



Sapienza-Silesia Graduate Forum 2024
(37th Cycle of the PhD Programme in Studies in
English Literatures, Language and Translation)

After Shock:
New Perspectives in Literary Studies and Linguistics
(Rome, 10th and 11th June 2024)

Call for Papers

In the face of ongoing disasters including the climate crisis, the pandemic, war in Europe and conflicts worldwide, as well as blatant manifestations of social injustice taking place on both a localised and a planetary scale, we might be prone to think that we have reached a capacity of response that is beyond shock, that we have become numb to events that affect us both directly and indirectly. Can literature continue to make felt and bring home the intolerability of everyday events that may otherwise pass without remark? Does our ‘response-ability’ depend on our being shocked, and how is such a response figured in language?

‘Shock’ has endured as a key term in literary studies for over a century. Its status as the sensation proper to modernity emerged in medical discourse in the nineteenth century and was then cemented by clinical studies of shell-shock after the First World War. It remains central to what Jeffrey T. Schnapp described as ‘prevailing traumatocentric accounts of modernity’ (‘Crash (Speed as Engine of Individuation)’, *Modernism/Modernity* 6, no. 1 (1999): 4). These accounts pass through a number of shocks: from early attempts to pathologise shock as a literal wound or tearing of tissues, to competing theories of shock as a result of enervation or overstimulation, up to post-Freudian understandings of shock as a traumatic penetration of the psyche’s defences and Walter Benjamin’s notion of the ‘shock experience’ as integral to urban life. If modernity is excessive, shock is the measure of that excess.

From a linguistic perspective, addressing shock and its consequences requires a multifaceted approach. ‘Shock’ may describe reactions to sensationalism or representations of extreme events in mass media, or responses to disturbing or taboo material. Researchers face challenges when investigating such sensitive topics and approaches will vary depending on the source of shock, the content of shocking material, the form it takes, and reactions to it. A proper categorisation of shock might explore how it is registered linguistically: how does it influence prosody and language choices? How do we communicate when we are shocked, and does it influence our efficiency? What linguistic elements make a statement shocking, and how can we recognise a shocked language user?

With this Graduate Forum, we hope to ignite a conversation not only on representations of shock and shocking representations in literature and language, but also on what comes after shock, lingering on responses to shock which search for new forms of response to events that once seemed extreme. What new sensations and responses might contend with shock in the twenty-first century? Recognising the numerous and diverse ways in which shock manifests itself in daily lives, the Organisers of the Graduate Forum of the 37th cycle of the PhD Programme in Studies in English Literatures, Language and Translation welcome contributions from both the fields of literary studies and linguistics that revolve around the concept of ‘shock’.

Keynote Speakers

Gavin Brookes (Lancaster University),

Cheryl Suzack (Batchewana First Nations, University of Toronto).

Steering and Organising Committee

Hal Coase, Paolo D’Indinosante, Sophie Eyssette,

Giulia Magro, Sara Riccetti, Joanna Ryszka.

Scientific Committee

The Faculty Board of the PhD Programme.

Where, When and How

The Graduate Forum will take place in a hybrid form and will be held at the Edificio Marco Polo, Viale dello Scalo S. Lorenzo, 82, 00159 Rome, on 10th and 11th June 2024. The language of the conference will be English.

Application Process

Applicants must send their proposals as an attachment to aftershock2024@us.edu.pl by 24th December 2023. The file must include:

- ◆ Name(s), surname(s), affiliation(s) and brief biobibliographical profile of the author(s) (up to 150-200 words);
- ◆ Title of the paper;
- ◆ Abstract (up to 250-300 words, excluding references).

Accepted authors will be notified by 15th February 2024 and will have 20 minutes each for their talk. Conference registration will be free of charge.

Important Dates

24th December 2023: proposal submission deadline.

15th February 2024: author notification.

Website and Email Address

For further information, please visit the conference website at <https://aftershock2024.us.edu.pl>. The website will launch in mid-November 2023.

If you have any questions, please write to us at aftershock2024@us.edu.pl.