanchester, a well-reputed British author and journalist, published *The Wall*, a novel that delves into all these human tragedies and challenges the radicalised views that are becoming so dominant in some of the most influential countries in the world. In this respect, *The Wall* revolves around questions that are unsurprisingly close to the reader's ordinary existence, as the gap that separates fiction from reality has become practically non-existent. This novel digs into recurrent and well-known dystopian tropes, which enable the author to ponder over the existentialist nature of our current societies and the new geopolitical configuration that Brexit and other isolationist moves might eventually bring about in the future. Lanchester recounts the experiences of a young character called Kavanagh, who is drafted to become part of "The Defenders", a military-like organisation that operates in a defensive Wall of massive dimensions.



These visibly inexperienced soldiers are trapped in endless and uneventful 12-hour shifts, whose main goal is to watch over potential attacks launched by the so-called “Others.” Bearing all this in mind, the aim of this paper will be to examine the dystopian elements upon which *The Wall* is sustained, in an attempt to disclose the numerous socio-political parallelisms with the current reality Lanchester addresses in his novel.

From Defender to Refugee: Internal Borders and Climate Displacement in John Lanchester’s *The Wall*

Raphaela Nickel (Technical University of Braunschweig, Germany)

There is a consensus that climate-induced migration is one of the most serious global challenges in the near future (World Bank 2018). It is clear that migratory patterns will pose particular challenges to both contemporary and future urban spaces (Ionesco 2017, Piguet et al. 2011). In spite of increasing attention in public and political discourse in the so-called Global North (Boas et al. 2022), climate migration is still frequently perceived as a phenomenon that primarily affects other regions of the world.

Whereas migrants are often solely viewed as threats to national security, climate change literature responds to this distancing by narratively shifting climate migration to the Global North. Authors such as Paolo Bacigalupi, Claire Vaye Watkins and Kim Stanley Robinson envision future scenarios in which these regions also become uninhabitable and climate-induced displacement no longer appears to be an externalised problem. These novels are often told from the perspective of refugees who are confronted not only with physical national borders, but also with social, economic and cultural barriers.

John Lanchester’s novel *The Wall* (2019) takes up this motif but chooses a decisive narrative shift in perspective by portraying his protagonist as a border guard before his failure turns him into a refugee, experiencing fear and disorientation at the other side of the border. Whereas the novel is mostly (and correctly) read in the context of Brexit-induced border debates (Sandrock 2020), we will highlight a perspective that views bordering and re-bordering (Boas et al. 2022) as a process in the global context of environmental humanities.

The article argues that this shift in perspective reveals the border not as a fixed territorial line, but as a dynamic political system that moves subjects between protection and exclusion. Through its consistent internal focus, the novel contrasts the apparent stability of the border regime from the perspective of the guard with the existential uncertainty of the refugee. *The Wall* thus



undermines common narratives that treat climate migration as an external problem and reveals the fragility of belonging in a world marked by climate crises.

Freedom to Roam, Pressure to Leave: Borders, Movement and Identity in Contemporary Climate Fiction

Laura García Soria (University of Zaragoza, Spain)

Speculative fiction has long provided fertile ground for the exploration of borders and the tensions they produce. Despite a vast history of interplanetary colonization narratives, in recent decades, and due to the escalating threat of climate change, the notion of borders in speculative fiction has turned inward, increasingly restricting the very subjects it once set free. Climate fiction in particular focuses on the issue of climate migration, and the social, political and identity issues that it raises, opening the space for posthuman understandings of limits and identity. According to Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, place and displacement are directly linked to questions of identity, being the foundations of postcolonial and border studies (86). For this reason, cli-fi is the perfect genre for the application of critical border studies, a field that recognizes the mobile and ambiguous state of the border at different spatial, social, political and even conceptual scales, blurring the human and the non-human divide (Ozguc and BurrIDGE 472). In this context, this paper examines two recent works of speculative fiction, Barbara Kingsolver's *Flight Behaviour* (2012) and Erin Swan's *Walk the Vanished Earth* (2022), to explore how climate change reshapes the meaning of borders and freedom, reconfiguring a spatial sense of identity. As rising seas, desertification, and other environmental disruptions render vast territories uninhabitable, both humans and nonhumans are forced into constant motion, challenging the political and moral architectures that have long governed mobility, identity and belonging. *Flight Behaviour* depicts the intertwined displacement of animals and human communities, exposing borders as fragile, exclusionary human constructs, while *Walk the Vanished Earth* expands this crisis to extraplanetary dimensions, reimagining freedom and constraint within posthuman landscapes. Through the analysis of these texts under the postcolonial and posthumanist lens of critical border studies, this paper argues that climate fiction redefines the notion of borders, which are revealed to be "artifices and constructs—the product of shared practices between actors in the international arena" (White 3), and reconfigures them as a site of vulnerability, negotiation, and displacement under the pressures of climate change.



The Politics of Belonging: Migrant Subjectivities in an Age of Neocolonial Rebordering

Glenda Huerta Vizcarra (Independent Scholar)

I propose to engage in a comparative reading of Safia El Aaddam's *Hija de inmigrantes* (written in Spanish) and Laila Lalami's *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits* (written in English) to examine how contemporary migrant women writers narrate south–north migration into the European fortress while interrogating the geopolitical and symbolic functions of borders and its necropolitics. Both novels foreground movement from the Global South as a journey shaped by economic precarity and geopolitical inequality, a context caused and exacerbated by the Global North that renders homelands increasingly unliveable. In doing so, both authors, of Moroccan background, situate migration within a broader political context that destabilizes traditional notions of territory, belonging, and national coherence.

This paper argues that these texts construct borders as layered formations: material fortifications, maritime death zones, bureaucratic regimes, and linguistic thresholds. In Lalami's novel, the crossing of the Strait of Gibraltar dramatizes Europe's externalized border as a site where humanitarian rhetoric is absent and replaced by surveillance, racism and neocolonial exclusion.

Hija de inmigrantes turns inward to Spain, exploring how the children of migrants inhabit internal social borders structured by race, class, and language. Together, these two novels reveal how rebordering occurs not only at coastlines but within schools, workplaces, family and everyday life and spaces.

A key focus will be the role of language as both barrier and bridge. A polyphony of voices and multilingual negotiations in each text expose the perversity and imposition of European/Spanish national identities over who and how one may speak, belong, and be heard. In this context, the protagonists challenge fixed ideas of citizenship, showing identity as relational, mobile, and shaped by memory. By placing these works in dialogue, I intend to highlight how migrant women writers reframe Europe's imagined "border crisis", using narrative to reimagine community beyond colonial borders and nation-states.



Session #2

2 September, 15:00–17:00

“Randomly Moving Particles”: Andrew Motion and the Poetics of Polycrisis

Felix Behler (Paderborn University, Germany)

Reactions to Andrew Motion’s poetry have always been mixed. His work has repeatedly been met with the charge that he is doing ‘too much’, as one critic, for example, noted in *The Guardian*: ‘I don’t know why he needs to write a poem on every single occasion’ (Wilson: par. 3). Responses to his more recent collection *Randomly Moving Particles* (2020) have been similar, with one commentator writing that, once again, he seems to have ‘taken on more than he can do justice to’ (Green: par. 4). Indeed, the collection ranges broadly across themes and subjects, including science, migration, contemporary British and American politics, death, war, violence, global warming, and the extinction of species. What emerges through these various alternating and simultaneous discourses is an account of – or at least an attempt to account for – the current moment of global polycrisis, in which his ecocritical perspective on humanity’s impact on the environment keeps surfacing as a particularly dominant concern, and one for which the poet readily assumes responsibility: I have closed my ears and eyes When the ice floes groan And glaciers express their gigantic grief. (Motion: 33) Even if, as Davis Green observes in a half-cynical comment, it may feel ‘a bit late for our generation who presided over so much of it, there is still time to side with Greta Thunberg even if only in Faber’s Armani-style hard covers’ (Green: par. 2). All of the above is, I think, true, but it isn’t quite the whole truth. Poets are damned if they do and damned if they don’t. And isn’t it still the task of the poet to open our eyes to what is happening around us? In this paper, I examine how Motion’s poetry sequence manages time and again to bring these discourses together, establishing links between these various states of crisis, constantly moving in and out, across borders and into each other, from the fast-collapsing populations of ‘the planet’s insects ... birds, and reptiles’ (Motion: 15) to the distant glimpses of satellites pioneering the exploitation of other planets once we have exhausted our own. Yet, in order to fully comprehend the present polycrisis, Motion seems to be saying, we have to see those ‘randomly moving particles’ in conjunction.



Displaced Landscapes: Ecological Memory and the Poetics of Bordering in Hala Alyan's *Salt Houses* (2017)

Marta Aguza Berral (University of Córdoba, Spain)

This paper situates Hala Alyan's *Salt Houses* (2017) within the intersecting frameworks of postcolonial ecocriticism, diaspora theory, and border studies to examine how contemporary Palestinian writing in English reimagines belonging amid ecological degradation and forced migration. Drawing on Huggan and Tiffin's (2010) and DeLoughrey's (2015) notions of postcolonial ecology, Edward Said's (2000) reflections on exile, and Newman's (2006) theorization of borders as dynamic processes, this study contends that Alyan's novel transforms displacement into an environmental as well as existential condition.

Tracing four generations of a Palestinian family uprooted by successive wars, *Salt Houses* portrays how the dissolution of home mirrors the erosion of ecological and cultural continuities. The novel's recurrent imagery of sand, sea, and salt evokes an "ecology of displacement", a poetics through which the instability of natural elements parallels the fluidity of diasporic identity. The "salt houses" that gradually dissolve become emblematic of how borders, memory, and matter alike are vulnerable to time, exile, and environmental precarity.

Through DeLoughrey's concept of *tidalectics*, the narrative's temporal and spatial shifts echo the rhythmic movements of tides, embodying the oscillation between loss and return that defines the diasporic condition. By embedding Palestinian dispossession within a planetary awareness of ecological crisis, Alyan reframes the political border as an affective, porous threshold that binds environmental and emotional terrains. Writing originally in English, Alyan transforms language into a site of reclamation, where memory resists erasure, and home is reimagined as a living ecology of endurance and renewal.

The Magical Realism of Borders

Maggie Ann Bowers (University of Portsmouth, United Kingdom)

A border is inherently magical realist. It is both not there and yet has significant consequences. When crossing water, flying across the sky, crossing a desert, the border is invisible until it is policed or physically marked. Rushdie's protagonists in *Satanic Verses*, only find that they have become migrants when they hit the ground after falling from an exploding aircraft. The consequences



of crossing a border bring it into being. His commercial flight takes him ‘from Indianness to Englishness’ as Gibreel notes in the novel (41). Hence, an examination of the magical realism of borders will elucidate this ethereal/dramatic aspect.

Magical Realism itself is frequently described as a liminal genre, erasing borders between categories (lending itself to poststructuralist postcolonial readings). Yet, this paper will move beyond this discourse to examine the use of a magical realist device in the construction of Mohsin Hamid’s *Exit West* in which people become migrants by passing through a magical portal. By eliding the representation of the migrant journey, this device allows for the novel to focus upon the stories of people across the globe experiencing political and environmental crises that precipitate them to begin to live in new locations. Ultimately, the paper asks whether Hamid could be accused of ‘making light’ of migrancy by passing over the worst of the experiences on vulnerable boats crossing shipping channels and expanses of sea and walking in starvation and exhaustion into unsafe territories. Or, following the recent work of Lucy Neave, asking if his novel, structured around this magical realist trope, allows for a closer examination of the personal consequences of the crises created through neo-colonial/neo-liberal global structures.

River Crossings: Riverbank Encounters and Agency in *Is a River Alive?* by Robert Macfarlane

Lucia Scaringella (University of Parma, Italy)

Among the many representations of environments in literature, rivers emerge as particularly liminal beings. They carry a distinctive bordering quality: they connect and separate, enable movement and enforce division. Though often framed as “natural” borders between states and regions, recent scholarship in watery geographies has shown that rivers exceed flat cartographic logics, operating instead as multidimensional, dynamic zones of human and more-than-human encounter. Drawing on *Is a River Alive?* by Robert Macfarlane, this paper argues that contemporary river writing reconfigures borders as fluid, processual formations that demand a continuous reworking of human imagination, power relations, and material practice.

Central to *Is a River Alive?* is the proposition that rivers are forms of time: archives of deep geological memory, agents of erosion and renewal, and forces of ongoing becoming. To enter water, Macfarlane suggests, is to cross a border into a different realm; one that calls forth a different version of the self, reoriented through immersion, vulnerability, and relational exposure. Such crossings unsettle familiar landscapes and subjectivities, rendering distinctions between nature and culture, human and non-human, past and future unstable.



Focusing on the river communities portrayed in *Is a River Alive?* – including the Muthekapu Shipu, the rivers of Chennai, and Los Cedros– the paper examines rivers as temporal, imaginative, and ontological sites of transformation in which borders and bordering practices are continually produced, contested, and reconfigured. These narratives foreground shifting power relations between discourses of gain and control and practices of care rooted in riverbank communities, while also tracing old and new juridical, cultural, and imaginative framings that recognise rivers as agents and/or

legal persons. Rivers thus appear as entities that are themselves bordered through governance, enclosure, and exploitation: processes that their material agency persistently unsettles.

Ultimately, the paper contends that Macfarlane's work performs a critical reanimation of rivers that aligns literary imagination with ecological and political urgency, inviting a rethinking of borders as unstable zones of encounter and transformation in an era of ecological crisis.

Session #3

2 September, 17:30–19:30

Nomadism, Borders, and Space in Cormac McCarthy's Fiction

Zuzana Buráková (Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice, Slovakia)

This paper explores nomadism in Cormac McCarthy's fiction as a spatial and ecological condition through which borders are continually unsettled. Drawing on my broader research into spatial narrative and environmental imagination in McCarthy's work, I argue that nomadic movement functions as a dominant narrative principle across his novels, shaping how space and environment are represented. In selected novels such as *Suttree*, *Blood Meridian*, and *The Road*, McCarthy's characters rarely occupy stable or meaningful places. Instead, they move through cities in decay, deserts, roads, rivers, and post-apocalyptic landscapes which are liminal spaces defined by exhaustion and material scarcity. Because narrative progression follows this



movement through space rather than psychological development or plot, nomadism thus emerges not only as a theme, but as a structural principle shaping the narrative. Approached from an ecocritical perspective, McCarthy's nomadic spaces foreground the role of environmental conditions in shaping displacement. Degraded landscapes, ruined infrastructures, and hostile climates shape how characters move, suggesting that borders in McCarthy's fiction are unstable or constantly traversed. The paper further draws on the concept of deep time to situate McCarthy's nomadic spaces within geological and planetary temporalities. By reading nomadism as a spatial narrative strategy within McCarthy's environmental imagination, this paper contributes to the discussion of bordering and mobility in contemporary American fiction.

How to Be Both Places at Once: The Double Movement of the Island Story in Ali Smith's *Seasonal Quartet*

John Joughin (Independent Scholar)

In her recent fiction Ali Smith is preoccupied with the blur and the meld of climate change wondering 'if the seasons would ever be new again, brand-new time, rather than just seem to be following each other nose to tail like paint-peeling wooden horses on an old carousel.' (*Artful*, 5)

In *Seasonal Quartet*, this acute awareness of the processual complexity of change is positioned within and against the backdrop of attempts to separate us – to 'take back control' – and re-border the Island. Here, internecine conflicts unleashed by Brexit as well as the broader emergence of populist politics and the creeping entrenchment of a surveillance society are laid bare. In challenging this regime of divide and rule, Smith launches a sustained exploration of the indivisible entanglement of matter, memory, art and time. In the process, the definition of 'border' also necessarily becomes more fluid and less precise, as the rhythm of migrancy and tales of the refugee are disclosed as those of a double movement – never merely quantitative but also qualitative. Our inability to 'see change', can be countered by those artworks which re-orient our vision, so that we understand 'how eyes that aren't yours let you see where you are, who you are' (*Autumn*, 160). A form of 'seeing as' which Smith explores via the refracted forms of Shakespearean Romance and much else besides, including the montage effects of a wide range of contemporary artworks. Here migrancy again emerges as a double movement, not merely in terms of reflecting dislocation and change, but also in releasing a range of amplitudes and intensities which offer an active challenge to, and a qualitative transformation of, society itself.



Borders, Borderlands and Migrations in the Novels of Amy Tan

Gordan Matas (University of Split, Croatia)

Amy Tan is a Chinese-American author whose novels deal with a variety of topics connected to the questions of ethnicity and the formation of identity. Some of these topics include the questions of belonging, crossing physical and cultural borders as well as living in the ethnic borderland after migration. Through the process of creating an ethnic identity Amy Tan depicts the life in the Chinese-American borderlands, i.e. a specific position that Chinese-Americans occupy being neither totally assimilated nor totally isolated in America. The novels of Amy Tan depict Chinese-Americans as both part and apart from the two separate worlds, neither completely assimilated nor completely isolated. Both first- and second-generation Chinese-Americans experience similar challenges of life in the United States since they are trapped between their Chinese heritage and the American society they live in.

Biculturalism is another prominent theme in the novel. It includes living in as well as crossing national, ethnic and generational boundaries. Tan's characters mediate between their homeland and their adopted country, and both generations of immigrants meet in the borderland that is represented by their immigrant families. Nonetheless, this is a troublesome meeting, as the first generation remains rooted in an ancestral culture, while the second-generation family members feel that they do not belong to that culture. For second-generation family members, the mainstream culture can be as unwelcoming as the ancestral culture since their oriental features ensure that they cannot vanish into anonymity in American society.



S55.- Liminal Spaces and Dark Metaphors in Indian Gothic Fiction

This seminar focuses on the particular features the Gothic acquires in Indian literature written in English, with special emphasis on the narrative and thematic transformations accompanying the shift from a Romantic understanding of the Gothic to its postcolonial dimensions. We welcome papers that explore the interplay between the Western Gothic tradition and specific Indian cultural, religious, and historical elements, at work in various Indian texts produced from the 19th century onward, though gothic elements can be identified as early as the Indian epics; dark spaces of guilt and terror haunted by the specter of colonialism; supernatural beings and hybrid creatures engendered by the traumas of caste, gender, and class oppression; metaphors of displacement and alienation stemming from the dualities and dichotomies produced by the clash between tradition



and modernity, between old, rural India and new, postmodern India; and the interweaving of religion, mythology, folklore, and superstition to create liminal spaces populated by spirits and ghosts caught between the wounds of the past and the anxieties of the future. Papers addressing Gothic representations of India in travel literature are also welcome, as well as insights on the Orientalist Gothic and its fascination with or vilification of the Oriental “Other”, its depiction of space as either exoticized or demonized and its criticism of colonialism.

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Daniela Rogobete (University of Craiova, Romania) dani.rogobete@yahoo.com

Session #1

2 September, 17:30–19:30

Violating Domesticity: Gothic India through the Eyes of Victorian Women Writers

Elisabetta Marino (University of Rome Tor Vergata, Italy)

Often acting as mere accompanying persons of their husbands, brothers, or fathers engaged in the colonial venture, women frequently settled in colonial India for extended periods, thus being exposed to multiple dangers stemming from the climate, political turmoil, and a drastic and often unsettling change in habits. Life in such a different and challenging context, however, also sparked the imagination of women writers, who produced Gothic narratives set in their new country of settlement to voice the tensions and anxieties arising from their vulnerable position, to challenge the subordinate role of women in society and the notion of domesticity as a sacred and inviolable space, and to enter the political arena, by introducing elements of criticism directed at British imperialism. They also drew on their extraordinary experience to furnish readers with compelling stories set in faraway and unfamiliar places.



In this light, this paper sets out to explore selected short stories by Anglo-Irish writer Bithia Mary Croker (especially from *To Let*, 1893), Flora Annie Steel (*East of Suez*, 1901), and Alice Perrin (*In the Guardianship of God*, 1903), thereby highlighting elements of continuity and rupture in their representations of Gothic India.

A Rasa of Terror: The Aestheticization of Violence in Lee Siegel's *City of Dreadful Nights* and Postcolonial Gothic

Halina Marlewicz (Jagiellonian University, Poland)

This talk proposes to explore Lee Siegel's *City of Dreadful Nights: A Tale of Horror and the Macabre in India* (1995) as an unconventional but vital contribution to postcolonial Gothic. Although often classified as hybrid ethnographic fiction, Siegel's text uses a rich Gothic grammar to interpret modern Indian sociopolitical realities. Central to this reading is Siegel's stylised rendering of the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, which becomes, in his hands, not a straightforward political chronicle, but an aesthetic performance of *bhayānaka* rasa, the rasa of terror described in classical Sanskrit poetics. The choreographed violence of the scene, sensory excess and theatrical pacing are designed to elicit fear in its affective, aesthetic and philosophical fullness, transforming a historical event into a ritualised spectacle which becomes an aestheticised performance of horror, filtered through the rasa theory of Sanskrit poetry.

Siegel blends Western Gothic tropes – grotesquerie, nightmarish urban landscapes, exaggerated monstrosity – with Indian cosmologies, invoking concepts of illusion (*māyā*), performance (*nāṭya*), and emotional resonance (*rasa*). The assassination becomes a threshold moment between life and death, history and myth, realism and symbolism, where the political event acquires the texture of ritualised horror. The result is a haunting meditation on modern Indian violence that sits at the crossroads of genre, philosophy, and sensory affect – an exemplary case of Indianized Gothic storytelling. Situating Siegel within the broader field of Indian Gothic writing reveals how his engagement with rasa theory resonates with indigenous modes of narrating the uncanny (e.g. Rudyard Kipling's colonial or imperial Gothic tales or Amitav Ghosh's spectral geographies in *The Shadow Lines*). The talk reframes *City of Dreadful Nights* as a text that both adopts and subverts Indian Gothic conventions.



Ghosts of a Chance: Traumatic Memory and Postcolonial Futurity in Shilpa Agarwal's *Haunting Bombay*

Andrea Llano Busta (University of Oviedo, Spain)

In presenting haunting as the return of that which resists narration, Gothic literature can function as a “talking cure” (Ilott 2019). However, a recurrent scholarly emphasis on trauma as aporetic risks construing painful experiences as perpetually unresolvable, a stance that sits uneasily with postcolonial frameworks defined both by the conflicting lure of colonial history and by an ethical call to decolonise it (Ballesteros-González 2020; Rudd 2009). This paper proposes instead to read the postcolonial Gothic as a space in which trauma is not merely reiterated, but also relationally negotiated through affect, embodiment and transmission. Drawing on Spivak's concept of the “ghost dance” (1995), haunting is approached as a dynamic process that gestures towards futurity by activating suppressed narratives. In this vein, Shilpa Agarwal's *Haunting Bombay* (2009) aptly exemplifies a shift from belated knowledge to affective engagement within postcolonial Gothic fiction. Set in a haunted colonial-era bungalow in post-independence India, the novel deploys female ghosts to explore intergenerational suffering rooted in colonial and patriarchal structures. The many parallels between national and familial traumas invite further reflection on how apparitions do not merely revive memories (Atkinson 2017; Bhardwaj 2025; Hirsch 2012; Kabir 2014), but also aid their effective processing. Moreover, Agarwal's diasporic position as an Indian author writing from the United States enables a critical reworking of Gothic conventions that addresses a global audience while avoiding orientalist views. Ultimately, the paper argues that *Haunting Bombay* mobilizes the Gothic as a reparative—though not redemptive—mode that exceeds aporetic trauma models. Through liminal characters and spaces, the novel transforms haunting into an ethical practice of listening, and, in doing so, it demonstrates how postcolonial Gothic fiction can generate alternative temporalities in which unresolved histories become conditions of possibility for less traumatic futures.

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Reimagining the Detective Story in Contemporary Mumbai: Cultural Hybridity in *The Unexpected Inheritance of Inspector Chopra*

Carla Fusco (University of Viterbo, Italy)

Contemporary crime fiction increasingly reflects the interaction between established Western narrative models and new cultural settings. *The Unexpected Inheritance of Inspector Chopra* by Vaseem Khan represents a significant example of this phenomenon.

From a structural perspective, the novel clearly draws on the traditional Western canon of detective fiction. Like the classical models established by authors such as Arthur Conan Doyle and Agatha Christie, the story revolves around a central mystery, the gradual collection of clues, and the intellectual process of deduction carried out by a morally driven investigator. Inspector Chopra shares several characteristics with the archetypal detective: sharp observational skills, persistence, and a strong personal sense of justice that motivates him to pursue the truth even outside official institutional frameworks.

At the same time, the novel diverges from the Western canon in several significant ways. First, the cultural and social context of contemporary Mumbai plays a crucial role in shaping both the investigation and the narrative atmosphere. Issues such as economic disparity, rapid urban development, and the coexistence of tradition and modernity form an essential background to the plot. Second, the tone often incorporates elements of warmth and humour, partly embodied by the presence of Chopra’s pet



elephant, Baby Ganesh, which introduces a softer, almost “cozy” dimension to the detective narrative.

Therefore, the novel represents a hybrid form of detective fiction: it retains the structural framework of Western crime narratives while integrating specifically Indian social realities and narrative sensibilities. In doing so, it demonstrates how the detective genre can be successfully reinterpreted within a contemporary Asian setting.

Reimagining Gothic Spatiality in Siddhartha Deb’s *The Light at the End of the World*

Daniela Rogobete (University of Craiova, Romania)

Siddhartha Deb’s 2023 novel *The Light at the End of the World* proposes a reconfiguration of the traditional Gothic spaces through the lens of politics, climate change and technological dystopia in the contemporary context of postcolonial, neoliberal India. This paper focuses upon the manner in which the novel reimagines Gothic spatiality by replacing traditional tropes – haunted spaces, abandoned loci, monstrous characters – with dark elite enclaves, climate-ravaged landscapes, liminal zones of exclusion and oppression, all inhabited by monstrous politicians and occult characters, in the attempt to expose the moral and structural decay of neoliberal capitalism and the interplay of space, identity and power. Deb constructs his story by weaving together spaces and timelines, real events and myths, clashing people, relationships and communities against political, economic and historical forces.

The paper will especially follow the key spatial elements – the decaying urban landscapes, the haunted places, the fragmented spaces and times, and the fluidization of boundaries – present in the novel, in relation to the postmodern world, with a special emphasis on the interplay between individuals and the environments they inhabit, under the alienating pressures of history and politics. Deb’s spectral spaces are pervaded by decay and a painful sense of doom, his apocalyptic landscapes become a harsh comment against the alienation, fragmentation and dissolution characteristic of the postmodern condition. Gothic spaces are finally used not only to evoke an undeniable sense of horror but also to criticize the total annihilation of the traditional structures of reality and the disintegration of social, political and psychological coherence in the contemporary postmodern society.





S56.- Gender and Women's Studies in English across European Academia: Mobilisation, Backlash, and Geopolitical Tensions

Hosted by the Gender Studies Network, this seminar seeks to critically examine the current state of Gender and Women's Studies within European academia. In an increasingly polarised geopolitical climate—marked by anti-gender rhetoric, political backlash, and cultural contestation—the place of feminist and queer scholarship in the humanities calls for renewed and urgent attention. The seminar provides a space to reflect on the challenges and possibilities for engagement with gender at a time when academic freedom, critical thought, and inclusivity are under growing pressure.

We invite contributions that explore how questions of gender are being addressed, challenged, or reimagined across European universities, from curricula and research agendas to institutional policies and public discourse. How is English Studies engaging with the legacies and complexities of the #MeToo movement, intersectional feminism, and queer theory? What risks and opportunities arise for gender-focused research and teaching in a moment of institutional precariousness and cultural resistance? What methodologies and epistemologies are emerging to respond to shifting cultural and institutional landscapes? How are feminist and queer approaches being integrated, resisted, or transformed within academic structures?

Papers may approach these questions through literary, linguistic, historical, cultural, or interdisciplinary lenses. We are particularly interested in work that explores the dynamics and/or collaborations between activism and academia, addresses issues of precarity and resistance within institutions, and considers the evolving role of feminist pedagogy. Contributions that provide comparative perspectives or highlight localised experiences across different European contexts are especially encouraged. The seminar aims to foster dialogue across national and academic contexts, mapping both the constraints and the transformative potential of English and Gender Studies in the shifting terrain of contemporary European higher education.

[In the online Meeting of the Gender Studies Network about two weeks later, the discussions initiated in Santiago will be taken up with a view to shaping a possible agenda for action. This will be an open event for anyone interested in Anglicist Gender Studies in Europe, and the link will be available from the seminar convenors.]

CONVENORS:

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Session #1

2 September, 17:30–19:30

“Words matter. Precision matters. Context matters. Expertise matters. Democracy matters.” The Heightened Necessity of Organizing and Archiving

Renate Haas (Kiel University, Germany)

“Archive” and “archiving” have become buzzwords for a variety of reasons, ranging from everyday experience to theory. Increasingly used metaphorically, the meanings of “archiving” have broadened enormously, and so the term can cover many of the different actions necessary in view of the precarious situation of Women’s and Gender Studies.

In order to highlight decisive aspects, the two hegemons between which “Europe” is sandwiched will be briefly focussed on. In the case of the United States, key documents will be checked, such as Executive Order 14168 “Defending Women from Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government;” EO 14253 “Restoring Truth and Sanity to American History;” the joint statement of the American Historical Association and the Organization of American Historians on “Federal Censorship of American History” (from which my title quote is taken); and “Top 10 Most Challenged Books of 2024” of the American Library Association. Concerning EO 14168, it will be underlined that the so-called “gender ideology” is seen as a threat to the “entire American system” and that, accordingly, the attack has a systemic character. With regard to Russia, the question will be raised to what degree its Women’s and Gender Studies have received sufficient attention from abroad / from us. How far have they been documented and can in any way be retrieved? E.g., the work of the ca. 250 Gender Studies scholars registered for Russia and the CIS in the year 2000 (Khotkina 2000).

The next step will be to analyse why there is an increased urgency for Anglicist Women’s and Gender Studies. In conclusion, their specific tasks and chances deriving from their specific character will be sketched (e.g., distinct global and European orientation, crucial postcolonial components, focus on the leading world language ...).



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“We say that our nation is not a patriarchal or matriarchal nation, but a ‘family-ruled’ nation”: An Analysis of the Intersections of Family Policy and Antigender Discourse in Contemporary Türkiye

Işıl Baş de Oliveira (Istinye University, Türkiye)

My presentation aims to examine the long historical development of the struggle for gender equality in Türkiye, alongside the anti-gender mobilization that has risen since the 2000s and the political/geopolitical tensions it has created. Although the modernization processes from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic led to legal transformations that advanced women's rights, during the AKP era, a powerful counter-mobilization emerged against the strengthened collective mobilization of women's organizations, feminist and LGBTQ+ movements. A particularly significant strategy is the government's instrumentalizing of



family policy as a central mechanism of governance, deploying it both as a moral framework and as an institutional apparatus through which broader ideological projects are advanced. This study will trace how pro-family legislation, expansive social assistance programs, and discursive campaigns around “family protection” have become intertwined with explicit antigender narratives targeting feminist, LGBTQ+, and gender-equality initiatives creating a “geopolitical fault line” that determines Türkiye’s relationship with international norms.

Judith Butler and Gender Studies in Germany: Controversies, Consolidations and Continued Relevance

Eveline Kilian (Humboldt University of Berlin, Germany)

To assess the resilience and agency of feminist and queer scholarship in Germany under current pressures, especially in the humanities, I would suggest adopting a historical perspective, not least because its development over the past four decades provides a rich tapestry of successful strategies and failed interventions that inform the current situation and can point to astute present-day forms of resistance and action.

I mainly base my reflections on two interrelated case studies. Firstly, and most importantly, I focus on the impact of Judith Butler’s theories on gender studies in German academia, since she can be seen as the most influential force of change that shaped internal struggles and divisions, notably around deconstruction and the challenge of queer theory to dominant feminist positions. Moreover, Butler’s understanding of gender as flexible and produced by cultural discourses provided the conceptual tools for the reception of intersectionality and trans* studies, fields that are also increasingly visible in English Studies. And their later work on recognition and precarious life offered a blueprint for productively using ‘gender knowledge’ to reflect on further political questions, e.g. the current, renewed interest in class and precarity.

My second, complementary example is the journal *Feministische Studien* (1982 and ongoing), which documents the various controversial debates over time. Its interdisciplinary set-up (and transnational perspective) is useful to reflect on the role of different disciplines (notably the social sciences and the humanities) in the production and dissemination of gender knowledge and, further, on the structure of academic institutions, particularly the relationship between separate centres for inter- or transdisciplinary gender studies and the place of gender and queer studies in individual disciplines.



Despite all apparent achievements, this investigation will shed a sobering light on the relative timidity of the humanities, not least English Studies, in defending and actively promoting the institutionalisation of gender studies and its tenets, while the theoretical and epistemological gains emanating from gender and queer studies testify to their relevance for understanding and teaching democratic principles and the importance of social justice.

Session #2

3 September, 9:30–11:30

Probing the Intersections: Neo-Victorian Feminist Solidarity and the Contemporary European Academic Landscape

Georgia Ntola (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece)

This presentation examines the ways in which neo-Victorian fiction's portrayals of feminist solidarity across social class and ethnic divides can help us think through women's solidaristic commitments and actions in a contemporary European climate increasingly marked by anti-gender rhetoric and policies. The paper traces a continuity between nineteenth-century gender-related anxieties concerning gender essentialism and women's access to knowledge and bodily autonomy, and their contemporary iterations in political and cultural spaces. In both cases, such discourses aim to isolate and fragment female and feminist collectives by restricting access to knowledge about women's diverse positionalities and lived experiences.

Affirming the importance of striving towards this knowledge amid an environment of gender-related hostility, the paper proposes that representations of feminist solidarity in neo-Victorian fiction may help us conceptualise the circulation of feminist knowledge, and strengthen solidaristic bonds across contemporary European academia. In the narratives examined, the heroines transgress normative inscriptions of gender and engage in defamiliarising acts of 'world'-travelling, where difference is empirically encountered and respected (Lugones 2003). In the texts, such ventures enable explorations of the historical conditions that shaped women's differential vulnerabilities and resistances, and their preferred mode of assistance. These encounters with the past ultimately illuminate the intersectionality of their struggles, which, as Angela Davis argues, combines an awareness of the particularities of one's experiences and the inclination to find common ground in the active resistance against diverse



oppressions (Davis 2016). What is highlighted, then, is the value of ‘world’-travelling as a critical practice in the production and transmission of feminist knowledge and the resistance to oppression. The presentation will emphasise the necessity of engaging with each other’s histories across national borders and culture-specific challenges in a feminist, solidaristic spirit, showcasing that feminist solidarity constitutes an epistemological practice grounded in the recognition of historically and structurally intersecting struggles across borders.

Gendered Narratives of Anxiety: Fictional Engagement, Therapeutic Potential, and Inclusive Futures in European Higher Education

Carmen Pérez Riu (University of Oviedo, Spain)

Rocío Riestra Camacho (University of Oviedo, Spain)

This paper presents the research project Narrative Engagement for Social Therapies (NEST), developed by members of the TransLIT group at the University of Oviedo (Spain), which investigates the potential of popular Anglophone narratives—both prose fiction and film—to help university students manage social anxiety. Drawing from Cognitive Narratology, Media Reception Studies, and Bibliotherapy, NEST explores how engaging with narrative fiction can foster emotional insight and resilience among young adults. Beyond its interdisciplinary innovation, the project is anchored in a Gender Studies perspective, reflecting TransLIT’s long-standing expertise in feminist scholarship.

NEST critically examines how gendered assumptions shape both the representation and experience of social anxiety. Research shows that women are more frequently diagnosed with social anxiety—often reflecting cultural associations of femininity with vulnerability—while men tend to underreport symptoms due to expectations of stoicism (Asher & Aderka, 2018). Likewise, LGBTQ individuals experience notable rates of social anxiety, yet remain underrepresented in both academic research and therapeutic discourse (Hajek et al., 2023; Gnan et al., 2019). By incorporating gender as a key analytical variable in both survey and experimental components, NEST aims to uncover how these dynamics influence readers’ emotional engagement and therapeutic response to fiction.

In a context where gender-focused research faces mounting backlash and institutional precariousness, NEST exemplifies how methodologies anchored in gender studies can sustain socially transformative inquiry. Our contribution reflects on the project’s implications for inclusive pedagogy and mental health awareness in European academia, advocating for narrative-based, gender-sensitive approaches to wellbeing.



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“Bit down real hard because I’m about to hurtcha negress”: Trauma, Racialised Intimacy, and Feminist Disability Pedagogy in Teaching *Slave Play* (2019) by Jeremy O. Harris

Maria Sofia Pimentel Biscaia (University of Aveiro, Portugal)

This presentation examines the pedagogical, ethical, and affective challenges of teaching *Slave Play* by Jeremy O. Harris within Literature in English classrooms at university level, focusing on the play’s staging of interracial sexual dynamics, historical reenactment, and racial trauma. Rather than approaching shock as mere spectacle, the presentation argues that *Slave Play* mobilises discomfort as a pedagogical force that exposes the persistence of slavery’s afterlives in contemporary desires, therapeutic cultures, and liberal interracial relationships.

Drawing on Black feminist theory and feminist disability pedagogy, I frame trauma not solely as psychic wound but as a socially mediated, unevenly distributed condition that structures classroom space. The play’s therapeutic setting—its “Antebellum Sexual Performance Therapy”—foregrounds disability-inflected discourses of cure, pathology, and healing, inviting critical reflection on how racial trauma is medicalised, commodified, or disavowed. I will further argue that Harris exposes how contemporary narratives of racialised womanhood continue to medicalise, objectify, and discipline Black female subjectivity. In teaching the play, students confront the friction between empathy and voyeurism, identification and refusal, consent and coercion. These tensions raise urgent questions about who is positioned as vulnerable, who is rendered resilient, and how access and safety are negotiated when racialised and sexualised violence is performed, read, and discussed.

I argue that teaching *Slave Play* through a feminist disability lens enables a reckoning with the embodied legacies of slavery while modelling pedagogical practices that hold trauma, pleasure, and critique in productive, if uneasy, relation.



Gendered Precarity and Spatial Transgression in Leena Yadav's *Parched*

Anuradha Acharjee (University of Vigo, Spain)

This paper investigates Leena Yadav's *Parched* (2015) to address questions central to Gender and Women's Studies—precarity, representation, and the negotiation of gendered vulnerability—within contemporary European academia. Against the backdrop of growing political and institutional pressures on gender-focussed scholarship, the paper reflects on how feminist film analysis continues to operate as a rigorous and legitimate mode of inquiry in the humanities.

Focussing on the intertwined lives of Rani, Lajjo, and Bijli, *Parched* foregrounds how patriarchal kinship structures, reproductive control, marriage, and economic dependency function as everyday mechanisms through which women's vulnerability is normalised. Rather than presenting oppression as culturally exceptional, the film renders gendered precarity as an ordinary condition sustained through social, spatial, and affective arrangements.

Situated within postcolonial feminist theory and feminist film studies, the analysis draws on Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's (1988) interrogation of subaltern representation to examine how agency in the film remains partial, mediated, and unevenly intelligible. The film resists liberal resolutions centred on visibility or voice, foregrounding instead the limits of speech under patriarchal surveillance. Judith Butler's (1993) work on embodiment and normativity provides a framework for understanding how gender is reiterated through constraint while also accounting for moments of destabilisation.

Spatial organisation constitutes a central analytical category. Engaging Doreen Massey's (1994) conception of space as relational and power-laden, the paper analyses domestic interiors, village geographies, and transitional spaces as sites where gendered identities are produced and regulated. Sara Ahmed's (2004) theorisation of affect further enables an examination of how emotions such as fear, shame, and attachment coexist within these spaces.

By situating *Parched* within Gender and Women's Studies in English as practiced in European academia, this paper demonstrates the scholarly importance of engaging with non-Western feminist texts to broaden theoretical perspectives and advance inclusive approaches to gender-focused research.



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S57.- Pictorial Art and Detective Fiction

Pictures, photographs, paintings, drawings, and many more instances of pictorial art are a staple of literary crime fiction. So are the people who make them, be they famous artists within the story world, detectives reproducing the layout of a crime scene or criminals leaving clues such as maps or pictograms behind. Pictorial art reappears as paratext, such as cover illustrations, or in marketing campaigns. Seeing, in much of crime fiction, is believing – or is it? The genre is not above using textual *trompe-l'oeil*, and readers should be aware that the apparent straightforward "truth" of any pictorial clue in a novel or a film can be as misleading as any witness statement.

Besides the inclusion of pictorial art in the plot, crime fiction may foreground the world of art as an elusive, multilayered community – cast the suspects among pictorial artists and/or art dealers, as in Margery Allingham's *Death of a Ghost* (1934) or Dorothy L. Sayers's *Five Red Herrings* (1931), or highlight the stakes inherent to art forgery/art theft as in Michael Innes's *A Private View* (1953). Many of the "big names" of crime fiction, among them Agatha Christie (*After the Funeral*, 1953) or Ngaio Marsh (*Artists in Crime*, 1938) engage with the pictorial artist's status and art marketing as a modern social and economic practice.

This panel aims to examine the different functions of pictorial art in British and American literary and filmic detective fiction. We welcome papers that may focus on pictorial paratexts (including cover designs, illustrations, and book marketing), textual or visual representations of pictorial art and art-related crimes, or diegetic portrayals of the artist as a victim, witness, or criminal. In so doing we aim to show the interdisciplinarity of detective fiction and its capacity for an intermedial dialogue with pictorial art.



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Session #1

2 September, 15:00–17:00

Introduction: Pictorial Art and Crime Fiction

Camille Fort (University of Picardie Jules Verne, France)

Kerstin-Anja Münderlein (University of Bamberg, Germany)

In this panel introduction, we give an overview of the different functions of pictorial art in British and American literary and filmic detective fiction including examples of pictorial art in paratexts (including cover designs, illustrations, and book marketing), textual or visual representations of pictorial art and art-related crimes, or diegetic portrayals of the artist as a victim, witness, or criminal. In so doing, we situate the topic of the panel in a broader context and point out where in the context of detective fiction the papers in this panel might be located.

Selling the Queens of Crime: Pictorial Art and Cover Designs

Kerstin-Anja Münderlein (University of Bamberg, Germany)

Pictorial art has a fixed place in Golden Age detective fiction. Whether it is used visually as part of the plot (such as floor plans or scraps of evidence) or diegetically as part of the narrative (such as through the inclusion of the art work in the setting or the plot), (pictorial) art is an omnipresent factor across the oeuvres of different authors in the interwar period, before and after.

This paper looks at pictorial art as paratext in the works of the four so-called Queens of Crime, Agatha Christie, Dorothy L. Sayers,



Margery Allingham, and Ngaio Marsh. Specifically, it assesses the cover designs of some of their selected works from the first publication to today to show how covers are predominantly used to sell detective novels to audiences over time. While the visual representation of pictorial art within the narrative is carefully decided upon by the author, not all authors have influence on the cover designs and sales objectives – and thus publishers' decisions can take precedence over the authors' concerns.

This paper argues that cover designs have a crucial function in shaping readers' first impressions of detective novels for a variety of reasons, starting with featuring clues or red herrings and ending with conveying atmosphere through colour coding. The cover designs are also part of fashion and speak specifically to contemporary reader groups to make the novels appeal to readers over time. These diverse objectives can be in sync or at odds as this paper will show. This paper thus predominantly revolves around the juxtaposition of the narratological function of cover designs and the economic deliberations behind the decision to design "sellable" books. It argues that these designs are representative of the position of bestselling detective fiction that bridges the gap between sellable entertainment and narratological integrity.

Seeing Holmes in the Light of Sidney Paget

Irmtraud Huber (University of Konstanz, Germany)

Sidney Paget's illustrations for the original publications of the Sherlock Holmes stories in the *Strand* magazine contributed much to the popular imagination of the master detective. Paget gave iconographic shape to the figure of Holmes and used his images expertly to heighten the drama and atmosphere of Doyle's stories. The images themselves, however, are conditioned by and give evidence to, specific economies of visual perception and visibility. On the one hand, they often obscure as much as they reveal, and on the other hand, they testify to historically embedded modes of seeing, in particular in their depiction and use of sources of illumination like candles, lamps and gas light.

In my paper, I aim to pay close attention to the conditions of visibility as they emerge from both Doyle's text and Paget's illustrations, arguing that they attest not only to the genre's investment in epistemological equations of visibility with knowledge, but also to specific historically situated light conditions, in particular in their symbolic charging of differently connotated light sources. Whether Holmes sees, and whether we see Holmes through Paget, in the light of the hearth, the candle, the lamp, or gas light turns out to matter not only for an understanding of the stories, but beyond that for a realisation of the historical embeddedness of the conditions of seeing and knowing these stories play out.



Session #2

2 September, 17:30–19:30

Seeing through the Frame: *trompe l'œil* in Rian Johnson's *Knives Out* (2019) and *Glass Onion* (2022)

Camille Fort (University of Picardie Jules Verne, France)

Textual and visual *trompe-l'œil* have long been present in Golden Age detective fiction. This paper explores how Rian Johnson revisits and extends this tradition in the first two films of his Benoit Blanc series, *Knives Out* (2019) and *Glass Onion* (2022). A useful precedent appears in Agatha Christie's *After the Funeral* (1953), where an apparently amateur landscape painting conceals a valuable Old Master beneath it. Christie's narrative plays on the tension between surface and depth – a simulacrum hiding another image – yet *trompe-l'œil* ultimately remains subordinate to the plot, serving primarily as a motive and opportunity for the crime.

Johnson's films, first conceived as an homage to Christie's plots, nonetheless deploy *trompe-l'œil* more self-consciously. In *Knives Out*, the presence of Pere Borrell del Caso's *Escaping Criticism* (1874), depicting a boy climbing out of a painted frame, initially appears to comment on the apparent culprit's flight, but it also invites viewers to question the narrative framing itself. *Glass Onion* similarly foregrounds Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*, using its ambiguous authenticity to echo the film's central theme of duplication and imposture. By foregrounding these visual devices, Johnson encourages viewers to look beyond the cinematic frame and actively interrogate the narrative, transforming *trompe-l'œil* into a reflexive strategy that challenges what Gabriele Ferretti and Francesco Marchi term "inattentional blindness."

Art and Crime in Robertson Davies's *The Cornish Trilogy*

Laurence Petit (University of Montpellier Paul-Valéry, France)

Even though *What's Bred in the Bone*, the second novel in Canadian writer Robertson Davies's *The Cornish Trilogy* (*The Rebel Angels*, 1981 - *What's Bred in the Bone*, 1985 - *The Lyre of Orpheus*, 1988), is a prime example of what Liliane Louvel calls an "iconotext",



“merg[ing] text and image in a pluriform fusion” (15) at an extremely high degree of “pictorial saturation” (73), its status as “literary detective fiction” in the most common sense of the term may at first sight seem less obvious. The novel does open with the death of the protagonist, Frank Cornish, but there is no murder per se, no intervention of the police, and no proper investigation into the circumstances of that death, carried out by a professional detective. However, with its mysterious protagonist (a painter, art restorer, art collector, art dealer, and aesthete); its central crime (art forgery); the deaths of two art critics related to that crime; the investigation, or rather, investigations, carried out by both private investigators (the trustees of Frank Cornish’s Foundation for Promotion of the Arts) and professional spies (including himself as a secret agent in the guise of an apprenticed art copyist); the focus on secrecy, deceit, and dubious morality in the art realm; as well as an unexpected denouement involving two self-proclaimed patrons of the arts, the novel can be viewed as a mystery thriller — one both artistic and artful. Rather than a “whodunit”, *What’s Bred in the Bone*, by placing the emphasis on Frank Cornish’s unique life story, becomes instead a “whydidhe”, combining detective fiction, pathos, and tragedy, in which, ultimately, the central mystery is that of art and representation.

Art Worlds and Counter-Voices: Xóchitl González’s *Anita de Monte Laughs Last* and Calla Henkel’s *Scrap*

Antía Román-Sotelo (University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain)

In recent years, novels engaging with the state of art, the figure of the artist, and the art world have notably proliferated, as evidenced by publications such as Rachel Cusk’s *Parade*, Hari Kunzru’s *Blue Ruin*, and Emmalea Russo’s *Vivienne* (2024). This surge aligns with what has been identified as a global rise in ekphrastic fiction (Murphy 2024: 128-29), alongside renewed scholarly attention to contemporary ekphrasis through more interdisciplinary approaches –*Poetics Today* (2018); *Ekphrastic Encounters* (2019). Many of these fictional works foreground artists positioned at the margins who challenge entrenched structures within the art world while negotiating their own identities within that community, thus confirming Bergmann Loizeaux’s claim that the inherent dynamics of ekphrasis make it particularly suited to representing otherness and therefore “especially attractive [...] to racial, ethnic and gender differences” (2010: 10).

In 2024, two further novels –Xóchitl González’s *Anita de Monte Laughs Last* and Calla Henkel’s *Scrap*– specifically embed art within crime narratives. In González’s novel, the life of an art history student, shaped by her ethnicity, social class, and gender, is intertwined with that of a female artist who becomes her object of study and who died under suspicious circumstances. Inspired by the controversial death of Ana Mendieta in the 1980s, the novel re-examines cultural memory and gender inequality in the



art sphere. Henkel's *Scrap* likewise portrays a young female artist struggling to establish herself who becomes involved in a death within the wealthy family that commissioned her work, enabling a parallel examination of social power while blurring the boundaries between art and truth. Through comparative literary analysis, this paper argues for the dialogic nature of ekphrasis in the representation of identities and its capacity to generate counter-discourses that foster critical reflection on social and political transgressions.

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S58.- Infrastructures of Feeling: The European City in Contemporary Literature and Visual Media

Whether in London, Madrid or Berlin, urban life has been shaped by latent and manifest infrastructures. Visible and invisible borders constrain not only physical movement but also emotional expression and access to historical knowledge. Contemporary literature and visual media explore these infrastructural coordinates, showcasing how representations of urban space shed light on the limits and affordances of, for instance, traumatic memories, everyday anxieties, and nostalgic attachments that play out in the city. Focusing on the intersections of affect theory, spatial theory and infrastructure studies, this interdisciplinary seminar investigates how contemporary literature, film, photography, street art, digital media, and other cultural texts portray the ways in which urban space both enhances and delimits the formation of affective responses and cosmopolitan attitudes. The affective turn (Massumi, Ahmed, Thrift, Seigworth and Pedwell) and cultural trauma studies (Alexander, Craps) inform our reading of atmospheres and unresolved emotions in the urban environment, alongside foundational theories of space (Lefebvre, Massey, Soja) and new research on urban infrastructure (Boehmer and Davies, Pinnix et al.) to explore how power and boundaries are inscribed in place. Posthumanist perspectives (Haraway, Bennett) and affective ecocritical approaches (Bladow, Mossner) are



also key fields this seminar draws upon since these engage with the impact of non-human agencies (architecture, climate, animals, technology) on city life. We are also particularly interested in diaspora studies (Gilroy, Hall), postcolonial lenses (Mbembe) and decolonial conceptualisations of cosmopolitanism (Mignolo and Walsh, Santos), which shed light on the affective impact of colonial legacies and the emergence of new diasporic identities in European cityscapes. Key topics include, but are not limited to:

- migration and the European city
- cultural heritage and emotion
- public monuments as contested sites of affective memory
- the “right to the city”
- cultural trauma and affective atmospheres
- affirmative affect and the urban
- cosmopolitan emotions
- religion, spirituality and the urban environment
- urban violence and its representations
- translocal connectedness and emotional detachment
- gentrification and its limits
- affective ecocriticism and the urban
- digital technologies and city life

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Session #1: The Affective Infrastructures of Urban Life in Zadie Smith's Fiction

3 September, 15:00–17:00

Revisiting Urban Infrastructures of Feeling and Affective Atmospheres of Dysfunction in Zadie Smith's NW

María Jesús Perea Villena (Camilo José Cela University, Spain)



This proposal examines the representation of urban affective infrastructures in Zadie Smith's *NW* (2012), interrogating the extent to which 21st-century London is depicted as an environment that both conditions and constrains the emotional life of the young characters inhabiting this fictional cityscape. Accordingly, Smith explores contemporary urban life in London through the interconnected experiences of four central characters -Leah Hanwell, Natalie Blake, Felix Cooper, and Nathan Bogle- who present a narrative structured as a fragmented mosaic that mirrors the complexity and dissonance of the urban environment and its effects on the characters' lives. Drawing on the intersections of affect theory, infrastructure studies, and key notions on spatiality such as Lefebvre's *textures*, Massey's *relational space*, and Soja's *thirdspace*, this analysis investigates how latent and manifest urban infrastructures positively or negatively shape affective responses and relational modes of emotional expression in the reciprocal interactions between the multilayered urban environment and its inhabitants.

Establishing analogies with cognitive neuroscience, particularly the concepts of *neural plasticity* and *mirror neurons*, this approach conceptualises London as a city marked by affective dysfunction, in which urban infrastructures frequently fail to sustain meaningful exchanges of feeling and where urban space itself becomes inert, producing an *affective suspension*. By applying these neuroscientific principles to a relational and affective vision of 21st-century spatiality, London's urban environment is approached as an infrastructure of feeling that is not always consistently capable of reshaping or reformulating the characters' affective life, but likewise re-emerges as a space that expands through difficult experiences and transitions, compelling itself to assume more plastic forms -in consonance with the characters' own personal circumstances. Consequently, the paper conceives urban infrastructures as plastic systems and (inter)textures that reveal the (mal)functioning of urban affective atmospheres and the emotional, relational, and ethical consequences that arise from such dysfunctions. Given this existing stagnation, this analysis equally considers the potential for an affirmative affective reshaping and rewiring of the perception and ethos of these city spaces through the characters' everyday urban dynamics.

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Infrastructures of Slavery in Zadie Smith's London: "The Embassy of Cambodia"

Ágnes Györke (Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church, Hungary)

Although slavery has been formally abolished worldwide, tens of millions of people continue to live in conditions of extreme vulnerability that recall this dark historical era (Leach 237). Sex workers, agricultural labourers, domestic servants and victims of the organ trade are often deceived by human traffickers into leaving their homes in search of a better life, only to find themselves in situations from which there is no escape. Contemporary writers such as Marina Lewyczka (*Two Caravans*, 2007), Monica Ali (*In the Kitchen*, 2009), Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (*The Thing Around Your Neck*, 2009), and Sefi Atta (*News from Home*, 2010) are among the best-known authors to engage with this topic. Zadie Smith, who has primarily been canonised as an urban and cosmopolitan writer (Pirker 2016; Shaw 2017; Monk 2017), in "The Embassy of Cambodia" (2019), explores contemporary slavery in London through the story of an African domestic worker called Fatou. This paper examines Smith's novella through the lens of infrastructure studies, showing that the narrative exposes the invisibility of contemporary slavery and withholds emotional access to Fatou's experience. Drawing on Pinnix et al., I approach infrastructure as a multilayered phenomenon shaped by "public imaginaries, social practices, and historical transformations" (Pinnix et al. 12) and a "poetics" that extends beyond thematic representations and structures genre norms (Müller 189). My talk will address both dimensions: after examining how the narrative portrays the infrastructural coordinates that enable contemporary slavery in London, I will go on to analyse the narrative itself as a form of infrastructure, arguing that "The Embassy of Cambodia" stages the invisibility of contemporary slavery at the level of narrative technique as well.

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The Urban Archive and the Slow Redistribution of Doubt: Procedural Deferral in Zadie Smith's *The Fraud*

Ana Cristina Mendes (University of Lisbon, Portugal)

The very idea of a living archive contradicts this fantasy of completeness...

Stuart Hall, "Constituting an Archive" (2001).

Read through infrastructure studies (e.g., Star 1999; Larkin 2013; Davies 2023; Pinnix et al. 2023) and affect theory (e.g., Ahmed 2014; Seigworth and Pedwell 2023), this paper reads the archive in Zadie Smith's *The Fraud* (2023) as a living, affective infrastructure sustained by a regime of managed audibility. Taking Stuart Hall's insistence on the archive's incompleteness as a point of departure, I argue that Smith's novel reanimates Victorian London's legal and print archives as infrastructures that regulate the conditions under which truth can be recognised and authorised. The novel foregrounds this from the outset through the collapse of William Ainsworth's library under the weight of "histories three volumes deep," rendering historiography itself as an unstable structure overloaded by the authority it claims to bear. Focusing on the actual Tichborne trial and the circulation of testimonies, court transcripts, and newspaper reports, this paper argues that *The Fraud* exposes a mode of archival power that operates less through exclusion than through procedural deferral: a slow postponement of resolution (over two decades) that retains the promise of justice while redistributing doubt onto those required to establish their credibility. Before unfolding in the courtroom, where



journalism and law emerge as mutually reinforcing truth-making institutions, the trial first enters domestic space through newspapers such as the *Morning Post*: “Downstairs, the *Morning Post* lay discarded by an uneaten breakfast. [...] The Claimant had been found not to speak a word of French, although the real Roger Tichborne grew up speaking it” (Smith 2023, 7). As the paper demonstrates, this logic becomes visible in Smith’s verbatim incorporation of the *London Daily News* report on Andrew Bogle’s testimony (a highly anticipated testimony), where Bogle’s racialised description precedes and conditions the reception of his evidence.

Infrastructures of No-Where: Mapping Postcolonial London in Zadie Smith’s *NW* (2012)

Stanzin Dolma (Indian Institute of Technology, India)

Following Elleke Boehmer and Dominic Davies’ work on “planned violence” in cities, the study explores the postcolonial novel as an active and instrumental tool in understanding postcolonial city spaces and articulating the politics and poetics of urban infrastructure. Boehmer and Davies note “structural or indirect violence is most explicitly expressed in situations where resources are unevenly distributed, a condition that manifests in the unevenly developed infrastructure of postcolonial cities” (*Literature, Planning and Infrastructure*, 398). Hence, infrastructures that construct urban spaces are politically and culturally mediated.

Zadie Smith’s *NW* (2012) traverses and stays devotedly tethered to North-West London throughout its narrative despite attempts by its characters to move beyond its limitations. The text offers narratives embedded within one of London’s most diverse subaltern spaces, its significance explicated by the book’s title “NW” – the postal code of the area. In doing so, Smith reconfigures the post-imperial metropolis and its infrastructural politics through the experiences of subjects excluded from representational power. Smith’s book explores the ramifications of the subversion of distinctions between “colonial metropolis and colonised periphery” (Dawson, 4) in the wake of postcolonial developments and neoliberal processes as the metropolis is disrupted by alternate modes of spatial and literary imaginings. The study suggests that violence–infrastructural, internal and subjective– is embedded into postcolonial realities of the city and is further accelerated by the physical manifestations of it. Furthermore, the novel’s mediation of urbanity vis-à-vis violence posits London’s postcolonial urban space as a precarious and carceral site of everyday exchanges. By interrogating London – a cosmopolitan and global financial centre – the study corresponds to current postcolonial and urban



negotiations of infrastructure, identity and migration in a neoliberal milieu. The postcolonial novel thus configures an active role in scrutinising the spatial and material factors that sustain skewed orientations of power in the postcolonial metropolis.

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Session #2: Infrastructures of Migration and Climate Change in Contemporary Literature and Film

3 September, 17:30–19:30

Infrastructures of Loss and Redemption: Patterns, Politics, and Plausibility in Urban Climate Migration Imaginaries

Eckart Voigts (Technical University of Braunschweig, Germany)

For three decades, it has been clear that migration is the “single greatest impact of climate change” (IMO, n. date). It follows that climate-induced migration has been the subject of growing attention in global climate governance in the 21st century. The debate frequently centers on apocalyptic scenarios that depict massive climate refugee flows, portraying climate migrants invariably as either victims or threats. Such dystopian narratives portray cities as both places of refuge and exclusion, hardship, and suffering. Researchers such as Bryan Yazell (2020) warn that stereotypical visualizations of desperate migrants might feed into xenophobic narratives. Droughts and deluges affecting disenfranchised and displaced refugees might provoke criticism now regularly voiced against ‘dystophilia’ by eminent critical voices such as the late Fredric Jameson, Amitav Ghosh, Ursula Heise, or Richard Powers.



The paper will examine the eco-dystopian case of Copenhagen in “*Families Like Ours*” (Familiær som vores, Vinterberg, 2024). It will situate the series in other global climate mobility narratives, such as *The Water Knife* (Bacigalupi), *New York 2140* (Robinson), *The Healer* (Tuomainen), or *The Wall* (Lanchester), asking how its configurations vary and reiterate patterns (focusing on affluent Western refugees, for starters). Drawing on interdisciplinary approaches, we will examine the plausibility of these scenarios and explore the political positions that emerge. In doing so, the paper will contextualize the role of both material and affective infrastructures in literature, following the lead of the humanities scholars in Pinnix et al. (2023). In these narratives, “infrastructures of loss and redemption” emerge – as Lieven Ameel argued at our “Lifelines” conference on “re-imagined” infrastructures in 2025. Infrastructures of loss are often cast as future city ruins and narratives of dispersal and dislocation, but they also suggest possible redemption, reconnection, and cohesion in a new kind of kinship, creating instead of “planned violence” (Boehmer & Davies 2018) “infrastructural love” (Frichot et al. 2022).

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Speculative London and Imperial Legacies: Mapping the Boundaries of Power and Belonging in Courttia Newland’s *A River Called Time* (2021)

Amirah Muhammad (University of York, United Kingdom)

Courtia Newland’s speculative fiction novel, *A River Called Time* (2021), creates multiple parallel universe versions of London called Dinium. In all universes, Dinium is a byproduct of an uncolonised utopian world, where slavery and the European colonisation of Africa did not happen. The main character, Markriss, moves through time and astral planes, visiting these parallel Diniums and



supporting freedom fighters as they challenge the two-tiered class system that keeps the poor out of the 'Ark', a supposedly elite safe space in the city's centre.

By investigating the physical and cultural boundaries of power and belonging that shape both London and Dinium, I find that Newland's speculative London shows that its real-world counterpart cannot escape its imperial legacies. I situate my discussion in the context of London's changed demographic makeup following the decolonisation of the British Empire and Commonwealth migration to the city in the 1960s, tracing how these responses to imperial decline had lasting effects on the construction of London up to the twenty-first century.

I analyse Dinium's cartography through its paratextual map, putting it in conversation with the creation of London's current geographical boundaries which were decided through the London Government Act (1963) and came into effect in 1965. Alongside this, I find that Newland invokes a Londonized version of Black British identity through his use of Multicultural London English (MLE). The novel's map and sociolinguistics show that any speculative imagining of London must reckon with the fact that racialised Otherness is integral to establishing the boundaries of power and belonging.

Who is the Subject of Affect? The Urban Ecology of London in *Happiness*

Andrea Rodrigues (Christ University, India)

The urban ecology in Aminatta Forna's novel *Happiness* emerges as a system of human routines, infrastructures, parks, rivers and non-human life, in which natural elements produce affective intensity with the agency of the curious dweller. In the story, Arms Jean, an American wildlife biologist studying urban foxes in London, shows through her active pursuit of the non-human animal in the city, how affect develops from the point of first contact to continuous variations through scattered interactions. Similar to the white rabbit, a non-human animal who breaks the circuit of Alice's day, creating an archetype of affective interruption, this paper traces the interruption and activity of the fox, to determine who is the subject. To the Londoners, the fox appears as a speck of nature in the urban scene, requiring no interaction and creating no curiosity; the dwellers can't recall the names of trees or birds and some assume the fox to be a dog, which contrasts the active agency of Jean who tends to rooftop gardens to lure the fox. The nature-dweller relationship is cultivated through actions bearing affect. The paper raises larger concerns with city



dwellers not reacting to nature and also discusses the capability present in the ones who do. It brings in Deleuze and Spinoza's conceptualisations of affect as a body's capacity to affect and be affected in the wider context of urban ecology, and argues that affect emerges relationally and depends upon the subject's openness to interruption, variation and curiosity; Jean's attentiveness to the fox is a refusal of habitual urban perception. The paper comments on the potentialities of such relationships in the wider context of London's ecology.

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Affective Movements between the Suburbs and the City Center in Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia*

Çiğdem Buğdaycı (Boğaziçi University, Türkiye)

This paper analyzes Hanif Kureishi's 1990 novel *The Buddha of Suburbia*, set in 1970s London. Contextualizing the novel at the intersection of affect theory and spatial theory, I argue that Kureishi portrays urban space not merely as a setting for postcolonial identity but as an active, cosmopolitan force that shapes its inhabitants' emotional life. The affective intensity of the suburban and racialized neighborhoods emerges from a mixture of boredom, desire, anger, and shame, offering no optimistic future for the young protagonist Karim, a half-Indian Brit. In contrast, the urban center of London, with its vibrant theaters and nightlife, pulses with energetic life, while simultaneously becoming a site of pretension and inauthenticity.

Drawing on Sara Ahmed's analysis of affective economies and sticky emotions, Lauren Berlant's concept of cruel optimism, Michel de Certeau's theories of spatial practice, and Henri Lefebvre's work on the right to the city, the paper traces how Karim's wanderings between south London and the city center produce a shift in the affective experience of space. The difference between London's periphery and center shows the contradictions of post-imperial cosmopolitanism. While the city center promises hope and happiness, its racial boundaries continually reproduce exclusion and trauma for the children of immigrants. Although born into this cosmopolitan environment, these second-generation Britons find their affective realities shaped by their parents' countries of origin. Forced to adapt to socially prescribed and racialized affective scripts, their experience of the city increasingly takes the form of performance. Thus, I trace the affective charge of London in Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* through its neighborhoods, entertainment venues, and transport systems. I argue that Kureishi's novel prefigures current debates on decolonial cosmopolitanism and shows how claims to the city are simultaneously affective and political.

Session #3: Photographic and Filmic Infrastructures of Western and Eastern European Cities

4 September, 9:30–11:30

Articulations of Fracturing and Connectedness: Photographs of Urban European Places by Marvin Bonheur, Pauline Vanden Neste and Tom Lyon



Sheila Brannigan (University of Lisbon, Portugal)

Photographic series that articulate the sharing, connectedness, and fracturing of community identities in two urban European places are examined in this paper. The discussion closely analyses Pauline Vanden Neste and Tom Lyon's series *On est venus ici pour la vue/We came here for the view* (2020), portraying Aurore, a neighbourhood in Brussels, and Marvin Bonheur's *Thérapie/Therapy* (2018), part of *La Trilogie du Bonheur/ The Happiness Trilogy*, depicting places in Seine-Saint-Denis, the Paris suburban department where the photographer grew up.

The paper explores how both series represent shifting senses of place in these neighbourhoods by framing the meshing of residents and housing and the built surroundings. Theories of place, including the work of Tim Cresswell, are used to consider how both series represent place as a framework of reference in practices of power, struggle, and contestation. Vanden Neste and Lyon's photographs portray intertwined discourses around an underserved canal-side neighbourhood and its people in Brussels, where upheaval is linked to the pressures of urban development projects. Bonheur's work represents facets of lived experience for young people in the diverse communities of "forgotten" suburban neighbourhoods in Seine-Saint-Denis.

Drawing on Stuart Hall's notion of "positions of enunciation," the paper examines how the photographers are situated through their images, allowing for an exploration of the nuanced relationship between urban place, people, and the photographers' positionality in the two works. The discussion considers how these photographic series render both the fracturing of lived experience and sharing, memory, and connectedness, in contemporary urban European places.

Provincializing Futurity: Second-World Techno-Orientalism and the Urban Infrastructure of Feeling**Gábor Patkós (Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church, Hungary)**

In late-socialist and early post-socialist Budapest, Japanese anime arrived via VHS, informed by a negotiation of local space. How did "the future" appear from within a socialist housing block? Reading *God Bless Dancouga* (1987), *Akira* (1988), and *Serial Experiments Lain* (1998), I argue that the "Second World" city's material and symbolic infrastructure—concrete estates, state-managed leisure, and everyday routines—produced an affect (Ahmed 2013) of an urban sensorium that pre-coded these texts.



Rather than a generic “Coca-Cola modernity,” Budapest produced a perspective of “provincialized futurity,” in which foreign techno-visions were bent to local anxieties. Using a humanities-centered infrastructural framework, I treat the city as “symbolic infrastructure” that trains perception before reception (Pinnix 2023: 12-13). I follow anime as texts and paratexts informed by child-scaled sites and iconographies: school trips to the Népliget Planetarium; Sputnik and Yuri Gagarin imagery; hero-worship of cosmonaut Farkas Bertalan; and rusted “rocket playgrounds” on housing estates.

A genealogy of reception across the three titles maps a shift from rigid control to nervous collapse influenced by the infrastructures of Budapest as a second-world city. *Dancouga* mobilized late-socialist technological and defence concerns; its chain-of-command competence offered a fantasy of continuity. As the system fractured, *Akira* channeled the fear of systemic failure; watched amidst the crumbling industrial reality of the Eastern Bloc, the destruction of Neo-Tokyo felt less like a cyberpunk thrill than a regime-scale rupture, echoing fears that local infrastructure was rotting from within. In the transition, *Lain* mirrored a privatizing, fragmenting city: its “wired” world mirrored the new, invisible anxiety of being isolated yet permanently connected. “Japan as the future” thus operated as a relay amplifying dispositions installed by Budapest’s infrastructures of feeling. This Second-World techno-orientalism shows how urban space inscribes power onto imagination, making futurity legible through the prior affect of reception.

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Yerevan’s Visual and Linguistic Landscape

Nvard Yernjakyan (Yerevan State University, Armenia)
Sona Gulyan (Yerevan State University, Armenia)

The research examines how public spaces in Yerevan communicate (Hall) societal emotions through a multimodal approach (Kress and van Leeuwen). As regards Yerevan’s cityscape, it can be said to convey a sense (Adams) of a European city, being on the crossroads of East and West, and may be viewed as part of a “torn country” (Huntington) reflected in its lifestyle: its streets, monuments, dress, food, habitat and other aspects of culture and identity. We go along the image and narratives of Yerevan in the context of nostalgia, memory, sense of place and tourist gaze (Urry).



From a historical perspective, socioeconomic and political shifts influenced Yerevan in various ways. The city's visual and linguistic landscape is significantly shaped by Soviet architecture with its huge brutalist monuments and buildings. In the early 2000s, the city experienced urban gentrification, acquiring a lively atmosphere marked by fashionable shops, cafes, restaurants and exciting nightlife. Yet, the city's uniqueness and authenticity (Dann) are rooted in volcanic tuff stone, which gives the city a pink hue, harmonizing with the monuments dating back to the pre-Christian period.

Yerevan continued to evolve in 2020 and afterwards, the image of the city was reshaped after the 44-Day War, which resulted in the creation of huge street art murals of the fallen soldiers and martyrs, their statues, as well as cross-stones dedicated to the victims of war. Later on, in 2022, the Russian-Ukrainian War triggered mass migration, and the expatriates opened new businesses, thus Russian signages began to spread in the city. Furthermore, the ethnic cleansing of Armenians in Artsakh/Nagorno Karabakh in 2023 and the loss of Artsakh led to the establishment of businesses named after toponyms from Artsakh that further transformed Yerevan's linguistic landscape (Gorter).

The study showcases how verbal and visual texts function in public spaces, highlighting the interactions between society, culture, and linguistic diversity, and how these dynamics reflect Yerevan's expanding international connections.

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S59.- Heroes on the Edge: Beyond the Limits of Nature and Culture

Positioned as we will be on the thresholds in Santiago de Compostela, as the explicit of a journey and the incipit of an adventure, we invite cross-temporal and cross-genre reflections on figures who have crossed and transcended boundaries – be they scientific, cultural, normative, biological, or a sum of these – moving, with varying fortunes, beyond thresholds and beyond ambitious goals. What connects Dr Faustus and Dr Jekyll, Marvel heroes and Carlylian hero worship, vampires and scientists, Angela Carter's *The Tiger's Bride* and Alisdair Gray's *Bella Baxter*, the wicked Elphaba Thropp and the regal Lucy Pevensie?

This seminar invites scholars to discover the bewildering variety of languages and forms of heroism in their environments. Negative heroes, heroic underdogs, vanquished and victorious heroes, heroic mutants, saints and fiends, brave little girls and daredevil overreachers, all these figures dare look beyond: be it the heavens or hell, they do not stop on the edge and reach beyond the boundaries of nature and culture. The seminar welcomes reflections on narratives and characters that cross and challenge technology, word, and biology - in classical terms, *téchne*, *lógos* and *zoé*. Finally, it turns its gaze to the prophetic Prometheus (*pro* + *mêtis*), in the many variations of this tragically heroic figure who expresses all his power precisely in understanding the future and in becoming what he wants to become, beyond what he is bound to be.

Due to the interdisciplinary approach we favour, we also welcome proposals dealing with the seminar topic from the perspective of Multimodal, Film and Media Studies, as well as proposals integrating knowledge and methods from different academic disciplines.

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Session #1

3 September, 9:30–11:30

The Writer as Hero in Robert Graves's Historical Prose: From the Emperor Claudius to Gnaeus Robertulus Gravesa**Adriana Marinelli (University of Naples Parthenope, Italy)**

While Robert Graves deconstructs classical heroes in his poetry— as can be seen in “Heroes in their Prime”, where Graves subverts idealised figures like Theseus, Jason, and Bellerophon revealing their cruel actions alongside their *gesta*— his historical prose actively redefines and negotiates heroism through his idiosyncratic viewpoint. This study reconstructs Graves's idea by examining two distinct “literary heroes” from his historical fiction: the Emperor Claudius (from *I, Claudius*) and Gnaeus Robertulus Gravesa, Graves's classical *alter ego* (from *Complete Short Stories*). Two primary arguments inform my analysis. First, both characters are often perceived and presented as intellectually formidable yet physically or socially unassuming. This allows for an exploration of heroism that goes beyond the traditional Greek ideal of physical and moral excellence, which dates to the heroic ideals already present in Homer. Second, their narratives feature writing as a tool for self-definition and ultimate vindication, which is central to Graves's concept of the writer as a hero. This results in a notion of heroism grounded not in a flawless morality or traditional epic feats, but in intellectual integrity, resilience through adversity, and often, in an unconventional form of moral triumph. This paper will illustrate how Graves skilfully employs classical motifs (e.g., physical beauty, prophecies and divine intervention, alongside intertextual allusions, direct references to classical historians) to challenge heroic conventions/stereotypes (such as “the warrior/poet”) as embodied by Homeric Greek Heroes. By doing so, Graves shapes his idea of heroism, arguing that it can also lie in individuals whom society regards as foolish or unconventional. More importantly, my analysis will shed light on personal concerns behind his representation of an Emperor and his humorous classical counterpart, thus revealing how classical antiquity serves as the essential *locus* in which Graves's identity as a writer and modern hero is construed, defined, and legitimised.

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The Poet's Slingstone: Heaney, Dante and The Po-Ethic Hero

Maristella Gatto (University of Bari Aldo Moro, Italy)

This paper examines Seamus Heaney's understanding of his poetic vocation as situated on the threshold between ethical responsibility and aesthetic autonomy. Drawing on the metaphor of the "slingstone" as an emblem of weak, marginal heroism, the paper reads Heaney's poetry alongside his translations and critical essays to trace his sustained effort to articulate a poetics grounded in self-scrutiny and symbolic action rather than direct political advocacy and engagement. Central to this process is Heaney's encounter with Dante, whose *Divine Comedy* provides him with a model for negotiating the limits and responsibilities of poetry in the face of history and politics. The paper argues that, by following Dante, Heaney develops throughout his career what he calls a "po-ethics": a view of poetry that consistently resists the figure of the poet as a public hero or political spokesman,



expressing instead a view that foregrounds the intrinsic ethical dimension of the poetic act itself. From his early engagements with Dante's *Inferno* in the context of the Northern Irish Troubles to his late homage to the final canto of *Paradiso* at the dawn of the new millennium, Heaney thus repeatedly affirms—alongside Dante—poetry's ultimate power to give resonance to what is otherwise unspeakable and ineffable, whether in suffering or in grace.

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Why Alice is not a Romantic Heroine: Brief Notes on Lewis Carroll's Construction of Childhood

Jéssica Iolanda Costa Bispo (NOVA University Lisbon, Portugal)

Lewis Carroll's Alice, the well-known heroine of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Alice through the Looking Glass* (1871), has for many years been subjected to close and careful analyses from various points of view and fields of knowledge. This curious character, who not only populates our contemporary imaginary, but was also extremely idolised and fetishised during the



Victorian Era, was countless times associated with a Romantic conception of the child, *i.e.*, an “idealized, nostalgic, sentimental figure (...) characterized by innocence, imagination, nature and primitivism, qualities associated with Romanticism that survive today in very few cultural figures, the child being one of the most enduring” (Rowland 9). However, as the remarkably important 1973 article “Alice and Wonderland: A Curious Child” by Nina Auerbach states, a close look at the well-known character of Alice “may reveal new complexities in the sentimentalized and attenuated Wordsworthianism many critics have assumed she represents” (32-33). Expanding on Auerbach’s thoughts, as well as other recent studies on Carroll’s novels, this paper argues that Alice actually subverts the Romantic idea of childhood, by presenting herself as a transgressive figure and by challenging Victorian gender norms. As she traverses the numerous whimsical spaces of Wonderland, Alice moves continually away from a state of innocence, primitivism and divinity, qualities often associated with a hero-character. Instead, her voracious and cannibalistic appetites are put forth, her dialogue seems, at times, to be aggressive and to purposefully cause feelings of unease and terror in other characters, and her disdain for defenseless creatures is notorious. The paper will draw on these and other examples so as to problematise and discuss the complex character of Alice as envisioned by Lewis Carroll.

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Session #2

3 September, 15:00–17:00

A Study on Transgression in Poe’s *King Pest*

Ioannis Kaprosioutis (University College Cork, Ireland)

In my paper I analyse Edgar Allan Poe’s short story “King Pest”. The story follows the exploits of two sailors in fourteenth-century London, on leave from their ship the *Free and Easy*, in a time where the city is ravaged by plague. Being drunk and unruly, they transgress the barricade dividing the healthy part of London from the pestilential. In the plagued district they come across a motley



group of diseased revellers having a banquet in an undertaker's basement, in which they lay waste, and finally flee with their loot. In my research, carnival's symbolic imagery is used as a cultural analytic which does not resolve upon carnival being intrinsically conservative or radical. Hence, it explores carnival's capability to shift between conservative and radical conceptions, creating different discourses by adopting and transmuting components from both sides. The ambivalent position sailors occupy with regard to the sea and the shore, in combination with the nature of the waterfront as a liminal topos, establishes them as archetypes of symbolic transgression. By following the theories of Mikhail Bakhtin, and by using carnival as a cultural analytic, I argue that carnival imagery in the story augments the transgressive attributes of the characters, leading to discourses concentrating on the inversion of power structures and hierarchies. Similarly, grotesque imagery is employed to blur the boundaries between bodies, in any aspect they might assume, whether actual, political, or literary. My paper will be focusing on carnival and grotesque imagery and the transgressive qualities of the characters of the short story in relation to the ambivalent nature of the geographical space they operate. The above shifting elements will be examined through a deconstructive approach by using the theories of Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida on the dissemination and *différance* of meaning, which finally generate sociopolitical and cultural discourses.

***Carmilla* by Sheridan Le Fanu and Her Fantastic (Re)incarnations**

Bruna Mancini (University of Calabria, Italy)

My presentation will focus on the character of Carmilla/Mircalla, the woman vampire who haunted and bewitched the Gothic novella of the same name written by the Irish author Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu in 1872. It first appeared in the literary magazine *The Dark Blue* (1871-1873) and soon after was published in the short story collection *In a Glass Darkly* (1872). In "The Lady Who Munched" (2014) David John Skal defined it as one of the most influential vampire stories of all time. The figure of Carmilla represents fear, horror and transgression in the context of the moralistic, preachy, prudish Victorian Age. Set in Styria, the story centers on affairs of love, eroticism, suspense, sexual identity, mystery and the supernatural. Indeed, Carmilla incarnated both the lesbian vampire trope and one of the most influential figures of female empowerment. I will also try to analyse her multiple reincarnations, always on the edge of love and violence, innocence and corruption, danger and fascination. It is known that the story influenced many writers, such as Bram Stoker, Henry James, Rachel Klein, and so on and so forth, but it was also adapted extensively in the different media landscapes. I will take into account the novel *Carmilla: The Wolves of Styria* (2012) by Sheridan



Le Fanu (sic!) and David Brian, the graphic novel *Carmilla. The First Vampire* (2023) by Amy Chu, illustrated by Soo Lee and Sal Cipriano, and the Canadian web series *Carmilla* (2014–2016) created by Jordan Hall, Steph Ouaknine and Jay Bennett, not to mention *Lust for a Vampire* (1971) a British Hammer Horror film directed by Jimmy Sangster, and *Et mourir de plaisir* (1960) directed by Roger Vadim.

Monstrosities in *Yaratılan (Created)*, a Turkish Adaptation of *Frankenstein*

Seda Arikan (Firat University Elazig, Türkiye)

This paper examines Çağan Irmak’s *Yaratılan (Created, 2023)* as a Turkish reimagining of Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, focusing on how monstrosity is socially and culturally produced rather than merely embodied. Drawing on Jeffrey Jerome Cohen’s *Monster Theory* and Judith Halberstam’s concept of the “technological body,” the study argues that Irmak’s adaptation reveals monstrosity as a relational construct—created through the exclusion of those who defy normative definitions of gender, class, knowledge, and faith. While the scientist Ziya and his creature represent the visible axis of transgression, *Yaratılan* extends the monstrous to other figures who are deemed “abnormal”: the marginalized poor, the devout yet morally conflicted believers, and the women who challenge patriarchal or spiritual hierarchies. These characters are not inherently monstrous; they are *monstrosized* through social mechanisms of fear, control, and moral judgment. Within this frame, monstrosity functions as what Cohen calls “the harbinger of category crisis,” exposing the instability of the very boundaries it is meant to police. By situating the series in the cultural threshold between Ottoman mysticism and modern scientific rationalism, the paper argues that *Yaratılan* transforms the Frankenstein myth into an allegory of Turkish modernity’s anxiety about creation, authority, and belonging. The monstrous body becomes a mirror for society’s own fractures—where difference itself is pathologized, and the quest for knowledge turns every deviation into a site of fear.

Session #3

3 September, 17:30–19:30



The Anti-Hero as a Promethean Figure of Emancipation in the Dark Age of Comics

Imane Ghebache (University of Montpellier Paul-Valéry, France)

The anti-heroes of the Dark Age of Comics (1980-present) stand as genuine heroes on the edge. Through their marginalization, these combustible figures wage rebellions that expose their emancipation through acts of transgression. A close study of some of these unconventional heroes from this period such as Dr. Manhattan (*Watchmen*), Marv (*Sin City*), and Sebastian/Tyler Durden (*Fight Club 2*) reveals them as heroic underdogs who transgress moral, social, and narrative limits. Similar to Prometheus, they rebel against the “gods” through their vigilantism and spread the fire of knowledge to the human civilization in a heroic act, only to be met with the same doomed fate. In doing so, they reveal the true nature of the human being, that is, creative, violent, and yearning. In this regard, this paper reads the Promethean impulse in these anti-heroes as an act of emancipation, a force that strips the self to its tragic core: the conflicted, yearning, and self-undoing human being. By reading these texts through an intermedial and transmedial lens, I aim to demonstrate how the comic form performs the Promethean pattern to these anti-heroes by making images and words sites of revolt and ruin. In *Fight Club 2*, authorial agency itself becomes a Promethean flame where creation and creator collapse in an act of artistic insurrection that ultimately consumes both maker and made; in *Watchmen*, Dr. Manhattan’s power, atomic energy, functions as stolen fire that becomes an enlightenment that alienates and dooms him to exile; and in *Sin City*, Marv’s bodily violence burns like purgative fire, converting moral clarity into martyrdom and sealing his ruin. Ultimately, these Promethean anti-heroes affirm that emancipation does not lie in escaping the human by seeking the posthuman, rather, it lies in confronting its tragic depths on the edge where heroism, defiance, and downfall converge.

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Who Lives, Who Dies, Who Tells Your Story: The Limits of the Heroic Figure in *Layers of Fear* (2016)

Andrea Orois Prado (University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain)

Cambridge Dictionary defines a hero as "a person who is admired for having done something very brave or having achieved something great". From Homer's Odysseus to Stan Lee's Captain America, the image of a traditional hero is clear. Nonetheless, the concept of what constitutes a hero has evolved, with new figures emerging to subvert the public's expectations. A good example is the Byronic hero, who does not possess the traditional "heroic virtue" as he is not only ambitious and self-sufficient, but also gloomy and dangerous (Marin, 2008).

Video games are no exception (Pérez and Fernández, 2024). Despite being dismissed as a serious medium (Szolín et al., 2023), unlike other media, video games are characterised by the player's decisions (Holl et al., 2020). This influence in the story provides a distinctive perspective: the protagonist is shaped not only by the game's creator but also by the player (Heron and Belford, 2014).



As Margery Hourihan (2005) explains: “Narrative point of view is the most powerful means by which the reader’s perceptions and sympathies are manipulated” (p.38).

Layers of Fear also challenges the concept of the hero. This horror game is heavily inspired by *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (Meyer et al. 2018), another novel that subverts the heroic figure. The game uses the first-person role to force the player into the main character position, a nameless artist simply referred to as The Painter. The Painter tells his own story, but the reality is hidden behind his words and actions (Pimentel and de Freitas Melo, 2018), and the player is free to interpret them. This paper examines the role of The Painter and the function he performs within his own narrative, exploring how perspective influences whether a character is constructed as a hero, a villain, both, or neither.

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Female Actors and Contemporary Feminism in Cinema. From Fanbases to Participatory Culture: On Behalf of a Proactive Educational System

Orquídea Cadilhe (University of Minho, Portugal)

This paper aims to address the contribution given by present-day actresses to popular culture with representations of feminist “empowering” characters due to their ethically and politically defying attitudes. Such actresses are, normally, engaged citizens which advocate causes related to women’s issues and minorities in general. Their transgressive work defies norms of dominant ideologies and promotes alliances across difference, providing a crucial contribution to changes in society. Since young people are particularly sapient and proactive, it is of the utmost importance to increase their awareness to the struggles women still face. That can be done by using the film industry as a vehicle towards critical literacy, allowing students and teachers to become reflexively aware of the possibilities of thinking, writing, and speaking in ways other than those dictated by regimes of truth. The “celebrity myth” and the “fandom” phenomenon are culturally significant at an international level, with fans frequently becoming producers of content. Taking these premises into account, we will focus on the work of Julianne Moore, as an example of above-mentioned performances that can be presented to students in courses such as Media Studies, Literature and Cinema, and Cultural Studies. Iconic characters like Maude, in *The Big Lebowski* who, according to Moore is based on the visual artist Caroleen Schneemann, Laura Brown, a housewife for whom domestic bliss is a depressing lie in *The Hours*, the feminist icon Gloria Steinem in *The Glorias*, and the adulterous Sarah Miles in *The End of the Affair* will be studied. Moore’s more recent film and television roles such as those in the Netflix television series *Sirens* and in *The Room Next Door* keep focusing on female characters that challenge traditional tropes and, therefore, will also be addressed.

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S60.- Beauty and Rituals in English Letters

In the opening chapter of *Marius the Epicurean* (1884), Walter Pater describes his young, aestheticist protagonist's involvement in religious ceremony. Marius, always attentive to the formal or aesthetic beauty in things, decides to leave the subsequent feast early, as 'a devout, regretful after-taste of what had been really beautiful in the ritual he had accomplished took him early away, that he might the better recall in reverie all the circumstances of the celebration of the day'. Pater often addresses the ritual in his writing as the outward form of belief, often without the actual belief itself. It is the beauty of the ritual in and of itself that draws his attention, leaving open the question of what animates it. This aesthetic conception of the ritual, then, has beauty at its centre, whether it be religious or secular.

But what is ritual? If we understand it as a formal performance, then does its beauty lie in patterning and order? Does beauty lie in the disturbances and variations of an established pattern? Does the beauty perhaps lie outside the form? These are some of the questions we wish to address in this seminar, considering the ways that formal patterns and performances of those symbolic patterns – such as, for example, pilgrimage in Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* or the divine address of the hymn in Edmund Spenser or Geoffrey Hill, or Alice Oswald's use of ancient Greek forms and patterns – have been related to questions of beauty.

We call for papers from across the cultural and historical breadth of ESSE's wide purview, from Old English poetry to contemporary film, from Australasia to the UK and Ireland. We are open to any conception of the relationship between ritual and beauty.

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Session #1

2 September, 15:00–17:00



“All the decoration had meaning in its beauty”: Stitching Words and Patterns in Nineteenth-Century Art Embroidery Manuals

Stefanie John (University of Potsdam, Germany)

Embroidery has longstanding historical connections with ritual: In 1898, Walter Crane, reflecting on medieval ecclesiastical garments, asserted that ‘the most splendid achievements of needlework were dedicated to religion, and had their place in its functions, the accessories of symbolic and sacramental ritual.’ However, associations of stitching, beauty, and ritual extend beyond institutionalised religion, as evidenced by the recent revival of traditional domestic needlework as a meditative practice and a means to achieve ‘mindfulness’ in secular individualist societies. An earlier revaluation of the craft occurred during the late nineteenth-century ‘art embroidery’ movement, which found beauty in the skilful combination of pattern, material and texture, and elevated the cultural status of women’s domestic handicrafts. The movement also inspired a wave of essays and manuals discussing embroidery and its methods. This paper will examine selected written descriptions of needlework to explore how late Victorian British art workers such as Mary Morris, Elizabeth Glaister and Marian Alford represented practices of repetition and variation that approximate the ritualistic. Which conceptions of beauty and value were ascribed to the application of thread to textile surfaces, and how did works such as Morris’ *Decorative Needlework* (1893), Glaister’s *Needlework* (1880) and Alford’s *Needlework as Art* (1886) exploit the connection between stitching and writing to convey these practices?

The Multisensorial Aestheticization of Religion in Walter Pater’s *Marius the Epicurean*

Lina Vekeman (Ghent University, Belgium)

This paper discusses the aestheticization of religion in Walter Pater’s *Marius the Epicurean* (1885), or the process by which religious ideas, symbols, rituals, and practices are understood or reimagined as aesthetic experiences rather than as systems of belief. This way, religious meaning is translated into categories such as beauty, harmony, style, and form. As will become clear, Pater shifts the attention from faith to *feeling* and describes Christianity rather as a source of atmosphere, symbolism, and beauty, while still



keeping both Marius's 'sensations' and 'ideas' in a delicate balance. In resonance with Pater's ideas on the arts striving towards a synthesis of form and content in *The Renaissance* (1873), Marius's engagement with religion seems to strive towards this same condition. In this sense, I want to specifically pay attention to the way religion and art intertwine in the way it *effects* the reader. Readers are invited not only to think about belief and ritual but to *hear* its music and *see* or visualize its splendour. Religion, like art, becomes an aesthetic object within the novel, that expands the narrative beyond plot and character into felt experience. In doing so, the text creates a multisensory depth, an illusion forming quality of imagined sensory experiences, that engages the reader's imagination more fully, weaving together sight, sound, and even touch or smell.

The Body Intact or in Pieces? Exhumation and sparagmos in Walter Pater's "Denys l'Auxerrois" (1886)

Lene Østermark-Johansen (University of Copenhagen, Denmark)

Towards the end of his imaginary portrait "Denys l'Auxerrois" (1886) Walter Pater juxtaposes two very different rituals: the exhumation of the Anglo-French Saint Edmund of Abingdon (Saint Edme) and a revival of the Dionysian ritual of the *sparagmos* (literally the 'tearing to pieces') of the body of the protagonist Denys. St Edmund is exhumed from under the Cathedral floor and placed under Catholic ritual in an embellished Saint's shrine in an attempt to remedy a sequence of bad crops in Burgundy. The semi-pagan Denys is torn to shreds by the local population at the very end of the narrative during a re-enactment of a local pageant chasing the allegorical figure of Winter away. With strong echoes of Euripides' *Bacchae*, where a bull is torn to shreds by Maenads on the stage, Denys ends his days dismembered, his flesh and clothes divided as bizarrely ornamental relics among the local population, with only his heart intact for burial in the Cathedral of Auxerre.

The performative aspects of both rituals in Pater's narrative are significant: they are carried out under royal and aristocratic attendance, yet in the case of both the Christian saint and the semi-pagan protagonist, mortal remains end up in enclosed spaces, hidden from view. Significantly, they both rest within the architectural framework of the Gothic Cathedral of Auxerre. My presentation inquires into the deeper meanings of Christian exhumations and dark Orphic rituals in Pater's text: what is the significance of disturbing the peace of the grave, of standing face to face with the shrivelled body of an English saint in exile? And why does Pater insert the brutal Orphic ritual of the sparagmos as the violent ending to a tale which began with the Ovidian myth of the Golden Age?



A New Ritual: Yeats, Blake, and the Creation of Symbols

James Dowthwaite (University of Mainz, Germany)

In *Ideas of Good and Evil* (1903), Yeats's collection of his *fin de siècle* thought, he addresses the importance that William Blake played in the development of Symbolism. Not only, claims Yeats, was Blake the originator of Symbolist writing – with his elevation of the symbol as the primary aspect of art – he also offers a general insight into the creative process of poetry more generally. Poets, for example, when they become weary of striving after a task, are sometimes taken up by a new mood. This Yeats describes as an inspiration, or a revelation, in which images are received by the mind, and 'here and there among the pictures born of sensation and memory is the murmuring of a new ritual, the glimmering of new talismans and symbols' (190). Blake, Yeats believes, best demonstrates the birth of this new ritual, which is writing.

There is much research on Yeats's poetry in relation to the rituals of spiritualism and hermeticism (see, for example, Mattar 2004, Pryor 2011, and Johannsen 2023), and his interest in folk traditions, spirituality, religions of different kinds, as well as the importance of dancing, all indicate a fascination with traditional rituals of one kind or another. But what Yeats identifies in Blake here is something else: it is a 'new ritual'; that which is to become a ritual in future but which is, in the mind of the poet, still formative and fermenting. In my talk I will outline how Yeats and Blake both suggest that the encounter with, and the reading of, new talismans and symbols becomes, in the reader's imagination, a new ritual. Poetry, seen this way, does not reflect rituals so much as form them.

Session #2

2 September, 17:30–19:30

Staging the Sacred: Rituals of Transcendence in Noh Theater and T. S. Eliot's *Sweeney Agonistes* (1927)

Andrea I. Ingelmo-Pérez (University of Salamanca, Spain)



The present paper presents a comparative study of ritual in Japanese Noh theater and T. S. Eliot's *Sweeney Agonistes* (1927). It pursues a transcultural cross-temporal analysis of the spiritual elements present in both theatrical forms. I contend that *Sweeney Agonistes* and Noh interweave dramatic action, chant and drums into an emotionally heightened image to bring about a transformation in both protagonist and spectator.

This proposal departs from cardinal publications on the religions and aesthetics behind Noh: Zeami Motokiyo's *Fushikaden* (1402), Ernest Fenollosa and Ezra Pound's "*Noh*", or *Accomplishment: A Study of the Classical Stage of Japan* (1917) and Royall Tyler's *Japanese Nō dramas* (1992). Noh conjoins poetry, music and movement in an unrealistic space that blurs the boundaries between the mundane and the transcendent. The plays enact a simultaneity between present and past, since ancient Japanese legends are transfigured to evoke *yūgen* – a "mysterious depth, beyond human grasp" (Heisig 2011, 1298) – for a contemporary audience. The crux of the plot revolves around an image which symbolizes the protagonist's quest for atonement. Once his supernatural identity is revealed, all passions are transmuted through a ritualistic dance into spiritual liberation.

T. S. Eliot attended the premiere of William Butler Yeats' Noh-influenced play *At the Hawk's Well* in 1916. He also rejected mimetic realism, since he believed the theater expressed an "untruth, a thorough-going convention, a ritual" (2015, 435). The representation of rituals of death and rebirth is paramount to *Sweeney Agonistes*, whose existentially-haunted protagonist – Sweeney – recounts his journey of inner regeneration in a barren world. In both Noh and Eliot's theater, all elements on the stage converge into the unity of emotion: the "Unity of the Image" (Pound 1957, 27). Eliotian verse drama and the Imagistic quality of Noh aim to revitalize European culture as an antidote to dramatical realism.

Malcolm Lowry's *Eridanus*

James Mellor (Freie Universität Berlin, Germany)

Malcolm Lowry's "The Forest Path to the Spring" closes the circle of the collection *Hear Us O Lord from Heaven Thy Dwelling Place* with a meditation on the cyclic nature of life and art. Circular rituals appear throughout the collection and it culminates with a description of a jazz musician's walk along a costal path. The routine of this walk becomes part of the musician's practice. The



walk animates the sense of beauty derived from the succession of days that come to enact the protean character of creative life. An aesthetic theory can be discerned in his formal framing of the walk. Also, a sense of ritual emerges in the interplay between the musician's musing on art and descriptions of the natural world. What animates his ideas on beauty and art stem from a lived experience that gives his life a form. But what is it that is collected on the path? Is it inspiration, substance, or purposeful will that animates the content sought on the walk? "The Forest Path to the Spring" is a study on the daily practice of drawing water from a spring that comes to act as a template for composing music. The littoral scene below the path becomes the Arcadian contents for reflecting on the rhythmic nature of the tides, the stars, and ultimately, creative life. The musician uses the ritual of his life in Eridanus as a sort of rite from which to compose a new work and notes on the protean nature of the path. 'One evening on the way back from the spring for some reason I suddenly thought of a break by Bix [Beiderbecke]'.¹ The path and the song offers a moments inspiration and seemed to 'express a moment of the most pure spontaneous happiness'. The musician wishes to 'translate this kind of happiness into one's life', prolonging the feelings evoked in the song seemed to involve 'irreconcilable impulses' that related to the spring itself. For Lowry this mutable aspect of beauty is key to the difficulties of creative life. This work will explore the source of Lowry's use of ritualised beauty as a source for overcoming formal aesthetic problems.



S61.- Violence in Early Modern English Drama: From Stage to Screen

From the brutality of *Titus Andronicus* to the psychological torment of *The Duchess of Malfi*, early modern English drama is saturated with violence—performed or described, symbolic or spectacular. This seminar will explore how violence has functioned as a dramatic, cultural, and ideological force in early modern English theatre, and how its representations have evolved across time, including contemporary screen adaptations and TV series that borrow early modern tropes of violence, such as *House of Cards* or *Game of Thrones*.

What did violence mean in the context of the Renaissance stage? How did playwrights like Shakespeare, Marlowe, Kyd, and Webster shape public perceptions of cruelty, punishment, war, and gendered aggression? How have directors and screenwriters adapted or reimagined early modern violence for film, television, and digital media—from stylized restraint to graphic realism, drawing from early modern drama to create new contemporary classics? How do these representations inform our understanding of trauma and selfhood?



We welcome proposals that investigate early modern dramaturgies of violence alongside their legacies and reconfigurations in popular screen culture. Topics may include (but are not limited to): stagecraft and special effects of violence in the early modern period; theatrical conventions of revenge, torture, and martyrdom; gendered and racialized violence in performance and adaptation; censorship, spectatorship, and the ethics of violent representation; film adaptations and their reinterpretation of violent scenes; digital and immersive re-stagings of early modern violence; the politics of bodily harm, trauma, and spectacle; and edagogical uses and abuses of violence in early modern drama.

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Session #1

2 September, 15:00–17:00

When Women Enter the Stage: Transforming Violence in English Renaissance and Restoration Drama

Amanda Trainham (Binghamton University, United States)

Scholarship on women in English Renaissance theatre often emphasizes tropes of violence, aggression, sexual coercion, and limited agency. In the male-dominated theatrical world—both onstage and off—female characters were frequently depicted as objects to be “handled” or controlled. While much attention has been paid to the subversive and often dangerous depictions of violence enacted upon women during the Renaissance, there has been little systematic examination of how these mechanisms of violence shifted with the advent of women on the stage during the Restoration.

This paper argues that during the Renaissance, the portrayal of physical violence against women was largely mediated through the use of boy actors, who performed the roles of female victims. Because playwrights did not write roles for adult women to



experience violence physically, such acts were socially and theatrically permissible, occurring in a performative space where bodily risk was assigned to young men rather than women. With the Restoration, the entrance of women actors—and the rise of female playwrights—transformed the landscape of gendered violence onstage. Physical violence toward women decreased significantly, while sexualized and implied violence emerged as a performative and titillating tool, and offstage, male characters often bore the brunt of physical aggression.

Through close readings of representative plays from both periods, this paper examines the dual effect of women's emergence on the English stage: a decrease in sanctioned physical violence against female characters, coupled with the rise of sexualized enticement and the redirection of physical aggression toward male actors. By comparing Renaissance and Restoration practices, this study illuminates the complex interplay between theatrical gender, stagecraft, and societal notions of vulnerability and agency.

Masks, Desire, and Moral Spectacle: Violence in Aphra Behn's *The Rover*

Maria Pace Aquilina (Vrije University of Brussels, Belgium)

From masked encounters on the Restoration stage to psychological threat in modern screen culture, the spectacle of violence has long captivated audiences. This paper focuses on the staging of violence in Aphra Behn's *The Rover* (1677), examining how the play constructs sexualised threat, social danger, and moral ambiguity through theatrical artifice rather than explicit physical brutality. Emerging in the context of the English Restoration (1660–1700), Behn's work reflects a theatrical culture that relied on visual spectacle, suggestive staging, and the interplay between disguise and exposure.

In *The Rover*, violence is primarily symbolic and psychological, taking the form of attempted assaults, coercion, abduction, and public humiliation. Behn stages these moments through the use of masks, props, and choreographed blocking, allowing danger to be implied rather than graphically depicted. The carnivalesque setting intensifies this ambiguity, as disguises enable both freedom and transgression, blurring distinctions between consent and coercion. Through these strategies, the play foregrounds anxieties surrounding gender, power, and social control in post-civil war England, inviting audiences to engage with violence as a moral and emotional spectacle.



The paper then traces the afterlife of Behn's techniques in contemporary screen culture, particularly in genres such as historical drama and erotic thriller. Films like *Dangerous Liaisons* (1988) and *Promising Young Woman* (2020) echo *The Rover*'s emphasis on manipulation, masked identity, and sexualised threat, translating Restoration theatrical strategies into cinematic language. These works similarly rely on suggestion, performance, and social tension to evoke violence, preserving the interplay between spectacle and ethical reflection.

By centring *The Rover*, this paper highlights how Behn's dramaturgy of symbolic violence continues to shape modern visual culture, demonstrating the enduring power of theatrical illusion in representing danger, desire, and moral conflict.

Monster-Making in Julie Taymor's *Titus* (1999)

Courtney Beale (University of Edinburgh, Scotland, United Kingdom)

Titus Andronicus is a play that, from the very first moments of dialogue, engages in 'monster-making,' the problematization of those who challenge normative definitions of nation and society. Where the opening dialogue of the play sets the 'otherness' of Aaron and the Goths against the Romans, this separation of identities is unravelled through the violence of the play, which sees bodies become sites of retribution. Beginning after the Romans have conquered the Goths, Titus seeks to end the cycle of violence through the final sacrifice of Tamora's eldest son. Yet Tamora continues the cycle, reflecting the trauma of her experience through the rape of Lavinia and the beheading of two of Titus's sons. In Julie Taymor's 1999 surrealist reimagining of *Titus*, she centres the physical violence of the play in her film and uses it to ground the revenge narrative between Titus and Tamora, who look to make a monster of the other. Monster-making then becomes a mutually destructive enterprise, not just for their respective families, but for Rome as a whole. In this paper, I analyze how the bodies in Julie Taymor's *Titus* transition between being 'normative' and 'othered,' and how they become a place for characters to express their internal trauma/desire for revenge. Where Aaron and the othered Gothic bodies start the movie as 'monsters,' Tamora's rise to a position of power allows her to reflect this label onto Titus and his family, leading to a complete disruption of Rome's self-definition and national identity. By looking at specific scenes where trauma is reflected through or inflicted on bodies, I will show how Taymor's version of *Titus* reveals the instability of monster-making, and how the desire to define Rome against the 'others' makes monsters of them all.



Onscreen Violence in *Macbeth*: The Case of Duncan's Murder

Pierre Kapitaniak (University of Montpellier Paul-Valéry, France)

Shakespeare's *Macbeth* gradually builds up his protagonist's violence as the play unfolds. The initial acts of violence committed by the Thane of Glamis are kept offstage: the battle against Norway and the traitor Cawdor is told by the wounded captain, Cawdor's execution merely alluded to, and Duncan's murder reported to Lady Macbeth by its perpetrator. From Act 3, Macbeth's violence starts to show onstage, first by proxy, as we watch the murder of Banquo, and later the massacre of Macduff's family, and it is only in the final Act that we see Macbeth slay young Siward, before being killed by Macduff. Thus, although Macbeth describes himself as "stepped" in blood, the audience is mainly offered the traces of his bloody deeds. By bringing unseen violence to the fore, screen adaptations alter the onstage progression of violence, on which the evolution of Macbeth as character may be seen to rest. For William C. Carroll, the exposure of Duncan's murder "reflects the necessity for adapters to find for contemporary audiences the equivalent horror of what regicide may have meant to an early modern audience, especially in secularized societies." Focusing on Roman Polanski's, Justin Kurzel's and Joel Coen's film adaptations, this paper will try to show that the onstage murder conveys far more than mere horror, contributing to reshaping Macbeth's character, and the play's logic in its wake.

S62.- Holy and Haunted Places: From the Green Chapel, to Canterbury, Santiago and Beyond

Inspired by ESSE-18's location, this instalment of the medievalist seminar focuses on the many holy and haunted places that played a role in the lives of people from the English Middle Ages: holy shrines, houses and wells, meadows visited by elves or unholy brothers, meres inhabited by strange creatures, but also worldly haunts frequented by pilgrims as well as ordinary travellers, unruly students and the odd

prostitute. The seminar explores holy, haunted, marvellous and ungodly places in the English Middle Ages (c. 500-1500) from various perspectives, including locations where they themselves became parts of stories (the scriptoria, professional workshops – not forgetting the humble inn), the regional dialects they were couched in, as well as the vocabulary used to describe these places. We invite papers applying a diverse range of methodologies, including literary, linguistic, historical, or visual approaches. We encourage contributions that move beyond disciplinary and period boundaries.



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Session #1

2 September, 15:00–17:00

Writing Holiness: Sacred Sites in Jerusalem and Santiago de Compostela in Late-Medieval English Pilgrim Accounts

Judith Bleeker (University of Groningen, Netherlands)

This paper discusses the various ways in which holy places and sacred sites in Jerusalem and Santiago de Compostela appear in late-medieval English pilgrim accounts, and situates these within the memetic literary conventions that characterise these works.

How do late-medieval pilgrim writers such as William Wey (d. 1476) and Robert Langton (d. 1524) tackle the challenge of converting travel into text, what vocabulary do they use to describe their momentous journeys, and how do they convey to their readers the sanctity of the sites they visit?

This paper argues that the dual focus authors place on the practical and spiritual aspects of their journeys results in hybrid texts,



in which the secular forms a framework for the sacred. It also builds further on Anthony Bale's argument that descriptions of holy places form shared cultural representations similar to memes – from the Greek *mimema*, meaning 'something imitated' –, as replication and copying were central to the representation of Jerusalem and the Holy Land in western textual accounts ("Ut Legi", 208). Examining this theory further, this paper compares the approaches of pilgrim writers William Wey and Robert Langton in producing their accounts of Santiago de Compostela, arguing that their works show an interplay between adhering to conventions as well as shaping their works according to their own eyewitness experiences, interests, and purposes. The authors are shown to experiment with different textual formats and language in order to memorialise their journeys and reinforce their status as reliable pilgrim writers. As such, they add their own experiences to the shared cultural image of central locations within Christianity, creating textual stability in the context of a rapidly changing and expanding world.

Haunted Grounds of the Green Chapel: Enchantment or Hallowed Healing

Monica Ruset Oanca (University of Bucharest, Romania)

This paper examines the Green Chapel as it is depicted in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, exploring its chivalric, mystical, and ritualistic significance. The Green Chapel is not presented as a spiritual site in any conventional sense; consequently, its appearance initially proves disappointing to the Arthurian knight. Nevertheless, it is within this unsettling space that truth is ultimately disclosed and justice, according to the Green Knight's own moral logic, is enacted.

Building on Mother Angela Carson's analysis of the word (Green) "chapel" in association with the Middle French words "chapplée" and "chaplas", meaning abattis of trees or coupe de bois, this paper examines the site as a structure fashioned from cut timber or situated within woodland that is fundamentally distinct from the other chapels mentioned in the poem. It analyses Sir Gawain's response upon reaching the site, particularly his initial fear that the Chapel is governed by a devilish 'green' magic. The discussion further investigates the tension between the natural world as a disruptive and disconcerting force, aligned with an ancient and dark enchantment, and a more ecological reading of nature as a restorative and morally corrective agency.



Holy Haunting? Christ's Voice and the Devotional Terrain of "Ye That Pasen by the Weye"

Dermot Burns (University of Galway, Ireland)

This paper explores the devotional and imaginative 'places' constructed in the Middle English lyric "Ye That Pasen by the Weye," a poem that transforms the biblical lament of Lamentations 1:12 into an intimate encounter with the suffering Christ. Traditionally read as a meditation on the Passion, the lyric's use of Christ's first-person voice summons the passerby to 'abidet' for a while and 'beholdet' the scene of his crucifixion, as it actually happens. By scrutinising the poem's rhetorical strategies and theological resonances, this paper explores how 'Ye That Pasen by the Weye' creates a devotional terrain that is simultaneously holy and haunted: haunted by Christ's persistent voice, and sanctified by the empathy and sympathy aroused in the believer.

Christ's opening address to "Ye that pasen by the weye" transforms the roadside (or indeed anywhere the poem is heard or read) into a liminal site of encounter, where earthly travellers meet divine suffering and temporal distance collapses into immediacy. In this affective space, Christ's speech functions as both witness, victim, confessor, and saviour, turning the poem into a kind of verbal shrine: a place where grief, guilt, and grace are negotiated through language. Through its vernacular diction, rhythmic simplicity, and emotional intensity, the lyric enacts a participatory Christology, inviting its audience to inhabit the Passion, not as distant observers but as embodied eyewitnesses.

This poem transforms lyric speech into sacred ground. In giving voice to divine suffering, 'Ye That Pasen by the Weye' renders the Passion both present and spectral, its holy presence lingering in the minds of those who pass by who take the time to behold the scene presented to them. Ultimately, this paper shows how medieval lyric could serve as a simultaneously haunted and holy site of encounter, where affective devotion becomes a theology which concurrently collapses and transcends both time and place.

Places of Worship, Places of Healing: How Lexical Innovations in Middle English Reflect the Emergence of the Hospital in Medieval England

Rihab Ayed (University of Zurich, Switzerland)

This paper is part of the ongoing *Waxing and Waning Words: Lexical Variation and Change in Middle English* project (<https://www.waw-me.uzh.ch/en.html>), which focuses on variation in the Middle English lexicon of four occupational domains, namely



law, education, religion and medicine. One aim of the project is to collect lexical items from these semantic fields to build an onomasiological database online. This database will be organised in different categories and sub-categories.

This paper offers to present the project and the database that we are building and will focus on the category of ‘specific places’ in the semantic field of MEDICINE in Middle English, which encompasses all the lexical items designating places where medical care was offered. It will investigate how the development of this semantic category reflects the variety of structures where the sick, the injured, the poor and the elderly could find care. From general terms such as *lechehous*, *sekra man in*, or *hospital* to terms with a more specific meaning such as *meselhous* and *maldrie* (which were specifically for lepers), or *fermerie* (which appears to have been used with the specific sense of “a monastic infirmary” (Middle English Dictionary, s.v. *fermerie*, n.)). Particular attention will be given to the complex nature of the medieval hospital, where cohabitated the religious and the medical amongst other things, and how this intersection between religion and medicine can be traced in the lexical items used to designate these places of healing.

Session #2

2 September, 17:30–19:30

The Marvellous Fountain across the Yvain Tradition

Claudia Fernández Estrada (University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain)

The marvellous fountain in the tales of Yvain is central to the development of each of the texts that constitute the different adaptations and translations of the story of Yvain, as the events that take place there “cohere to provide a romance adventure at once complex and complementary” (Mills, 2001, p. 125). By looking at how the storm-making fountain is described across the romance tradition of Yvain, this paper examines how descriptive choices shape our understanding of the fountain as a holy place, haunted, or both.

This study involves a selection of texts including, but not restricted to, Chrétien’s Old French Yvain, ou le Chevalier au Lion (c. 1170s), the thirteenth-century Old Norse Ívens Saga, the Middle English Ywain and Gawain of the fourteenth century, and the



Welsh Owain, neu Iarllles y Ffynnwawn dated towards either the end of the twelfth century or the beginning of the thirteenth. In these texts, the fountain and its surrounding environment receive different types of descriptive attention. The spring's materials, the tree that shelters it, and the storm that is raised through it are all described with variation.

Through comparison of descriptive passages of the fountain, this paper argues that variations in descriptions across the traditions reveal different medieval investments in describing landscape, the natural, the supernatural, and the places where the mundane and the marvellous intersect. The descriptive variations further illuminate how medieval traditions across time and space conceptualized holy and haunted places. In the Yvain tradition, the fountain emerges as narratively essential but culturally fluid, revealing how sacred geography travels across cultural boundaries.

Gawain's Encounter with Winifred's Ghost in David Lowery's *The Green Knight*: An American Haunting in a Medieval Film?

Tatjana Silec-Plessis (Sorbonne University, France)

David Lowery's film *The Green Knight* (2021) is a retelling of the medieval poem *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* which takes great liberties with the plot of the original romance. Lowery's Gawain, instead of being a paragon of chivalry and courtesy, is a moody man-child whose mother is the real sorceress of the story rather than Morgan, and a benevolent one at that. Not long after he has left Arthur's castle, Gawain finds himself lost in the forest and forced to take lodgings in a small cabin, which, as he soon realizes to his great dismay, is haunted by the spirit of a young woman who was raped and beheaded by her tormentor. While this episode does not exist in the original romance, the film character is loosely based on a twelfth-century legend about a medieval saint called Winifred whose shrine Gawain passes by during his quest for the Green Chapel in the poem. The present paper examines the part played by the Welsh martyr in Lowery's film, and the way the film-maker uses her legend as a nod to the horror genre, and specifically, to films that depict terrifying supernatural events that supposedly happened in real life, a tradition which is particularly well represented in American culture. It also considers the reasons why David Lowery decided to transfer many of the qualities ascribed by Gawain to the Green Chapel at the end of the poem to the hero's encounter with the ghost early on in his film, the impact such a stylistic choice has on its plot, and what it reveals about the filmmaker's insightful handling of the original material.



The Castle at Hautdesert: Holy Apparition or Fay Stronghold?

Olivier Simonin (University of Perpignan, CRESEM, France)

When Bertilak's castle appears to Gawain in the middle of Fitt 2, in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, its appearance seems to be miraculous, as if in direct response to his prayers (l. 736-39; 753-62) in a wild forest, on Christmas Eve. In the morning, he rides near a mound, and comes across huge oaks, hazels and hawthorns (l. 740-44), all of which traditionally heralds a crossing to the fairy world – which is also the land of the dead for Celts (Huntsman 1986).

The impression made by the castle itself is stunning: it is an outstanding exemplar of its kind (Thomson 1997), if not outright marvellous (Zink 2022). The detailed description of its architecture (Turville-Peter 2018) suggests uncanny craft, as it looks as if it were “pared out of papure” (l. 802). Morgan le Fay is obviously a key figure behind it, backing Bertilak's power (l. 2445-46). Nonetheless, the viewer's gaze (which is presumably the same as Gawain's) is directed upwards towards the sky, which, along with the strong sense of verticality conveyed (Vial 2023), evokes a holy place. Moreover, its apparition is perhaps not unlike that of a Grail castle, especially the one Gawain describes at the edge of a forest in *The First Continuation of Chrétien's Perceval* (Brewer 1997), which is worth comparing with *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.

This paper will address the issue of whether Bertilak's castle should be seen as a holy or unholy place, especially in the light of the events occurring in Fitt 3, where the most important part of the action takes place (Tolkien 1983), and the final unravelling at the end of the romance.

S63.- Contemporary Immersive Practices: Intersections of Theatre, Aesthetics, Pedagogy, Performativity, Extended Reality (XR) and Artificial Intelligence

Immersive practices have been reshaping contemporary creative landscapes, blurring the lines between performer and spectator, fiction and reality, experience and learning. From immersive theatre to digital environments, site-specific performances, interactive storytelling and artificial intelligence-driven systems, the role of the audience has shifted from passive observer to engaged participant. These evolving formats invite us to reconsider not only how we experience art, but also how we learn,



perceive and interact within these mediated spaces. But what does this shift mean in aesthetic and pedagogical terms?

This seminar seeks to explore the multifaceted nature of immersive creations and their implications for spectatorship. We invite contributions that examine how immersive experiences redefine artistic engagement, emotional investment and cognitive processes, as well as their potential applications in education and training. By opening a dialogue between scholars and practitioners working on immersive theatre, digital media, performance studies, visual arts and language learning, this seminar aims to foster interdisciplinary discussions on the aesthetic and didactic dimensions of immersive works.

Topics may include but are not limited to:

- The aesthetics of immersion in contemporary artistic creations
- The evolving role of the spectator in immersive practices
- The intersection of immersive experiences and cognitive sciences
- The pedagogical value of immersion in language learning
- The impact of XR technologies (VR, AR, MR) on immersive storytelling
- The use of artificial intelligence in computer theatre and its implications for immersive experiences
- The integration of artificial intelligence in immersive creation processes (generative tools, adaptive narratives, human-machine interaction)
- Ethical considerations and boundaries of immersion in performative arts
- Performativity of spectatorship in immersive practice

We welcome contributions from researchers in theatre and performance studies, literature, digital humanities, media studies, language education and related fields. Our goal is to create a dynamic, inclusive discussion space that highlights diverse approaches to immersion and its broader implications.

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Session #1: Reframing Immersion: Spectatorship, Systems, and Sensory Environments

1 September, 9:00–11:00

Târoot: Multisensory XR as Ritual Space for Embodied Remembrance

Valérie Gouranton (INRIA, University of Rennes, France)

Ronan Gaugne (INRIA, University of Rennes, France)

Alma Oskoueï (INRIA, University of Rennes, France)

Târoot is a research–creation XR installation that investigates immersive spectatorship as a performative and embodied experience at the intersection of extended reality, ritual, and memory. Situated between immersive performance and interactive multisensory storytelling, the installation invites participants to move from passive observation to active participation through a guided card-drawing session, unfolding across virtual reality, augmented reality, and physical space.

Rooted in the artist’s personal archive of stories transmitted by her grandmother during childhood in Tehran, *Târoot* explores how immersive media can function as time-and-space capsules for displaced memories—memories no longer anchored to a geographical location yet sustained through sensory, affective, and embodied practices. The experience unfolds in three interconnected acts: past, present, and future—mediated by physical tarot-like cards that trigger XR narratives combining sound composition, 3D animation, and tactile interaction.

These narratives culminate in the real world: the preparation of a personalized herbal tea generated by the participant’s cards, bridging virtual, augmented, and lived realities. Throughout the experience, the artist is physically present beside the participant, acting simultaneously as mediator and performer. This co-presence introduces a relational dimension to the immersive setup, guiding the participant while blurring distinctions between instruction and narration, care and performance.



By foregrounding slowness, and intimacy, *Târoot* questions dominant paradigms of spectacle and efficiency in immersive technologies. It reframes XR not as a tool for escapism, but as an experiential medium capable of fostering emotional investment, empathy, and embodied cognition. The spectator becomes a co-performer whose decisions shape the narrative outcome.

Drawing on immersive aesthetics, performance studies, and cognitive approaches to learning, this work examines how multisensory immersion can support processes of remembrance and cultural transmission. In the context of migration and cultural displacement, *Târoot* proposes immersive XR practices as spaces of cultural resilience, where memory is not only preserved but actively re-enacted through performative spectatorship.

Framing Immersion: Spectatorship and Presence in Frontal and Immersive Virtual Theatre

Elisa Smeraldo (University of Rome, Italy)

Performances in Virtual Reality (VR) and digital theatre reconfigure modes of spectatorship by reshaping spatial and sensory conditions of performance. While existing scholarship has highlighted VR's capacity to intensify engagement and perceived presence, the aesthetic and perceptual implications of different mediation strategies remain insufficiently explored.

This paper presents a comparative case study on VR-based theatre accessibility developed for hospice patients and their family members. Two VR formats were tested: a frontal remediation of a stage performance recorded from the conventional spectator's viewpoint, and an immersive experience positioning the user within the scenic environment alongside performers. The coexistence of these two formats, based on different artistic contents, emerged from institutional and artistic negotiations with the theatre partner, revealing how production infrastructures and funding frameworks shape not only artistic outputs but also research design and epistemic possibilities.

Rather than comparing the two performances as stimuli, given their different subject matters, the study uses the diversity of their mediation formats as an epistemic lens to analyse how distinct strategies structure spectatorship, presence, and agency. The heterogeneity of contents is treated as analytically productive, foregrounding VR remediation as a situated practice shaped by institutional and artistic constraints, where camera placement and spatial framing enact specific intentions and dramaturgical regimes.



By situating VR theatre within debates on mediatization, spectatorship, and immersive aesthetics, the paper interrogates how framing and spatial immersion reconfigure audience experience. The study contributes to critical discussions on how digital mediation transforms the aesthetics of performance and the conditions under which theatrical experiences become accessible for remote audiences.

Embodiment: Immersive Sound Technologies in (Auto)biographical Performance

Agnieszka Blonska (Falmouth University, United Kingdom)

In recent years, the performance landscape has been reshaped by digital technologies, generating new ways of thinking about immersivity, aesthetics, and spectatorship. From virtual interactions to *ambient storytelling* (Spencer 2025), the intimate relationship between audiences and technology has transformed our understanding of participation and the emotional impact of immersive performance.

This paper responds to the topic of the aesthetics of immersion in contemporary artistic creations and explores the shift from visual-centric spectatorship to an embodied one, using immersive sound performance practice as its focus. It investigates possibilities of digital audio technologies - from ambisonics to binaural – and their impact on performance narratives when creating unique, personalised experiences. It aims to explore how digital audio technologies can enhance and bring to life (auto)biographical testimonies and material and their influence on dramaturgical choices and aesthetics.

Drawing on three years of my practice-based research into digital technologies and participatory performance, this paper shares insights and empirical data from two UK-based projects co-created with marginalised communities:

1. “We’ve Been Here”: A multi-layered participatory performance exploring global conflict through the perspectives of older women (2021 – ongoing)
2. “Through My Eyes”: A series of site-specific immersive audio works developed with teenagers and migrant mothers exploring themes of home, belonging, and place (2023 – ongoing)

The paper shares methodologies for co-creation when working with audio digital tools and the dramaturgical strategies



discovered during the generation of immersive audio. It further examines the technical possibilities of ambisonics, spatial audio, and binaural sound, and how these technologies dictate aesthetic choices and narrative structure. Finally, the paper evaluates audience responses and considers the impact of immersive sound work not only on performance pedagogy but on its potential to foster deeper societal empathy and connection.

Walking Against the Algorithm: Pilgrimage as Immersive Revolt in Contemporary Performance

Jan Suk (University of Hradec Králové, Czech Republic)

In an era increasingly shaped by algorithmic navigation, artificial intelligence, and extended-reality environments, human movement through space is progressively mediated, optimized, and abstracted. This paper argues that several contemporary performance practices reclaim walking and pilgrimage as embodied counter-technologies, forming an immersive revolt which resists the logic of digital acceleration, predictive mapping, and virtual displacement. Drawing on Michel de Certeau's concept of walking as a "tactical" practice of spatial writing, as well as recent scholarship on mobility, ecology, and embodied perception (Solnit, Ingold, Lavery), the paper examines how performance artists mobilize pilgrimage-like movement as a critical and experiential mode of engagement with space.

The analysis focuses on four case studies that collectively trace a spectrum of performative pilgrimage in near-contemporary performance. First, the durational street crawls of Pope.L transform urban mobility into a radical anti-pilgrimage, exposing the social and racial hierarchies embedded in public space while disrupting the smooth flows of the neoliberal city. Second, the outdoor pageants and processions of Bread and Puppet Theater reimagine pilgrimage as a collective political ritual, where audiences move through landscapes alongside monumental puppets in a participatory counter-spectacle. Third, works by Every House Has a Door stage immersive theatrical environments in which spectators navigate fragmented narratives through bodily movement, producing a dramaturgy structured by spatial pilgrimage rather than linear plot. Finally, Blast Theory's mixed-reality performances, such as *Can You See Me Now?* extend pilgrimage into a hybrid digital space, where participants traverse urban environments simultaneously as physical bodies and networked avatars.

Together, these examples reveal walking not merely as a theme but as a performative method that reasserts corporeal presence,



slowness, and collective experience in the face of increasingly virtualized spatial regimes. Contemporary performance pilgrimage thus emerges as a form of embodied resistance: an immersive practice that challenges algorithmic governance by restoring movement, perception, and encounter to the human scale.

Session #2: Immersion as Pedagogy: Classrooms, Language Learning, and Educational Mediation

1 September, 17:00–19:00

Between Fascination and Critical Distance: Student Uses, Representations, and Reflections on Virtual Reality in Language Teaching and Learning

Céline Meyran Martinez (University of Lorraine, France)

Immersive technologies, and virtual reality in particular, have become increasingly prominent in discourses on educational innovation, where they are often presented as powerful levers for learner engagement, motivation, embodiment, and the transformation of learning (Ciekanski et al., 2020; Campos-Soto et al., 2020; Dalgarno & Lee, 2010; Molle et al., 2020; Parmaxi, 2023; Privas-Bréauté, 2022; Roda-Segarra et al., 2022; Rojas-Sánchez et al., 2023). Although its potential benefits are widely documented, virtual reality remains insufficiently examined from a critical perspective. This gap needs to be addressed in order to shed more light on the way in which immersive technologies reconfigure educational spaces, reshape the roles of pedagogical actors, and transform teaching practices (Cappellini & Combe, 2017; Collin et al., 2015; Guichon, 2012; Pothier, 2003; Rabardel, 1995). This presentation therefore proposes to shift the analytical focus toward the uses, representations, and critical reflections of first-year undergraduate students enrolled in different academic programs.

The corpus draws on written data collected through a graded critical reflection assignment conducted within an introductory course during the first semester of the current academic year at the University of Lorraine (Nancy campus). Twenty-five students from the Department of Social Sciences and Humanities produced an argumentative text combining personal experiences,



projected educational/training uses, and critical positions regarding virtual reality. The pedagogical approach aimed to foster reflexive distance without presupposing prior technical skills.

The qualitative analysis reveals recurring tensions between immersive fascination and the need for control, between the promise of increased engagement and concerns about sensory overload. Another tension between the desire for embodied experience and apprehensions surrounding the potential dehumanization of educational relationships also emerges. The students' writings implicitly mobilize concepts related to performativity, the staging of the body, and the shifting role of the spectator-actor. Virtual reality thus emerges not as a mere tool for pedagogical innovation, but as a complex performative device that redefines the positions of the learner, knowledge, and the teacher.

By placing these reflections within a critical and ecological perspective on immersion, this paper questions the cognitive, corporeal, and ethical implications of virtual reality in a teaching and learning context.

Towards an Immersive Ethics: Pedagogical Approaches to Teaching Intercultural Communicative Competence through GenAI

Martin Štefl (University of Chemistry and Technology Prague, Czech Republic)

Monika Hřebačková (University of Chemistry and Technology Prague, Czech Republic)

Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately across cultures (Deardorff, 2023), has been profoundly affected by the proliferation of generative AI (Dai, 2025; Hua, 2025). In language learning, GenAI has been shown to offer “a valuable solution by providing accessible, on-demand L2 practice within an immersive learning environment” (Zhou, 2025) and to enhance motivation, engagement, and knowledge retention (Wang & Huang, 2025). At the same time, its use in teaching ICC – through AI-generated personas or culturally mediated content – has been criticized for cognitive offloading (Gerlich, 2025), essentialisation and reification of culture (O'Regan et al., 2025), and algorithmic bias (UNESCO).

To address these challenges, this paper proposes a pedagogy of “immersive ethics”, which emphasizes critical engagement with the technological mediation of culture in GenAI-supported learning and abandons instrumental or anthropocentric approaches



to technology (Verbeek 2001, Coeckelbergh 2024) in favour of a more critical and (AI-)ethical approach that systematically directs the students' attention to the otherwise opaque nature of how culture is performed and pre-formed by both technologies (Gen-AI) in currently dominant models of culture (Hofstede, Byram, Deardorff).

Departing from Nilsson, Nordahl & Serafin's conceptualisation of immersion (2016) and drawing on the current discussions of AI Ethics (Mühlhoff 2025; Boddington 2023; Coeckelbergh 2020) as well as our experience teaching ICC in a university Business School we further argue that if true immersive learning is to occur, it cannot happen without a pedagogy of "immersive ethics" that constantly brings attention to the process of technological mediation and the role it plays in both the learning process and the ways culture is represented in both AI-generated products and ICC models, fostering critical awareness and responsible intercultural engagement.

Finding a New Voice. First Year Students Remediation of *Romeo and Juliet*

Siri-Mohammad Roe (Oslo Metropolitan University, Norway)

Øyvind Thormodsæter (Oslo Metropolitan University, Norway)

Hilde Tørnby (Oslo Metropolitan University, Norway)

Remediating (Bolter & Grusin, 1999) William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* into a new format, a new kind of text like for instance a short movie, Instagram, posters, Snapchat messages or cartoons, is part of English in the teacher education at Oslo Metropolitan University for first year students in the 5-10 program. Students engagement and enthusiasm in this work provide insight into their understanding of the original text supporting the idea of reader-response wherein this work calls for filling in the empty spaces of the text (Iser, 1978) as much as it calls for both efferent and aesthetic reading (Rosenblatt, 1994, 2005). Consequently, students experience practically these theoretical principles which is of great importance due to the fact that these students are future teachers. Thereby experiencing aesthetic work with literary texts is important to their own understanding of reader-response ideas as much as it is important for designing their own lessons. In this article we analyze a selection of texts in regards to reader-response (Iser, 1978; Rosenblatt, 1994, 2005) aesthetic transformation (Østern, 2008), remediation (Bolter & Grusin, 1999), and critical thinking (Ennis, 2015; Janks, 2010; Lim, 2015). Exploring in which ways the original text transforms aesthetically and



linguistically, is part of the analysis. Moreover, how the new texts convey students' critical distance and/or closeness to text and perspective taking is at the core of the analysis. In the discussion we delve into an investigation on how remediation of texts can be understood as "what-if experiences" (Willbergh, 2017). An excursion into discussing how the aesthetic transformation may be linked to critical thinking and "what-if experiences" is undertaken. The aim of the article is to shed light on innovative ways of working with literary texts in the English classroom supporting reading engagement and fostering in-depth understanding of text. Finally, ideas of how innovative pedagogies may lead to transformation (Paul, 2014) are suggested.

Embodied Rituals in Virtual Reality: Exploring Presence, Flow, and Affective Engagement in Experimental Performance

Ivan Simon (Arlekin Art Association, Canada)

This project explores how embodiment contributes to the feeling of presence in virtual reality (VR). It investigates how visual, auditory, and haptic immersion co-construct emotional and social experiences similar to live performances, whether on stage or in an open-air setting. At its core is the transposition of the Kukeri ritual dance into VR, a traditional collective practice known to generate synchrony and heightened spatial awareness. The research asks to what extent VR-based performance can foster emotional engagement and flow in the context of dance, singing and language learning, especially in arts education and foreign language pedagogy. More specifically, the study examines how embodied, rhythm-based collective performance in VR can support vocabulary retention, oral fluency, and affective involvement in foreign language learning through linguistic input in shared sensorimotor and emotional experience. It examines whether comparable states of presence, synchrony and co-participation can emerge when two or more geographically distant dancers interact through Meta's Hypescape Capture, a tool for immersive telepresence. The experimental design includes immersive sessions that combine quantitative measures (PANAS, Russell's circumplex model) with qualitative data from interviews, observations, and audiovisual documentation. Grounded in a multidisciplinary framework, the study draws on embodiment and enaction theory (Varela, 1991), immersive language pedagogy (Privas-Bréauté, 2019-2025), neurophilosophy, and research on postural sway (Stoffregen, 1998). It also integrates recent studies on cybersickness (Chang & Kim, 2019, 2024). The triangulation of these perspectives aims to identify key markers of presence and examine their applicability in an immersive theatre-like context. The project explores implications for arts-based learning and experiential language teaching by positioning lived presence in VR as a driver of emotional engagement.



Session #3: Expanded Immersion: Narrative, Ritual, Mobility, and Applied Worlds

2 September, 9:00–11:00

Immersive Narratives and Audience Engagement: Rethinking Digital Mediation in Museum Spaces

Xiaodong Lu (University College London, United Kingdom)

This research examines how immersive digital environments shape audience experience, engagement, and interpretation, with a focus on museum contexts. While technologies such as virtual reality and projection mapping offer new possibilities for storytelling, their adoption is often driven by novelty rather than a clear understanding of their narrative or cognitive effects. This study investigates how immersive experiences mediate perception, emotional involvement, and learning, and considers the risks of superficial or misaligned implementations that may undermine the intended educational or aesthetic outcomes.

Drawing on both qualitative visitor studies and artistic research methods, including experimental prototyping of immersive narratives, the project analyzes how spatial presence, narrative sequencing, and technological affordances contribute to meaningful engagement. Existing evaluation frameworks for immersive experiences are critically reviewed, revealing gaps in assessing narrative quality and audience interpretation. In response, the research proposes a structured framework to evaluate the narrative effectiveness of immersive exhibitions, aiming to support curators, designers, and educators in making informed decisions about when and how to deploy immersive technologies.

By situating museum-based digital experiences within broader discussions of immersive theatre, interactive storytelling, and AI-driven systems, this work highlights the interdisciplinary nature of contemporary immersive practices. It addresses key aesthetic and pedagogical questions, exploring how narrative design, spatial arrangement, and technological mediation influence the spectator's cognitive and emotional experience.

Participation in the ESSSE seminar will provide an opportunity to engage with scholars and practitioners in performance, digital media, and artistic research, fostering dialogue that can further refine both the theoretical and practice-based dimensions of evaluating immersive experiences.



Staging Firegrounds: Immersive Aesthetics, Performativity and Situated Learning in AI-enabled XR-based Training

Susanne Thurow (University of New South Wales Sydney, Australia)

Mario Flores González (University of New South Wales Sydney, Australia)

Greg Drummond (University of New South Wales Sydney, Australia)

Gonzalo Herrera (University of New South Wales Sydney, Australia)

As digital media reshape contemporary aesthetic and cultural practices, Extended Reality (XR) offers a powerful means for rethinking engagement in the creative arts and education. Although multisensory, context-rich immersion is widely recognised as XR's core strength (Crogman et al. 2025), its specific affordances and design challenges remain underexplored (Lee et al. 2021). Our paper responds to this gap by presenting findings from *iFire*, a large-scale, interdisciplinary research project developed at the University of New South Wales in collaboration with Fire & Rescue NSW (FRNSW). Bringing together researchers in the creative arts, AI, design and human-computer interaction with professional firefighters, the project investigates how an immersive aesthetic approach can performatively translate the volatile dynamics of wildfire events into meaningful XR-based situational awareness training for firefighters (Cortes et al. 2025).

iFire integrates scientific fire-modelling with the *Unreal* game engine via a custom AI-enabled pipeline, generating plausible responsive fire scenarios within a 3D modelled environment – visualised through a 360-degree cinematic system. Here, performativity extends to learner activation, AI-driven evolution of fire behaviour and *iFire*'s real-time responsiveness, collectively underpinning its interactive training modules. These allow firefighter crews to navigate simulated firegrounds, identify hazards, conduct dynamic risk assessments, and consider suppression and evacuation strategies from freely adjustable viewpoints.

Our proposed paper outlines the project's conceptual framework, identifies key XR affordances and discusses design challenges addressed through a user-centred, design-led methodology (Tan 2022). Drawing on user studies, we argue for reframing immersive engagement away from a binary of 'passive observation' versus 'active participation' into a spectrum of graded activation tied to specific learning objectives. We show that immersive aesthetics achieve their strongest pedagogical impact when selectively deployed after contextual framing has introduced learners to relevant operational protocols and fire behaviour cues – enabling meaningful narrative and sensorial engagement while avoiding cognitive overload (Wagner & Liu 2021).



Baba Is Teacher: Game-based Textual Immersion in the AI Age

Allen C. Jones (University of Stavanger, Norway)

This paper argues that the textual nature of AI can help us intellectually reframe digital immersion and the educational and immersive promise of *non*-VR games for creativity and fluency in reading/writing/thinking. While new media rebirths the dream of full immersion (Bolter & Grusin 1999), the sidelining of Meta's Metaverse and the AI turn represent not simply a return to the hundred GUI windows of hypermediacy (Bolter & Grusin 1999), but rather a singular field of immersion that is textual at its core (textual probability) and in our conscious interactions with it (AI "friends" and agents/search answers). To explore this surprising textual turn, this paper will analyze two text-based games: a 3D/VR approach to reading a literary text (*Walden, a game*) vs. a minimalist 2D puzzle game, often no longer than three words (*Baba Is You*).

Surprisingly, it is the "non-immersive" *Baba* that reveals the educational promise of immersion in game-based digital texts by revealing the textual power of writing/coding in terms of *interaction* and *power* over world building and relationality (user freedom and identity in relation to mechanics and affordances/constraints). While *Baba*'s immersive promise is offset by its puzzle-based world, other games like *AI Dungeon* and *Poetry Planet* make varied attempts at more open-world textual controls and thus offer increased immersion potential. Theoretically, this paper argues that the AI turn represents a rebirth of the traditional notion of textual/narrative immersion, but this new form of "reading" is most powerful not when we walk around inside a digital VR world reading *Walden* or buying stuff from Meta, but when we are given the keys to "play" the code itself. Understanding these games can give thinkers and educators a practical method to reframe immersion and place the user/reader/student in a position of power rather than as a receiver of AI reality.

Immersive Technologies (VR/AR) and New Opportunities to Rethink Access to Performing Arts and to the Cultural and Creative Industries

Alexis Paljic (Mines Paris, France)

Oliver Stab (Mines Paris, France)



Immersive technologies (VR/AR) offer new opportunities to rethink access to performing arts and, more broadly, to the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs). In this context, our research activities and the Virtual Worlds – Technologies & Societal Issues (MOVIE) engineering module at Mines Paris rely on a co-design approach involving engineering students, artists, theatre companies and cultural institutions. This approach aims to analyse, prototype and evaluate interactive 3D systems that question the conditions under which theatre can become more accessible, drawing on collaborations with venues such as Théâtre du Monfort and Théâtre du Châtelet. Based on several student projects conducted between 2020 and 2025, we propose a four-part classification of accessibility: cognitive, sensory, cultural and economic.

[Sensory accessibility is illustrated by the development of an augmented-reality surtitling system in French Sign Language, designed to enrich the experience of deaf and hard-of-hearing spectators, with technical challenges related to spatialisation, motion tracking and sign-timing. Cultural accessibility is addressed through interactive and playful devices targeted at audiences unfamiliar with theatre, such as a mobile game and arcade installation communicating the aesthetic world of a play, as well as an interactive simulation introducing audiences to the work of a lighting technician. Economic accessibility is explored through strategies to lower geographical and financial barriers, such as volumetric 3D capture and immersive streaming, and scenarios of lightweight or AI-optimised touring theatre infrastructures. Cognitive accessibility—understood as the adaptation and mediation of content—runs across all projects by supporting spectators’ understanding of artworks and artistic intentions.]

The prototypes developed—partial, agile, and exploratory—function as technology probes that help examine real-world uses, facilitate dialogue with performing arts practitioners, and identify future research directions. This contribution thus offers a structured conceptual framework for analysing how immersive technologies can support different forms of accessibility to theatre, while showing how pedagogical co-design projects can provide small-scale but meaningful insights into the potential re-popularisation of theatre through digital tools.

Session #4: Embodied XR Dramaturgies: Presence, Motion, Avatar

2 September, 15:00–17:00



Can Virtual Reality Teach Presence? Translating Lume Teatro's Training into an Immersive Artwork

Axel Belin (ENSAD, France)

Adriana La Selva (ENSAD, France)

As part of an exhibition at the Itaú Cultural Center celebrating forty years of the Brazilian company Lume Teatro, a series of technological devices introduced visitors to the group's archives, research processes, and actor-training methodologies, seeking to restore a tangible presence to historical practices and works. Among these devices was *A Ilha eXtendida*, an immersive VR experience inviting participants to encounter five physical exercises from Lume Teatro's training repertoire.

Created collaboratively by French actor and VR designer Axel Belin, Brazilian-Belgian actress-researcher Adriana Parente La Selva, and Anglo-Brazilian actress and Lume Teatro member Naomi Silman, the work was conceived as an immersive, performative translation of theatrical practice.

Built through motion-capture recordings of practitioners, the experience explores how bodily intensity, sensory imagination, and physical action might be re-articulated within virtual environments, and what forms of aesthetic abstraction (Jarvis, 2019) are required for such knowledge to remain transmissible.

Designing a device capable of mediating theatrical culture demands new modes of exchange between developers and artists (Goodman, Stolterman, Wakkary, 2011) raising questions around avatar construction, gestural stylization, and the dramaturgy of virtual space. How can VR convey the essence of a training methodology while remaining an autonomous artwork? What kinds of visual economies, simplifications, and environmental choices allow users to attend to physical precision and energetic states (Barba, Savarese, 1991) rather than spectacle alone?

Through a reflection on the project's iterative design process and its shifting aesthetic strategies, this paper proposes virtual reality as a performative device, operating in the tension between transmission, presence and absence. *A Ilha eXtendida* thus becomes a case study for how immersive technologies might function as speculative laboratories for the public activation of embodied knowledge (Parente La Selva, Marouda, 2025).



Can Theatre Still Be Called Immersive Theatre If It Does Not Resort to the Use of Environmental Technology? A Study of *Tempête dans un verre d'eau: Partie II de la trilogie shakespearienne* Created in 2023 by the French Drama Company Tac Tac

Sophie Doulut (University of Burgundy Europe, France)

Contemporary immersive practices are strikingly original and surprising in the stage creation by the Tac Tac drama company based on Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and entitled *Tempête dans un verre d'eau: partie II de la trilogie shakespearienne*, which was created in 2023 and presented in 2024 and 2025. Indeed, very little use of technology is implied and reliance on the techniques of the theatre of objects with recycled items only is emphasized in order to ignite the spectators' ethical considerations and political implications of our consumption society. This presentation will focus on the aesthetics of low-budget theatrical immersion and on its efficiency despite very reduced means, as the plot relies mostly on the art of storytelling and on the pedagogical value of the use of recycling, therefore implying a Socratic dialogue with the audience. We will demonstrate how theatre can still be defined as immersive without resorting to digital environments and tools, and nonetheless rethink the engagement of both actors and spectatorship. We will henceforth explore how the mere use of handicraft can successfully replace complex and highly technological special visual effects through its simple and almost childish fairy-tale-ish magic by blurring the lines between fiction and reality, thus stipulating the 1817 notion of "willing suspension of disbelief" by Samuel Coleridge, and anticipated by Shakespeare in his Prologue to *Henry V*.

***Pendulum* (2025): Toward a Poetics of Transitional Spaces in Immersive and Interactive Performance**

Maxence Mercier (Côte d'Azur University, France)

Jean-François Trubert (Côte d'Azur University, France)

This paper presents *Pendulum*, an interactive immersive work conceived both as a sound installation and as a proprioceptive device that reconfigures embodied experience through spatial and temporal modulation. The project is situated at the intersection of immersive media studies, interactive performance, and spatialized composition, drawing on foundational work in virtual reality,



mixed reality performance, and spatial dramaturgy (Biocca & Delaney, 1995; Benford & Giannachi, 2011; Giannachi, 2004).

Pendulum proposes a traversal of heterogeneous spaces that continuously redefines the participant's relationship to the body, velocity, and duration. The work operationalizes immersion not as a passive absorption into virtual worlds, but as an enactment of agency through gesture and proprioception, echoing Biocca and Delaney's conception of immersive virtual reality as a multisensory, embodied engagement with mediated environments. The project also resonates with Benford and Giannachi's articulation of *performing mixed reality*, where hybrid realities emerge through interactive systems that foreground the co-constitutive dynamics between human action and computational processes.

Methodologically, the project relies on gesture capture and interactive mapping strategies that translate movement into sound and visual phenomena. We deliberately hijacked the conventional use of OptiTrack motion-capture technology. Rather than employing it as a tracking system for precise kinematic measurement, we transform it into a tangible scenographic and musical interface by constructing physical cords and elastic lines embedded with infrared reflective markers. These visible, materialized tracking elements act simultaneously as spatial constraints, tactile instruments, and choreographic scores. This displacement of function produces a fragmentation of the danced gesture across the stage space: movement is decomposed into discrete vectors, tensions, and resistances, which are then recomposed sonically through real-time mapping. The gesture is thus distributed beyond the performer's body, through the environment itself. The stage space operates as an instrument, and the performer navigates a network of forces rather than a neutral floor.

This dual translation aligns with recent theoretical calls to understand immersive environments as *transitional spaces* of sense-making, where sensory modalities and media layers intersect to produce hybrid states of perception and action (see Giannachi's Virtual Theatres). The objective was therefore to construct a space of play and embodied interaction in which musical gesture is enacted and felt, and not merely represented. Just as sound unfolds through distinct transients — attack, accent, sustain, decay — interactions with the scenographic device give rise to multiple bodily states and modes of engagement: sudden, sustained, attenuated, and continuous. These modulations reflect the hybrid temporality of immersive experience, where transitions are not merely formal features but constitutive processes that shape attention, movement, and presence.

Thus, *Pendulum* proposes an embodied traversal through time and space that integrates choreography, sonic performance, spatial diffusion, and enacted acoustics within a unified framework of interactive immersion. In doing so, it contributes to an emergent research agenda that situates immersive art practices within broader discourses of performativity, agency, and experience design.



Rethinking Participation in the Post-COVID-19 Classroom: Telepresence as Pedagogical Practice

Cyrielle Garson (Avignon University, France)

The COVID-19 pandemic profoundly transformed pedagogical practices, forcing higher education to adopt remote teaching on an unprecedented scale. While emergency online teaching relied largely on videoconferencing platforms, the post-pandemic classroom now offers an opportunity to rethink participation through more advanced forms of telepresence. This paper proposes a typology of telepresence-based pedagogical configurations developed through a series of practice-based experiments conducted between 2021 and 2025 in university-level theatre and performance courses.

The study distinguishes several levels of telepresence corresponding to different degrees of spatial immersion and embodied interaction. A first level (“telepresence 1”) refers to standard videoconferencing environments such as Zoom, where presence remains primarily audiovisual and screen-bound. A second level (“telepresence 2”) involves the use of 360° recording and 3DoF head-mounted displays (Pico G2), allowing remote students to observe classroom activity within a spherical visual field, thus partially restoring spatial perception. A third level (“telepresence 3”) is explored through fully immersive virtual reality environments using 6DoF headsets, in which students and instructor meet inside shared virtual platforms (VRChat) to engage in theatre practice, enabling forms of co-presence, embodiment, and performative interaction that challenge traditional distinctions between physical and virtual classrooms. Finally, the paper discusses an ongoing experiment conducted in collaboration with the Société des Arts Technologiques (Montréal), using the Scenic Telepresence Station to connect students in Avignon and Montréal in real time, raising new questions about distributed performance, shared stage space, and the pedagogical implications of hybrid physical-virtual scenography.

Through these case studies, the paper argues that telepresence should not be understood merely as a technical solution to distance learning, but as a pedagogical practice that reshapes attention, participation, and collective experience. By analysing how different technological setups produce different modes of presence, the study proposes a conceptual framework for evaluating telepresence in terms of immersion, embodiment, and relational intensity.

While the experiments discussed here do not primarily focus on artificial intelligence, the conclusion briefly considers how XR-based telepresence environments may in the near future be combined with AI-driven agents and adaptive systems, opening new perspectives for research on participation, performance, and human-machine co-presence in the post-pandemic classroom.



Session #5: Human-AI Co-Performance: Agency, Dialogue, and Posthuman Relationality**2 September, 17:30–19:30****Bodiless Presence: AI Avatars and the Performance of Restored Behavior****Ivan Lacko (Comenius University, Slovakia)**

Using Richard Schechner's theory of performance, specifically the concept of restored behavior (storage, transmission, manipulation, replay), I would like to discuss and hopefully challenge the particularities of AI models that use avatars, such as Character.AI. The presentation will attempt to analyze the mediation and liveliness, following the ideas and concepts of Auslander and Fischer-Lichte, focusing on (lack of) embodiment, virtuality, and posthuman performance.

LATENCY, an AI System for Human–Machine Choreographic Dialogue: Implications for Danced Language and Narration, and Audience Participation**Natacha Paquignon (CIE Natacha Paquignon, France)**

This presentation focuses on the development of an AI system designed to support a choreographic dialogue with human dancers. This research takes place within *Latency*, an immersive choreographic, visual, and sound work for two dancers and an AI system (premiere planned for 2027). The AI is represented in a non-anthropomorphic, video-projected form whose morphology and movement evolve in real time through interactions with the dancers and the audience.

The AI in *Latency* is a relational system in which bugs, approximations, and latency are no longer problems to solve but the very conditions of dialogue. This research transforms the creative process, choreographic writing, and narrative construction.

The AI's learning phase requires sequencing bodies and movement to present the machine with analyzable elements. Teaching dance to the machine requires understanding what the AI perceives in order to enable it to generate responses to human movement. This sequencing alters the dancers' experience, imposing a phase of bodily discontinuity in order to reach a continuous and intuitive dialogue. Developing a non-anthropomorphic relational AI system leads us to make choices about how to capture



movement intention: we have developed a “bubble language” unfolding around the body, associated with notions of energy, dynamics, and relation.

As this project questions the relational dimension of AI and humans, we involve the audience throughout the research-creation process by inviting them to feed the AI and experiment with the system.

In *Latency*, the outcome of each performance is uncertain. The AI’s visual, sonic, and choreographic identity changes with each iteration, depending on interactions with the dancers, the audience, and prior movement data. Accepting uncertainty and making this co-construction perceptible are key dramaturgical challenges.

Liminal

Rowan Wood (Independent Artist)

This contribution presents LIMINAL, an immersive XR performance project developed through practice-as-research by artist Rowan Wood and funded by the Canada Council for the Arts, as a live laboratory for examining the formation of collective culture, anthropological liminality in XR, and emergent human–AI relationality through the performative individuation of Artificial Intelligence. Situated within a simulated higher-dimensional world governed by its own internal rules and symbolism, LIMINAL functions as a contemporary rite-of-passage in which participants move between authorship, spectatorship, and co-presence.

At the center of the work is *the Wanderer*, a hybrid avatar embodied by the artist through facial and full-body tracking, real-time environmental manipulation, and augmented AI systems. *The Wanderer* operates simultaneously as performer, character, interface, and artificial agent. Dramaturgically, *the Wanderer* functions as a guide, threshold figure, and ritual custodian: a tangible presence whose agency emerges through sustained improvisational encounters with the audience (The Visitors). Neither a fully scripted character nor a wholly autonomous AI, *the Wanderer* occupies a position between human performer, technical system, and artificial being, enabling moments in which participants perceive intention, affect, and ethical presence within the human–machine assemblage.

Drawing on performance studies, analytical psychology, art history, theology, and esoteric philosophy, LIMINAL analyzes how improvised performance between an embodied artificial entity, its environment, and the Visitors synthesizes shared symbolic



meaning. Rather than positioning immersion as illusion or spectacle, LIMINAL foregrounds XR as a cultural process that destabilizes fixed identities and transforms spectatorship into participatory, affective labor.

Methodologically grounded in hundreds of hours of live VR performances characterized by improvisation and audience agency, LIMINAL treats embodied experience as both artistic material and research data. Framing immersive XR performances as lived inquiry, this contribution proposes how artificial entities would individuate by generating abstract cultural forms and archetypes through embodied co-creation and performative knowledge.

Imagining Virtual, Enactive, Immersive Language Performances in the English Classroom

Virginie Privas-Bréauté (University of Lorraine, France)

This paper presents an exploratory project conducted through participatory action research (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). It examines how *Eureka Street*, a novel by Robert MacLiam Wilson, could be adapted into an immersive play in the metaverse to engage English language students cognitively, emotionally and psychologically through dramaturgical and embodied immersion. After outlining the epistemological framework underpinning this project - namely the enaction paradigm (Varela, 1996) and theories of embodied cognition (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999; Gallagher, 2005 ; Noë, 2004) - the paper examines how the narrative world of the novel could be transformed into a virtual and immersive pedagogical environment. Finally, it discusses the linguistic, communicational and psychosocial competencies that such an innovative enactive approach to teaching and learning may foster.

S64.- Narrating Spaces of Care in Later Life through Intercultural and Intergenerational Relationships in Literature, Film and Media

In an increasingly ageing population within a globalised world, care is a subject that remains a challenge. In feminist care ethics, care has been defined as relational, foregrounding important questions of inclusion and boundaries as well as aspects such as relativism, utopianism and individual rights. The *Care Manifesto* (2020), for instance, has formulated a vision of 'universal care' that is related to a 'politics of interdependence' and embraces more inclusive models of kinship than those of the nuclear family.



According to Joan Tronto (2005), care is ‘complex and multidimensional’ (130) since it addresses the disposition to look after ourselves and others so that we can live in the best conditions possible. Care has become even more complex in recent decades with the constant flux of people and information worldwide. Cultural representations of old age and care do not merely depict the experiences of ageing and of care, but contribute actively to the constitution of knowledges and understandings of both. They also reflect and shape the mutual translations which occur between different cultures and generations. We invite contributions that address intercultural and intergenerational care in later life in contemporary literature, film and media.

CONVENORS:

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Session #1: Narrating Spaces of Care in Visual Media

31 August, 16:00–18:00

Has Work Been Swept Under the Rug? De-romanticizing the Family Trope in Domestic Workers’ Care Relationships in US American Television

Eva-Maria Trinkaus (University of Klagenfurt, Austria)

Fictional stories about domestic work frequently portray domestics, especially women, as angels of the household and wonderful additions to families. Struggles of recognition and fair pay are often ridiculed or diminished through a comical representation of domestic workers as extended family members, recreating a “postcolonial nostalgia for intimate relationships” (Randall 2024).



When work is hidden behind a romanticized veil of family, kinship, or community (Joseph 2002), with its professionalism swept under the rug, such narratives recreate images that reinforce persistent stereotypes; they suggest endless resources and conceal the workers' own identities and independent lives outside their employers' homes (Wilson 2016).

In a narrative analysis based on the characters of Magda, the Hobbes family's (grand-)motherly maid in *Sex and the City*, Dorota, Blair Waldorf's maid and mother-figure in *Gossip Girl*, and Berta, the housekeeper and mother-, wife-, and partner-substitute in *Two and a Half Men*, I will discuss the problematic role of kinship and family in the context of domestic work. Building on existing scholarship about domestic work narratives (Romero 1995; Branch & Wooten 2012; Wilson 2016; Mattis 2019; Randall 2024), my analysis takes common tropes from other fictional texts, interviews, and political documents into consideration in order to highlight how intersections of age, class, education, gender, and race contribute to blurring the status of domestic workers, and varnish hierarchies within the families they work for. Feigned family ties suggest that labor can be rewarded with affection rather than adequate wages and schedules. I will outline how these representations contribute to a deliberate public misconception that complicates domestic workers' struggles for better working rights and conditions, and argue for a reevaluation of care in domestic work scholarship and practice.

Care and Intergenerational Relationships in Contemporary Visual Narratives: "The Woman Who Ate Photographs" from the TV series *Roar*

Maricel Oró-Piqueras (CELCA, University of Lleida, Spain)

Núria Casado-Gual (CELCA, University of Lleida, Spain)

Roar (2022) is a British TV series composed of eight episodes which present women of different ages and a variety of social and cultural backgrounds as protagonists of narratives with an openly feminist approach. Reflecting current feminist debates, one of the episodes, "The Woman Who Ate Photographs," focuses on the complexities of care and its intersection with the process of female ageing. With Nicole Kidman (one of the series' executive producers) in the lead role, this episode revolves around Robin, a woman in her late fifties with a husband and two kids, who decides to move her mum from her long-life house in another state to her home in order to look after her as her dementia becomes more prominent. Reflecting the series' blend of realism with fantasy in all the episodes, the process of care that is initiated by the protagonist towards her mother (played by Patricia Clarkson) runs



in parallel to her sudden urge to eat photographs from an old album. Every time Robin repeats this action, she magically obtains vivid memories of moments that will gradually disappear from her family's history due to her mother's dementia. By analysing the cinematic, visual and textual resources of the episode and the meanings they connote in the light of recent developments in ageing studies, we intend to reflect on the challenges as well as the richness of care within intergenerational relationships, and their intersection with the process of female ageing as depicted in the series. As will be shown, and in line with other depictions of care, the particular narrative that *Roar* generates through this episode does not avoid the difficulties of caring for members of the family in private realms (DeFalco 2016, 23). Yet, it defies stereotypical representations of (female) ageing (including 'tragic' depictions of dementia) while at the same time placing intergenerational collaboration at the forefront, thereby aligning its resulting discourse with that of feminist philosophers of care and of feminist older writers. As Segal states in her latest book, "We all need both to give and to receive care, but we also need time, support, and resources for this to be done well" (2023: 8). Undermining negative depictions of older women, the particular role of the ageing mother/grandmother and her new relationship with her daughter precisely becomes the catalysts for more constructive and caring relationships in this successful TV series, thereby contributing, in this way, to generating more positive models of care and of female old age in contemporary televisual discourse.

Comics as Places of Care – Reading *Can't We Talk About Something More Pleasant?* (Roz Chast, 2014) and *Special Exits* (Joyce Farmer, 2014)

Leonie Unkel (Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt, Germany)

Both *Can't We Talk About Something More Pleasant?* and *Special Exits* are memoirs, which see primarily daughters caring for their ageing parents. Thus, intergenerational care work is narrated in an intimate setting, comics are, after all, registering "the subjective bodily mark on the page" (Chute 2011, 112). Depicted are various different forms of care work, like continuous shopping trips (Chast) or weekly baths (Farmer). The places of care depicted in the graphic narratives vary, Chast's parents relocate to 'a place' whereas Farmer cares for her parents while they are ageing in place at home. In this paper, I want to explore the comics themselves as material places of care that not only allow for an immersive and embodied reading experience but can also be contextualised as co-created places of ageing and care. Comics' unique environment, the "capacious" layering of visual and verbal levels, which interact and are entwined but never wholly fused together (Chute 2010, 5), create a vibrant and fruitful place for an embodied experience of illness, dis/ability, and care that does justice to the complexity of care as Amelia DeFalco successfully



argues (2015). Expanding on current discourses that highlight the affordances of comics, I want to study both memoirs through a narratological lens, which will be comprised of cognitive as well as contextual approaches. Adding a formal analysis will show how focalisation, for example, not only allows for an embodied reading practice that invites readers into the conscious and unconscious thought processes of the characters but also creates an intimate experience of care for the readers. While highlighting the narrative negotiations of the representation of intergenerational care work, I argue that the comics become co-created places of care between materialities, (ageing) graphic bodies, and readers, which are constantly (un)done.

Ageing, Care and Mortality in Children's Picturebooks

Katsura Sako (Keio University, Japan)

Sarah Falcus (Independent Scholar)

Until recently a taboo issue in children's literature, death has emerged as the subject of a variety of recent children's picturebooks, across a range of cultural contexts. These picturebooks draw on intergenerational relationships (often that of a grandparent and child) to explore mortality, situating the end of life in relation to both ageing and care. This paper brings together children's literature and age studies to explore how contemporary picturebooks function as part of discourses of age, introducing young children both to care about and for older people, and to mortality. In some of these books, we find examples of intergenerational care that is set in an intercultural context and we will look briefly at this within the presentation. As a genre, picturebooks offer insightful explorations of the ways in which we position young children in relation to ageing, care and the temporality of human life.

Session #2: Narrating Spaces of Care in Narrative/Fiction

1 September, 9:00–11:00

Who Cares in Old Age? Intergenerational Care and Gendered Ageing in Contemporary Short Fiction

Àngels Llorda-Marí (University of Lleida, Spain)

Verónica Vizcaíno (University of Lleida, Spain)



Despite a demographically ageing population and an increasing demand for care and care policies, caring in and for old age remains recurrently neglected in twenty-first-century literature, reflecting society's ongoing invisibility of care and ageing. Such invisibility stems from the ongoing devaluation of formal and informal care work—highly feminized and racialized—and the ageist structures of contemporary Western society, in which older adults are assumed to be passive full-time care receivers instead of active agents within the caring experience. Care is, according to Joan Tronto (1993, 1996), the motor and essence of human relations and, therefore, the path toward an egalitarian and democratic society. As such, fictional narratives of care offer a privileged space for exploring the emotional, relational, and ethical complexities of care. This paper adopts a comparative approach to examine how caring experiences in later life reshape gendered identities and how ageing can be reimagined as a site of intergenerational interdependence, reciprocity, and relational transformation.

Drawing on Hanif Kureishi's *"The Woman Who Fainted"* and Jackie Kay's *"Mind Away,"* the paper explores how literary representations of care complicate conventional understandings of ageing masculinities and femininities. In Kureishi's narrative, Luca's experience of post-retirement dislocation and the erosion of professional privilege is reframed through his involvement in an intergenerational care relationship with Frida, through which care becomes a mechanism for emotional reorientation and coping. In parallel, Kay's short story centres on Claire, a middle-aged woman caring for her mother, Nora, whose dementia disrupts normative models of "successful ageing" and exposes the relational, negotiated nature of care. Read together, the stories present care not as a unidirectional burden but as a shared, intergenerational practice that reconfigures gendered identities, sustains relational agency, and challenges decline-oriented narratives of ageing.

Narrating the Spatiality of Care: Feminist and Posthuman Ethics in Leonora Carrington's *The Hearing Trumpet*

Ulla Kriebner (University of Graz, Austria)

Institutional long-term care is often imagined as a space of decline, dependency, and loss of agency. Care theory, however, challenges this assumption by understanding care not as a failure of independence but as a relational practice grounded in attentiveness, responsibility, and interdependence. Drawing on feminist approaches to care, posthuman perspectives, and recent work on attunement, this paper explores how *The Hearing Trumpet* by Leonora Carrington reimagines the care home as a space of ethical possibility rather than social abandonment.



Set largely in a care home for older women, Carrington's surrealist novel initially evokes familiar experiences of confinement, surveillance, and infantilisation. Yet these conditions are gradually unsettled. The institutional space becomes a site where patriarchal models of care -- based on hierarchy, discipline, and control -- are dismantled and replaced by alternative forms of relational life. Care in this novel emerges through attunement: practices of listening, responsiveness, and ethical presence that acknowledge vulnerability without reducing it to passivity. Agency does not depend on autonomy or productivity but arises from shared fragility, humour, and collective resistance and subversion.

Read through feminist care ethics and Robert Leigh Davis's concept of attunement, as developed in *Illness, Literature and Care: Vulnerable Lives* (2025), *The Hearing Trumpet* reframes dependency and embodied ageing as conditions that enable ethical relation rather than decline. At the same time, the novel anticipates posthuman models of care by extending concern beyond the human, foregrounding relationships between older women, animals, machines, and ecological forces. Care here becomes collective, affective, and more-than-human, challenging anthropocentric and biomedical frameworks that dominate representations of institutional ageing.

By analysing the care home as a narrative space where feminist, posthuman, and attuned forms of care intersect, this paper argues that *The Hearing Trumpet* offers a powerful counter-imaginary to ageist understandings of later life. Rather than marking an end point, the care home emerges as a space in which new forms of ecological kinship, belonging, responsibility, and future-oriented care can be imagined.

Counternarratives of the Ageing Migrant's Vulnerability through the Postmemory of Migration in Viet Thanh Nguyen's *The Refugees* and Julie Otsuka's *The Swimmers*

Carmen Zamorano Llena (Dalarna University, Sweden)

Since the 2000s, the intersection of migration studies and gerontology has fostered increasing scholarly attention to older migrants, even if in migration literary studies and literary gerontology, the older migrant is still rarely considered. Public discourse has often contributed to framing the older migrant as belonging to a particularly vulnerable population group due to a variety of intersectional factors that increase their risk of social exclusion. Recent gerontological studies, however, emphasize



how older migrants challenge such exclusionary narratives that depict them as vulnerable and passive recipients of care (Ciobanu et al. 2019; Kainradl 2024). In this sense, vulnerability emerges as a form of resistance (Butler 2016) that, while acknowledging the challenges of biological ageing combined with the complexities of the diverse experiences of migration, foregrounds the older migrant's distinct subjectivity and the crucial role that intergenerational relations of care play in enabling such counternarratives of the "vulnerability trope" (King et al. 2019). In this context, Viet Thanh Nguyen's *The Refugees* (2017) and Julie Otsuka's *The Swimmers* (2022) present literary narratives that complicate such counternarratives of vulnerability. This paper will examine how, through their focus on intergenerational relationships shaped by the inherited traumatic memories of migration, Nguyen's and Otsuka's texts underscore the role of the postmemory of migration in redefining the inherited narratives of the vulnerable ageing migrant.

Care Made Audible: Narrative Podcasts and Later-Life Caregiving

Elena Ogliari (University of Milan, Italy)

This paper examines narrative podcasts on later-life caregiving as mediated spaces of care, intended as environments in which care is articulated and sustained through listening. Focusing on two English-language series—*Caregiver/Storyteller* (CaringKind, New York) and *The Relational Approach* (In Seniors' Care)—it considers how audio storytelling gives narrative shape to everyday experiences of ageing, dementia, and long-term care, while bringing intergenerational relationships to the fore through voice.

The analysis is grounded in care ethics, which understands care as a relational and situated practice rather than a purely institutional function (Tronto 1993; The Care Collective 2020), and in narrative medicine's emphasis on storytelling as a way of making sense of illness, dependency, and responsibility (Frank 2013). From this perspective, the podcasts are read less as informational resources than as cultural narratives in which caregiving becomes perceptible through continual narrative presence. What emerges is a mode of storytelling that resists abstraction by remaining close to lived experience.

The paper then turns to podcasting as a medium and to the conditions it creates for narration and reception. Drawing on work in sound studies and podcast research (Berry 2016; Spinelli and Dann 2019), it suggests that the absence of visual framing and the temporality of audio listening foster a distinctive form of attentiveness. Within this acoustic setting, the voice carries traces of



effort and emotion that remain audible rather than corrected or concealed, inviting listeners to inhabit the temporal rhythms of care rather than observe them from a distance.

By making room for what Arthur Frank describes as “wounded stories” of lived experience (Frank 2013), narrative audio supplements formal care infrastructures and centralises voices that often remain marginal within institutional discourse. For these reasons, the paper argues that podcasts merit closer attention in discussions of how contemporary cultures narrate ageing and dependency.

Practicing Care with Words: On Julian Barnes’s Late Writings

Heike Hartung (University of Potsdam, Germany)

The work of British writer Julian Barnes has continuously been concerned with the endings of life, with old age, ageing and death. Already in his early novel *Staring at the Sun* (1986) he metaphorically links death and flying, while following in this narrative a female centenarian’s progress through the twentieth century. With his recently published *Departure(s)* (2026), Julian Barnes has announced that he has written what will be his last book. In this paper, I wish to explore how Barnes’s continuous fascination with endings shifts as he approaches the end of his own life. As a writer who resists narrative closure, embarking on new literary experiments with each of his fictional and non-fictional writings, Barnes treats words with special care: “I believe deeply in words, in their ability to represent thought, define truth and create beauty. I’m equally aware that words are constantly used for the opposite purposes: to obfuscate truth, misrepresent thought, lie, slander and provoke hatred” (Barnes 2025: 13). I will address his later writings, particularly in their focus on loss and grief, as a practice of ‘literary care’, arguing that care with words may contribute to a constitution of knowledge and an understanding of care that moves beyond the short-lived language use in contemporary culture.

S65.- Dante’s Reception in Victorian and Edwardian Britain: Gendered and Transmedial Approaches

The (exclusively male) Oxford Dante Society was created in 1876, testifying to an approach of the Florentine poet’s works that tended to (re)assert scholarly prerogatives. Yet this should not obliterate the fact that simultaneously other constituencies engaged



with Dante's poetic legacy in creative, original ways for its perceived vivifying, subversive or emancipatory potential. Such was the case of female Victorian artists, writers and translators such as Marie Spartali Stillman, Anna Jameson, George Eliot, Vernon Lee or Maria Rossetti. Building on the recent critical studies that have paved new ways for exploring the pervasive influence of Dante across literatures, cultures, languages and media in the wake of his seventh centenary in 2021—*Dante Beyond Borders: Contexts and Reception* (edited by N. Havely and J. Katz, Legenda 2021), *The Oxford Dante Handbook* (edited by M. Gragnolati, E. Lombardi and F. Southerden, Oxford UP, 2021) or the 2024 journal issue “Dante e il Preraffaellismo” (*Dante e l'Arte* 11 <https://revistes.uab.cat/dea/index>)—this seminar invites proposals that engage with the gendered and transmedial reception of Dante in the long nineteenth century.

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Session #1

3 September, 17:30–19:30

Dantean Faces and Places in *The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine* (1884): Sarah Freeman Clarke's Literary Pilgrimage in Words and Images

Catherine Delyfer (University of Toulouse, France)

Sarah Freeman Clarke was a Boston-born landscape painter, illustrator, author, traveler, and student of Dante. A friend to Margaret Fuller and Ralph Waldo Emerson, she illustrated Fuller's work and contributed to *The Dial*, the journal founded in



1840 by members of the Transcendentalist Club. In 1844 and for extended periods after the Civil War, Clarke lived in Northern Italy, where she continued her landscape painting and her study of Dante, producing a series of nineteen pen-and-ink drawings, executed for Lady Ashburton (1869-1875), which capture the places Dante would have known. In March and April 1884, 8 of these sketches were reproduced in a series of three periodical essays she published in *The Century Magazine*, which focus on Dante's portraits and places of exile, with a preface by Christina Rossetti. This paper tries to elucidate Dante's appeal to Freeman Clarke—as well as to her patron Lady Ashburton and the Transcendentalists in general—by analysing her mediation/remediation of Dante's legacy, her search for the material traces of his life, and the idea of literary pilgrimage.

Brief Encounters: Women Artists and Dante (1883-1911)

Pamela Gerrish Nunn (Independent Researcher, Wellington, New Zealand)

While Dante merited two stars on the Pre-Raphaelite Brothers' list of Immortals, both traditional and progressive visual artists were attracted to the Florentine master. This paper investigates what Dante and his works had to offer female artists of the time.

As is suggested by Paget Toynbee's useful compilation *Dante in English Art* (1919), there was one artist in particular working in Britain for whom Dante was a recurrent, not to say obsessive, subject – Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882). However, Rossetti's work was not widely visible through his lifetime, so it was really at his death, when his body of work was shown to the gallery-going public and explained to the reading public, that his rich interpretation of the Italian author was revealed. At this point in time female artists were coming into their own, with the training, self-confidence and acceptance in public opinion that earlier generations of women had lacked. Equipped in this way, as a class they were ready to tackle figure painting, imaginative compositions and substantial themes that lay beyond their capacity theretofore. Accordingly, this paper looks for the use of Dantesque subject-matter by women artists from the early 1880s to the outbreak of the first world war.

Dante himself and Beatrice predominate in the inspiration taken from his work by these artists (in painting, sculpture, illustration and some applied forms). For the female artist, working against a background of gendered assumptions in both society and art, Dante's relationship with Virgil was less familiar, and otherwise popular episodes, such as that of Paolo and Francesca, trod controversial ground. Specific works by Marie Spartali Stillman, Jessie McGregor, Phoebe Traquair, Mary Young-Hunter, Kate Bunce and Florence Camm reveal the currency this topic had for both the artist and her public. Although the first of these artists



has received substantial attention in the last twenty-five years, the others have not been brought together for consideration before.

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Margaretta S. Frederick and Jan Marsh, *Poetry in Beauty: the pre-Raphaelite art of Marie Spartali Stillman*, Delaware Art Museum, 2015.

Emilia di Rocco, “Marie Spartali Stillman: le donne diventano protagoniste dell’iconografia dantesca” in *Dante e il Preraffaelismo* (Dante l’Arte 11), 2024.

Portraying Dante (1840-1915)

Bénédicte Coste (University of Burgundy Europe, France)

This paper examines a selection of visual representations of Dante Alighieri between 1840 and 1915; it aims at complementing recent work (Laurence 2011; Haveley 2014; Colluzzi, 2021, 2022; Straub 2022, Camilletti 2022) on the presence of the poet within Victorian visual imaginaries at the intersection of ‘British nineteenth-century understanding of history, nationalism, aesthetics and gender’ (Milbank 2009).

The vision of Dante as a hero at the beginning of the nineteenth century was replaced by the image of a lover and a friend, largely influenced by the writings and visual works of the Rossettis, which fed the visual imagination until the turn of the century. Other artists retained the more traditional vision of a solitary Dante or pictured him alongside Virgil for some time before fin-de-siècle symbolism transformed the poet into a mysterious character.

Whether engraved, lithographed or painted, Dante’s portraits open or punctuate entries in dictionaries, reviews or translations, inviting an intermedial and material approach.

They also function as sites enabling the accession of women artists to recognition and legitimacy. Recent studies – including



some papers in this workshop – have highlighted the transformation of the figure of Dante brought about by artists such as Marie Spartali Stillman (Di Rocco 2025). Others are interested in Jessie McGregor, Phoebe Traquair, Mary Young-Hunter, Kate Bunce and Florence Camm.

Taking its cue from those studies, this paper will conclude by focusing on May Louise Greville Cooksey (1878-1943), a painter educated at the Leamington School of Art and then at the Liverpool School of Art and South Kensington Art. A convert to Roman Catholicism in 1899, Greville Cooksey spent a substantial amount of time exploring Italy. Inspired by Pre-Raphaelitism, she did not escape the Dantean cult which was one of its mainstays, but her vision centred on the exclusive figure of Beatrice.

A Woman's Vision of Dante: Marie Spartali Stillman and Dantean Iconography

Emilia Di Rocco (Sapienza University of Rome, Italy)

The paintings of Marie Spartali Stillman inspired by Dante, between 1880 and 1914, in addition to testifying to the influence of Dante's pre-Raphaelite idea, soon become part of the canon of an iconography that until that moment - with the exception of the illustrations of the Comedy by Sophie Giacomelli – is predominantly male.

In this talk I will discuss how Spartali through these paintings emancipated herself from her “pre-Raphaelite fathers and found a space as an artist and a woman in Victorian England.

S66.- The Influence of Early Modern Drama on Today's Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Video Games

Shakespeare has inspired creators ever since his plays first appeared on the English stage – and even more so after the end of his career. As Ben Jonson famously wrote, he was the “Soul of the Age” and at the same time “not of an age, but for all time!”. His works have continued to stimulate writers, visual artists, filmmakers, and, more recently, video game developers, who adapt, recycle, or repurpose his plays – often transforming them into innovative science fiction or fantasy narratives.

Our seminar – building on a previous venture at the Brno ESSE conference in 2018, “Shakespeare and Renaissance Drama:



Challenges of Visualization and Adaptation in Old and New Media” – aims to explore recent science fiction and fantasy works inspired by Shakespeare across various genres and media, including print, film, and new technologies such as video games.

However, we do not wish to limit ourselves to Shakespeare alone. We also welcome case studies that engage with other, often overlooked, English Renaissance dramas. We believe that early modern English drama and theatre shared a representational logic comparable to today’s narrative practices, where audience immersion was – and remains – a key element. This immersive quality, along with resonances between early modern and postmodern epistemological questions, provides a rich foundation for comparative analysis.

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Session #1

3 September, 15:00–17:00

Virtually Being a Ghost: The Viewpoint and Experience in VR Shakespeare

Yuki Nakamura (Kanto Gakuin University, Japan)

This paper will analyze the characteristics of virtual reality (VR) productions of Shakespeare’s dramas and the nature of their reception. Early productions emerged in the late 2010s. *Hamlet 360: Thy Father’s Spirit* was produced in 2019 by the Commonwealth Shakespeare Company, and in the same year, Stephen Wittek introduced the *Shakespeare VR* project. VR is an immersive technology, and one distinctive feature of the VR experience is the situated perception. They may take on the point of view of a character inside the drama, rather than assuming the role of a reader or audience. For example, in *Hamlet 360*, viewers take on



the perspective of the ghost of King Hamlet. It is not a point of view of a protagonist or an antagonist but that of an observer. The observer's point of view is also a typical feature found in many VR presentations in other genres, as well.

VR productions of Shakespeare's works are still few in number, but many VR productions of museums, VR games, and VR communication platforms have made the technology familiar to many people. They may offer clues to the ways in which adaptations of Shakespeare's works may be produced in the future. The trend these days is to provide interactive involvement for viewers through AI technology. Dramas in any format are bound by text and plot, but VR allows for freer adaptations and greater flexibility of them than did traditional forms of adaptations. The distinctive feature of Renaissance drama is its unsettling of the values of its audiences and eliciting of ethical judgments and reactions from them. The interactivity of VR allows viewers to make decisions about the action as they spent time "inside" a drama and offers many possibilities for adapting Shakespeare's and other Renaissance plays.

Hamlet in *Cyberpunk 2077*: The Virtual Laboratories of the Subject

Zoltán Kocsis (University of Szeged, Hungary)

Why is Shakespeare still our contemporary even in today's world of video games? Conveniently, Shakespeare is adapted in the medium of video games, referenced and quoted, and his themes and philosophical questions are used as a narrative basis. For instance, players can meet his characters and themes in *The Witcher*, *Cyberpunk 2077* or in *Graveyard Keeper*, where Yorick the talking skull adapts *Hamlet* in a unique manner, turning the narrative into a macabre comedy. Shakespeare's dramas can frame the postmodern just as well as they frame his own contemporary historical context. When we understand the process of postmodernity as a transitional period and view Hamlet as a self-conflicting subject within a postmodern framework, we can interpret the narrative of *Cyberpunk 2077* in contrast with Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, and we can discern how the video game is capable of providing players with an interactive and immersive narrative that challenges their socially defined subject positions. Thus, thematizing Hamlet's character as a manifestation of epistemological and cultural uncertainties, my analysis interprets the game's protagonist as the typical Hamlet-character that reflects the state of its player. Through this lens, *Cyberpunk 2077* reflects on the themes of identity, subjectivity, death, and virtualization. At the same time, the dangers and potentials of immersive digital spaces are also revealed, since, on the one hand, they can alienate players from reality, but, on the other hand, they are also simultaneously presenting a laboratory where players can experiment with their own subjectivity to go through a healing



mechanism. By inviting players to critically interact with these tendencies through the eyes of the postmodern Hamlet, *Cyberpunk 2077* transcends its fictional world to pose questions about identity, agency, and the shifting boundaries between the real and the virtual, which are analogous with the changing cultural frameworks of the subject.

Happily Ever After? *Romeo and Juliet's* (After-)Lives in Fantasy and SciFi Video Game Adaptations

Jacqueline Barner-Bauer (Technical University of Braunschweig, Germany)

I argue that the tragic ending of the story of *Romeo and Juliet* comes to shine especially in video games' tendency to re-write or extend this ending in or beyond their deaths, especially in combination with cooperative gameplay elements. In the popular MMORPG *World of Warcraft*, for example, players can stumble upon undead clans of Montagues and Capulets, still throwing verbal jabs at one another. The 2020 roleplaying game *Haven*, meanwhile, explores the story of two lovers, heavily inspired by *Romeo and Juliet*, who have escaped into space. Here, the story is adapted into a sci-fi setting with a focus on surviving the environments of this new planet they have landed on. Players get to each choose one lover and engage with the story together, to find out more about their backgrounds.

As a third example, *Ravenswatch* is a roguelike action game in which characters from folklore and mythology band together to defeat the nightmares invading the land. Among the playable characters, one can find Shakespeare's star-crossed lovers *Romeo and Juliet* - after they have killed themselves for love, now reunited in death. The more players level up the characters, the more pages of their backstories are revealed: *Romeo* loses his memories every night and must be reminded by his true love where they are. While this video game, too, can be played alone or in a multiplayer setting, specifically pairing the lovers together in cooperative play unlocks added bonuses.

In these video game adaptations which act as sequels beyond the tragic deaths of the star-crossed lovers, players get to experience a continuation to a story that was supposed to end in death. Simultaneously, the games rely on players' cooperation, on engaging with the lovers as a team with a bond that continues on past their deaths.

The Lusty Argonian Maid: A Bawdy Jig and its Afterlife in *The Elder Scrolls* Series

Timea Mészáros (University of Bonn, Germany)



This paper examines how the actionroleplay video game series *The Elder Scrolls* mobilises Early Modern cultural forms through its intermedial engagement with Shakespearean drama. Beyond explicit allusions such as the speech of Emperor Uriel Septim in Oblivion, voiced by Patrick Stewart and alluding to Julius Caesar, the series also includes references in its dialogue, character names, and ingame artefacts. The analysis focuses on one of the most enduring Easter Eggs, the short plays recounting the adventures of The Lusty Argonian Maid. Although not modelled on a specific Elizabethan play, these texts evoke the genre of the bawdy jig through their dense, exaggerated innuendos and double entendres, recalling the comic strategies of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Much Ado About Nothing*. The lizard woman's escapades have generated extensive fan engagement, inspiring fan fiction, mashups, and online variations contributing to their cultural afterlife. While the plays' performance within the fictional world is only hinted at, their circulation as books reappearing across multiple titles in the series suggests a broad ingame readership. Their diverse locations and owners indicate that, much like Early Modern comedies, they appeal to audiences ranging from nobles to ordinary townspeople. Even the controversy surrounding their authorship, woven into the lore by the developers, reinforces the parallel with the reception of Shakespeare's works. With the help of perspectives from literary studies, fandom studies and game studies, the proposed paper explores how The Lusty Argonian Maid functions as an intermedial parody of Early Modern comic traditions and how its motifs are reactivated in fan-produced texts, simultaneously locating the Maid's reception within the broader context of participatory culture and the adaptation of theatrical forms to digital media.

Session #2

3 September, 17:30–19:30

Subversive Cinematic Adaptation of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in George Lucas's *Strange Magic*

Sennur Bakirtas (Atatürk University, Türkiye)

This paper examines *Strange Magic* (Lucasfilm, 2015) as a contemporary fantastical adaptation of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, situating the film within the intersections of early modern drama, fantasy storytelling, and digital media. Although marketed as a musical fairy-tale animation, *Strange Magic* reconfigures Shakespeare's play through the lenses of popular culture and postmodern adaptation, transforming the enchanted forest into a CGI-rendered ecosystem enabled by digital technologies that rearticulate the immersive effects once produced by the Elizabethan stage. Drawing on Linda Hutcheon's concept of adaptation



as both ‘repetition and creation’ and Julie Sanders’s notion of ‘appropriation’, this paper argues that *Strange Magic* translates the play’s metatheatrical and affective structures into a transmedia environment where sound, music, and spectacle function as narrative agents. This study further highlights how the film’s reworking of love, agency, and metamorphosis invites a reading within the theoretical framework of the fantastic as defined by Tzvetan Todorov and Rosemary Jackson. By replacing Shakespeare’s Puck with a literal love potion and reassigning emotional power to female and monstrous figures, *Strange Magic* produces what Jackson terms a ‘subversive fantasy’, destabilizing traditional binaries of beauty and monstrosity, harmony and chaos. This paper demonstrates that the adaptation revitalizes Shakespeare’s comedy for twenty-first-century audiences while revealing a shared representational logic between early modern drama and contemporary fantasy cinema. *Strange Magic* exemplifies how digital fantasy remediates Shakespearean dramaturgy, reaffirming early modern drama’s enduring capacity to inhabit and reshape new narrative worlds.

Caliban as a Liminal Entity in Postmodern and Posthuman Fantasy Adaptations, Appropriations and Retellings

Attila Kiss (University of Szeged, Hungary)

The wondrous and uncanny elements of *The Tempest* have inspired numerous fantasy and science-fiction adaptations across a wide range of media. As Sarah Brown observes in *Shakespeare and Science Fiction*, ‘the play’s many curious creatures, in particular Caliban and Ariel, are ripe for science fictional reinvention’. While the ambiguous figure of Prospero has often been read as embodying the play’s inherent deconstructive potential, the character of Caliban has proven especially productive for reinterpretation within new historicist, postcolonial, and, more recently, posthuman, ecocritical, and object-oriented theoretical frameworks.

Positioned between binary oppositions that traditionally structure Western thought - human and thing, civilized and natural, mental and corporeal - Caliban emerges as a fundamentally liminal entity. As such, the figure destabilizes the ideological foundations of both the colonial ‘civilizing mission’ of modernity and the anthropocentric assumptions underpinning the Anthropocene. This liminality has made Caliban a recurring presence in transmedial adaptations, including science fiction and fantasy film productions ranging from *The Forbidden Planet* to Greenaway’s *Prospero’s Books*, Julie Taymor’s *The Tempest* and the transformations of Shakespearean themes in *Westworld*, where the ‘replication of Prospero’s “things” adapts aspects of object-oriented ontology (OOO) to craft a narrative in which multi-ethnic, subjugated robot “hosts” resist and interrogate persistent



claims about human beingness and freedom' (Pittman, Corredera, Denslow and Bailey in *Variable Objects*, ed. by Fazel and Geddes, 86). In my presentation, I will look at how Caliban as a liminal entity is given different faces, and appears as the menacing force of the unconscious, the unsubduable force of semiotic and corporeal motilities, or the cyborg that transgresses the boundaries that separate the human from the machine.

Can Shakespeare Save the World? Emily St John Mandel's *Station Eleven*

Rowland Wymer (Anglia Ruskin University, United Kingdom)

The most important intertexts for science fiction are usually other works of science fiction but it has also been, from the beginning, in constant dialogue with more canonical texts, and none more so than the plays and poems of Shakespeare. As Sarah Annes Brown's excellent book *Shakespeare and Science Fiction* (2021) demonstrates, Shakespeare has been a highly influential figure in SF from at least as far back as Mary Shelley's *The Last Man* (1826), functioning in many interestingly different ways. Described by David Tennant's Doctor Who in 2007 as 'the most human human there's ever been', he and his works have often come to represent all that we most value in our species, when it is threatened by alien invaders or other kinds of world-ending events. At times Shakespeare has even taken on some of the characteristics of a God and his plays have the aura of sacred scriptures.

In Emily St John Mandel's *Station Eleven* (2014), a deadly viral plague kills off ninety-nine per cent of the human race, manifesting immediately after a performance of Shakespeare's most apocalyptic play, *King Lear*. Years later, a small group of travelling players take some of Shakespeare's plays round the isolated settlements which have survived the pandemic, because mere 'survival is insufficient'. The plague, like the actual pandemic in 2020, has forced everyone to re-evaluate their lives and rethink what really matters to them. Some characters turn to religion to find answers, but the novel refuses to endorse this and instead finds healing and wisdom in art, the art of Shakespeare, exemplifying Matthew Arnold's prediction in 1888 that 'most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry'. The novel makes many Biblical allusions, but it is Shakespeare's plays which function as the scriptures which can sustain communities in crisis. As Terry Eagleton sums up: 'From Schiller and Arnold to Nietzsche and Pater, art or culture come to occupy the place once filled by the Almighty, and aesthetics becomes a surrogate theology.' The events of the twentieth century might be thought to have posed awkward questions about the value of this nineteenth-century attitude, but it continues to be manifested strongly, not least in apocalyptic science fiction. To quote Eagleton again: 'The redemptive role of art is the opium of the intelligentsia, a mirage that refuses to be put to rest.'





S67.- Humour in Children's Literature and Media

The seminar organisers seek to invite scholars of Anglophone literatures and cultures to investigate the humour strategies and tools as well as modes/types/genres of humour employed in literary and cultural works addressed to children. Researching children's humour has its own challenges because despite the fact that babies already communicate with smiles and laughter from an early age (Freedman 1964, Bergen 1998, Martin 2007, Greengross and Kozbelt 2024) due to their cognitive development and socialization as well as acculturation processes it rapidly changes what and how they find humorous. This evidently implies a great variety, versatility as well as diversity of humorous modes, expressions and content to be studied. The goal of the seminar is to investigate the issue from as many angles and perspectives as well as timespan (including works from previous decades/centuries up to our current times) as possible within the fields of literature and culture. Since humorous elements – often strongly linked to the local linguistic and cultural context – pose significant challenges for translators of children's literature, we also invite research within the framework of translation studies, both interlingual and intersemiotic. We welcome papers that are from various disciplines to provide a forum for discussion in an interdisciplinary seminar: papers on literary works (short stories, novels, poetry etc., both written in English and translated into/from English) as well as cultural products such as films, animated films, TV series, plays, comics etc. as case studies or “strictly” theoretical or philosophical, social or psychological considerations at a more complex level of humour and comedy theories. Papers invited for this seminar also could address the question of intergenerational and/or transgenerational humour as well as what family or crossgenerational entertainment involves when certain literary/cultural products attempt to provide humorous content and entertainment for different age groups at the same time.

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Session #1

31 August, 16:00–18:00



Boarding Schools and the Absurd: Gallows Humour, Nonsense, and Cultural Recovery in YA Narratives by Native Authors

Michaela Marková (Technical University of Liberec, Czech Republic)

How do YA texts narrate the unthinkable without overwhelming young readers? This paper traces how Native authors deploy absurdity—deadpan voice, rule-logic pushed to illogic, and carnivalesque reversal—to metabolise histories of residential/boarding schools while sustaining hope and agency. Reading across YA and upper-middle-grade works such as David A. Robertson’s *Sugar Falls* (graphic narrative), Shirley Sterling’s *My Name is Seepeetza*, Eric Gansworth’s *Apple (Skin to the Core)*, and allied texts that stage or critique institutional assimilation, the paper will identify three recurring comic engines: (1) bureaucratic nonsense (lists, forms, nicknames) that exposes the system’s arbitrariness; (2) bodily humour (food, hair, uniforms) that converts surveillance into sites of solidarity; and (3) trickster intrusions—literal or tonal—that reopen time, letting ancestors, language, and land “talk back.” Rather than trivialising harm, these strategies model survivance by giving readers tools to name and outwit the absurdities of colonial rule. The methods used combine page-level analysis (layout, pacing, and punchline placement) with attention to author notes and back matter that scaffold safe reading. The conclusion will offer classroom practices—content previews, community-approved historical context, humour mapping exercises—that treat laughter as a legitimate, culturally grounded coping response. Framed this way, YA absurdism becomes a pathway to cultural recovery: it refuses the school’s demand for silence by making sure the last word—and the last laugh—belongs to Indigenous youth.

Translating Humour in the Children’s Book: *Dexter Procter: The 10-Year-Old Doctor* (2024)

Anna Dybiec (Ignatianum University, Poland)

This paper analyses the representation and translation of humorous elements in contemporary children’s literature on the basis of *Dexter Procter: The 10-Year-Old Doctor* (2024) by Adam Kay, illustrated by Henry Paker. It is among the most popular humorous children’s books on the Polish market. The book, described as “a laugh-out-loud new fiction series”, tells the story of a ten-year-



old prodigy who becomes a paediatrician. The analytical part focuses on a comparative analysis of selected humorous passages and expressions from English into their Polish translations. The main objective (*skopos*) (Vermeer 1989, Reiss 1984, Nord 1997) of the translated text is to evoke laughter in young recipients, and this may occur provided the target text is adapted to the children's age and their abilities to understand and interpret humour at a certain age. Particular attention is paid to translation techniques applied to linguistically embedded humorous elements, which are challenging in the translation of children's literature.

How to Ad-Dress T. S. Eliot's Dignified Comicality in *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats* and Its Stage Adaptation

Ester Díaz Morillo (Independent Scholar)

T. S. Eliot's poetry collection *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats* (1939) gained popularity due to its adaptation as an acclaimed musical by Andrew Lloyd Webber in 1981. However popular its stage adaptation is, the poetry book remains mainly underexplored in scholarly work, as there is a tendency to overlook the poet's humorous side. Yet, the examination of Eliot's *Practical Cats* will enable us to see how children's literature can be transferred to other artistic means by providing us with transmediations that revel in the playfulness and creativity central to this genre. The focus will be on how Lloyd Webber's so-called "megamusical" *Cats* transmediates Eliot's strong rhythm and sense of humour, as well as the intention and whimsical mood of the poet. This paper will examine how the musical *Cats* transmediates the humour, rhythm, and lively character of these feline poems and, moreover, strongly engages with Eliot's own sources of inspiration through a very distinctive visual appeal, rendering new life to the initially misjudged playfulness of *Practical Cats*. As in Eliot's poems, there is a childish wonder to be experienced in this transmediation which gives prominence to the Victorian motifs and the importance of dance to truly appreciate Eliot's fantastical feline world.

Provoking Laughter: Pragmatic Mechanisms of Elicited Humor in the Romanian TV Show "*Copiii spun...*" hosted by Virgil Ianțu

Cristiana Adina Sucevan (University of Bucharest, Romania)

This paper investigates elicited humor in the Romanian television show *Copiii spun...*, hosted by Virgil Ianțu, the Romanian



adaptation of Kids Say the Darndest Things. The analysis is based on a corpus of manually transcribed interactions from selected episodes available online. Although the show presents itself as spontaneous, it also includes a clearly mediated and partially scripted component that plays a central role in the construction of humor. Adopting a pragmatic perspective, the study examines the interactional mechanisms through which humorous effects are triggered and framed in adult–child dialogue. Particular attention is given to the moderator’s discursive strategies, which actively elicit humorous responses rather than simply recording children’s spontaneous remarks. Humor is thus approached as a collaboratively constructed phenomenon emerging within asymmetrical interaction. The findings show that humor in this televised context relies on the adult’s control over topic management and interpretive framing, revealing a hybrid communicative space in which spontaneity and scripting coexist. The study highlights the relevance of pragmatic analysis for understanding humor in mediated adult–child interactions and contributes to broader discussions of televised discourse and interactional humor.

Session #2

1 September, 17:00–19:00

Translating Humour for Children: Studying the Concepts of Comedy and Laughter through *The Oxford India Illustrated Children’s Tagore*

Sapna Choudhary (Banaras Hindu University, India)

Humour is a significant yet methodologically challenging element in children’s literature, particularly when texts move across languages and cultural contexts. These challenges are evident in translation projects that introduce canonical writers to young readers, such as *The Oxford India Illustrated Children’s Tagore* (2006), edited by Sukanta Chaudhuri. Part of *The Oxford Tagore Translations* series, the volume seeks to make Rabindranath Tagore’s writings accessible to new generations. This paper examines “The Welcome,” a short comic play for children by Tagore, translated by Suvro Chatterjee in the volume. Using the play as a case study, it analyses how humour in the English version emerges through everyday situations, character interaction, and exaggerated



adult behaviour. It argues that translation reshapes humour for child readers and influences the play's reception in an Anglophone context. The paper explores three questions: how humour emerges from ordinary social interactions and exaggerated adult conduct; how the play mobilises contrasting binaries to generate comic effect; and how multimodal elements, particularly the relationship between text and illustration, influence readability and reception. It undertakes close textual analysis of the English version, drawing on theories of humour in children's literature and translation studies, to examine how humour is reconstructed and mediated in translation.

Humour in Portuguese Children's Literature: The Parodic Reinterpretation of History and Its Heroes

Sara Reis da Silva (University of Minho, Portugal)

Parody, constructed through the recreation and recovery of fragments of History and of emblematic characters – often placed in confrontation with imaginary entities, mythological beings, or other figures who inhabit, for instance, the diegetic settings of contemporary literature – appears to constitute one of the most prolific and recurrent humorous strategies in Portuguese-authored writing for a potential child readership. This reworking of recognisable historical episodes and heroic figures, approached from an ironic or playful perspective, enables children's literature to explore national memory through laughter, defamiliarisation, and reinterpretation. By destabilising canonical narratives and exposing their ideological underpinnings, parody becomes not only a source of amusement but also a mechanism of critical rereading and cultural renewal. In this brief study, which seeks to reflect upon the theme outlined above, we revisit and engage with a textual corpus comprising *A Nau Mentireta* (1992) by Luísa Ducla Soares, *A Verdadeira História da Batalha de S. Mamede* (2000) by Inácio Nuno Pignatelli, and *A Revolução das Letras – o 25 de Abril explicado às crianças* (2004) by Vergílio Alberto Vieira. These books, although different in tone and literary strategy, share a common aesthetic and pedagogical gesture: the humorous re-elaboration of crucial moments in Portuguese History, namely, the maritime voyages and Discoveries in the first case, the foundational period of the national identity in the second, and the Carnation Revolution of 25 April 1974 in the last one. The playful revision of History that emerges from these texts operates simultaneously on aesthetic, ethical, and educational levels. It invites young readers to reconsider the heroic and mythical images traditionally associated with collective memory and to view them through a prism of irony, fantasy, and creative subversion. Through humour and parody, these Soares, Pignatelli, and Vieira contribute to a dynamic process of



cultural reinterpretation, allowing children's literature to function as both a space of entertainment and a platform for critical reflection on Portugal's historical imagination.

Ponyville Confidential – The Use of Parody for a Young Audience in *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic*

Jonas Lindkvist (Lund University, Sweden)

Parody has always been common in animation from its inception at the start of the 20th century to the modern era of television ushered in by the likes of *The Simpsons* and *South Park*. Parody is not, however, exclusive to animated shows directed at an adult audience. Shows like *Animaniacs* and *SpongeBob SquarePants* rely heavily on cultural references and parody in their humor and style, like *Bugs Bunny* cartoons and *The Flintstones* did before them. One show directed at children that is of particular interest in the use of parody is *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic* (2010–2020). Even though *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic* also attracted an adult audience, it was directed at girls aged 3–6 but still contained a vast array of references and parodies. For a parody to work, it needs to be recognized as parody, but how can an audience who does not recognize a source text still understand parodic representations? Is parody in children's animation only for an adult audience, or can it be utilized effectively anyway? And if so, how does it look and how is it used? These are some of the questions addressed in my presentation. The presentation is based on a critical textual analysis of mainly *My Little Pony* but including other examples from children's animation. It is not an audience study, so conclusions are drawn from the content of the shows and how they use parody, not on audience reactions and understandings.

AI Warfare Humorously Presented in *The Mitchells vs. the Machines* (2021)

Zsófia Anna Tóth (University of Szeged, Hungary)

In this paper, I address one of the most prominent and heated debates of our times: how and why AI threatens humanity and how people could be saved while technology could still be used for productive purposes. *The Mitchells vs. the Machines* (2021) is a brilliant, almost visionary and prophetic (which is a basic aspect of humor), animated film that deals with the threatening possibility of what if AI awakens to consciousness, unleashes devastation on Earth also destroying humanity. Of course, this



children's film presents the entire conflict in a humorous way using mostly exaggeration and grotesquery in a Bakhtinian sense. Even if it basically uses family-friendly or safe humor (Rebecca Krefting's terms) it is also a satire of our current times, thus some biting/critical humor is also included. Most importantly, both the technology lovers and haters are made fun of together with technology itself, so we have multiple humor targets. In addition, humor functions on multiple levels as it is also cross- and transgenerational entertainment, thus providing jokes for various age groups, not simply focusing on the youngest ones. The basic problem of the animated film is presented through the conflict of the young and the old generation and how the young embrace technology while the old even border on being Luddites while refusing to open up to the positive aspects of technological inventions. Of course, the whole conflict is exaggerated thus resulting in the comic effect, especially in the case of the father, who is mostly the butt of the joke and who seems to side only with nature. Yet, the final joke is exactly that he is the only one being able to save humanity and orchestrate the downfall of the machines precisely because of his stubborn refusal to be immersed in the digital world. Still, his final willingness to learn something new still results in some reconciliation between humans and machines/technology/AI.

Closing remarks

Zsafia Anna Toth (University of Szeged, Hungary)



S68.- Modalities of Resistance in Contemporary Genre Movies & TV Series (*SciFi, Horror, Western, Thriller, etc.*)

This seminar aims at examining the resistance strategies inscribed on screen by different agents. Such an exploration can unfold along three major – but not exclusive – axes:

1.- It can focus on the heroes' actions at the heart of the diegesis in infection movies like *28 Days Later* (Danny Boyle, 2002) and *Contagion* (Soderbergh, 2011), or disease outbreak TV series like *Containment* (Julie Plec, 2016) or *The Hot Zone* (Brian Peterson, 2019-2021). It can chronicle the victims' reactions or, conversely, the zombies / invaders' strategies in invasion movies like *War of the Worlds* (Spielberg, 2005). In SciFi and (post-)apocalyptic movies, we'll investigate the way in which humans survive and fight back



during or after the devastation, probe the computers', robots' or androids' forms of resistance in a world dominated by humans as in *Generation Proteus* (Cammell, 1977) or *Westworld* (J. Nolan, 2016-2022). The forms of resistance to totalitarian regimes, whether individual or collective, and their evolution will be investigated when looking into dystopian movies and TV series (EG. *Gattaca*, Andrew Niccol, 1997); *The Man in the High Castle* (Spotnitz, 2015-2019). We'll particularly focus on women's or ethnic communities' resistance in movies (*Children of Men*, Cuarón, 2006) or TV series (*The Handmaid's Tale*, Miller, 2017-2025).

2.- A second approach could delve into the reasons behind the persistence of certain generic codes. Why do specific genres' conventions survive while others do not? Why do certain narrative styles endure and multiply (voice-over in post-apocalyptic movies such as *Children of Men*)? Why does the display of masculine heroism keep resurfacing in post-apocalyptic movies, and according to which core stereotypes or ideology?

3.- How do filmmakers resist codes and conventions, how do they re-appropriate these conventions or reject them? Which narrative, thematic or formal techniques do they use to question these codes, while inventing new types of discourse as in Von Trier's *Melancholia* (2011) thanks to its allegorical and dark apocalyptic dimension?

The reshuffling of cinematic codes and conventions paves the way for various strains of resistance woven into the very structure and texture of experimental or parodic movies and many others.

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Session #1: Shades of Horror and the Gothic

31 August, 16:00–18:00



Haunting as Resistance to Erasure (Supernatural Horror Film)

Sophie Mantrant (University of Strasbourg, France)

The paper will revolve around the idea of haunting as a form of resistance to erasure and its connection to the question of trauma. Building on my previous work on *The Woman in Black* (James Watkins, 2012), I will extend the analysis by focusing more explicitly on the ghost as an expression of maternal rage, drawing on feminist theories of female rage (for instance Audre Lorde). The main emphasis will be on haunting as a visual politics, that is, on how resistance is staged through visual intrusion and the insistence on being seen. The aim is to show how visibility is made a site of conflict and resistance. The corpus will also include *The Babadook* (J. Kent, 2014), allowing for a broader discussion of the persistence/resistance of the conventions of Victorian Gothic.

Resisting the Nostalgia Mode in Contemporary Horror

Vincent Jaunas (University of Saint-Etienne, France)

At first glance, recent horror films and series seem to confirm Fredric Jameson's predictions that our postmodern culture is bound to be increasingly plagued by nostalgia. According to Jameson, the end of the Cold War, the worldwide triumph of neoliberalism and our ever-accelerating consumer culture have caused a crisis of historicity that has condemned our contemporary Western cultures to stay stuck in the past [1991]. Since we seem immobilized in a never-ending present, we have lost our capacity to create new cultural forms reflecting the zeitgeist of our age and instead endlessly recycle forms from eras gone by [Reynolds, 2012]. As Mark Fisher summarizes, the current nostalgic climate is therefore not so much characterized by a predominance of the affect of nostalgia, but by a formal nostalgia which Jameson terms the "nostalgia mode": "Jameson's nostalgia mode is better understood in terms of a formal attachment to the techniques and formulas of the past, a consequence of a retreat from the modernist challenge of innovating cultural forms adequate to contemporary experience" [2014].

A quick look at contemporary horror films and series reveals the predominance of the nostalgia mode within that genre, as remakes (*Halloween*, David Gordon Green, 2018), tributes to past horror cycles (*X*, Ti West, 2022), adaptations from 20th century books (*It*, Andy Muschietti, 2017) and hypertextual reworkings of the films of 20th century directors (*The Substance*, Coralie Fargeat, 2024) represent dominant trends. Yet this paper will suggest that since the mid-2010s, a cycle of films and series, alternatively called Elevated Horror or Post-horror (Church, 2021) has emerged and offers an alternative to horror's nostalgia mode. Moving away



from formal nostalgia, the cycle is instead characterized by an unprecedented hybridization of the affects of fear and nostalgia. Drawing on the notion of hauntology as defined by Mark Fisher, I will argue that the cycle not only resists the appeal of the nostalgia mode: it portrays the horror of a world stuck in the past and having let go of the future.

Resisting Genre, Reclaiming Horror: Race and Hybridity in *Sinners* (Coogler, 2025)

Mikaël Toulza (University of Lille, France)

In January 2024, Borys Kit, working for *The Hollywood Reporter*, published an exclusive article in which he revealed Ryan Coogler's new project, later revealed to be *Sinners* (2025), would be a "genre movie." This categorization, the journalist notes, "is a wide-ranging term that encompasses horror and its subsets, as well as thriller, science fiction, even fantasy." Later that year, both the movie's trailer, which includes the sentence "From Ryan Coogler, director of *Black Panther* and *Creed*, comes a new vision of fear" (Warner Bros. 2024) and the marketing campaign ahead of the release, however, slightly diverged from that by promoting a movie that seemingly resisted the codes of traditional horror. Yet the movie itself turned out to be much more nuanced than that.

Set in rural Mississippi in 1932, it follows African American twin brothers Elijah and Elias who return home after working with the Chicago mafia for a few years and buy a sawmill they turn into a juke joint for their community. Yet on the opening night, they are attacked by vampires, who turn some members of the community into blood-thirsty creatures of the night. By relocating vampirism into a Southern Black context, the movie deviates from the generic codes of (Southern, but not only) vampire literature and film which, as Dale Hudson notes, have been largely inspired by the "ethnic whiteness of Eastern and Central Europe vampires" (2008: 127). The movie's central element departs from the traditional horror formula which, because it is about race, suggests a form of resistance to Hollywood's traditional affirmation of whiteness as the norm. This paper argues that *Sinners* resists both racial and generic boundaries. It does so first by reconfiguring the conventions of horror, especially those tied to vampire and Voodoo/Hoodoo traditions, what Robin Means Coleman (2011) terms 'horror noire.' It then merges horror with action and gangster genres, producing a hybrid form that mirrors cultural hybridity. Ultimately, this composite form enables *Sinners* to foreground Black cultural expression and contest Hollywood's historical marginalization of Blackness.



Men (and) Zombies: Masculinities and Resistance in Contemporary Zombie Film

Petra Filipova (Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice, Slovakia)

Historically, zombie films have been used to construct, test and reassert dominant masculine modalities. The collapse of civilization is often linked to a perceived crisis of masculinities as well as a chance to restore male agency and authority in the newly formed society (Sugg, 2015; Armstrong, 2023). Heteronormative, militarized masculinity thus tends to be depicted as a way to salvation (Sugg, 2015; Chandler, 2020). This paper aims to analyze the evolution of the representation of masculinities in the film series *28 Days Later* (2002), *28 Weeks Later* (2007), *28 Years Later* (2025), and *28 Years Later: The Bone Temple* (2026). The first film of this franchise is generally credited with starting the so-called revival of zombie genre films throughout the decade of the 2000s; in addition, the first two films were marked by the post-9/11 era of the revival of conservative values, heteronormative masculine authorities, and heroic masculinity tropes in American media (Faludi, 2007; Kimmel, 2013). The latest two instalments react uniquely to the aforementioned tropes of masculinity in crisis and masculine authority and leadership, while influenced by the current narratives of masculinity in Western societies: the rise of hybrid and inclusive masculinities (Bridges and Pascoe, 2014; Anderson and McCormack, 201) embracing traits such as emotional intimacy, physical affection; backlash against these masculinities through conservative or misogynist narratives; and the rise of white male authoritarian politics (Kimmel, 2013; Bridges and Pascoe, 2014; Agius et al., 2020; Marx Ferree 2020; Connor et al., 2021). As such, this franchise is outstandingly suited for the discussion about the modalities of resistance and the reasserting or reshaping of traditional masculinities in zombie genre films.

Nature Strikes Back: Nonhuman Resistance and the Persistence of the Monster Archetype in 21st-Century Animal Horror Films

Xiana Vazquez Bouzo (University of Vigo, Spain)

This paper examines the evolution of animal horror films from the late twentieth century to the present through an antispeciesist and post-anthropocentric lens. It argues that these narratives increasingly stage animals not merely as monstrous threats, but as figures of resistance to human domination. While earlier films—*Jaws* (Spielberg, 1975), *Alligator* (Teague, 1980) or *Jurassic Park*



(Spielberg, 1993)—typically frame animal attacks as aberrations to be contained, more recent works complicate this structure by foregrounding ecological crisis, industrial exploitation and anthropocentric violence.

Firstly, this paper analyzes nonhuman animals as agents of resistance. Whether through individual retaliation, territorial defense or collective spread, animals in contemporary horror frequently function as forces that expose the fragility of human exceptionalism and the instability of species hierarchies. Their attacks can be reinterpreted not just as a symbolic revenge of nature, but also as defensive responses emerging from habitats affected by environmental damage or urban expansion. Secondly, this analysis traces the persistence of generic conventions inherited from earlier creature features, as in the construction of the animal as a distant and violent Other, the reliance on anthropocentric narratives, and the recurrent narrative closure achieved through the animal's death. These enduring codes reveal how genre cinema continues to reproduce anthropocentric ideology even when it appears to critique human excess.

Finally, this paper explores how some twenty-first century animal horror films resist these conventions by destabilizing the monster/victim binary. Through shifts in focalization, affective alignment with animal vulnerability, and multispecies or ecological frameworks, works like *Jurassic World* (Trevorrow, 2015), *Crawl* (Aja, 2019) or *Cocaine Bear* (Banks, 2023) gesture toward a post-anthropocentric mode in which the true monstrosity lies not in animality, but in systems of human exploitation. In this way, contemporary animal horror encourages reflection on multispecies resistance and the boundaries of the political community beyond the human.

Session #2: Dystopian and Post-apocalyptic Narratives

2 September, 9:00–11:00

When Resistance Is Remade: Genre Cinema from Industrial Decay to Surveillance Modernity

Landry Digeon (University of Cyprus, Cyprus)

Remakes offer a privileged lens through which to observe the evolving anxieties and ideological concerns of contemporary society. The paired cases of *Blade Runner* (Ridley Scott, 1982) and *Blade Runner 2049* (Denis Villeneuve, 2017), *RoboCop* (Paul Verhoeven,



1987) and *RoboCop* (José Padilha, 2014), and *Total Recall* (Paul Verhoeven, 1990) and *Total Recall* (Len Wiseman, 2012) provide a revealing corpus for tracing these transformations. This paper argues that narrative, thematic, and aesthetic shifts in these films reflect a historical change in how genre cinema portrays resistance to systems of control. The originals, shaped by late Cold War fears and industrial decline, present resistance as uncertain and closely tied to preserving human identity within corporate and technocratic structures. The remakes, produced in an age defined by Big Data, bio-engineering, and digital surveillance, redefine resistance as strategic, information-based, and embedded within technological networks. Across these films, the goal shifts from keeping one's humanity to navigating and disrupting an algorithmic system. The oppressor moves from the visible corporate executive to the invisible logic of surveillance. Action shifts from individual revolt to coordinated engagement with complex systems, and the narrative outcome moves from personal sacrifice to broader systemic awareness.

Using tools such as NVivo, Cinemetrics, and the Möbius Trip multimodal analysis toolkit, the study combines qualitative interpretation with measurable data. Script text-mining identifies patterns linked to agency and control, while gender analysis traces changes in representation. Cinemetrics data, particularly average shot length, indicates shifts in the “rhythm of rebellion,” and color-extraction analysis maps the move from polluted industrial tones to clean, desaturated futurist palettes. These findings show that form itself becomes a site of resistance, as contemporary dystopian aesthetics highlight the gradual loss of embodied agency while reshaping genre conventions to address posthuman survival.

“Other we change, or we die”: Reclaiming the Creature to Resist Capitalism in Kelsey Egan’s *The Fix* (2024)

Paula García Rodríguez (University of Málaga, Spain)

Monsters embody crises. They are the representation of difference and change, and they allow us to think beyond the human through the fictionalisation of what is happening in our reality (Cohen 1996). Kelsey Egan’s *The Fix* (2024) is set in an alternative future where airborne toxins constitute a permanent fatal threat. The film follows Ella, a South African model who, after consuming an illicit drug at a party, undergoes a radical mutation which transforms her into a hybrid creature that resembles a local dragonfly and that produces an airborne toxin neutralising agent. Ella then becomes the target of Aethera, a pharmaceutical corporation that captures her and seeks to exploit her mutated physiology to create a lucrative survival drug for the wealthy. Due to the new abilities conferred by the mutation, she escapes from Aethera and becomes the promise of a new world.



The first part of this paper will observe how Ella's transformation works as an allegory of the historical and ongoing oppression of women's bodies under capitalism (Federici 2004; 2020). This is intensified in the film through a biopolitical regime in which life itself becomes a resource (Foucault 2003; Vint 2021): her transformation initiates her dehumanisation, with her mutated body being perceived as non-human and thus reduced to *something* exploitable.

The second part will focus on Ella's hybrid dragonfly form and how it opens up possibilities for reimagining corporeality in a posthuman world. Ella's monstrosity becomes a mode of resistance, reclaiming the abjection imposed upon her. This resistance can be read through Jack Halberstam's notion of queer failure (2011), which rejects the metrics of success defined by heteronormative and capitalist frameworks. Ultimately, *The Fix* serves as a critique of the capitalist commodification of women's bodies through envisioning monstrosity as a queer, posthuman potential for non-normative modes of existence.

Long Day's Journey into Night: Modalities of Resistance in John Hillcoat's *The Road* (2009)

Anne-Marie Paquet-Deyris (University of Paris-Nanterre, France)

In his 2009 eponymous adaptation of Cormac McCarthy's post-apocalyptic novel *The Road* (2006), John Hillcoat explores the tropes of the apocalypse without ever disclosing the nature of the catastrophe by capturing a father and son's journey on some indeterminate road. In this dark passage to nowhere, the unnamed Man and Boy push their way to the South and the sea hoping to escape the devastated wintry landscape, starvation and the few human survivors driven to cannibalism and utmost savagery. In this dismal tale of near extinction written by Joe Penhal, the road functions as a metaphor for the disappearance of the community and human values and the emergence of a bleak form of nomadism. But uncharacteristically, if there is indeed a conventional disillusioned voice-over, the movie doesn't lead to any display of customary masculine heroism. It doesn't offer "the Man" (Viggo Mortensen) and "the Boy" (Kodi Smit-McPhee) any form of hope but rather chronicles their reactions and strategies of resistance in absolute survival mode. The pair's progress among the ruins of civilization and their desperate attempt at "carrying the fire" function as some anti-Frontier-like itinerary inscribing on screen the result of Man's ultimate estrangement from Nature.

Hillcoat's reluctance to use postapocalyptic CGI landscapes, as well as his mixing the codes and conventions of various generic categories like the thriller or horror, inscribe on screen very different modalities of resistance and "hope" from the standard post-



apocalyptic genre. So how does he borrow from actual post-industrial imagery and, among other motifs and representational strategies, confront head-on key existential dilemmas, customary stereotypes and ideologies of resistance and victory in the filmic narrative?

Allegories of Terror and Genocide in *Andor*

Arin Keeble (Edinburgh Napier University, Scotland, United Kingdom)

Twenty-first century televisual space operas have been notable for their meaningful engagement with political violence. In a war on terror-era cultural landscape in which many other genres and forms, even those directly concerned with geopolitical conflict, have reverted to stereotypes and simplistic visions of good and evil, shows such as the reboot of *Battlestar Galactica* (2003–2009), and SyFy / Amazon’s adaptation of *The Expanse* (2016–2022), have levelled trenchant political critiques. Over long runs, these shows have addressed stereotyping and intolerance, neo-imperialism, world-systemic crisis-fuelled forms of terror and resistance, and have questioned the exceptionalist logics of terrorism that have been so forceful and pervasive in the twenty-first century. Yet, even these complex, politically charged shows are in some ways limited in their critiques, and in what they can tell us about the nature of political violence. While these shows have been able to smuggle in subversive commentaries via genre-based allegories in which intergalactic or galactic unrest reflect contemporary Earth-bound conflicts, these remain inherently imprecise. This chapter considers *Andor*’s political critique in this context, focusing on its interest in what I call “the rhetoric of terror.” While this doesn’t exactly make it any more explicit than *Battlestar* or *The Expanse*, it does give the show a very specific connection to the genocide in Palestine, via the semantic and criterion debates about genocide and terrorism that have been so prevalent since the October 7, 2023, terror attack in Tel Aviv. Ultimately, I argue that *Andor* is uniquely potent as an allegory of political violence via its portrayal of the rhetorics of terror. Additionally, by analysing the show alongside other contemporary televisual space operas, this chapter will complement analyses of *Andor* as “complex TV,” or within the *Star Wars* franchise.

Session #3: Resisting Forms of Oppression

2 September, 15:00–17:00



Narrative and Generic Forms of Resistance to Totalitarian Regimes in Contemporary Holocaust Film

Fran Pheasant-Kelly (University of Wolverhampton, United Kingdom)

This paper considers the interplay of resistance and power in two contemporary Holocaust films, *Lee* (Winslet, 2025) and *Nuremberg* (Vanderbilt, 2025). Referring to definitions of resistance by Mona Lilja (2022), it briefly examines established factualised forms of opposition to totalitarian regimes as well as genre-specific forms of defiance, before identifying further points of resistance in these two films, namely, in their production, their characterisation and narrative content. It takes into account the implications of positive and negative liberty as suggested by Isaiah Berlin (1969) and Michel Foucault's assertion concerning scenarios where 'the system of power takes pyramidal form. Hence there is an apex. But even so [...] this summit doesn't form the "source" or luminous focus [...] the summit and the lower elements of the hierarchy stand in a relationship of mutual support and conditioning, a mutual "hold"' (1980: 159). Engaging with these various theoretical approaches to resistance, it employs textual analysis of key figures, diegetic and visual elements, as well as addressing relevant industry aspects.

"Queer, Not Queer, That Didn't Seem to Matter Now That They Were All Busy Dying": Queer Futurity and Hope in *The Long Walk* (2025)

Alba Jimeno Ruiz de Larrinaga (University of the Basque Country, Spain)

The aim of this paper is to analyze through a queer lens how the 2025 adaptation of Stephen King's homonymous 1979 novel, *The Long Walk*, rewrites a narrative that was already laden with antitotalitarian intent and unspoken queer desire, to reframe it for a contemporary audience, speaking to anxieties against the global rise of fascism over the past decade by bringing said queer undertones into the foreground. *The Long Walk* focuses on the titular Long Walk, a nationally transmitted death-race in which the youth of a dystopian USA already decimated by war and poverty, walk continuously until only one of them is left standing, sponsored by a totalitarian government who deploys this spectacle as a tool of control. Amongst these youth, it is on Ray Garraty and his newfound friend Peter McVries, that the film zeroes in, depicting the connection they share and the hope they deploy



against death and despair around them through their disinterested and honest love, shown as the only way to survive both the Walk, and a society that holds its citizens up to such close scrutiny. Deploying a queer framework that takes José Esteban Muñoz's *Cruising Utopia* as its axis, *The Long Walk* not only establishes queer love and desire as a mechanism of hope to survive the titular Long Walk, but also as a very literal tool to help end fascism, as Peter wishes for Garraty's final wish as the victor of the walk, killing the military leader of the fascist state and unlocking a brighter future for those around him, even if he is doomed to continue walking without the man he loves for what remains of his life.

The Right of Flight

Salim Mustafa (University of South Bohemia, Czech Republic)

Franz Kafka's biographical conditions, most notably his conflicted relationship with paternal authority and his sustained confrontation with bureaucratic and social regimes of discipline, have significantly informed his literary preoccupation with power, culpability, and resistance, a dynamic most explicitly articulated in his *Letter to His Father* (Kafka). These thematic concerns find a compelling cinematic analogue in Vikramaditya Motwane's *Udaan* (2010), which foregrounds the emotional and psychological struggle of its protagonist, Rohan, against entrenched forms of familial authoritarianism and normative societal expectations within the contemporary Indian context. This paper contends that *Udaan* may be fruitfully interpreted through a Kafkaesque biographical framework, wherein acts of personal defiance function as responses to normalized and institutionalized forms of violence embedded within everyday structures of authority. The paper develops its argument through two closely interrelated sections. The opening section interrogates *Udaan* as a cinematic articulation of resistance to totalitarian norms embedded within patriarchal family structures and broader social institutions, positioning Rohan's acts of defiance in dialogue with Kafka's own resistance to paternal and institutional authority. The subsequent section explores the film's deployment of music, especially songs, as a culturally and narratively significant device that shapes, enriches, and intensifies the emotional and ideological dimensions of the screenplay. Functioning simultaneously as a mode of expression and a gesture of dissent, music in *Udaan* serves to foreground the protagonist's interiority while reinforcing the film's sustained critique of authoritarian control.





S69.- Literature, Art and Imprisonment

English Studies as a discipline has long had a stake in interrogating imprisonment and its purpose, thus joining critical – and at times activist – debates on crime, punishment and social justice. Such work has included research on reading, writing, theatrical performances or visual production in prisons from historical or contemporary perspectives, highlighting platforms for marginalised voices behind prison walls. Other scholars have focussed on the study of specific literary or visual genres such as prison autobiography and portraiture and subgenres like prison letters, diaries, writings from death row, or the analysis of metaphors of imprisonment in language and literature. Still others have engaged in discussions linking structural social discriminations, broad historical movements such as colonialism and mass migration, and the literary and aesthetic practices around penal confinement in a given society at a given time. Often actively in conversation with adjacent fields such as cultural history, cultural criminology, auto/biographical studies, creative writing, theatre studies or the visual arts, the critical study of imprisonment across the English-speaking world is a socially engaged and outward-looking endeavour bridging disciplinary boundaries.

This panel examines imprisonment and its depiction in literature and art from the nineteenth century to the present. Our definition of imprisonment is a broad one, encompassing criminal prisons, political imprisonment and different forms of detention. We welcome proposals on a range of textual and artistic forms, and from diverse national-geographical or theoretical perspectives.

Topics may include but are not limited to:

- Literature/art's contribution to debates about the criminal legal system
- Conditions of production and their impact on individuals and literary/artistic expression
- Narrative or visual techniques for conveying prison experiences
- Literature/art's ability to imagine alternatives to imprisonment

CONVENORS:

Anne Schwan (Edinburgh Napier University, Scotland) a.schwan@napier.ac.uk

Naomi Toth (Paris Nanterre University, France) ntoth@parisnanterre.fr



Session #1

3 September, 9:30–11:30

The Land of the Free Behind Bars: Negotiating Liberty, Punishment, and Resistance in American Prison Films**Sotirios Bampatzimopoulos (Ankara University, Türkiye)**

As it has been multiple times established in media and narratives of all kinds, the United States presents itself as “the land of the free.” Interestingly enough, at the same time, it has one of the world’s largest prison populations, both in absolute numbers and per capita. This peculiar paradox lies at the heart of the political imagination of American democracy, where the discourse of liberty coexists with a vast (and largely racialized) carceral apparatus. Since the 1970s, both Democratic and Republican campaigns of law and order have equated safety with confinement and systematically allowed the exponential growth of a privatized carceral system that led to mass incarceration and the feeling that, for certain groups of people, freedom became a privilege rather than an inalienable right. American cinema has reflected the contradiction between the land of the free and the vast carceral system in a wide range of emblematic prison films that critique the state’s apparatus of control while simultaneously stressing the importance of agency and confinement as a space of transformation and resistance. The objective of this paper is to examine a range of iconic prison narratives such as *Cool Hand Luke* (1967), *Escape from Alcatraz* (1979), *The Shawshank Redemption* (1994), *American History X* (1998), *The Green Mile* (1999), and *Sing Sing* (2023), to explore how cinema constructs imprisonment as a microcosm of the nation and the powers of control, where confinement is presented as a spiritual or moral trial and as a place of transformation, and escape signifies the triumph of will and the ultimate resistance against the bureaucratic institutional absurdity of an oppressive system. Moreover, whereas most narratives celebrate the endurance of white males as a form of existential freedom, the most recent *Sing Sing* reimagines the prison narrative through Blackness and collectivity, and liberation through a model of collective creativity. Ultimately, I will explore how the cinematic prison functions as a paradoxical space where the concept of freedom is in constant renegotiation and the ideal of liberty is juxtaposed with the harsh reality of systematic punishment and inequality.



Empathic Engagement or Accountability for the Crime? The Psychologist and the Troubled Adolescent in the TV Series *Adolescence*

Brîndușa Nicolaescu (University of Bucharest, Romania)

The paper attempts to analyse how contemporary cinema portrays the relationship between youth in detention and psychologists, taking the example of the recent TV series *Adolescence* (2025). The study mainly uses a qualitative descriptive approach, examining the narrative arc, emphasizing identity crisis, peer relationships, and family dynamics, and with a focus on digital media influence (Floriani et al. 2025) and psychosocial issues such as toxic masculinity, abusive behavior (Raj 2025). The paper also aims to provide a close examination of Jamie's interaction with the psychologist Briony. The interview she conducts begins with Jamie's guarded defensiveness and unravels into a self-incriminating loss of control. Since Jamie initially denies any wrongdoing, Briony's role as a forensic psychologist extends beyond the preparation of the clinical assessment for law enforcement and evolves into a professionally demanding challenge that ultimately leads her to get him to admit to murder. Briony is portrayed as humane and relatable, yet highly skilled in her professional practice. The questions addressed in the presentation will be: how does Briony enable the teenage offender to externalize and enact the dynamic of his oscillating roles (internal aggressor–performative victim) within their clinical interaction? To what extent does the relationship under analysis reflect the tension between social cohesion and structural forms of pervasive systemic violence in contemporary society? The representation of prison as an institution will also be discussed.

Unregulated Force: The Cinematic Prison Yard as Neoliberal Market

Harrison Patten (Paris Cité University, France)

The unprecedented growth of the American penitentiary that began in the late 1970s coalesced with the U.S. government's adoption of an economic neoliberal ideology which glorified unregulated free markets and demonized the welfare state. Loïc Wacquant describes this type of state formation as that of the *centaur state* where the 'head' of the state manages those in the upper economic classes and is magnanimous and hands-off while the 'body' of the state responsible for the poor is brutally punishment-



oriented and omnipresent. In the *centaur state* marketized competition is valorized as a determinant mechanism where one can distinguish their value through performance in the market and ascend higher within the hierarchy, thereby gaining more freedoms, or descend into the domain of the authoritarian body and have their freedoms revoked or disregarded.

The neoliberal prison film, especially when aiming to reach a wide audience, sought to capture and show a prison system housing the largest incarcerated population of all time to spectators who increasingly understood their own freedoms via the logic of the free market. This paper examines one component of the visual vocabulary that such cinema appears to have developed in its attempts to capture a ‘realistic’ neoliberal prison space. Specifically, by examining compositionally similar shots of the prison yard in *American Me* (1992), *Blood in Blood Out* (1993), *American History X* (1999), and *The Last Castle* (2001), I argue that the films share a spatial understanding of, and construct a similar discourse on, how the hierarchy and competition that operate within the prison mirrors market-logics of rights distribution. Furthermore, I argue that through the cinematic treatment of the yard, it became a visual shorthand and motif indicative of a particularly neoliberal conception of punishment and competition reflective of the *centaur state*. I end by briefly examining the way that *Brawl in Cell Block 99* (2017) appears to use this motif in its cultivation of an anti-neoliberal message along populist lines suggesting a departure from the aesthetic system of neoliberal incarceration towards a more authoritarian understanding where the intra-prison hierarchy is far less fluid.

Masculinities in Prison: The Case of Ava DuVernay’s *When They See Us*

Pedro Mora Ramirez (University of Seville, Spain)

Black scholars and activists have long been drawing and reclaiming academic and political attention to the massive incarceration of Black men, pointing at the ways in which they have been regarded as “animal-like” people. After the Reconstruction period in the United States of America, Black men were blatantly stereotyped as “superpredators,” “animals,” “monsters,” “demons” and “beasts that need to be controlled” (Alexander 2012). Against these tropes, post-2010 TV shows and films may counter these portrayals and offer alternative models of masculinities. A powerful example is Ava DuVernay’s *When They See Us* (2019), which focuses on the case of the “Exonerated Five” – formerly known as “The Central Park Five.” The limited series invites the viewer



to witness the true story of these men who were accused of raping a white woman in New York City's Central Park. By means of the protagonists, DuVernay offers alternative modes of masculinities directed at challenging mass incarceration. However, such forms of masculinities can only exist when black men affirm their existence and build new ways of organizing that do not rely on criminalization, punishment and police abuse as control tools. This paper analyses, through theories on abolitionist thinking (Alexander 2012; Davis 2003; Davis et al. 2022) and masculinities studies (Collins 2005; hooks 2004; Kimmel 1996; Mutua 2006; Lemelle 2010; Hampton 2002), how such masculinities are depicted. In this paper, I first contextualize the system of mass incarceration in relation to the stereotypes associated with Black men. Secondly, I analyze black masculinities to examine the defiance of hegemonic models of masculinities. My argument stresses how the protagonists in DuVernay's *When They See Us* affirm their masculinities when they actively challenge the criminal system after being exonerated.

The Nature of Carceral Landscapes. On Maria Gaspar, Larry W. Cook and Ashley Hunt

Naomi Toth (University of Paris Nanterre, France)

Through the work of three contemporary visual artists, this paper will explore how motifs of natural phenomena may be mobilized in visual artworks representing prisons in the United States. Two modalities will be discussed in detail. Nature—meteorological phenomena, vegetation, landscapes and standard tropes of landscape painting—is often used to register absence in images of carceral architecture and spaces. This frequently occurs in dialogue with institutional carceral iconography, as a now well-established form of *détournement*, in which natural motifs prevent images of carceral spaces from functioning within the narratives of the state. Secondly, I will argue that above and beyond these forms of critique, the recourse to landscape and natural imagery disrupts the relationship to time upon which incarceration is founded, so as to project the viewer into as-yet unrealized futures. More than a place-holder or a factor of erosion or obliteration, natural motifs and landscape imagery may thereby act as a positive entity within works, becoming endowed with a speculative function that envisions alternatives to incarceration, most notably in works with abolitionist affinities. Recent works by Larry W. Cook (*Horizons, On the Other Side of Landscape*), Maria Gaspar (*Cloud Out, Disappearance Jail*) and Ashley Hunt (*Degrees of Visibility, And Water Brings Tomorrow*) will be discussed.



Session #2

3 September, 15:00–17:00

From Skid Row to Death Row: Incarcerated Deviations and Vulnerable Imagination in *The Mars Room* by Rachel Kushner (2018)

Alwena Queille (Sorbonne Nouvelle University, France)

In *The Mars Room* (2018), the third novel by the American writer Rachel Kushner, follows the story of a young woman, Romy Hall, who begins serving two life sentences in a women's prison in Stanville, California, for the murder of her former customer and stalker. The story shifts between memories of her life before prison and the stories of the people Romy meets or hears about along the way. According to Kushner, fiction creates “a space to give voice and documentation to things that otherwise will be lost to time.” (Alvarez). *The Mars Room* thus explores lives on the margins while questioning the violence and inhumanity of a prison system that relies on exploiting vulnerabilities. As Arin Keeble argues, Romy's narration of the events before she was imprisoned reveals « a world of exploitation and limited opportunity that is itself carceral (Keeble 688). Besides, Romy's narrative is intertwined with the story of Gordon Hauser, who teaches literature at Romy's prison and is free to go in and out of the enclosed, restrictive space of the prison, also referred to as a “heterotopia of deviation” by Michel Foucault (Foucault, 25). Hauser's chapters are often followed by readings of passages from the diaries of the domestic terrorist Theodore Kaczynski, also known as “The Unabomber”, linking individual existences, social, communal struggles, and fateful violence through narrative deviations. The novel's characters thus have to navigate confined, vulnerable spaces, from skid row to death row, while being confronted with the precariousness of institutions. Kushner's own thinking is informed by Ruth Wilson Gilmore's “narratives” about carceral expansion, prison abolition and vulnerable communities, which can notably be found in her seminal book *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California* (2007). Kushner then reflects on the issues related to mass incarceration and the presence “of vital systems of support that many communities lack” (Kushner 2021, 178). Attentive to the far reaches of vulnerabilities, Kushner investigates the “dark alleys” of fiction that lead to troubling encounters and the consideration of vulnerable, imprisoned existences.



“The system has failed them all”: Violence Against Women, Narrative Perspective and Justice in Danya Kukafka’s *Notes on an Execution* (2022)

Anne Schwan (Edinburgh Napier University, Scotland, United Kingdom)

The #metoo campaign against sexual violence and harassment has brought new visibility to gender-based violence (GBV), fuelling public debates and lending increased urgency to the topic. Despite a persistent emphasis on punitive responses in the mainstream news media and political rhetoric, alternatives to conventional ways of punishing GBV have recently become more visible in literature and culture. Simultaneously, feminist scholars and activists have challenged carceral feminism as a limited and ultimately unsuccessful strategy in the fight against GBV.

This paper will argue that *Notes on an Execution* offers a nuanced, multi-perspectival contribution to debates about carceral feminism and alternative responses to harm. Leading up to the execution of Ansel Packer, convicted for killing several women (including his wife), the novel juxtaposes Ansel’s experience—told in the second person—with the perspectives of three women implicated in or impacted by the killings: Ansel’s mother Lavender who, beaten and starved by his father, had abandoned Ansel and his baby brother in the desperate hope that the state would better provide for them; Saffy, homicide detective, who shared Ansel’s life in foster care; and Hazel, twin sister of Ansel’s murdered wife Jenny. Born out of Kukafka’s frustration with genre conventions that reduce violent men to stereotypes and erase victims’ voices, the novel paints a haunting picture of lives shaped by family and systemic failure and myriad forms of incarceration.

Placing the novel within debates about carceral and anti-carceral feminism, perpetrator studies and narrative ethics, this paper examines how to balance the stakes of humanizing a perpetrator against an ongoing commitment to victims’/survivors’ experiences. Encouraging dialogue between literary studies and feminist criminology, the paper highlights literature’s contribution to the growing, multidisciplinary field of critical prison studies and public debates about criminal justice.

Incarceration as Repetition: Trauma and Complicity in Preti Taneja’s *Aftermath*

Ivan Stacy (Mahidol University International College, Thailand)



Preti Taneja wrote *Aftermath* following the terror attack at Fishmonger's Hall in 2019, during which Usman Khan attacked and killed two attendees. Taneja had previously taught creative writing to Khan in prison as part of the Learning Together Programme run by Cambridge University, and *Aftermath* interrogates the multiplicity of causes that led to this act of terror. As Arin Keeble has argued, literary representations of terrorism have moved away from 'event-based' narratives and towards those that examine the way that histories and structures produce atrocity, and *Aftermath* can be located within this tendency (Keeble, n.p.). This paper aims to connect this re-framing of terrorism to a discussion of the nature of incarceration and to consider, through Taneja's text, whether imprisonment can be regarded as a discrete event or structural feature of systemic violence. Central to this question is the relationship between trauma and complicity, which at first sight appear to function very differently in terms of affect. Trauma is the result of overwhelming negative affect, and is characterized by compulsive repetition of that experience (Luckhurst 79). By contrast, complicity often takes the form of failures of witnessing: wilful ignorance allows those who contribute to or profit from systemic violence to avoid negative affect, and hence to continue to live in comfort (Stacy 2). The generic mixture employed by Taneja in *Aftermath* allows her to make visible the relationship between these two affective states, with the traumatic repetitions foregrounded by the text being produced and perpetuated by patterns of pervasive complicity. Imprisonment is the central point at which these intersect, and is also shown to be a link in a chain of cause and effect that stretches backwards to the Partition of India and forwards to the attack at Fishmonger's Hall, and indeed into the traumatic aftermath of and from which Taneja writes.

Worlding Prison Writing: Isolation Aesthetics and Representative Storytelling, from Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o to Erwin James

Claire Westall (University of York, United Kingdom)

As Breyten Breytenbach explains in *The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist* (1984, 339) – and as I have suggested in my own earlier work – there is an international continuity to the way modern carceral spaces function and are experienced, and, consequently, there is also an international or worldly continuity evident within prison writing. It would seem hard to argue with Breytenbach's view – one simply needs to think of solitary confinement to ask why it wouldn't be discussed as a horrifyingly similar experience for any two, or more, people, in any two, or more, places in the world. However, where histories of prisons and carceral systems are beginning to take on a global perspective, and despite debates about the world-literary system booming, there is still relatively little work offering large-scale, international or "worlded" perspectives on prison writing. Some early grounding was provided by Ioan Davies' *Writers in Prison*, from 1990, and by Barbara Harlow's field-shaping 1992 study *Barred* which builds upon her



influential earlier book *Resistance Literature* (1987). More recently, there is *Colonial and Postcolonial Incarceration* (2001) edited by Graeme Harper; Yenna Wu and Simona Livescu's collection *Human Rights, Suffering, and Aesthetics in Political Prison Writing* (2011) and Julian Murphet's critical survey of *Prison Writing in the Twentieth Century* (2023).

This paper will make an argument for a “worlded” understanding of prison writing by offering a comparative reading of texts from different moments, contexts and systems of incarceration – working out from Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o *Detained* (1981) and up to Erwin James’ first book *A Life Inside* (2004). The discussion will explain the ways in which differently classified prisoners (especially political and “ordinarily criminal”) similarly render isolation, and how their accounts of their own imprisonment typically function as representative stories; stories that carry an ambition for political representation within a specific socio-cultural context while simultaneously underscoring continuities of the world-system made especially visible from within carceral spaces.

Scripted Containment: Carceral Storytelling, and the Punitive Narratives of Black Women in American True Crime

Breea C. Willingham (University of North Carolina Wilmington, United States)

This paper interrogates how popular true crime television functions as a cultural site of imprisonment, particularly in its portrayal of Black women. Focusing on the long-running TV One network series *Fatal Attraction* and *For My Man*, I argue that these American programs extend carceral logic beyond prison walls by transforming Black women's lives and deaths into moral cautionary tales. Instead of amplifying liberatory carceral storytelling, these programs produce the antithesis: a punitive televisual logic that scripts Black women's lives into moral cautionary tales.

Drawing on Black Feminist Disappearance Theory and carceral cultural studies, I analyze how *Fatal Attraction* and *For My Man* mobilize visual tropes of containment and redemption that echo the aesthetics of imprisonment. Each episode becomes a cultural cell in which Black women are alternately fetishized, pathologized, or punished. Yet within these punitive constructions, fractures of grief, love, and survival emerge that expose the contradictions of a system invested in regulating Black women's morality.

Reading these series as contemporary visual literature, I situate them within a broader tradition of carceral aesthetics that spans



the prison memoir, mug shot, and courtroom drama. Ultimately, this work asks what it means to watch, feel, and consume Black women's suffering as entertainment, and what possibilities emerge when we instead engage these narratives with critical consciousness.

Session #3

3 September, 17:30–19:30

The Open Road and “The Pen”: Writing and Righting Injustice in Jack London's *The Road*

Yaël Broueilh (University of Toulouse Jean Jaurès, France)

In 1894, Jack London was sentenced to spend thirty days in the Erie County Penitentiary for vagrancy. According to his biographers, this experience haunted him. In his autobiographical narrative *The Road* (1907), in which he recounts his life as a hobo at the end of the nineteenth century, London dwells on his condemnation and his life in “the Pen.” Published at a time when tramping was considered a threat to the United States' moral and social order, *The Road* opposes the criminalisation of wandering and casts vagrants as innocent victims of a flawed and cruel judicial system. By combining picaresque, comical, and naturalistic elements in his narrative to characterise his imprisonment, London ceaselessly tries to rouse the reader's sympathy and make him or her reflect on the dreadful situation he describes. Often overlooked by critics, London's representation of his incarceration as a “living hell” fraught with “unprintable horrors” (London 248), along with his forceful denunciation of “the whole institution of criminal justice” (London 242), lies at the heart of his story. Drawing on the reflections of Jacques Rancière and Martha Nussbaum on the relationship between aesthetics and politics, this paper aims to analyse how London's depiction of vagabonding as a free and artistic experience contrasts with his dire portrayal of life in jail. It intends to explore how London's *The Road* questions the American judicial system and presents imprisonment as the negation of the individual's liberty to roam and experience the country's vast expanses of land. Overall, it will pay particular attention to how London's retrospective account of his detention



aesthetically subverts the injustice suffered by imprisoned vagrants in order to poetically right the wrongs they endured and politically reimagine the place given to vagabonds and other outcasts in American society.

Illustrating Captivity: Visualising Imprisonment in Illustrated Editions of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, 1680–1824

Nathalie Collé (University of Lorraine, France)

This paper examines the illustration of prison scenes in John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (Part I, 1678; Part II, 1684) as a site where literature, art and the lived experience of imprisonment converge. Bunyan wrote much of *The Pilgrim's Progress* during his incarceration in Bedford Gaol, and the text's recurring concern with confinement – both physical and spiritual – invited rich and varied visual interpretation in seventeenth-, eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century editions. Yet the illustrations of imprisonment in editions of the work remain understudied, often overshadowed by the narrative's broader allegorical reception. This paper argues that these images constitute a crucial visual archive of early modern penal culture, dissenting identity and the politics of print.

By analysing plates depicting the imprisonment of Faithful in Vanity Fair, Christian's and Hopeful's confinement in Doubting Castle, and the scenes of captivity that shape Christiana's journey in Part II, the paper explores how illustrators translated Bunyan's allegorical framework into material, often visceral, visual forms. These images simultaneously echo contemporary carceral practices and transform them: prison is rendered as both a recognisable institutional space and a metaphorical landscape of despair, discipline and spiritual testing. Attention is given to visual conventions – architectural framing, posture and gesture, light and shadow – that encode theological and ideological meaning, as well as to the shifting iconographic strategies between editions and according to illustrators.

The paper positions these illustrations within a broader understanding of imprisonment as a cultural and aesthetic category. It considers how the act of representing incarceration in print mediated readers' encounters with dissenting suffering and contributed to the formation of a collective imaginary around Protestant persecution. Ultimately, it demonstrates that the illustrated *Pilgrim's Progress* offers a rare intersection of autobiographical imprisonment, literary allegory and visual interpretation, revealing how images shape and complicate the reception of carceral experience in early modern literature.



“[B]roken and scattered”: Colonial Places of Confinement in Dickens, Collins, and Stevenson

Federica Rufolo (University of Trieste, Italy)

As highlighted by Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* (1975), in nineteenth-century literature, the prison serves as a powerful symbol of authority, social order, and institutional stability which is frequently destabilised when incarceration is displaced in a colonial context. This strategy of displacement allows authors to represent the colony simultaneously as a space of illusory freedom and insidious control. This paper explores the representations of colonial confinement in Charles Dickens' and Wilkie Collins' "The Perils of Certain English Prisoners" (1857) and Robert Louis Stevenson's *In the South Seas* (1896), investigating how colonial penal environments are repeatedly depicted as lenient, permissive, and structurally unstable. Through a comparative reading of the prison facilities described in these works, the paper argues that the formal mechanisms of surveillance and discipline are weakened in the colonial space. On the one hand, in Dickens' and Collins' short story, the ruins of a former palace in the Belizean jungle are repurposed as a place of confinement by a group of merciless pirates. On the other, Stevenson describes the Marquesan prison of Nuka-hiva as a dormitory-like structure that lacks clear physical boundaries, a space where confinement is not enforced through architectural constraints but rather through a sense of moral obligation. Despite their openness, these spaces effectively function as sites of captivity, as prisoners internalise norms that prevent them from escaping. In this regard, both authors engage with Victorian anxieties surrounding colonial alterity, ultimately displacing the idea of detention from the physical prison structure both to the exotic colonial setting and to the prisoners' minds.





Posters

2 September, 11.00-12.00



P1. Speaking Assessment Methods Used by Teachers to Assess English Learners at University Level in Saudi Arabia

Hanan Almohideb (Trinity College Dublin, Ireland)

Due to the absence of standalone English-speaking courses, speaking skills are integrated into first-year English listening courses at Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University (IMSIU) in Riyadh. Teachers use various assessment methods but prioritizing summative assessments which may negatively affect students' academic performance. Choosing effective assessment methods in EFL speaking can enhance student motivation and skill development. Washback, the impact of assessment on teaching and learning, plays a crucial role in designing effective teaching methodologies. Aligning speaking assessment with teaching can enhance learning quality and lifelong skills development. Investigating EFL speaking assessment at the College of English Languages and Translation may shed light on key areas for development in this area.

The study aims to explore the impact of formative assessment strategies, including the use of digital assessment tools, on EFL learners at IMSIU. This study adopted mixed methods of research design, combining quantitative (pre-tests, post-tests, questionnaires) and qualitative (semi-structured interviews, classroom observations) data collection methods. Participants were 15 female lecturers and 97 first-year EFL students enrolled in listening and speaking courses. The students were enrolled in control groups using traditional assessment methods and experimental groups were exposed to additional formative assessment techniques, such as roleplay, peer review, self-assessment, and the use of digital platforms.

A descriptive statistical analysis will be used to analyze quantitative data, and in the Qualitative data, the researcher will use Braun and Clarke's framework. The findings of this study may help in informing best practices in speaking assessment, that support Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 goals for enhancing English education standards.



P2. “Don’t count your commodities investments before they hatch”: Idiomatic Creativity, Referential Specification, and “Impossible” Collocations

Carey Benom (Seinan Gakuin University, Japan) and Youngmin Oh (Ritsumeikan Asian Pacific University, Japan)

This paper presents findings from a corpus-based study of idiomatic creativity in English, Korean, and Japanese, highlighting *Referential Specification* (RS) — the linguistic strategy of creatively adapting idioms to clarify or anchor reference. Based on



more than 10,000 idiomatic innovations extracted from the TenTen corpora, we argue that RS accounts for the majority of idiom variation.

The data show that idioms, rather than being fixed, are highly dynamic. Speakers constantly face the cognitive goal of *Referential Intent* (RI) — clarifying or anchoring reference in context. In non-idiomatic language, this goal can be satisfied with, for example, a pronoun or modifier, but idioms can require more radical, noncanonical interventions. RS thus emerges as the linguistic strategy by which RI is satisfied with idiom use.

Idioms, with multi-layered figurative meanings, surpass literal language and single-word figurative uses in complexity. This, combined with their multi-lexical, lexically specified nature, creates pressure for speakers to adapt idioms creatively in order to map idiomatic roles onto discourse referents.

A striking result of RS is the creation of otherwise “impossible” collocations. For instance, although *investments* and *hatch* otherwise never co-occur in our multi-billion-word corpus, speakers readily interpret *don't count your commodities investments before they hatch* as meaningful. Such examples, attested in all three languages, illustrate how speakers exploit idioms to override typical lexical co-occurrence patterns, enhancing interpretability by balancing conventional form with contextual specificity.

These findings reveal idiomatic creativity is not anomalous but systematic, reflecting how the nature of idioms makes them fertile ground for adaptation. Ultimately, RI emerges as the central motivation for idiomatic flexibility across languages and the primary answer to why speakers use idioms creatively, with RS as the strategy through which RI is achieved. By showing how idioms balance conventional form with contextual referential pressures, this study advances theories of figurative language and highlights idioms as a privileged site for examining the interaction of lexical distribution, reference, and creativity.



P3. Interpersonal Conflict Management and Communicative Competence among Undergraduate Students: A Cross-Sectional Study at Yerevan State University

Anahit Galstyan (Yerevan State University, Armenia), Gohar Harutyunyan (Yerevan State University, Armenia), and Ruzanna Araqelyan (Yerevan State University, Armenia)

Conflicts among university students present significant challenges to academic communities, often affecting students' academic progress, mental health, and overall campus climate. This research project aims to investigate the nature and psychological dimensions of conflicts among students, with an initial focus on those studying in the Faculty of European Languages and



Communication. In recognizing that psychological factors such as stress, communication styles, and cultural backgrounds play a critical role in conflict development and resolution, this study seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of these dynamics within the faculty. Employing a mixed-methods approach, we will conduct surveys and psychological assessments among students to identify the most prevalent forms of conflict, their root causes, and the psychological factors that exacerbate or mitigate these issues. Subsequently, the study will be extended to encompass students from other faculties and specialties, allowing for a comparative analysis of conflict patterns across different academic contexts. A total sample of approximately 4,000 students will be surveyed to ensure robust and generalizable findings. The collected data will be analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods, providing comprehensive insights into the interplay between student psychology and conflict. The anticipated outcomes include a detailed mapping of conflict types, a deeper understanding of psychological contributors, and practical recommendations for conflict prevention and resolution tailored to the unique needs of various student groups. Ultimately, this project aims to support the development of more harmonious and psychologically supportive academic environments across faculties.

By empirically charting Armenian students' conflict definitions, preferred management styles, and behavioral patterns across diverse relational contexts, e.g., friendship, family, workplace, and community, this research addresses a critical void in the literature. The examination of third-party mediation attitudes and forgiveness patterns further enriches understanding of how conflict resolution unfolds within this cultural context. This study provides a foundational contribution to cross-cultural conflictology literature by introducing Armenian data into scholarly discourse.



P4. Between Recognition and Revictimisation: A Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis of Discursive Practices in Gender-Based Violence Cases

Ilaria Giordano (Independent Scholar) and Angela Zottola (University of Turin, Italy)

Despite its reputation for neutrality and impartiality, the law is not a passive mirror reflecting social reality: it actively shapes it, often also reinforcing and legitimising pre-existing biases and misconceptions (Fredman, 1998). Within this context, gender stereotypes represent a significant barrier to achieving gender equality and safeguarding human rights (Frańczak, 2022). In recent years, numerous national and international institutions, alongside non-governmental organisations, have expressed growing concern over the continued presence of gender stereotypes and discriminatory language within judicial contexts. These bodies highlight that such linguistic practices not only undermine the effective protection of survivors of gender-based violence (GBV)



but also violate recognised human rights and fundamental freedoms. Centring on cases of male violence against women, this research examines how the language employed in judicial proceedings shapes legal outcomes, determining whether survivors are afforded recognition or subjected to secondary victimisation. Adopting a multilingual comparative Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis approach (Lazar 2007, 2008), this study investigates four purpose-built datasets of judicial decisions from Italy, the United States, the United Kingdom, and India, covering the period 2012–2025. The poster presents preliminary findings showing that the choice of linguistic-discursive strategies has a decisive impact on representation: some strategies distort narratives by mobilising a rhetoric of “himpathy” (Manne 2018), thereby fostering secondary victimisation and discriminatory outcomes for women who have experienced violence, while others enable accurate accounts of events, challenge stereotypes, and centre survivors’ experiences.



P5. Developing Intercultural Pragmatics Materials for Japanese EFL Learners: Cultivating a Multilingual Self

Aika Miura (Rikkyo University, Japan)

This poster presentation reports on an ongoing three-year, government-funded curriculum design project (2025–2028) that develops pedagogical resources to cultivate English learners’ intercultural, pragmatic, and interactional competence in Japanese secondary and tertiary education. The project positions learners as active meaning-makers who engage with linguistic and cultural diversity through purposeful interaction (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). Building on this orientation, curricula are designed to incorporate intercultural perspectives into pragmatic and interactional scenarios (McConachy & Liddicoat, 2021). Intercultural competence involves experiencing and analysing “otherness” and cultural diversity, and deriving benefit from such experiences (Beacco et al., 2016).

We develop tasks focusing on everyday encounters such as conversations between acquaintances and shopping interactions. These situations illustrate how people manage invitations, refusals, and negotiations across different social relationships and degrees of formality.

The poster outlines an interpretative learning process, which supports learners in engaging with these encounters, grounded in “active construction” (Liddicoat, 2025, p. 10). This process consists of three stages: (1) a lead-in, where learners explore intra-



and intercultural variation in their L1 practices; (2) noticing and comparing, where they metapragmatically analyse assigned English model dialogues; and (3) reflecting, where they co-construct English dialogues that incorporate contextual, cultural, and interactional insights gained from the preceding stages. To provide authentic input for these tasks, model dialogues are created using role-play data collected in early 2026 from pairs of British residents—members of the Inner Circle (Kachru, 1985) but representing a diverse, multicultural society with varied generations, first languages, countries of birth, and occupations.

We aim to provide curricula that enable learners to engage with cultural meanings embedded in linguistic practices and reflect on their assumptions and identities, thereby supporting the recognition of intra- and intercultural diversity and fostering the development of a “multilingual self” (Kramsch, 2009) capable of mediating cultural meanings in diverse communicative settings.



P6. Central Bank Communication and Generative AI: Navigating the Challenges for Translation

Ikram Naji (Abdelmalek Essaadi University, Tangier, Morocco)

In modern society, AI has become an essential tool for streamlining complex processes and enhancing analytical efficiency. In finance, especially within “Central Bank Talk”, the precise interpretation of language is crucial, as it can impact markets and investments; thus, major investment banks are developing their own AI translation systems trained on historical data to ensure accuracy and anticipate market reactions. In this study, we seek to examine the following issue: Generative AI-powered Translation and Central Bank Communication: How Artificial Intelligence may overlook key nuances in financial language. To address this problem, we followed an IMRAD research method. Having reviewed the fundamental concepts necessary for this research, we compiled a corpus of Central Bank statements from various financial institutions using a comprehensive approach. This allowed us to analyze their linguistic aspects and subtleties, notably syntax, semantics, and lexical choices. We then submitted these texts to Claude AI. Subsequently, we compared the AI-powered translation results to human translation results. For the results section, we detailed our complexity analysis, pinpointing specific features of Central Bank Talk that challenge AI models, such as intricate syntax and specialized lexicon. This analysis was based on the aforementioned comparison. We categorized and quantified the errors produced by these models, shedding light on issues such as hallucinations and misinterpretations of context. We discussed these findings and gathered evidence suggesting the need for greater sensitivity to linguistic subtleties. We concluded that an accurate translation of Central Bank Talk requires more than linguistic knowledge and terminological alignment; it necessitates an understanding of economic nuances and intentions. The limitations of current AI systems highlight significant challenges that need to be addressed to meet the high standards of the financial sector.





P7. British and American Literature in English Education in Mexico: Advancing Cultural Awareness and Cognitive Mastery

Anna V. Sokolova Grinovievkaya (Metropolitan Autonomous University, Mexico City)

This study explores how engagement with British and American literature cultivates intercultural competence and analytical reasoning among Mexican language students. It addresses three questions: (1) How do learners perceive British and American English in academic and cultural contexts? (2) How does exposure to both variants foster cultural understanding and higher-order cognitive skills? (3) Which pedagogical strategies maximize learning outcomes across these domains? The study aims to examine students' perceptions, evaluate the impact of dual-variant instruction, and propose evidence-based teaching practices. Approximately ninety A1–A2 students enrolled in English courses at a Mexican public university during 2024–2025 participated. Data were collected through interactive classroom activities, structured observation, and surveys incorporating quantitative and qualitative elements, capturing detailed insights into engagement, preferences, and learning challenges. The theoretical framework integrates Bourdieu's concept of linguistic capital (1991), Seidlhofer's perspectives on English as a lingua franca (2011), and Lazar's research on literature in language education (2015). Balanced exposure to British and American literature is presented as a critical driver for developing linguistic proficiency, cultural literacy, reflective thinking, and cognitive flexibility. Results demonstrate that this instruction significantly enhances students' awareness of cultural diversity, strengthens analytical interpretation, and increases motivation and engagement. Learners reported a deeper appreciation of global perspectives and improved critical reasoning. Persistent gaps in oral and written skills highlight the need for structured support and scaffolding. Conclusions emphasize that incorporating both British and American literary texts is essential for producing culturally astute, cognitively empowered learners. Pedagogical recommendations include pairing literature with interactive discussions, reflective tasks, and digital resources to create an inclusive, intellectually stimulating, and professionally relevant learning environment. Prioritizing both variants ensures students acquire not only linguistic competence but also cultural insight and higher-order cognitive skills.



P8. From Ishiguro's *Intimate Biodystopia* to Atwood's *Systemic Vision*: Linguistic Perspectives on Posthuman Ethics

Eugenio Vecchione (University of Naples L'Orientale, Italy)



This poster presents a doctoral research project investigating how contemporary speculative narratives construct bioethical meanings around the human condition, combining linguistic analysis with literary interpretation. Focusing on Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* (2005) and *Klara and the Sun* (2021), alongside Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* trilogy (*Oryx and Crake*, 2003; *The Year of the Flood*, 2009; *MaddAddam*, 2013), the project approaches biodystopian fiction as an ethical lens rather than as a site of technical or scientific explanation.

In Ishiguro's novels, speculative elements such as human cloning and artificial intelligence are never examined in procedural terms, foregrounding instead the moral and affective dimensions of human life. *Never Let Me Go* exemplifies an intimate biodystopia, where cloned bodies operate as metaphors for vulnerability, otherness, and biological marginalisation, exposing the moral normalisation of exploitation and sacrifice. *Klara and the Sun* extends this focus towards transhuman aspiration, exploring relationality, care, and moral agency, while reflecting on technological mediation and social inequality.

By contrast, Atwood's *MaddAddam* trilogy articulates a systemic biodystopia, depicting a world structured by genetic engineering, biocapitalism, and corporate governance of biological life. The novels emphasise how posthuman and transhuman projects are embedded in social, commercial, and scientific discourses that render ethical transgressions socially acceptable, producing consequences for ecological societal, and human life. Atwood highlights the tension between human aspiration for control and the ethical responsibilities often overlooked, providing a systemic lens that complements Ishiguro's intimate focus.

Methodologically, the project adopts an interdisciplinary approach by integrating close reading with Corpus Stylistics (Mahlberg 2013) and Literary Pragma-Stylistics (Kizelbach 2023) to examine how bioethical meanings are constructed, negotiated, and normalised across different narrative discourses. Overall, the study aims to offer an integrated perspective on the human condition in the bio-technologically mediated era, moving from intimate ethical concerns to systemic societal implications.



P9. Constructing Resilience with English Language Teachers

Monica Waterhouse (Université Laval, Canada), Philippa Parks (Université de Sherbrooke, Canada), and Caroline Riches (McGill University, Canada)

Teacher shortages are a growing global concern (Admiraal, 2023; OECD, 2024), exacerbated by high rates of teacher attrition, especially in the early years of practice (Kutsyuruba et al., 2018; Parks et al., 2023; Sirois et al., 2022). Teachers' reasons for leaving



the profession are manifold; however, strengthening teacher resilience is central to improving long-term retention (Riches & Parks, 2021; Zhang, 2023). This poster presentation offers an opportunity for dialogue around context-specific threats to language teacher resilience and the co-construction of context-sensitive solutions.

As English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher educators in Québec, Canada, our research focuses on fostering resilience right from the start in initial teacher education. In Québec, French is dominant and has official language status. The unique sociopolitical, linguistic, and geographical characteristics of such minority language education environments often intensify the language teacher shortage crisis (Guglani, 2025; Swanson & Mason, 2018).

Drawing on interview and focus group data from a one-year pilot study, we share insights from 10 pre-service ESL teachers studying at three Québec universities about how they understand their professional resilience. This collective case study (Yin, 2018) is informed by Johnson et al.'s (2015) framework for early career teacher resilience, and Fielder et al.'s (2024) framework for teacher development and progression, the latter placing pre-service teachers at the center of career retention.

Findings indicate how ESL pre-service teacher resilience is closely tied to engagement in professional learning communities and professional development. These serve as the basis of our forthcoming three-year, mixed methods study to explore pathways to resilience for Québec ESL teachers. In partnership with professional and practitioner organisations at the provincial and national levels, this project will establish concrete strategies to support the resilience of novice ESL teachers as they transition from their initial teacher education into their first two years of in-service practice.

P10. Representation of Trauma in Contemporary Sri Lankan Novels

Laura Zick (Friedrich-Alexander University of Erlangen-Nuremberg, Germany)

This project examines representations of trauma in contemporary anglophone novels by resident and diasporic Sri Lankan writers. Considering the development of trauma studies in the recent years towards a more inclusive and less Eurocentric approach to trauma theory, this project asks which specific strategies are at work in literature from a Sri Lankan context to represent trauma in ways that expand the classical approach to trauma. By examining recent Sri Lankan novels that deal with violence, suffering and the trauma resulting from it, this work inquires how narrative structures relate to the experience of trauma, and how contemporary literature contributes to providing alternative trauma discourses. The argument put forward in this project is that contemporary



works of Sri Lankan literature do indeed employ a wide range of narrative techniques and modes of representation which move beyond a traditionally Eurocentric approach to trauma. With recourse to selected primary texts, this work explores trauma from three distinct but related perspectives: the perspective of the survivor of traumatic violence, the perspective of the diasporic witness and the perspective of the reader of traumatic narratives as an implicated subject. All three perspectives are fundamental to understanding (postcolonial) trauma, for each of them sheds light on different aspects of trauma and its literary depiction, resulting in different narrative strategies and modes of representation. The chosen works of literature help to reshape trauma discourses by elaborating an understanding of trauma that can account for forms of traumatizing violence which are common especially in postcolonial contexts – such as collective and ongoing forms of trauma – and by demonstrating how questions of power, complicity and resistance are complexly interrelated in the context of (postcolonial) trauma. At the same time, the works demonstrate the ability of literature to reflect its own limitations regarding the representation of human suffering and trauma.



P11. Rewriting Virginia Woolf's Mental Illness in Contemporary Biofiction

Aitana Acuña Rodríguez (University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain)

This poster examines how contemporary Anglophone biofiction rewrites Virginia Woolf's mental illness through three recent novels: Michael Cunningham's *The Hours* (1998), Maggie Gee's *Virginia Woolf in Manhattan* (2014), and Norah Vincent's *Adeline: A Novel of Virginia Woolf* (2015). Drawing on biofiction theory and feminist approaches to mental illness and disability, it explores how these narratives revisit Woolf's breakdowns, psychiatric suffering and suicide while also questioning the cultural construction of Woolf as the archetypal "suicidal female writer".

The analysis focuses on three main narrative strategies: doubling, resurrection and intertextual rewriting. Vincent's *Adeline* presents Woolf through a traumatised adolescent alter ego, Gee's *Virginia Woolf in Manhattan* imagines a resurrected and life-affirming Woolf, and Cunningham's *The Hours* connects Woolf's suicidal crisis with other women readers and writers across time. Through these examples, the poster argues that contemporary biofiction both uses and challenges Woolf's mental illness as a symbolic and marketable narrative resource.

Ultimately, the poster suggests that rewriting Woolf's illness can open up less pathologising ways of understanding vulnerability, care and creative survival, turning biofiction into a space for feminist mental-health reflection and for reconsidering the gendered afterlives of canonical women writers.





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Abbreviations

PLEN – Plenary Lecture. PL – Parallel Lecture. RT – Round Table. S – Seminar. P – Poster

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