

## PARALLEL LECTURES – ESSE2024 @UNIL (in alphabetical order):

- Charles Ivan Armstrong (University of Agder, Norway): *The wanderings of the modern myths: Exemplarity, adaptation, and spatiality*
- Roman Bartosch (University of Cologne, Germany): *Future Imperfect: The end of the world and the teaching of English?*
- Ingo Berensmeyer (LMU Munich, Germany): *How literature makes authors: Towards a history of writers as characters in modern fiction*
- Juan Camilo Conde-Silvestre (Universidad de Murcia, Spain): *The third-wave approach in historical sociolinguistic research: Evidence from late fifteenth-century English correspondence*
- Roberto del Valle Alcalá (Södertörn University, Sweden): *From utopia to hegemony: English social fiction and the political imagination*
- Julia Hoydis (University of Klagenfurt, Austria): *The challenge to imagine just futures: Narration and intergenerationality in contemporary fiction*
- Giovanni Iamartino (University of Milan, Italy): *Ideological bias and self-censorship in the history of English dictionary-making*
- Miriam Locher (University of Basel, Switzerland): *Politeness research and its theoretical interface: Insights from fictional data and health communication research*
- Sári B. László (University of Pécs, Hungary): *The contemporary economic novel: Hernan Díaz's Trust*
- Gabriele Rippl (University of Bern, Switzerland): *Mediating the Anthropocene: Intermediality and the environmental humanities*
- Johannes Riquet (Tampere University, Finland): *Creative and collaborative geographies: Performing the 'Arctic'*
- Andrea Schalley (Karlstad University, Sweden): *From events to concepts: Using experiments to model word meaning*
- Titela Vîlceanu (University of Craiova, Romania): *Literary translation studies – Romanian contexts and research directions*

## ABSTRACTS:

- **Charles Ivan Armstrong (University of Agder, Norway): *The wanderings of the modern myths: Exemplarity, adaptation, and spatiality***

Certain modern literary texts and their protagonists have proved to provide extraordinarily fertile ground not only for renewed reading and interpretation but also reinvention and adaptation. Figures such as Robinson Crusoe, Faust, Don Juan, Frankenstein, and Dracula continue to entertain and intrigue large audiences, long after their original versions, providing a spur to new artistic expression. Although key early articulations took place in literary works by writers such as Daniel Defoe, Christopher Marlowe, Mary Shelley, and Bram Stoker, these stories have lived on, not only in other literary works but also in the visual arts, cinema, computer games, and other formats. While we may think of the exclamation “It’s alive!” as pertaining to the feverish breakthrough moment of Shelley’s inventor, it was actually first used in James Whale’s 1931 film version of the Frankenstein story. In slightly different fashion, visitors to Disneyland Paris might be reminded of Defoe’s eighteenth-century novel when they encounter an improvised, basic home beside a ruined ship on an island, but they soon learn that this tourist experience is a contemporary interpretation of Johan David Wyss’s 1812 novel, *Der Schweizerische Robinson*, which itself had reconfigured the original novel through the prism of a travelling family.

This lecture will first present how these figures and stories have been interpreted as modern myths by Ian Watt’s *Myths of Modern Individualism: Faust, Don Quixote, Don Juan, Robinson Crusoe* (1996) and Ian Ball’s *Modern Myths: Adventures in the Machinery of the Popular Imagination* (2021), identifying some key issues of definition. Here both the concept of myth and its relevance in a modern context will be discussed. Subsequently, this presentation will use some of the rich material available to show how these stories have wandered between different forms of expression and modalities. The question will be raised if, and to what degree, these myths can be said to provide didactic exemplars for human behaviour. In addition, the spatial aspect of the stories will be emphasized, showing provide narratives of geographical exploration and escape.

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- **Roman Bartosch (University of Cologne, Germany): *Future Imperfect: The end of the world and the teaching of English?***

As scholars of Anglophone literatures and cultures and linguistics, we are also all educators. The recent years have seen a growing recognition of this fact, partly due to the political and societal ambitions of research programmes in the environmental and public humanities, in gender and queer studies or in post- and decolonial criticism, partly in acknowledgement of student diversity and the needs of learners in tertiary education. While this has led to greater visibility of the work of subject-specific educational research within our discipline, it has not yet yielded substantial intradisciplinary research output. I will argue that such collaboration is both rewarding and timely, and that it is needed to better understand that the basic parameters of research and teaching are undergoing fundamental change. This change pertains to the foundational premise of education – the notion that future generations will have it better than previous ones because of the value of learning – and the intergenerational contract between teachers and learners in times of planetary crises and global injustice: what happens to the

promise of empowerment and capability when climate emergencies and dystopian politics threaten to diminish the future of generations to come? The lecture will discuss and compare key educational ideas from literary and cultural studies as well as pedagogy and use them to build a case for joint explorations of the potentials of languages, literatures and cultures in the face of looming disaster and to suggest that creativity and conviviality are potential means to student (and teacher) flourishing.

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- **Ingo Berensmeyer (LMU Munich, Germany): *How literature makes authors: Towards a history of writers as characters in modern fiction***

Authors make literature, but literature also makes authors. This is made explicit in narrative fiction that addresses what the elusive author Morelli, in Julio Cortázar's 1963 novel *Hopscotch*, calls "the strange self-creation of the author through his work". Such 'author fictions' refer to material facts and immaterial myths of authorship in the real world, reflecting and refracting them in their form. By telling stories about invented authors, actual authors invite their audiences to reconsider the meanings and values of authorship, and of literature; in doing so, they can hope to change their own position in the aesthetic and economic networks of the literary field, and to renegotiate prevailing notions of literary creation and production. Works of 'author fiction' – novels about novelists – engage with existing models and concepts of literary authorship, which are, in turn, social and political as well as aesthetic paradigms, 'author fictions' in the sense of abstract concepts that influence concrete literary practices. To get to the bottom of these processes and their dynamic interrelations, I adapt a set of tools developed in narrative theory and literary sociology. In this lecture, I'm taking up the challenge to combine both these aspects and to map out a history of literary author- making in narrative fiction since 1800. I will close with a paradigmatic reading of Rachel Cusk's *Outline* trilogy as a case study of contemporary narrative representations of authorship.

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- **Juan Camilo Conde-Silvestre (Universidad de Murcia, Spain): *The third-wave approach in historical sociolinguistic research: Evidence from late fifteenth-century English correspondence***

It is now widely assumed that sociolinguistic research over the last decades has developed in three waves: a first wave of quantitative studies analysing variability in connection to given categories like class, age or gender; a second wave of ethnographic-based approaches drawing on participant-designed categories to analyse individual linguistic identity in the micro-context of social units, like social networks; and a third wave of anthropologically-oriented studies that aim at reconstructing the social meaning of linguistic variables within layered communities, not only sharing a 'dialect', but also a common background, similar aspirations, mentalities and world-views that inform the construction of both individual and group identities (Eckert 2012). The historical sociolinguistic paradigm has mainly developed within the first and second waves, with studies drawing connections of linguistic data from the past with the classical variables of class, age, gender (first wave) and social network (second wave), thus enriching our comprehension of historically attested changes —for an overview of the main research

directions, see Nevalainen (2011), Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (2012), Auer et al. (2015) and Conde-Silvestre (2016a). Historically-oriented approaches within the third wave are still scarce, possibly due to difficulties in reconstructing groups and, especially, identities and social meanings within past societies—see, however, for the history of English, Watts (2008), Fitzmaurice (2010), Kopaczyk and Jucker (eds. 2013), Conde-Silvestre (2016b; 2019), Moore (2019) and Timofeeva (2022), among others.

A key analytical construct within the third-wave is that of ‘community of practice’: a group of people linked by the pursuit of a joint enterprise, sharing a repertoire of resources, including linguistic ones (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998). Field research has also confirmed the relevance of this construct in the diffusion of present-day variation, as part of a common, locally-constructed style: “it is in the process whereby an individual negotiates with his/her communities of practice that linguistic style is constructed and refined and patterns of variation are imbued with meaning” (Eckert 2000: 172; see also Meyerhoff 2002). Communities of practice are therefore crucial for the diffusion of linguistic innovations, including both standard and non-standard practices, as part of the process of identity construction, and I believe that this tenet—which certainly holds for the present—can also be extended to the past, adding a new dimension to historical sociolinguistics.

In my presentation, I will discuss the methodological tenets guiding the application of third-wave sociolinguistics to the past, and illustrate them with case-studies based on the evidence afforded by some extant collections of late fifteenth-century English correspondence, like the Paston letters, the Stonor letters and the Cely letters.

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- **Roberto del Valle Alcalá (Södertörn University, Sweden): *From utopia to hegemony: English social fiction and the political imagination***

This lecture examines two seminal contributions to the English canon of social fiction: Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton*, an exemplary instance of the Victorian Condition-of-England novel, and Robert Tressell's *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*, one of the first strictly working-class and openly socialist novels in this tradition. The argument is twofold. First, I claim that *Mary Barton* represents a significant transformation of the social-reformist imaginaries of the early nineteenth century, in particular the utopian and anti-political tradition represented by Robert Owen. In Gaskell's novel, the vision of a reconciled society rising above the chasm of class antagonisms in early industrial capitalism is tied to a paternalist logic of middle-class benevolence towards the working class which is nevertheless recognised as absent in this mid-nineteenth-century context. This leads to an important ethical opening at the heart of those processes of class identification (as capitalist or worker) that underpin the new economy of social relations in capitalism, insofar as the self-referentiality and immanence of proletarian and bourgeois subjectivities is deemed to be incapable of restoring harmony or fullness in any meaningful sense. But beyond the (im)possibility of a paternalism that is no longer within reach and which therefore cannot guarantee social homogeneity, the novel also announces the positive discovery of heterogeneity as the spectacle of that which offers no guarantees in modern society. My second claim builds directly upon this latter 'discovery' in *Mary Barton*: it is precisely with the uncovering of heterogeneity at the heart of the social that the possibility of a discursive project of political articulation emerges, reclaiming the category of class from any pre-determined or essentialist definition and opening it up to a logic of contingency. I argue that this is the line of thinking espoused by Robert Tressell's *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* and a key development in the political imagination proposed by English social(ist) fiction. I further argue that, while it never reaches the level of theoretical maturity found in continental Marxism at the turn of the century, and while its frame of reference remains that of late Victorian and Edwardian socialist debates in Britain, Tressell's novel is comparable in some of its strategic conclusions to those of post-Marxist political thought and therefore lends itself to analysis from a radical-democratic perspective of relevance to our own political conjuncture.

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- **Julia Hoydis (University of Klagenfurt, Austria): *The challenge to imagine just futures: Narration and intergenerationality in contemporary fiction***

The lecture explores narratives of climate futures and human survival amidst and after environmental disaster in contemporary British prose fiction and drama. It argues that intergenerational justice emerges as a key theme in texts engaging with discourses of

environmental and demographic crises and that these texts simultaneously highlight decline and loss as well as resilience and a sense of continuity. Especially the prose fictions, the focus of the first part of this lecture, deviate from other post-apocalyptic narratives in content and narrative form by refashioning modes of realist storytelling. The concern with intergenerational justice shifts the dominant declensionist disaster narrative to solidarity and individual development. While foregrounding routines and resilience, questions of individual and collective agency and responsibility are at the heart of the novels that revisit familiar tropes of hope, such as the figure of the child, by imagining alternative visions of the nuclear family. Contemporary eco-plays, under scrutiny in the second part, similarly try to depict the loss of health and habitats, and to imagine futures of care and caring about (in)just futures. Dystopian and satirical templates prove harder to shake here. In the negotiation of intergenerational justice, the plays oscillate between depicting conflict and clashing attitudes about climate futures and questions of how to cope with loss and ‘survivor’s guilt’.

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- **Giovanni Iamartino (University of Milan, Italy): *Ideological bias and self-censorship in the history of English dictionary-making***

Dictionaries are often considered as objective and perfect repositories of the lexical store of one or more languages. Yet, metalexigraphers have long made clear that

Dictionaries, encyclopedias and grammars are the best examples of texts that one should read between the lines, where the conflicts, the hidden and ignored oppositions, the clichés that make up the family album of a culture can be detected more easily than anywhere else. (Meschonnic 1991, in Béjoint 2009: 203)

Therefore, a brief survey of the history of English dictionary-making together with the analysis of a few case studies will be meant to serve a number of different but interrelated purposes, namely: to dispel the myth of perfect, ‘God-given’ lexicography; to argue that word meanings “are conventionally, institutionally, and ultimately ideologically determined by the traditions and practices of lexicography (Manley, Jacobsen, and Pedersen 1988: 281); to provide evidence of how quite a few entries – or lack thereof (in the case of taboo words) – in a given English dictionary did, and still do, reflect the ideological bias of its times; to show that dictionaries may provide relevant and interesting data for research; finally, to suggest that a historical approach to English lexicography may teach students how to trace evidence of ideological bias in present-day politically-correct and seemingly neutral compilation of dictionaries.

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- **Sári B. László (University of Pécs, Hungary): *The contemporary economic novel: Hernan Díaz’s Trust***

Recent American fiction has seen a resurgence of historical topics, and significant attempts have been made to revisit moments perceived as defining an epoch in American history. The revitalized interest in history in the mainstream of contemporary American fiction can be described as reckoning with and commemorate traumas in the distant and the recent past (e.g.:

Colson Whitehead's *The Underground Railroad* and *The Nickel Boys*), as historicist engagements with trying to locate possible pockets of personal experience against the grain of historical grand narratives (Jennifer Egan's *Manhattan Beach*), as engagements with a neoliberal reorganization of the economy and personal relations (Jonathan Franzen's *The Corrections*), of urban lifestyles and politics (Garth Risk Hallberg's *City On Fire*), or of the visual, popular and political media (Nathan Hill's *The Nix*). Most of these well-received novels adhere to an arguably conservative, "realist" aesthetic that downplays even the most visible of postmodernist influence. However, *Trust*, Hernan Díaz's Pulitzer Prize-winning second novel of 2022 demonstrates a formally more conscious approach to a period outside the scope of attention to most contemporary historical novels. The presentation will argue that (1) *Trust* critically re-evaluates the metaphoric connection between economy and psychology indicated by the titular phrase, (2) it makes an attempt to reclaim reading as an unalienated form of labour by the use of its fragmented form, and (3) it provides insight into the historical development of human cognition and the use of information and communication technologies in its historical account of the New Deal, and (4) it does so by rethinking the economic novel and its entanglement in the history of gender relations.

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- **Miriam Locher (University of Basel, Switzerland): *Politeness research and its theoretical interface: Insights from fictional data and health communication research***

Politeness research and its theoretical interface: Insights from fictional data and health communication research. This paper reviews theoretical insights from interpersonal pragmatics that has traditionally drawn from fields such as politeness research, identity construction research and pragmatics in general. It discusses the cross-fertilisation of these fields in light of relational work and draws on empirical work from fiction and health projects to sketch the challenges and potential directions of research interested in the dynamic negotiation of relationships.

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- **Gabriele Rippl (University of Bern, Switzerland): *Mediating the Anthropocene: Intermediality and the environmental humanities***

Gabriele Rippl's lecture *Mediating the Anthropocene: Intermediality and the Environmental Humanities* brings together two burgeoning fields: Intermediality Studies and the Environmental Humanities. It discusses the negotiation of the Anthropocene and the stagings of ecological imaginaries in twentieth- and twenty-first Anglophone fiction. The goal is to explore the intermedial/ekphrastic ecological aesthetics and the transformative affective and socio-political potential of narrative texts that present possible futures.

- **Johannes Riquet (Tampere University, Finland): *Creative and collaborative geographies: Performing the ‘Arctic’***

In this lecture, I engage with recent developments that theorise the intersection of cultural production and geography to map out ways of thinking about space as a collaborative and creative practice at the intersection of different epistemologies. In the first part of the talk, I will bring into conversation three approaches to literary and cultural geography: geopoetics, which focuses on interactions between the creative energies of physical space and the poetic energies of texts (e.g. Magrane et al. 2020); nonrepresentational geographies with their emphasis on embodied practice and performance; and Indigenous spatial philosophies, which view space as relational and shaped by multiple agencies (e.g. Watts 2013). As I will demonstrate, these approaches speak to each other in various ways as they share an emphasis on geography as an ongoing performance and co-production emerging from a plurality of living and supposedly inanimate actors.

In the second part of my talk, I will turn to contemporary cultural production from the circumpolar North as a case study. Conceived as a unified geographic region, the ‘Arctic’ is a Southern invention and closely connected to post-Cold War geopolitics, yet the term has also been claimed and reinvented in the context of circumpolar Indigenous politics. Focusing on a range of examples including collaborative creative and academic work produced within the Mediated Arctic Geographies project, I will think through the idea that geography is as much a matter of poetics as of politics and gesture towards ways of viewing the Arctic as an ongoing collaborative performance in which both scholarly work and creative practice are implicated – and cannot be neatly separated.

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- **Andrea Schalley (Karlstad University, Sweden): *From events to concepts: Using experiments to model word meaning***

On which grounds do we interpret what we observe around us as an instance of a specific event, e.g. as pushing or pulling? Which event properties trigger speakers to prefer one verb (e.g. ‘pull’) over another (e.g. ‘drag’) in their linguistic descriptions of such events?

In this presentation, I present an explorative analysis of the results for English of a psycholinguistic experiment that we currently run for a number of languages. Using carefully controlled 3D event animations, participants' task was to briefly describe how an animated actor caused an inanimate object to move. We systematically manipulated the relative positions of object and actor, the length of contact between the two, the force exerted, and the body orientation of the actor. Productions were annotated for a rich number of features associated with caused motion. The results show how English verbs of pushing and pulling carve up the conceptual space. I report on the predictors that trigger the production of different verbs, and the observed semantic verb clusters.



- **Titela Vilceanu (University of Craiova, Romania): *Literary translation studies – Romanian contexts and research directions***

The lecture is intended to discuss the challenges and prospects of a newly emerged subdiscipline – *Literary translation studies*, with particular reference to the Romanian context(s) in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. The paper also focuses on the notion of *multiple translatorship*, integrating sociological perspectives on the status and roles of the literary translator. As far as the methodological toolkit is concerned, special importance is attached to ethnography, interviews, case studies and historiography, based on their potential to provide reliable qualitative data from a process-oriented perspective that goes beyond the literary translator's struggle of achieving linguistic and cultural equivalence (within the cognitive framework of the interpretive theory of translation). Hence, the lecture aims to build a robust framework for investigating the intricate social, cultural and psychological dimensions of literary translatorship and to boost literary translation studies in the Romanian context as aligned with literary translation studies (still in the making, in our opinion) in the more comprehensive western landscape. Moreover, we are fully aware of the fundamental unpredictability of the selected qualitative research tools, which requires depth of analysis so as to make sense of the context(s) and transform a wealth of data into meaning endowed with theoretical and practical relevance.

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