ANNUAL ENGLISH RESEARCH DAY 2025

PROGRAMME

9:30 ARRIVAL AND REFRESHMENTS

10 Session 1 Xsara and Jack

11:00 BREAK

11:15 Session 2 Elsie and Brian

12:15 LUNCH

1:00 Session 3 Lucy and David

2:00 BREAK

2:15 Session 4 Szilvi and Destiny

3:15 Closing remarks

**SESSION 1**

**XSARA HELMI**

**The Numinous Ear: Autistic Listening and Aural Diversity as a Gateway to the Divine and Sublime- Exploring Sonic Consciousness through Phenomenology, Panpsychism, and Process Philosophy**

This presentation explores the intersection of aural diversity, autistic listening, and the numinous, positioning auditory perception as a site of relational consciousness. Drawing on Rudolf Otto’s mysterium tremendum et fascinans (1917/1923) and Carl Jung’s concept of the numinous as an archetypal force shaping the unconscious (1958), I examine how neurodivergent auditory perception challenges conventional understandings of sound, revealing its role as a dynamic, affective, and transcendent force. Autistic listening often involves heightened sensitivity to sonic textures, patterns, and intensities that neuromajority perception filters out, (hyperacusis). These experiences parallel Otto’s numinous qualities- overwhelming power (tremendum), profound mystery (mysterium), and compelling fascination (fascinans). The autistic experience of being simultaneously overwhelmed by and drawn to sound mirrors the paradoxical nature of numinous encounters, inducing awe, reverence, and even terror beyond ordinary sensory experience. From a Jungian perspective, numinous encounters activate archetypal forces in the unconscious, facilitating individuation. Autistic listeners’ heightened receptivity to sound’s affective qualities may represent a more direct engagement with these archetypal dimensions, where ordinary sounds bypass cognitive filtering to trigger profound psychic responses. These experiences characterised by overwhelming intensity, sublime revelation, and ineffable meaning suggest that sound operates not just as sensory stimulus but as an active agent in the co-creation of consciousness. By reframing neurodivergent auditory perception as a form of knowledge rather than disorder, we uncover how sound mediates between perception and the vibrational substrate of reality. This discussion is further informed by Merleau-Ponty’s embodied perception (1962), Ihde’s phenomenology of listening (2007), and Nancy’s resonance (2007). Engaging panpsychism (Chalmers, 1996; Goff, 2019) and process philosophy (Whitehead, 1929), I explore how sound actively shapes experience, inviting us to reconsider: Is sound an external force, or is it a co-creator of inner reality?

**Xsara** **Helmi** is a PhD researcher at the University of Salford, Manchester, supported by a Leverhulme Trust studentship within the Aural Diversity Research Doctoral Hub. Her transdisciplinary arts practice research explores aural diversity, neurodivergence, and creative methodologies. Previously, she received a BAFTA Scholarship for her MA in Filmmaking (Screen Documentaries) at Goldsmiths, University of London, and studied Child and Adolescent Psychotherapeutic Counselling at the University of Cambridge.

As a neurodivergent, care-experienced, mixed-ethnicity artist, her work spans music, journalism, broadcasting, documentary film, social sciences, and psychotherapeutic counselling. She employs exploratory, subversive artistic methodologies to disrupt dominant knowledge-production frameworks, blending multiple paradigms as an artistic act. Learn more about her research here: [www.xsara.co.uk/academic](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.xsara.co.uk%2Facademic&data=05%7C02%7CS.Thurston%40salford.ac.uk%7C0cffe39d8e4e4bd26ec708dda4f7a3bb%7C65b52940f4b641bd833d3033ecbcf6e1%7C0%7C0%7C638848105707689958%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOiIwLjAuMDAwMCIsIlAiOiJXaW4zMiIsIkFOIjoiTWFpbCIsIldUIjoyfQ%3D%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=GYbBGitwVlFFgkKE5BLUgMTfG3OP7lpRyM%2BXMXwQ1z8%3D&reserved=0)

**JACK WILSON**

**Sound localisation and language**

Sound localisation refers to the ability to locate a sound source in space. While it is widely acknowledged that this ability plays a fundamental role in evolution and cognitive development, its role in linguistic communication has been almost entirely ignored. In this talk, I argue that sound localisation plays a fundamental role in how our languages work, how they evolved, and how young infants learn them. I will show how well-established theories in acoustic science and evolutionary acoustics shed light on fundamental puzzles in linguistics. The two puzzles I address in this talk are the acquisition and use of demonstratives and the development of theory of mind in young infants. My main conclusion is that these two puzzles are fundamentally linked by the mechanisms of sound localisation.

**Jack Wilson** is a lecturer in English Language at the University of Salford. His research focusses on the limits of linguistic communication, exploring how non-linguistic communicative behaviours fit within traditional semantic and pragmatic frameworks. His recent publications include *Pragmatics, Utterance Meaning, and Representational Gesture* (2024).

**SESSION 2**

**ELSIE UNSWORTH**

**‘Airmid’s Voice’ and Folklore as Memorial in Oein DeBhairduin’s *Why the moon travels***

Oein DeBhairduin's *Why the moon travels* (2020) is a folklore collection that features stories told by Irish Travellers. It advocates for better representation of this ethnic minority and explores some of the culture, history and traditions of the community. Throughout this collection, death and loss are central themes, with the text enacting remembrance of these lives through the stories it tells. Unjust death is a symptom of systemic discrimination, while the memorialising of these deaths represents important cultural and communal healing, recognition of injustice and collective responsibility. This unjust death is a poignant marker of the discrimination targeted at Irish Travellers, linked to unemployment, loss of culture and racism. In Why the moon travels, however, it is not just death that is explored but rather the remembrance of loss, and the text positions storytelling as a means of memorialising injustice. "Airmid's Voice" is a popular story about the origins of herbalism and is one of the tales retold in Why the moon travels. DeBhairduin's framing of it allegorises unjust loss and highlights the importance of collective remembrance. The allegory also explores the idea that storytelling and storytelling traditions can memorialise unjust death and function as collective remembrance.

**Elsie Unsworth** is a PhD student, undertaking research on contemporary Irish folklore. They are interested in the ways that folkloric storytelling speaks to community and identity, and recent literary approaches to folklore that reflect subaltern and marginalised experiences.

**BRIAN CLARKE**

**Adapting Classic Literary Sources to Early American Newspaper Strips**

My proposed presentation considers the adaptation of classic literary sources in American newspapers from the first quarter of the 20th century. I begin with an overview of the evolution of comic strip adaptations from its earliest form as character appropriations and trace its development towards and into serialised stories as they emerge as part of the adventure strip genre. The presentation of texts in illustrated form revealed a tension between those who saw illustrated texts as uplifting with positive social benefits and those who saw them as undermining the status of novel reading. Attempts to ‘replace’ the reader’s imagination with drawings were perceived by some educationalists as contributing to illiteracy. Examination of comic strip adaptations provides a lens through which to consider the social, political and philosophical reactions to a publishing trend that saw itself as democratising middle-class reading habits.

**Brian** is a comic book and magazine writer with 30-plus years’ professional experience. He is a PhD candidate at the University of Salford, England, where he researches the history of American comic strip adaptations of classic literary sources. As writer, editor and publisher he has worked with The Egmont Group, Warner Bros., Mattel, Hasbro, DC Thomson, DC Comics and dozens of TV properties.

**SESSION 3**

**LUCY POWER**

**Creative process pilot projects**

Creative processes can be used to address the obstacles impacting an individual’s wellbeing. The foundation of my autoethnographic research includes a catalogue of my experience of devising and delivering creative projects over a period of thirty years. This reference material, documenting rich, diverse models, is my Vade Mecum – a handbook informing my creative practice as research. My presentation describes two current pilot projects that have generated supplements for the Vade Mecum by focusing on previously untested creative processes affecting wellbeing. I will provide an overview of these contrasting pilot projects and describe how they address the ways that creative processes impact participants’ hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing. Presented during the last twelve months, these models explore the potential of collaboration, improvisation, risk-taking, sharing, and combining creative processes to affect wellbeing. Qualitative research gathered during the projects demonstrates that creative approaches of this kind can have a significant impact on a participant’s wellbeing.

**Lucy Power** is a Doctoral Researcher in Creative Writing at the University of Salford. Her experience as a disabled artist living with Multiple Sclerosis informs her investigations into combining creative processes to address the obstacles impacting wellbeing. She is a practising poet, musician and visual artist.

**DAVID SAVILL**

**The Northern School of Writing's Developing Literacy Strategy**

In July 2024 I received research funding to scope an innovation network around the subject of literacy - research, community engagement, pedagogies and action. This presentation updates the subject group on the developing strategy, the achievements of the first 10 months, and the potential to build a research narrative around literacy that speaks to the University's strategic aims of social mobility, social justice and knowledge equity. I will consult the group on a potential road map for the next 12 months and highlight some of the challenges and opportunities of working in this area without an established school of education.

**David Savill** is a senior lecturer in Creative Writing and programme leader of BA Creative Writing Multidiscipline. His latest published work is the essay *Once Upon A Time In Budapest,* in *The Carbon Arc*, ed. Richard Skinner, (Vanguard Press, July 2025).

**SESSION 4**

**SZILVI NARAY**

**Translating Hungarian “Difficult Women”: a case study on the translating and staging of Krisztina Toth’s The Bat onto the English stage.**

This engaging and thought-provoking presentation will straddle the disciplines of contemporary feminist/ feminine translation strategy as well performance. It will present the translation and staging challenges that Manchester based theatre company Ignition Stage faced in their English world premiere of *The Bat*, a contemporary Hungarian drama from the award-winning poet and writer Krisztina Tóth who has been cast as a “Difficult Woman “and hence been the victim of unparalleled misogynistic attacks by the mainstream Hungarian media that resulted in her exile as forced to flee as fearing for her own and her family’s safety .

**Szilvi Naray** (formerly Naray-Davey) is a university lecturer, translator, and theatre director. She lectures in drama and translation studies at The University of Salford. She is the founder and artistic director of Ignition Stage, a Manchester based theatre company which specialises in pioneering Eastern European plays in English translation. She publishes in the fields of literary translation with a special interest in feminist translation and has been critically acclaimed for her English world premiere productions of her translations.  Her latest article (Hurley, UK and S Naray (50/50 authorship) 'But not for him. Just by him.' Hungarian landscapes and women's time in the short fiction of Anna T. Szabó and Krisztina Tóth has been published in Intellect’s Short Fiction Theory and Practice in March 2025. Her book (2024) is published by Bloomsbury, Methuen drama: *Plays from Contemporary Hungary “Difficult Women” and Resistant Dramatic Voices* (2024). For short teaser clips and more info visit <https://ignitionstage.wordpress.com/>

**DESTINY IDEGBEKWE**

**Text Simplification as a Quest Towards Decolonising Health Communication in ESL Contexts**

The dominance of complex, Western biomedical English in health communication materials, particularly Patient Information Leaflets (PILs), continues to marginalise non-native speakers in postcolonial societies. In many English as a Second Language (ESL) contexts like Nigeria, the linguistic complexity of malaria PILs reinforces colonial legacies that privilege foreign language structures and scientific discourse over local accessibility and patient comprehension. This study investigates the role of text simplification as a decolonial strategy aimed at dismantling these enduring inequalities. Drawing on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and decolonial theory, this research critically examines both original and simplified versions of malaria PILs. Through a mixed-methods approach involving comprehension tests and content analysis among Nigerian L2 English users, the study assesses how language simplification improves understanding and restores agency to drug users. Findings reveal that simplifying PIL language reduces linguistic barriers, enhances experiential knowledge, and challenges the entrenched biomedical authority characteristic of colonial health communication models. By situating text simplification within the broader struggle for linguistic and epistemic justice, this study argues that accessible language is not merely a technical adjustment but a profound act of decolonisation. The research advocates for reimagining health communication in ESL contexts to prioritise linguistic inclusivity, cultural relevance, and community empowerment.

**Destiny Idegbekwe** is currently a PhD student at the University of Salford, where he is in the third year of his research. Prior to this, he was a lecturer in the Department of English at the University of Africa, Bayelsa State, Nigeria. He holds a PhD in English Studies from the University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria. His academic interests include health communication, English as a Second Language (ESL), Applied Linguistics, Discourse Studies, and Pragmatics. He has contributed to several scholarly journals and has accumulated extensive teaching experience over the years. During his undergraduate studies at the University of Benin, Nigeria, he served as the President of the English and Literature Students’ Association. Destiny’s current research is interdisciplinary, focusing on improving public health communication by addressing language accessibility issues in malaria drug leaflets in Africa. Alongside his doctoral studies, he works as a Part-Time Hourly Paid EAP Lecturer at Oxford Brookes University in partnership with the Global Banking School (Manchester Campus) and at the University of Bolton (Manchester Campus). He is married and blessed with three children.