2019 Grad Student Conference

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Jie Wang

The Role of Formulaic Sequences in Second Language Acquisition

Formulaic sequences (FSs) refer to prefabricated multiword expressions such as idioms, collocations, lexical bundles and phrasal verbs, etc. Considering how babies and toddlers learn to speak a language before they develop any literacy skill, imitation of sound and word sequences taken from their caregivers is presumably the dominant way this happens. Researchers have proposed that language acquisition is essentially the learning and analysis of sequences (Ellis, 1996) and that the processing of formulaic patterns contributes largely to native-like fluency (Pawley and Syder, 1983). Studies also suggest that FSs are widespread in language, composing up to one half of discourse (Conklin and Schmitt, 2012). FSs seem to play an essential role in first language acquisition.

In contrast, no matter how post-childhood second language learners try to emulate native speakers, they can rarely fully achieve native-like fluency and idiomaticity. There is also a relative paucity of research investigating the role of FSs in second language acquisition (SLA). However, this does not mean that FSs are not important in SLA. Many questions remain unanswered. The panel could discuss the following topics:

- The processing of FSs in SLA
- Individual differences in formulaic language learning
- FSs and intercultural pragmatics
- FSs in learner corpora
- Pedagogic approaches to the teaching and learning of FSs
- The use of technology in teaching and learning FSs

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Zibu Lin

From Spatialization Metaphor to Cultural Variation

Three types of conceptual metaphors that are distinguished by Lakoff & Johnson (1980) are: ontological metaphors, structural metaphors, orientational/spatialization metaphors. Although all of them together are seen to ground the process of creating and organizing a human’s abstract thoughts, spatialization metaphors (referring to the organization of a system of ideas in terms of the relation and interaction in space like up-down, front-back, inside-out, shallow-deep etc.) seem to be the primary ones. As Lakoff & Johnson suggest, ‘most of our fundamental concepts are organized in terms of one or more spatialization metaphors.’ Moreover, there is a consensus within Cognitive Linguistics and Embodiment Philosophy that all concepts, both concrete and abstract, are grounded in terms of spatio-physical experience (e.g. gravity; body being contained by the surface of our skin). Studies in spatialization metaphors have offered us profound insights into the relation between language, mental representation and human experience. However, it is important to note that metaphors do not only come from our bodily experience, they are also influenced by culture. An interesting question to ask here is how cultures differ in their conceptualization of common abstract life aspects (e.g. emotion; morality; health etc.) in terms of space, when we share identical basic spatio-physical experience. Answers towards this question will help us to understand more profoundly the role culture plays in our construction of reality and furthermore in our reasoning and behaviour.

This panel seeks papers that study spatialization metaphors from a cross-cultural and cross-linguistic perspective. Approaches that could be taken are, for example, looking at the frequencies of certain spatialization metaphors in different varieties of a language; or comparing and contrasting metaphorical use of certain spatial expressions (e.g. spatial prepositions) cross linguistically. Other approaches are welcomed.

Please send proposals of 200-300 words to: z.lin@stud.uni-heidelberg.de
Robin Sadlier

“Monkeys in shoes” – How are human beings adapting linguistically to the Digital Age

The arrival of the Digital Age has been hailed as the third language revolution and has allowed humanity to communicate in new and previously unimagined ways. The pre/post generational divide was so strong that people born into the Digital Age have been described as ‘digital natives’, and those outside as ‘digital immigrants.’ Once access to mobile phones and the internet became widely available in the early 1990s, society became fascinated by the ‘newness’ of linguistic behaviour and then promptly pilloried an entire generation for their ‘degrading’ language and social skills.

Three decades later, the first generation of digital natives have grown up and delivered children of their own into a world immersed in digital communication. A great corruption of language and society has failed to materialise and people have linguistically adapted their real-word lives to the digital medium, forming bonds, communities, and identities entirely through computer mediated discourse. We seek papers that contribute to a discussion on how linguistic behaviour has adapted to three decades of the prolific usage of digital technology. How much of this is actually ‘new behaviour’ and how much is patterns of age-old human behaviour applied to a new medium? What are we doing differently, and how are we utilising this technology?

Please send proposals of 200 – 300 words to: sadlier@stud.uni-heidelberg.de
Dana Serditova

Slang(uage)

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, slang is «a type of language consisting of words and phrases that are regarded as very informal, are more common in speech than writing, and are typically restricted to a particular context or group of people». Slang is used for self-expression; moreover, it reflects personality and helps people distinguish themselves from others. It is playful, inventive, witty, picturesque, brief, and concise; it can be secretive or rebellious. Slang is present in all cultures, even though it does appear in different forms and possess various traits. Even the etymology of this word is still an unsolved problem (scholars argue that there are three different theories: Romani, Scandinavian, and variations on English words language, lingo, or the French langue (Green 2016, Libermann 2003, Partridge 1954)). Slang is universal and, consequently, it is an inexhaustible topic for discussion and research. How important is style for slang? Is there such thing as ‘dark lexis’? Can slang be considered a language (slanguage)? What is the difference between colloquialism and slang? These are some of the questions that we will raise on the Slang(uage) panel.

Please send your proposals of 200-300 words to: danaserditova@gmail.com
Laura Herges:

What happened to you, Mary Sue? – Constructions and Destructions of the Perfect Female Character in Contemporary Literature and Film

Although the new Marvel movie Captain Marvel has been very successful, grossing almost one billion dollars worldwide and receiving generally favourable reviews by audiences and professional critics alike, there have also been numerous hate comments on social media, many of which accused the writers of constructing the main character as a “Mary Sue”: “an idealized and seemingly perfect fictional character”, who is often “recognized as an author insert or wish fulfillment” and criticised as being “too perfect” and lacking in realism - so much that it appears one-dimensional and ridiculous.

And Captain Marvel is not the only example: the Star Wars Franchise also had to face negative comments from viewers who repeatedly called the protagonist Rey a Mary Sue. But how can this stereotype still be so present today, considering that we live in a society with such strongly increasing female empowerment and self-love movements? Or is it still present? Could the criticism of these heroines just be a negative reaction to the sudden rise of “girl power” in a film genre that has almost exclusively been dominated by male characters before? Certainly, there is a tension between misogyny and potentially reasonable criticism whenever a female character is accused of being a Mary Sue.

The objective of this panel will be to find out more about the Mary Sue character: in which contexts it still exists today, how the Mary Sues are adjusted to our present-day society (for example with the “Manic Pixie Dream Girl” stereotype in movies such as Garden State or Elizabethtown) and in which ways this stereotype has been or can be challenged. For this topic, it could for example be interesting to analyse novels or movies that subvert the cliché of the seemingly ideal female character, like 500 Days of Summer, or to look at the male equivalent, i.e. the “Marty Stu” or the “Manic Pixie Dream Boy”.

If you are interested in writing a paper, feel free to include any of the above-mentioned movies in your analysis, but of course you can also come up with other examples from novels, movies, comics or series.

Please send proposals of 200-300 words to: laura.herges@gmail.com.

I am looking forward to your suggestions!

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Rubiga Murugesapillai:

Women of Color in Postcolonial Literatures and Media

Women have been struggling for over centuries to find a voice not only in colonial, but also in post-colonial and diasporic settings in which younger generations are still coping with the influences of colonization. Facing the constraints of double colonization, women were and are not only subject to racial but also sexual oppression. For women writers of color, one could even argue that they have a third burden to bear: being female in a male-dominated field. Writing history from the view of women has just been one way of dealing with issues of gender, patriarchy and identity. Nowadays, Instagram-poets like Rupi Kaur make use of the new digital technologies and social media to address topics such as femininity, patriarchy and questions of identity. Although dating back to 1988, Gayatri Spivak’s influential text “Can the Subaltern Speak” is still relevant today. Can women ever find an equally heard voice? Can we ever overcome the need to talk about female writing, female art, and female fiction or can it just be writing, art and fiction with an equal amount of men and women contributing? And in what ways has society already changed and how long is the way that still needs to be traversed? Finally and most importantly, how is that expressed and dealt with in (contemporary) art, literature and media?

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Sarah Jaber

Deconstructing Gender in Modern to Contemporary Literature.

Since the 1st January 2019 Germany has introduced the option of a “third gender” as official gender-identification. It is a milestone in the acceptance of genders outside of the binary system, despite its controversies and criticism of coming too short in its intentions. In society, the binary gender system with all its connotations and influences on the individual life has started to break down. Feminist movements seek acceptance for transgender and non-binary people and call for a change in the very values and factors that identify gender itself. Hereby Simone de Beauvoir’s theoretical work *The Second Sex* and Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble* lay the very groundwork on gender theory and its consequences.

Literature has found numerous ways to criticise the binary gender system, show the influences it has on our society, and also to question the reader on their own definition of gender. Virginia Woolf, Angela Carter and Jeanette Winterson have done exemplary work in exploring gender constrictions and constructions by changing the gender of characters or leaving out gender in the narration in the first place. In contemporary literature the topic is as important as ever such as in N. K. Jemisin science-fiction novels with transgender and genderless characters. What these works of fiction have in common is that they point to gender primarily as a social construct and call for a deconstruction of the fixed binary gender system in art and society.

Please send your proposals of 200-300 words to: jaber@stud.uni.heidelberg.de
Sarah Jaber

The Handmade Literature of Zines

Zines are handmade magazines by underground artists, writers, and political movements. These little works of art were most prominent during the feminist “RiotGrrrl” movement in the 1990s popularised by the feminist punk band Bikini Kill. Thus, zines are closely connected to feminist movements and feature feminist manifestos and literary works such as poetry dealing with the experiences of young girls within a patriarchal and sexist world. But also before the 1990s zines were a tool for writers to self-publish and create their own artistic spaces. The term itself originates from American Science Fiction fanzines in the 1930s and was later shortened to its current name.

Nowadays the art of zines has not died out but flourishes as an art-tool within a digitalised world. Many zines before the 2000s have been archived on online-platforms and zines are used, not only in the traditional feminist movements, but also for any kind of minority activist such as LGBTQ, mental-health, people of colour and ecology. What is remarkable about zines is that they combine the written word with paintings, comics and cut-outs. They thus connect different art forms and create a voice for those unheard.

Please send your proposals of 200-300 words to: jaber@stud.uni.heidelberg.de
S.Can Emekli

Ethics of Difference, Responsibility, and Literature

Self-Other correlation has been subjected to a binary distinction generated in the traditional politics of identity. Inspiring the Ethical turn during the 1980s, Emmanuel Levinas develops a fresh understanding of Self and Other by grounding them the ethical living and being. The essence of his perspective is to liberate the other from the absolutisation of the Self, and to make the Self recognise the otherness of the others in order to have the sense of infinity/alterity. Furthermore, he introduces the infinite ‘responsibility’ between the Self and Other, through which the ethical living and being are doable. Hence, ethical being is identified as ‘being-for-oneself’ through ‘being-for-the-other’. In 1990s, Alain Badiou, who calls Levinasian ethics ‘ethics of difference,’ applies this to his discussions on multiculturalism and the concept of evil. In 2010s, Terry Eagleton re-evaluates Levinasian ethics in his discussions on ethics of difference and evil. Consequently, this cumulative philosophy, ethics of difference, promotes the end of absolutisation of self-perspectives and a new reign of co-existent other/s and infinite responsibility. The challenging aspects of ethics of difference are: Badiou claims Utopias to be delusional since they are the socio-political form of the absolutisation of the self; Levinas sets no limit to his perception of responsibility, which genuinely suggests that the ‘I’ should subscribe to any need and demand of the other, and the exposure to this demand identifies the self. Despite raising the importance of co-existent multiplicity, significance of otherness, and sympathy/empathy, ethics of difference raises questions like “Are we all bound to the other?” , “Is self-autonomy hideous?” , “Does this perception limit the freedom of the self?” , “What is the limit of this responsibility?”. Concordantly, we will discuss the limits of responsibility, recognising the otherness of the other, ethical encounters, and their representations in literature. The topics could be, but are not limited to:

- Limit of Freedom and Responsibility
- Sympathy/Empathy and Ethics in Literature
- Culture and Difference in Literature
- Social/Political Activism and Difference in Literature
- Political Agendas and Ethics of Difference in Literature
- Discrimination and Difference in Literature
- Critical Theory and Difference

Please send your abstracts, not exceeding one page, to Sametcan09emekli@gmail.com.
Chelsea Roden

The Fire This Time: The Resurgence of James Baldwin

As the US and other countries reckon with historical and ongoing attitudes towards race, the works of James Baldwin (1924–1987) have experienced a resurgence of relevancy. In the past years, large scale works have focused on Baldwin’s legacy of social criticism, including a biographical documentary *I Am Not Your Negro* (2017), a film adaptation of his Harlem parable *If Beale St. Could Talk* (2018), and an edited collection of essays and poems responding to his compassionate call-to-action *The Fire Next Time* (1963), titled *The Fire This Time* (2016, ed. Jesmyn Ward). Since his death in 1987, Baldwin’s fiery warnings and influential philosophy have been propagated by a variety of contemporary writers of color, such as Ta-Nehisi Coates, Angie Thomas, Hanif Kureishi, Tayari Jones, and others. He has also influenced a multitude of visual artists, historians, politicians, and musicians. Thus, this panel seeks to trace the impact of Baldwin’s literary legacy to the present day by examining this recent resurgence. Ideal papers will connect the themes and ideas from the Baldwin canon as they appear in recent works, either in literary, visual, or oral contexts. Papers that explore this connection with traditionally unorthodox or non-literary works (i.e. spoken word poetry, hip-hop, socio-historical expression, linguistic analysis of the use of his words, etc.) are particularly welcome, but this panel is also accepting related papers regarding similar trajectories of African American thought and expression in an American or international context from the last 50 years.

Please send your proposals of about 200-300 words to: chelsealynroden@gmail.com
Alkim Kutlu

Food and Identity in Literature

Food is quintessential to human life. Its function goes beyond sustenance into personal choices that impact one’s identity. Every food-related choice is one based on cultural and personal identification, such as the choice of ingredients, rejection of certain food products, food considered as taboo, the medium with which to cook it, and whom to share it with. Though most of these choices seem mundane every aspect of this shapes how we view our bodies, construct our bodies or attain knowledge of both our culture and others around us. Sociologists, historians and philosophers such as Claude Fischler, Roland Barthes, Massimo Montanari and Claude Lévi-Strauss have taken note of the importance of food in the lives of people and its impact on identity on both an individual as well as a cultural level.

With this in mind, it is not by chance that many literary works include food moments and/or imageries in their narratives. In Zora Heale Hurston’s Their Eyes Were Watching God, barbeque stands as a cultural signifier and a link of the American South to the African diaspora, and Joy Kogawa’s Obasan features stone bread on a both narrative and allegorical level to talk about the immigrant identity. Even Shakespeare in Hamlet employs food imageries to talk about the titular character’s position in the society as well as to deal with the circumstances of his father’s murder. So it can be said that in literature, food is the tool of accessing memories, expressing and understanding the self and others, as well as negotiating cultural identities.

We are looking for papers that explore the link of food and (cultural) identity in literature. This includes fiction and non-fiction and what the role of food is in these narratives. Studies on works that feature rejection, acceptance of foods by individuals, cultural expression through food, assimilation, integration etc. are all topics that can be looked at in the scope of this panel.

Topics include, but are not limited to:

- The role of food in memory recovery and narration
- The role of food in negotiating hyphenated identities
- Narratives set around the dinner table
- Food as an indicator of the cultural/regional landscape
- Food memoirs

200-300 word abstracts may be sent to: alkimkutlu@gmail.com
Philipp Leonhardt

Ecocriticism: Theory, Literature, Science and Environmentalism?

Writing the Environmental Crisis.

While entire ecosystems are decisively damaged, altered or lost and ‘life on earth’ severely affected by climate change’s increasingly forceful signs (e.g. loss of bio-diversity, sea-level rise, floods, drought, famine, epidemics, resource shortages) some still downplay, even reject scientific evidence on the present ecological situation, its emergence, and scenarios based on those insights predicting serious future consequences on a geo-political, planetary scale. Initiatives to immediately change and take action ‘now’ are often perceived as alarmist, fear-mongering ‘narratives’. Similarly, journalistic writing like The Uninhabitable Earth (Wallace-Wells 2019) has been portrayed as an exaggerated construction of selective material; the ‘journalist’ writing about scientific expert knowledge questioned and criticized to falsely address an assumed ‘collective we’. If any kind of ‘crisis-conscious-writing’ is identified as a means to instrumentalize climate change and environmentalism for certain interests and industries, political leaders and countries globally alleged to seek the status-quo in a profit-driven deadlock of power, there seems little space for agency and change, for the individual and politics alike.

Ecocriticism, initially “the study of the relationship of literature and the physical environment” (Glotfelty 1996), comes in the shape of a hybrid in that regard. Its theory and practices by now rooted in interdisciplinary fields, it aims to address a ‘world out there’, a ‘reality’ of interconnected ecosystems and ecology. Ecocriticism has itself been criticized, e.g. for dichotomies of nature and culture influenced by its own literary traditions and institutional biases (Cohen 2004) – as an enterprise of ‘amateur environmentalism’ by literary scholars; not only a ‘fish out of water’ but occasionally in trouble to keep itself afloat in the rapid current of changing scientific data, studies and its implications.

This panel invites contributions addressing this problematic and vulnerable position of ‘writing’ about the issue, particularly of ecocriticism as theory and practice in the midst of science, journalism and literature, with regard to potential authority, credibility and relevance for change, individually and geo-politically, in a climate of cultural pessimism and polarization.

Looking forward to your ideas and suggestions (200-300 abstracts, PDF-files only):

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Ruth Quante

Values in Marriage and Partnership: An Exploration of Men’s and Women’s Writings

The research on this topic should focus on the mediation of values in partnerships as presented in literary as well as cultural works such as films. Depending on the era one will look into, the topic of partnerships and its values has been discussed to different extents. But especially looking into contemporary writings, partnership and its values has not been a topic of great interest, even though it is one of the classic themes occurring in literature.

This panel hopefully evokes interest in values of partnerships and may discern the understanding of partnership from ordinariness to vital importance. Gender equality is claimed everywhere and seen as a common right in many countries today. But still, research psychologists like Shalom Schwartz have found in a recent study that “self-direction and achievement values were nearly universally (93% of samples) more important to men”\(^3\), while women still value security and tradition. While politics and society are changing quickly, values seem to be more steadfast. Hence, it makes sense to reflect on the emerging discrepancies, look back, and reappraise.

Contributions about films and/or literary works from all centuries (from Jane Austen to Henry James and Elizabeth Gaskell to Zadie Smith) and countries are welcome!

Email address: ruthquante@hotmail.de

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Dana Serditova

Digital Performativity

Performativity is a principle that allows for performance, while performance depends on an audience. We play dozens of different roles every day depending on the social context we find ourselves in, and the self is not a key factor. As Nietzsche put it, there is «no doer behind the deed». Today, we are performing the digital. It is clear that digital technology is one of the key participants in the ‘making’ of culture. Naturally, the whole idea and understanding of performativity is changing and being reevaluated. In a way, we are encouraged to perform through new technology, for example, social media, which has created a scene for everyone as a response to a generation that demanded to be in the spotlight. Anyone can put on their own show now and get a multi-million audience almost instantly. It is cheap, fast, and (mostly) effortless. What does it mean for culture in general? Can digital cultures be considered performative cultures? Are computer codes the new speech acts (and, if yes, is the fact that computer programs and codes are silent an issue)? Is there a way to measure performativity? How can augmented reality reinvent the ‘face’ on a cultural level? All these (and many other) questions will be answered on the Digital Performativity panel.

Please send your proposals of 200-300 words to danaserditova@gmail.com
Ana Turtoi

The Ambiguity of Sexual Conduct: Between Seduction and Harassment

Seduction inevitably implies a certain level of manipulation and persuading. When we are pursuing, we are asserting ourselves. But rules of sexual conduct, if in fact they exist, are subtle, and not easily defined. Therefore, boundaries can be crossed, from seducing to harassment. Where does the pursuit stop and preying start? What are the rules of sexual conduct and who defines them? In Samuel Richardson’s *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded*, we have kidnapping, unlawful imprisonment and repeated rape attempts ending with marital bliss. After being subjected to sexual harassment, Pamela settles the problem by marrying her harasser. Here, the issue of sexual conduct is seen as both moral and religious. Because of her moral superiority and religious convictions, Pamela manages to resist the unwanted sexual advances and even reform her harasser. The story of sexual harassment turns into a story of sexual seduction. Pamela as the object of desire takes centre stage and seduces the seducer, thus becoming the seducer par excellence. The tables are turned and we are left wondering how and why. Another interesting example would be Nabokov’s *Lolita* and J. M Coetzee’s *Disgrace*. On the one hand, we have underage and barely legal girls, and on the other grown up men, who claim to be in love. The young women are given tremendous power to stir desire in the men, thus “provoking” them to morally dubious action. Is the men’s sexual conduct legitimate? We shouldn’t forget that the stories are told from the perspective of men, and so is Pedro Almodovar’s *Talk to Her*. A male nurse ends up taking care of a comatose ballerina. And while he recounts a story of tender love, it all starts to unravel when he gets accused of raping her. The issue of sexual consent and conduct is at stake, although Almodovar makes us forget that, as he presents the transgressor in the most gentle and sympathetic way. We cannot help but feel in some way that the main protagonist is deeply and sincerely in love even though he commits rape, at least in terms of societal mores.

Please send proposals to Ana Turtoi at ana.turtoi@gmail.com
Cristina-Ruxandra Burghelea, Silvia Schilling, Sherin Nikita D’Souza

Narrative Space and Its Inhabitants Across Literature and Other Media

Within this panel, we would like to focus on the concept of narrative space without limiting the discussion to a specific genre or medium. Alongside the temporal dimension, spatial organization characterizes lived experience since all bodies are located in space. The physical delimitation of the events taking place in any medium of narration, be it a written text, a TV series or a movie, bears different representations from case to case and is endowed with rich symbolic meaning. Because of the mutual influence between characters and space, the interpretations that this panel calls forth should also draw attention to the dynamics and flexibility of space in relation to its inhabitants. Linked to this, a possible direction of analysis may consist of targeting the stereotypes and the concept of “othering”, as a tool for distancing a specific group (and space) from another group (and space).

In the realm of fiction, there is an immense catalogue of spatial depictions and so presentations may look into a multitude of narratives, such as drama, children’s literature, young adult books and detective novels as well as stories of horror and fantasy. It is also possible to focus on theories about space and the manner in which they contribute to the better understanding of the concept in question.

Please send proposals of about 200-300 words to:

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Sherin Nikita D’Souza - s.dsouza@stud.uni-heidelberg.de

Cristina-Ruxandra Burghelea – burghelea@stud.uni-heidelberg.de
Valentina López Liendo

The Genre Turn

After publishing *The Buried Giant* (2015), Kazuo Ishiguro wondered about his usual audience: “Are they going to say this is fantasy?” The novels of the “genre turn,” i.e. works published by established literary authors which make use of genre elements. In doing so, these authors draw from genres embedded in popular culture, such as science fiction, crime, fantasy, horror or post-apocalyptic fiction. Titles of the genre turn include, Cormac McCarthy’s *The Road* (2006), Colson Whitehead’s *Zone One* (2011), or Emily St. John Mandels’ *Station Eleven* (2015), e.g. These works have generated much debate about our current conceptualizations of literature, as the very categories of “literature” and “genre fiction” come under scrutiny. The tensions caused by these “flirts with genre,” as described by Mark McGurl, echo throughout the reception of these novels among audiences, in the press and academia.

These works have foregrounded questions at the very center of our discipline: what makes a work literary? In what ways, if any, do genre novels differ from literary fiction – be it in subject matter, mode of writing, marketing or reception? How do established “literary” authors use “genre” and what does their use of genre entail? Does Whitehead’s use of zombies, for instance, differ from Max Brooks’? Can we distinguish between “high literature” and “genre,” and if so, to what extent? Is this distinction one created by the publishing industry, as Ishiguro and Whitehead have suggested? Would it be possible to define “literature,” as Ursula K. Le Guin argues, simply as “the extant body of written art”?

We seek papers which address these and similar questions. Papers may also focus on one specific genre or aspect of the genre turn, one particular author or novel, or the debates on genre as carried out in the press or academia on both sides of the Atlantic and the wider implications they may have for our understanding of literature.

Please send abstracts of 200-300 words to v.lopezliendo@gmail.com