



Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski
Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology
Department of English and American Studies

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

LITERATURE AT THE BORDERS: BIOFICTION STUDIES TODAY

(29-30 May 2024)

Ever since the first modern novels, such as Daniel Defoe's, masquerading as autobiographies—as if an entirely fictional story did not deserve the audience's attention—the writing of auto/biographies has raised many questions as writers have always avoided the sharp distinction between biography and fiction. Many attempts have been made to bring order to this field, with various terms proposed to account for the wide variety of such texts, the most commonly used nowadays being fictionalized biography, biographical fiction or "biofiction". The latter is not a new genre in literature, but recently it has been interpreted by critics as another form of the postmodern tendency to break genre boundaries and transcend them. All these attempts to define what is happening in the field of biography are related in one way or another to the question of the relationship between biography and history and where the borders of the factual end and the story-telling begins.

An even more interesting problem is posed by novels that, while not completely breaking genre boundaries, are nevertheless postmodern novels with famous characters from the real world that change the notion of history - private and public - and become part of what Linda Hutcheon calls "historiographical metafiction". In fact, all these texts are eloquent examples of the way in which historical facts are selected and positioned in the postmodern narrative. Thus, one of the main questions in the contemporary debate about biography is whether this genre can still be seen as a stable genre untouched by postmodern hybridization, or as part of a liminal zone, a sort of "third space" that already shares the characteristics of both historiography and the fictional story-telling.

The international conference Literature at the Borders: Biofiction Studies Today which will take place on 29-30 May 2024 at Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski, Bulgaria, aims to bring together scholars and researchers from different parts of the world working in the field of biofiction and border studies, enabling the exchange of ideas from different socio-cultural and scholarly contexts. Invited keynote speakers and participants will make it possible to 'negotiate' the literary processes in the biographical field as part of the postmodern storytelling, and the creation of fictional images that inhabit both the world of fact and the world of imagination. The conference will also contribute to the unfolding of the debate on the nature of postmodern writing and biography as situated in the border zones of hybridity and genre uncertainty, inhabiting the "third space" of ambivalence and subversion of the "grand narratives" of the past.

We invite submissions of abstracts for papers discussing various aspects of literature at the borders with a focus on biofiction but not limited to this area of research. We welcome proposals from both established literary scholars and aspiring young researchers, doctoral candidates and MA and BA students who work on interdisciplinary topics from their own literatures or from foreign ones that fall within the scope of the present call. A selection of the papers will be published after blind reviewing.



The language of the conference is English, Bulgarian, and Russian.

The conference is planned to be in a hybrid format (in-person and online).

The deadline for proposals is **15th May 2024**. The abstract should be 150-250 words, containing the title of the paper, the name of the participant, their affiliation, and contact details. Presentations will be approximately 15-20 minutes, including time for Q&A.

Please send your proposals to **Kiril Hadzhikosev**, khadzhikos@uni-sofia.bg

The submitted proposals will be reviewed and a note of acceptance/non-acceptance will be sent within three days of submission.

Organizing committee:

Professor Madeleine Danova, PhD

Professor Magdalena Kostova-Panayotova, DHabil

Associate Professor Galina Avramova, PhD

Kiril Hadzhikosev, PhD candidate