Call for Papers

Third Heidelberg Graduate Student Conference in English Studies

Concept and Organization: MA Students of the English Studies Program

June 25-26, 2021

All students (not just from the English Department of Heidelberg University) are invited to apply to participate in one of the following panels. The conference will take place in a hybrid, or in an entirely online format, depending on the Covid-situation.

Overview:

When Poetry Meets Other Genres (Timm Shanks)

The Image and the Word (Lea Autenrieth)

Shakespearian Heroines (Danielle van der Merwe)

The Spectre Haunting Academia: Understanding the Role of Academia in the Rise of the Far Right (Armen Hesse)

Britain on Screen: Adapting British Literature, Culture, and History for Film and Television (Nicole Gillner)

Research Data Management and Digital Humanities in Literary Studies (Jessica Fingerhut)

Poetry and the Endurance of Human Life (Tanya Gautam)

It's the End of the World as We Know It and I Feel Fine? (Eva Marie Heimers)

2nd Time's the Charm /(Dis)Enchanted? – Classics Retold (Eva Marie Heimers)

From Pages to Film: Literary Adaptations in Cinema and on the Small Screen (Laura Herges)

Uncloseted – An Exploration of Queerness Across Fiction (Lara Marie Kossowski)

Timm Shanks:

When Poetry Meets Other Genres

Poetry is a peculiar thing to pursue. Especially in this day and age, other literary forms such as the novel or the television show seem to have pushed poetry to the margins of cultural significance. What it may lack in popularity, however, is more than made up for in its depth and unique expressive possibilities. Interestingly, this conviction seems to be shared by the very authors and showrunners of more popular genres: In the TV-show Breaking Bad, for example, there is a deep interconnection with poetry, which reveals itself in the underlying yet constant presence of Walt Whitman, a recitation of his poem "When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer" and a titular reference to P. B. Shelley's "Ozymandias" (see the TV-show's antepenultimate episode of the same name). Other interesting examples include a recitation of Emily Dickinson's poem "Ample make this Bed" in the movie Sophie's Choice, or the myriad of poems that appear in the movie Dead Poets Society.

This panel seeks to explore the question of what happens when poetry comes into contact with other literary genres. How does the poem affect its surrounding context, and in turn is affected itself? Does the poem add meaning to its given context? Does the context broaden or limit the poem's interpretive scope?

Of specific interest are movies, TV-shows, or even advertisements that treat a poem to a recitation. However, topics might also include explorations of the visual dimension of poetry.

I look forward to receiving abstracts at timm.shanks@gmail.com

Lea Autenrieth:

The Image and the Word

'Art' is a broad term that has often been rediscussed, redefined, and reclassified. It may include literature, visual art, music, dance, and so much more – depending on the definition. During the 18th century, efforts were made to properly distinguish and rank types of art – both between and within the different art forms. However, over time and until today, there have always been 'mixtures' – music accompanied by dance, literature referring to paintings, or paintings depicting dance, and so on.

This panel invites discussion on the relationship of real-life paintings and other forms of visual art described in pieces of literature. Why would an author resort to a (more or less well-known) painting? After all, literature itself uses words to create images in our heads. Simultaneously, however, we often use words to describe or 'read' pieces of visual art and the feelings they evoke in us. So, what if literature and visual art overlap? Do they become of equal importance for understanding a novel? Are they rivals or supplements when it comes to the reader's understanding? Does fiction then become less fictional and more real? And how is the reader's imagination influenced?

Liliane Louvel's *Texte/Image: Images à Lire, Textes à Voir* (2002) and *Poetics of the Iconotext* (2011) offer an interesting approach to the interaction of text and image and invite to be worked with.

This panel seeks papers on the role and function of visual art in written fiction, particularly when pieces of art are of great importance to the overall meaning.

If you wish to participate, please send an abstract of about 300 words to autenriethlea@gmail.com

Danielle van der Merwe:

Shakespearean Heroines

In Shakespeare's large collection of plays scholars are presented with a number of different representations of women: from the typical love-sick teenager like Juliet to the vicious Lady Macbeth. This panel will take a look at those infamous female characters – with the focus being on Shakespearean Drama (his plays). Literary papers theorising about the characters themselves, as well as papers discussing the characters in their social/historical circumstances are required.

It might be interesting to look at the role of these characters in regard to the plot, their relationship with other characters – especially their male counterparts – and their treatment during a time when the patriarchal system made up the base of 16th century society. How are these women characterised? Are these women stereotypical or do they break the stereotype? Does the female heroine drive the plot of the play or is she simply a filter for her male counterpart? In case you have an already written term paper on one of these topics or if you are interested in researching and presenting your findings please write to me.

Please send proposals of about 300 words to Danielle van der Merwe: daniellevdm@outlook.com

Armen Hesse:

The Spectre Haunting Academia: Understanding the Role of Academia in the Rise of the Far Right

> *Dismantling power structures in academia goes beyond the self-absolution of "I am not a racist; therefore, I am not a contributor," since the root cause is systemic racism rather than at an individual level. To paraphrase Ibram X. Kendi, to do nothing is to contribute to continued racism.*

Alain de Benoist, the French thinker focused on the far right, labelled the growth of the right in Academia as far-right Gramscism; a cultural revolution bent on reshaping the image of society in a far-right image, using the guise of Academia to propound their message. Echoes of this can be seen across many fields; from economics to literature, to political scientists to historians. The inner workings of this fractious, decentralised movement are both vitally important and fascinating objects of study, which not only brings into question how academic research should be conducted, but also why?

Arguably, the response of Academia to the alt-right has been impotent, defined by a reticence to offer moral rebukes, alongside, in some cases, harbouring those who hold alt-right views and perspectives (see: David Gilley, Portland State University, Jordan Peterson, University of Toronto, Thierry Baudet, Leiden University). Shoddy, academically sponsored 'racial science' has in the past animated racist policy making (See: Raphael Patai's The Arab Mind), Alt-right co-options of Medieval and Dark Age culture bring stigma to academics focused on Medievalism, who, instead of denying the Alt-Right's a-historical claim to these eras, simply change their lexicon, leaving terms and ideas to the Alt-Right in an attempt at separation. Cool passive observation of their growth in power, dismissal, retreat and simply ignoring them have been common responses in many corners of academia. Does Academia have a duty to society to say more, do more, and to counter the flimsy arguments upon which the strength of the Alt-right is based? Must we aim to go beyond mere denial and disapproval, but rather, develop techniques to undermine the allure of their ideology, and identify the root causes of their growth in the first place?

In many fields, certain fields of study have become suffused with taboo by association with this movement (whether knowingly or not) as the movement takes historical symbols, movements, images for its own. Meanwhile its practical political agenda, as Alt-right Governments take power globally, seeks to undermine the extant liberal consensus in favour of resetting the clock to an imaginary idyllic time in some vague past. For example, Trump's iconic Make America Great Again slogan naturally begs the question, when was America great? In what image is America to be reset to in the eyes of the Alt-right? And what shape will the new world they wish to build take? It is the duty of academia not only to identify and interpret these questions, but also to ensure that spurious scholarly practices do not compound the aforementioned phenomena. The question then becomes, how should academia give potent responses to the alt-right, rather than giving a cloak of authenticity to their ideas.

Please send proposals of about 300 words to Armen Hesse (armen-hesse@t-online.de)

Nicole Gillner:

Britain on Screen: Adapting British Literature, Culture, and History for Film and Television

Motion pictures serve as a versatile medium to tell stories and show places – be it on the big or the small screen. As consumers of films and television, we follow along as plots unfold, characters live their lives, and traditions are held up, all against the backdrop of a certain place in the world at a certain point in time.

With its rich history, long tradition of culture and the arts, and inspiring landscapes, Britain has been both home to a major film industry and setting of innumerable motion pictures for many decades. Historical and social topics, such as the destruction of the Globe Theatre in 1613 and urban culture in the early 20th century, are at the centre of the film *All Is True* and the series *Peaky Blinders*, respectively. The life of the Royal Family, an important aspect of British cultural history, is depicted in the series *The Crown*, while biopics like *Vita and Virginia*, *The Theory of Everything*, and *Bohemian Rhapsody* pay homage to key personalities of British literature, science, and music. Furthermore, literary works are especially popular sources for film and television, with various film adaptations of classic novels by Jane Austen and Charles Dickens, but also the *Harry Potter* series being enjoyed by broad audiences. Television series based on literature include *Outlander*, *Poldark*, and *Sherlock*.

This abundance of works produced for film and television is united in that they all present Britain and Britishness on screen. Papers for this panel may focus on any of the following topics:

- Adaptation of literary plots, characters, themes, and other details on screen
- Representation of social, gender, and class issues
- Political and other historical events in film and television
- The role of adapter, audience, and context
- Any other topic related to the representation of British literature, culture, and history in film and television

Please send proposals of 200 to 300 words and any further questions you might have to nicole.gillner@stud.uni-heidelberg.de.

Jessica Fingerhut:

Research Data Management and Digital Humanities in Literary Studies

Research data management is an increasingly important topic, especially in the context of Digital Humanities. Furthermore, it is a topic concerning all of us – including literary scholars. Therefore, the aim is to share experiences in how research data is handled and to develop strategies to optimize that handling.

First of all, what does "research data" even mean in the case of literary studies? And where do we get them from? Ways of generating data have tremendously increased along with new media and the internet. For example websites, digital archives and tools, as well as repositories open up new possibilities for accessing and creating data. But what is the current status quo in literary studies? How do literary scholars use and come up with these possibilities? Theoretical and interdisciplinary approaches, such as close/distant reading or cultural studies, show that the problem of how to assess sources and their increasing variety in kind is urgent and recognized. But this variety and amount of data can only be tackled when following a structured approach.

Nevertheless, research data management is as much a topic concerning individual scholars as the academic community as such. Have you ever caught yourself desperately searching for findings you have had during a previous research project without recalling where you stored them? Did you have to do all the work all over again? Good data management will not only prevent duplication of effort, but also give you an overview on your own data and enable you to back up your own research. Therefore, what are possible ways and guidelines for handling your research data? What do we need concepts such as the research data life cycle or good scientific practice for? And how can you implement them in your next project?

Please send your abstracts of about 300 words to Jessica Fingerhut, ln250@stud.uni-heidelberg.de

Tanya Gautam:

Poetry and the Endurance of Human Life

> *"Poetry matters because it still knows the steps to the big dance; it still knows the metrics of creation."* — Mark Tredinnick

Poetry, among other forms of art and expression, is proof of our evolution from being instinct-driven mammals to becoming humans capable of reflecting on the manifold truths of life. The transformative power of poetry has indeed been evident in every age that has held language close for seeking a connection with, and understanding of, the joysand struggles of life on Earth. Poetry helps us journey to a place where we can face, with deepened capacities, both beauty and brutality; mercy and barbarity; joy and calamity; brilliance and banality. This panel seeks to engage in a discussion on how poetry is one of the ways in which we can gain a renewed cognizance of enduring human life. Especially in atime where we have come closer than ever before to feeling isolated, endangered and vulnerable, the panel hopes to createan environment where we can witness, through poetry from any time and place, the incredible experiences that shape and strengthen our ability to exist, to continue to exist. Topics include and, like poetry, are not limited to :
1. Poetry and Revolution
2. Poetry, Crisis and Survival
3. Poetry, Climate Change and Sustainability
4. Poetry and Human Rights
5. War, Peace and Poetry
6. Poetry and Self
7. Poetry and Form
8. Poetry and Isolation

Abstracts of 200-300 words can be sent Tanya Gautam: gautam.tanya24@gmail.com

Eva Marie Heimers:

It's the End of the World as We Know It and I Feel Fine?

We can never imagine our death; we merely imagine it by a stand-in. Our subconscious distances itself from the idea that we can be dead because it cannot conceptualise it. Similarly, we can never imagine the "real" apocalypse, after which there is nothing. Therefore, in our post-apocalyptic fictions, there is still life. Just as the utterance "I am dead," is an oxymoron, "the world has come to an end," is one as well – in this speech act we are made into liars, but also rendered alive.

In times of 'Fridays for Future', the global phenomenon of young people fighting for a greener future, it is hard to ignore the growing need for change in our society to move towards a more sustainable world. This change has been palpable in nearly all areas of life, be it public discourse or the shifting attitude towards one-way plastics. Literature is no exception. The (natural) apocalypse is by no means a new topic in literary discourse, nor is humanity's involvement in changing the environment. However, there are many other ways in which writers have imagined the end of times – whether imminent, present or indeed already past, as Jean Baudrillard or more recently Slavoj Žižek contend.

Post-apocalyptic fictions of the 19th and 20th century have provided modes of inquiry into a world without human life. In our current global and political climate, fraught with concerns about the climate crisis, international relations and global health, fiction concerned with "the last of things" seems more current than ever.

This panel welcomes papers concerning the connection between ecocritical concerns and the current capitalist system – be it on dystopian novels, sci-fi cli-fi.

Keywords: anthropocene, (post-)apocalypse, post-humanism, trans-humanism, hyperreality, capitalism, nature writing, ecocriticism

Please send proposals of 200-300 words to: eva.marie.heimers@stud.uni-heidelberg.de

Eva Marie Heimers

2nd Time's the Charm /(Dis)Enchanted? – Classics Retold

Matthew Arnold defined culture as "a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know […] the best which has been thought and said in the world," looking at our canon of classic literature, he might as well have amended his statement to 'the best which has been thought and said by *old white men*'. Which, admittedly, does not have the same ring to it. The point stands, however, that for most of classic literary history, men have shaped the stories we read and have coined the tropes we use to tell them.

Rewritings enjoy great popularity, for one, they often expand on the original work but they can also be vehicles for nostalgic longing. Drawing inspiration from the *Canongate Myth Series*, a series of novellas telling reimagined ancient myths from various cultures, this panel focuses on adaptations and retellings. Re-workings of well-known stories and the re-fashioning of tested and proven tropes can bring out new facets and highlight formerly marginalised characters and viewpoints.

Fairy tales where the princess kills the dragon, where the prince and his white horse are in distress and in need of saving or stories where the zombies were the heroes all along – this panel welcomes all papers concerning the conversion of popular tropes, retellings of classical narratives (feminist, gender-swapped, etc.), and other alternative reworkings of classical texts.

Keywords: adaptation, queer studies, literary tropes, post-modernism, intertextuality, nostalgia

Please send proposals of 200-300 words to: eva.marie.heimers@stud.uni-heidelberg.de

Laura Herges:

From Pages to Film: Literary Adaptations in Cinema and on the Small Screen

Who has never been sitting in a cinema chair, chewing their popcorn and thinking "But that scene was so much better in the book"?

Book-to-screen adaptations have always been a controversial topic, because when one tries to convert a 300+ pages book into a 1.5-hour movie, something will necessarily get lost in translation.

However, films based on books take on average 53% more at the box office than original screenplays (www.thebookseller.com/news/films-based-books-take-more-91m-more-globally-original-scripts-825036), and an incredible 70% of the world's top 20 grossing films are based on books (www.medium.com/publishing-in-the-digital-age/book-to-film-adaptations-caec7c65e96a).

And while 2020 was not the best year for the film industry, it certainly was for streaming platforms, which reached millions of viewers at home. And some of the most successful shows on these platforms are based on novels, like Netflix's *The Queen's Gambit* and *Bridgerton*, which just broke the platform's record of the most-streamed program, or Amazon Prime's hit show *The Boys*, which is based on a comic. But if millions of people enjoy these programs, why is it then that so many of them end up dissatisfied with the adaptation of their favourite books? And what factors actually decide about what is a good adaptation and what isn't?

This panel will be dedicated to films and series that are based on literary works, be it novels, plays or comics. It could for example be interesting to take a look at different adaptations of the same literary work, or to focus on the difference between films that are direct adaptations and films that are only based or inspired by literary works. Another possible topic could be the transmission of a literary work into a different time period and setting, as it has for example been done in 1996's *Romeo and Juliet* – and whether it still succeeded in conveying the original idea of the work.

There are countless possibilities for papers about the big wide world of literary adaptions. 😊

So, do not hesitate to send your proposals of about 200-300 words to Herges@stud.uni-heidelberg.de

Lara Kossowski:

Uncloseted – An Exploration of Queerness Across Fiction

Queer literature is a quickly growing genre that actively challenges existing heteronormative standards and especially offers young readers a means of exploring their sexuality. While these works of fiction may openly express homosexuality and have made their way into the mainstream, writers of past literary periods had to be immeasurably more discreet in introducing homosexual themes and gay subtexts, due to societal standards. Especially transgressive genres such as horror or gothic fiction in the 18th and 19th century lent themselves to homoerotic undertones, and in particular the figure of the vampire became a popular device for said exploration. Another genre that allows the incorporation of homosexual themes is speculative fiction, which grants the author much creative freedom in worldmaking and demands the reader to analyse their own bias and assumptions. As homosexuality has been progressively more accepted in the 20th century, themes of queerness can be witnessed explicitly in works of fiction.

At this point, a distinction has to be made between queering or queer literary criticism and queer studies. Queer studies investigates underlying issues of queerness such as gender identity and sexual orientation in the context of cultural norms, whereas queering is an analytical technique that emerged from queer theory, which focuses on questioning the politics of sexuality. Both begin with similar empirical observations. However, they employ rather contrasting frameworks for interpretational purposes. We encourage a discussion that includes both methods to accomplish a diversified exploration.

There are no geographical restrictions imposed on the scope of submissions. This panel intends to analyze multiple portrayals of Queer individuals and themes throughout various periods. Thus, any paper that explores Queerness in fiction, whether it be a covert or an open depiction of homosexuality, is welcome.

Topics addressed in this panel could include, but are not limited to:

* Queer Defamiliarisation
* Gender Identity/Sexual Orientation and Cultural Norms
* Homoeroticism and Homosociality
* Sexual Othering – The Monstrous Queer
* Heteronormativity and Performativity

To take part, please send your proposals of 200-300 words to: lara-marie.kossowski@web.de