



The Historical Fictions Research Network invites you to its international, interdisciplinary online summer workshop on historical fiction. We invite scholars from all over the world to come and join us for this international conversation. We have yet to find a time zone we cannot accommodate, so do join us in June!

2025 Online Summer Workshop: Transnational and Postnational Historical Fictions

13 June 2025 (online in Zoom) ca 8 am to 5 pm (GMT)

15 min talks

Transnational and Postnational Historical Fictions

Since the inception of its critical study through Georg Lukács, the historical novel has been conceived of as a national genre: In *The Historical Novel*, Lukács links the emergence of the genre to the “reawakening of national history” (Lukács 1962: 25), arguing that it was through the series of wars between nations in nineteenth-century-Europe that (male) subjects began to be able to conceive of their own existence as “something historically conditioned, for them to see in history something which deeply affects their daily lives and immediately concerns them” (Lukács 1962: 24). This conceptualisation has been adopted by many influential critics working in his wake, such as Aaron Fleishman (1971), Richard Maxwell (2009), and Frederic Jameson (2013). The same definition has been applied to historical drama and other historical genres; in his “Lectures on Shakespeare”, Samuel Coleridge said that for drama to be “properly historical [...], it should be the history of the people to whom it is addressed” (Coleridge 1811-1819: 108), and Paulina Kewes has noted that one of the most frequently cited characteristics of the Elizabethan history play in modern criticism remains its “Englishness” (Kewes 2003: 171), in spite of it “frequently blurring the line between the native and the foreign” (Kewes 2003: 175).

Diana Wallace has forcefully criticised our overreliance on Lukács, arguing that his concept excludes the historical writings of women and blinds us to the ‘maternal genealogy’ of the historical novel Wallace 2005: 3, 8); her criticism may also be applied to the subject of the non-national in historical fictions, which has so far received little systematic critical attention, creating a serious blind spot in our field. Historical fictions ranging from Jane Porter’s *Thaddeus of Warsaw* (1803) to Mary Shelley’s *Valperga* (1823), George Eliot’s *Romola* (1862), Virginia Woolf’s *Orlando* (1928), Pat Barker’s Regeneration trilogy (1990s), Hilary Mantel’s *Wolf Hall* novels, Selby Winn Schwartz’s *After Sappho* (2022) or Zadie Smith’s *The Fraud* (2023) arguably display a clear transnational dimension. Beyond the anglophone world, recent historical fictions such as Leïla Slimani’s *Le Pays des Autres* (2020) or Daniel Kehlmann’s *Tyll* (2017) demonstrate a deep preoccupation with the non-national. As Jerome de Groot argues, the historical novel has since its inception been an “international form”, succeeding on a “transnational scale” (de Groot 2010: 93), so what makes it so appealing beyond its nationalised context? How do the transnational, international, and postnational appear in historical fictions?



In this **one-day workshop**, we focus on “**Transnational and Postnational Historical Fictions**” to explore how the non-national appears in historical fictions (including but not limited to literature, film, television, audio, narrative non-fiction, exhibitions, documentaries) and historical narratives of any type, from any region, any time period, and in any language. We are inviting papers concerned with any aspect of the non-national in historical fictions, and encourage an open-minded, wide-ranging and ambitious discussion of what may constitute the non-national in historical fictions. While it is important to distinguish between terms such as ‘transnational’, ‘postnational’, and ‘international’, the organisers invite papers considering any dimension of the non-national. The organisers are planning to publish an edited collection on the subject and plan to invite contributions from speakers who will present at the workshop. We welcome contributions from researchers at all career stages, as well as practitioners, and particularly from individuals working in the Global South. We accept submissions in English, French, and Spanish. Please note that discussions at the workshop will take place in English, but we will do our best to appoint chairs who may be able to interpret questions and answers from French and Spanish into English and vice versa.

Please send a 250-word abstract and a short biographical note via our website (<https://historicalfictionsresearch.org/online-workshop-2025-summer/>) by 15 May 2025 at midnight.

Organisers: Christine Lehnen, Editorial Board *Journal of Historical Fictions*, University of Exeter; Dorothea Flothow, Series Editor ‘[Global Historical Fictions](#)’, University of Salzburg; Siobhan O’Connor, Series Editor ‘[Global Historical](#)’, Independent Scholar, Yolanda Rodríguez Pérez, Editorial Board ‘[Global Historical Fictions](#),’ University of Amsterdam.

Workshop fee: £20 for waged and £10 for unwaged / PhDs. Please contact us if the fee stands in the way of you participating and we may be able to find a solution together.

Any questions, please email historicalfictions@gmail.com.