



18th ESSE Conference

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

CALL FOR POSTERS AND SEMINAR PAPERS

Submissions of proposals for individual posters to esse2026@usc.es	31st January 2026
Submission of proposals for seminar papers to seminar convenors (see list below)	
Registration will begin on 1st March 2026	
For further information and updates, please visit the conference website: www.esse2026.com	

1. POSTERS

Posters will be devoted to research-in-progress and project presentations. The aim is to provide additional opportunities for feedback and personal contacts. The conference will include a dedicated poster session.

Proposals of **not more than 300 words** (excluding bibliographical references) must be sent to esse2026@usc.es by 31st January 2026.

2. SEMINAR PAPERS

Scholars wishing to participate in one of the seminars listed below are invited to submit a **300-word abstract (excluding bibliographical references)** to the convenors of their chosen seminar by 31st January 2026.



Seminars will include a range of academic papers and discussions. Each presentation should last 20 minutes, followed by a 10-minute discussion. As the number of seminar slots is limited, convenors may request shorter presentations to accommodate more participants in their sessions.

Please note that participants at ESSE 2026 are permitted to present only one paper during the conference, whether as sole authors or co-authors.

LIST OF SEMINARS

1. ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTICS

1.- 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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CONVENORS:

- Eva Skopečková (University of West Bohemia, Czech Republic)
skopeco@kan.zcu.cz
 - Emanuela Tenca (UniCamillus, Italy)
emanuela.tenca@unicamillus.org
-

2.- 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.



CONVENORS:

- Jean Jimenez (University of Calabria, Italy)
jean.jimenez@unical.it
 - William Kelleher (Rennes 2 University, France)
william.kelleher@univ-rennes2.fr
 - Evgueniya Lyu (Grenoble Alps University, France)
evgueniya.lyu@univ-grenoble-alpes.fr
 - Caroline Peynaud (Grenoble Alps University, France)
caroline.peynaud@univ-grenoble-alpes.fr
-

3.- 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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CONVENORS:

- Patrizia Anesa (University of Bergamo, Italy)
patrizia.anesa@unibg.it
- Carmenne Kalyaniwala (University of Lorraine, France)
carmenne.kalyaniwala@univ-lorraine.fr
- Cédric Sarré (Sorbonne University, France)
cedric.sarre@sorbonne-universite.fr



4.- 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:

- Begoña Lasa Álvarez (University of A Coruña, Spain)
b.lasa@udc.es
- Anna Szczepaniak-Kozak (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poland)
annkozak@amu.edu.pl

5.- 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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CONVENORS:

- Ewa Domagała-Zysk (John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland)
ewadom@kul.pl
- Jitka Sedláčková (Masaryk University, Czech Republic)
jitkasedlackova@mail.muni.cz



6.- 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:

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

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CONVENORS:

- Elisa Mattiello (University of Pisa, Italy)
elisa.mattiello@unipi.it
- Pavol Štekauer (Pavol Jozef Šafárik University, Košice, Slovakia)
pavel.stekauer@upjs.sk

7.- 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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CONVENORS:

- Maarten Lemmens (University of Lille, France)
maarten.lemmens@univ-lille.fr
- Frančiška Lipovšek (University of Ljubljana, Slovenia)
franciska.lipovsek@ff.uni-lj.si

8.- 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.

CONVENORS:

- Mario Brdar (J. J. Strossmayer University of Osijek, Croatia)
mbrdar@ffos.hr
- Agnieszka Grząsko (University of Rzeszów, Poland)
agrzasko@ur.edu.pl
- Robert Kiełtyka (University of Rzeszów, Poland)
rkieltyka@ur.edu.pl
- Bożena Kochman-Haładyj (University of Rzeszów, Poland)
bkochman@ur.edu.pl
- Goran Milić (J. J. Strossmayer University of Osijek, Croatia)
gmilic@ffos.hr

9.- 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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CONVENORS:

- Oliver Currie (University of Ljubljana, Slovenia)
Oliver.currie@ff.uni-lj.si
- Angela Andreani (University of Milan, Italy)
angela.andreani@unimi.it



10.- 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 (cf. 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
- cross-linguistic differences between disinformation texts

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CONVENORS:

- Dominika Beneš Kováčová (University of Ostrava, Czech Republic)
dominika.kovacova@osu.cz
- Massimiliano Demata (University of Turin, Italy)
massimiliano.demata@unito.it
- Jiří Lukl (University of Ostrava, Czech Republic)
jiri.lukl@osu.cz

11.- 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?

CONVENORS:

- Kristy Beers Fägersten (Södertörn University, Sweden)
kristy.beers.fagersten@sh.se
 - Andreas H. Jucker (University of Zurich, Switzerland)
ahjucker@es.uzh.ch
 - Sandrine Sorlin (University of Montpellier Paul-Valéry, France)
sandrine.sorlin@univ-montp3.fr
-

12.- 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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CONVENORS:

- Lieven Vandelanotte (University of Namur & KU Leuven, Belgium)
lieven.vandelanotte@unamur.be
- Anna Piata (National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece)
apiata@enl.uoa.gr

More information and submission

Please see the seminar website at metasocial.unamur.be

13.- 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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CONVENORS:

- Daniela Francesca Virdis (University of Cagliari, Italy)
dfvirdis@unica.it
- Agata Rozumko (University of Białystok, Poland)
a.rozumko@uwb.edu.pl



14.- 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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- . 2019. *Joseph Conrad. Language and Transnationalism*. Chieti: Solfanelli.

CONVENORS:

- Kim Salmons (St. Mary's University, London, UK)
kim.salmons@stmarys.ac.uk
- Tania Zulli (University of Chieti-Pescara, Italy)
tania.zulli@unich.it



15.- 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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CONVENORS:

- Vincent Renner (Lumière Lyon 2 University, France)
vincent.renner@univ-lyon2.fr
- Marie-Aude Lefer (University of Louvain, Belgium)
marie-aude.lefer@uclouvain.be
- Caroline Rossi (Grenoble Alps University, France)
caroline.rossi@univ-grenoble-alpes.fr

16.- 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;
- Comparing 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;
- Tendency to trust / mistrust AI-generated translation outputs.

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CONVENORS:

- Tiffany Jandrain (University of Mons, Belgium / University of Louvain, Belgium)
tiffany.jandrain@umons.ac.be
 - Charlene Meyers (University of Mons, Belgium)
charlene.meyers@umons.ac.be
 - Loïc De Faria Pires (University of Mons, Belgium)
loic.defariapires@umons.ac.be
 - Joëlle Popineau (University of Tours, France)
joelle.popineau@univ-tours.fr
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17.- 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);
- resemiotization of legal discourse.

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CONVENORS:

- Giuseppina Di Gregorio (University of Catania, Italy)
g.digregorio@unict.it
- Marco Neves (NOVA University Lisbon, Portugal)
mfneves@fcsb.unl.pt

18.- 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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CONVENORS:

- Cristina Gómez Castro (University of León, Spain)
cristina.gomez@unileon.es
- Elisabeth Gibbels (Humboldt University of Berlin, Germany)
Elisabeth.Gibbels@hu-berlin.de

2. ENGLISH LANGUAGE, LITERATURES IN ENGLISH

19.- 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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CONVENORS:

- Lucie Betáková (University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice, Czech Republic)
betakova@pf.jcu.cz
 - Iulian Cananau (University of Gävle, Sweden)
iulian.cananau@hig.se
-

20.- 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.

CONVENORS:

- Adelina Sánchez Espinosa (University of Granada, Spain)
adelina@ugr.es
- Nicole Haring (University of Graz, Austria)
nicole.haring@uni-graz.at

3. LITERATURES IN ENGLISH

21.- 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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CONVENORS:

- Cédric Courtois (University of Lille, France)
cedric.courtois@univ-lille.fr
- Angelo Monaco (Aldo Moro University of Bari, Italy)
angelo.monaco@uniba.it

22.- 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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CONVENORS:

- Jean-Michel Ganteau (University of Montpellier Paul-Valéry, France)
jean-michel.ganteau@univ-montp3.fr
 - Susana Onega (University of Zaragoza, Spain)
sonega@unizar.es
-

23.- 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.

CONVENORS:

- María Jesús Lorenzo-Modia (University of A Coruña, Spain)
maria.lorenzo.modia@udc.es
 - Marie Nedregotten Sørbo (Volda University College, Norway)
marie.nedregotten.sorbo@hivolda.no
-



24.- 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 reconstruction. 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
- Gendering the past in contemporary historical fiction

CONVENORS:

- Alberto Lázaro (University of Alcalá, Spain)
alberto.lazaro@uah.es
- Vassiliki Markidou (National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece)
vmarkidou@enl.uoa.gr



25.- 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:

- Magdalena Pypec (University of Warsaw, Poland)
magdalenapypec@uw.edu.pl
- Angelika Zirker (Eberhard Karls University in Tübingen, Germany)
angelika.zirker@uni-tuebingen.de

26.- ‘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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CONVENORS:

- Rosario Arias (University of Málaga, Spain)
rarias@uma.es
- Patricia Pulham (University of Surrey, UK)
p.pulham@surrey.ac.uk
- Béatrice Laurent (University of Bordeaux Montaigne, France)
beatrice.laurent@u-bordeaux-montaigne.fr
- Anna Kérchy (University of Szeged, Hungary)
akerchy@ieas-szeged.hu



27.- 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 Maudslay, 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

CONVENORS:

- Maria Isabel Romero-Ruiz (University of Málaga, Spain)
mirr@uma.es
- Helen Davies (University of Wolverhampton, UK)
h.davies6@wlv.ac.uk



28.- (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 metatheatricality 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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CONVENORS:

- Laura Monrós-Gaspar (University of Valencia, Spain)
laura.monros@uv.es
- Beth Palmer (University of Surrey, UK)
b.palmer@surrey.ac.uk



29.- 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, film, 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
- neo-Victorian engagement on social media

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CONVENORS:

- Sarah Beyvers (University of Passau, Germany)
sarah.beyvers@uni-passau.de
- Barbara Braid (University of Szczecin, Poland)
barbara.braid@usz.edu.pl

30.- 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.
- Narrative ethics in mental illness narratives.

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CONVENORS:

- Laura de la Parra Fernández (Complutense University of Madrid, Spain)
lauraparrafernandez@ucm.es
- David Lombard (Research Foundation Flanders (FWO) and KU Leuven, Belgium)
david.lombard@kuleuven.be

31.- 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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CONVENORS:

- María Alonso Alonso (University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain)
maria.alonso.alonso@usc.es
- Margarida Pereira Martins (University of Lisbon, Portugal)
margarida.martins@uab.pt

32.- 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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CONVENORS:

- Laurent Mellet (University of Montpellier Paul-Valéry, France)
lau.mellet@gmail.com
- Andrew Thacker (Nottingham Trent University, UK)
andrew.thacker@ntu.ac.uk

33.- 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.



CONVENORS:

- David M. Clark (University of A Coruña, Spain)
david.clark@udc.es
 - Gabriella Hartvig (University of Pécs, Hungary)
hartvig.gabriella@pte.hu
-

34.- 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/affectation’ (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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CONVENORS:

- Birgit Neumann (Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf, Germany)
birgit.neumann@uni-duesseldorf.de
- Gabriele Rippl (University of Bern, Switzerland)
gabriele.rippl@unibe.ch
- Sofie Behluli (University of Bern, Switzerland)
sofie.behluli@unibe.ch
- Malaika Sutter (University of Bern, Switzerland)
malaika.sutter@unibe.ch
- Michael Boog (University of Bern, Switzerland)
michael.boog@unibe.ch
- Dr. Hannah Pardey (Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf, Germany)
hannah.pardey@hhu.de



35.- 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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CONVENORS:

- Antonella Braidà (University of Lorraine, France)
antonella.braidà-laplace@univ-lorraine.fr
- Laurence Roussillon-Constanty (University of Pau and the Adour Region, France)
laurence.roussillon-constanty@univ-pau.fr
- Elisabetta Marino (University of Rome Tor Vergata, Italy)
marino@lettere.uniroma2.it

36.- Discourses of Crisis in Anglophone Fiction from Modernism to Postmodernism – and Beyond

Reinhart Koselleck observed back in 2006 that from the 19th 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 20th 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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CONVENORS:

- Armela Panajoti (University of Vlora, Albania/ University of the Balearic Islands, Spain)
armelap@assenglish.org
- Angelika Reichmann (Eszterházy Károly Catholic University, Hungary)
reichmanna@gmail.com

37.- 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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CONVENORS:

- Justyna Galant (University of Gdansk, Poland)
justyna.galant@ug.edu.pl
 - Marta Komsta (Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Lublin, Poland)
martakomsta@wp.pl
 - Urszula Terentowicz-Fotyga (Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Lublin, Poland)
urszula.terentowicz-fotyga@mail.umcs.pl
 - Nathalie Vanfasse (Aix-Marseille University, France)
nathalie.vanfasse@univ-amu.fr
-

38.- 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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CONVENORS:

- Tamara Jovović (University “Mediterranean” in Podgorica, Montenegro)
tamara.jovovic@unimediterranean.net
 - Olena Lilova (University “Mediterranean” in Podgorica, Montenegro)
olena.lilova@unimediterranean.net
 - Lyudmila Fedoryaka (Kryvyi Rih State Pedagogical University, Ukraine)
fedoryaka.lyudmila@gmail.com
-

39.- 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, opticentric, 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).



CONVENORS:

- Halil Ibrahim Arpa (Cankiri Karatekin University, Turkey)
hiarpa@karatekin.edu.tr
 - Eva Katharina Bauer (University of Graz, Austria)
eva.bauer@uni-graz.at
-

40.- 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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CONVENORS:

- Ivan Callus (University of Malta, Malta)
ivan.callus@um.edu.mt
- Armelle Parey (University of Caen Normandy, France)
armelle.parey@unicaen.fr

41.- '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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CONVENORS:

- Jennifer A. Wagner-Lawlor (Penn State University, US)
jaw55@psu.edu
- Esther Peeren (University of Amsterdam, Netherlands)
E.Peeren@uva.nl
- Merve Sarıkaya-Şen (Baskent University, Ankara, Turkey)
sarikaya@baskent.edu.tr

42.- 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 Arnhem (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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CONVENORS:

- Lucia Esposito (Roma Tre University, Italy)
lucia.esposito@uniroma3.it
- Virginie Roche-Tiengo (University of Artois, France)
virginie.rochetiengo@univ-artois.fr
- Alessandra Ruggiero (University of Teramo, Italy)
aruggiero@unite.it



43.- 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
- utopian performative

CONVENORS:

- Sibel Izmir (Atılım University, Turkey)
sibeleceizmir@gmail.com
- Claus Peter Neumann (University of Zaragoza, Spain)
cpneuman@unizar.es



44.- 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.

CONVENORS:

- Jaroslav Kušnir (University of Prešov, Slovakia)
jaroslav.kusnir@unipo.sk
- Dan Horatiu Popescu (Partium Christian University, Romania)
dhpopescu@partium.ro



45.- 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.

CONVENORS:

- Isabelle Meuret (Université Libre de Bruxelles, Belgium)
Isabelle.Meuret@ulb.be
- John S. Bak (University of Lorraine, France)
john.bak@univ-lorraine.fr

46.- 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:

- Kamila Vránková (University of South Bohemia, Czech Republic)
vrankova@pf.jcu.cz
- Coralline Dupuy (University of Galway, Ireland)
coralline.dupuy@universityofgalway.ie
- Yamina Hafian (University of Pécs, Hungary)
yaminahafian01@gmail.com

47.- 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.

CONVENORS:

- Fiona McCann (Sorbonne University, France)
fiona.mccann@sorbonne-universite.fr
- Dilâra Yilmaz (Kiel University, Germany)
yilmaz@anglistik.uni-kiel.de

48.- 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.

CONVENORS:

- Roslyn Irving (Johannes Gutenberg University, Germany)
rirving@uni-mainz.de
- Jakub Lipski (Kazimierz Wielki University, Poland)
j.lipski@ukw.edu.pl
- Mary Newbould (Kazimierz Wielki University, Poland)
newbould@ukw.edu.pl

49.- 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.

CONVENORS:

- Irena Grubica (University of Rijeka, Croatia)
irena.grubica@uniri.hr
- Aoife Leahy (N.A.E.S., Ireland)
aoifebleahy@hotmail.com

50.- 25 Years of (Neo)Medieval (Sub)versions: Reimagining Medieval Narratives to Face Contemporary Cultural Issues and Anxieties

Except for those with philological training, Medieval English literature has always been received by reading audiences in translation, given the distance between the source language(s), Old and Middle English, and the target language. The translation of the most important literary works of the period and the literary (sub)creation based on worlds more or less recognizable as 'medieval' have been the two most common procedures for consuming medieval literature, from the historical novels of Walter Scott or the poetry of Tennyson, to the works of J. R. R. Tolkien's *legendarium*, the poetic recreations of Borges or the neomedieval fantasy of George R. R. Martin's novels.



The arrival of visual narratives in the 20th century was an interesting addition to this list. We witnessed an explosion of visual texts (graphic novels and filmic texts), especially from the 1970s onwards, with a clear consolidation in the first two decades of the 21st century. It is from the release of Peter Jackson's films on *The Lord of the Rings* (2001-2003) when the receivers of fiction were visually prepared to be able to assume, with the help of neomedieval fantasies, adaptations that maintained a strong connection with the original works and presented a degree of subversion from the original material that, although apparently moving away from that material, precisely managed to focus on fundamental aspects of the adapted works (Albin *et al* 2019), so that readers or spectators of the present day could have a greater understanding of them. This took place in translation –Thomas Meyer's e.e. cummings' flavoured *Beowulf* (2012) or Maria Dahvana Headley's feminist *Beowulf* (2020)–, literary creation –*After Beowulf* by Nicole Markotic (2022) or Dahvana Headley's novel *The Mere Wife* (2018)–, graphic novels –*Grendel, Kentucky* by McComsey & Edwards (2021) or García & Rubín's *Beowulf* (2016)– and fundamentally in visual texts, whether they are films –David Lowery's *The Green Knight* (2021)–, series for television –*The Canterbury Tales Retold* (2006) by the BBC– or for streaming platforms –HBO's *Game of Thrones* (2011-2019) & *King and Conqueror* (2025)– or Amazon Prime's *The Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power* (2022)–.

This seminar aims to continue to focus on these adaptive processes proposing, thus, the study of all these (neo)medieval (sub)versions as described above in order to review their evolution and the broad spectrum of their theoretical and practical implementation over the last 25 years. It will consider papers that review any aspect of these works (translations, literary adaptations, graphic novels, films, series) with the appropriate theoretical framework(s) in each specific case (ecocriticism, feminism, reception, adaptation, translatology, cultural issues, etc). The basic idea is to assume for these (neo)medieval (sub)versions what Harty & Manning (2024: 3) recently said about cinema based on the Middle Ages: “(they) speak to the vibrancy of a continuing cultural phenomenon first evidenced during the waning days of the so-called Middle Ages: the embrace, time and again, of some reimagining of the medieval to meet contemporary cultural issues and alleviate contemporary cultural anxieties”.

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CONVENORS:

- Jorge L. Bueno Alonso (University of Vigo, Spain)
jlbueno@uvigo.gal
 - Miguel A. Gómes Gargamala (University of Sunderland, UK)
miguel.gomes@sunderland.ac.uk
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51.- 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

References:

Hutcheon, Linda, Siobhan O'Flynn, *A Theory of Adaptation*, Routledge, 2013.

CONVENORS:

- Zsuzsanna Csikai (University of Pécs, Hungary)
csikai.zsuzsa@pte.hu
- Annamária Fábián (Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary)
fabian.annamaria@btk.elte.hu
- Márta Minier (University of South Wales, UK)
marta.minier@southwales.ac.uk

52.- 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. Suggested 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

References:

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- Han, Byung-Chul (2024) *The Spirit of Hope*. Translated from the German by Daniel Steuer. Cambridge: Polity.



CONVENORS:

- Chiara Battisti (University of Verona, Italy)
chiara.battisti@univr.it
- Julia Kuznetski (Tallinn University, Estonia)
jul@tlu.ee
- Silvia Pellicer-Ortín (University of Zaragoza, Spain)
spellice@unizar.es

4. LITERATURES IN ENGLISH, CULTURAL AND AREA STUDIES

53.- 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).



CONVENORS:

- Ludmilla Kostova (University of Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria)
l.kostova@ts.uni-vt.bg
 - Oana Cogeanu-Haraga (Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi, Romania)
oanacogeanu@gmail.com
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54.- 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.



CONVENORS:

- Gioia Angeletti (University of Parma, Italy)
gioia.angeletti@unipr.it
 - Christine Berberich (University of Portsmouth, UK)
Christine.berberich@port.ac.uk
-

55.- 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.

CONVENORS:

- Elisabetta Marino (University of Rome Tor Vergata, Italy)
marino@lettere.uniroma2.it
 - Daniela Rogobete (University of Craiova, Romania)
dani.rogobete@yahoo.com
-

56.- 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:

- Işıl Baş de Oliveira (Istinye University, Turkey)
isil.bas@istinye.edu.tr
- Florence Binard (Paris Cité University, France)
florence.binard@u-paris.fr
- Renate Haas (University of Kiel, Germany)
haas@anglistik.uni-kiel.de
- Alejandra Moreno Álvarez (University of Oviedo, Spain)
morenoalejandra@uniovi.es



57.- 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.

CONVENORS:

- Camille Fort (University of Picardy Jules Verne, France)
camillefort@yahoo.fr
- Kerstin-Anja Münderlein (University of Bamberg, Germany)
Kerstin-anja.muenderlein@uni-bamberg.de

58.- 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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- Seigworth, Geoffrey J. and Carolyn Pedwell. *The Affect Theory Reader 2: Worldings, Tensions, Futures*. Duke University Press, 2023.
- Soja, Edward. *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*. Blackwell, 1996.
- Thrift, Nigel. *Non-Representational Theory: Space, Politics, Affect*. Routledge, 2008.



CONVENORS:

- Ágnes Györke (Károli Gáspár University, Hungary)
gyorke.agnes@kre.hu
 - Ana Cristina Mendes (University of Lisbon, Portugal)
anafmendes@edu.ulisboa.pt
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59.- 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.

CONVENORS:

- Seda Arikan (Firat University, Elazig, Turkey)
sarikan@firat.edu.tr
- Francesca Saggini (Tuscia University, Viterbo, Italy)
fsaggini@unitus.it
- Anna Enrichetta Soccio (G. d'Annunzio University, Chieti, Italy)
enrichetta.soccio@unich.it



60.- 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.

CONVENORS:

- James Dowthwaite (Johannes Gutenberg University, Mainz, Germany)
jdowthwa@uni-mainz.de
- Lene Østermark-Johansen (University of Copenhagen, Denmark)
oesterm@hum.ku.dk

61.- 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
- Pedagogical uses and abuses of violence in early modern drama.

CONVENORS:

- Yan Brailowsky (Paris Nanterre University, France)
yan.brailowsky@parisnanterre.fr
- Víctor Huertas Martín (University of Valencia, Spain)
victor.huertas@uv.es

62.- 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.

CONVENORS:

- Monica Ruset Oanca (University of Bucharest, Romania)
monica.oanca@lts.unibuc.ro
 - Annina Seiler (University of Zurich, Switzerland)
annina.seiler@es.uzh.ch
 - Tatjana Silec (Sorbonne University, France)
tatjana.silec@gmail.com
 - Olivier Simonin (University of Perpignan, France)
olivier.simonin@univ-perp.fr
 - Olga Timofeeva (University of Zurich, Switzerland)
olga.timofeeva@es.uzh.ch
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63.- 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.

CONVENORS:

- Cyrielle Garson (Avignon University, France)
cyrielle.garson@univ-avignon.fr
 - Virginie Privas-Bréauté (University of Lorraine, France)
virginie.privas-breaute@univ-lorraine.fr
 - Jan Suk (University of Hradec Králové, Czech Republic)
jan.suk@uhk.cz
 - Ivan Lacko (Comenius University, Slovakia)
ivan.lacko@uniba.sk
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64.- 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:

- Heike Hartung (University of Potsdam, Germany)
hhartung@uni-potsdam.de
 - Sarah Falcus (University of Cumbria, UK)
sarah@sjfalcus.co.uk
 - Maricel Oró-Piqueras (University of Lleida, Spain)
maricel.oro@udl.cat
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65.- 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 Preraffaelismo” (*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.



CONVENORS:

- Bénédicte Coste (University of Burgundy Europe, France)
Benedicte.Coste@u-bourgogne.fr
 - Catherine Delyfer (University of Toulouse-Jean Jaurès, France)
catherine.delyfer@univ-tlse2.fr
 - Emilia Di Rocco (Sapienza University of Rome, Italy)
emilia.dirocco@uniroma1.it
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66.- 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.

CONVENORS:

- Attila Kiss (University of Szeged, Hungary)
akiss@lit.u-szeged.hu
 - György E. Szönyi (University of Szeged, Hungary)
geszonyi@gmail.com
 - Rowland Wymer (Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge, UK)
rowland.wymer@aru.ac.uk
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67.- 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.

CONVENORS:

- Zsófia Anna Tóth (University of Szeged, Hungary)
tothzsofianna@gmail.com
- Aleksandra Wieczorkiewicz (Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland)
wieczorkiewicz@amu.edu.pl

68.- 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.

CONVENORS:

- Anne-Marie Paquet-Deyris (University Paris-Nanterre, France)
Apaquet-deyris@parisnanterre.fr
- Gilles Menegaldo (University of Poitiers, France)
g.menegaldo@gmail.com
- Fran-Pheasant-Kelly (University of Wolverhampton, UK)
f.e.pheasant-kelly@wlv.ac.uk



69.- 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

