



The Uses of Form: Theory – Methodology – Pedagogy

A Digital Workshop, 1 & 2 July 2022

Timeline:

Initial proposal deadline: 18 March

Extended deadline: 25 March

Acceptance Rejection: 1 April

Prerecorded papers / texts deadline: 3 June

Papers will be made available to participants two weeks before the workshop.

Workshop schedule (CET, Berlin/Paris/Amsterdam):

Friday, 1 July: 9.30 - 15.30h

Saturday, 2 July: 9.30 - 13h

Call for Papers

What is form and what does it do? Why does it matter to ask these questions and what is the role of form in literary studies? Questions like these continue to preoccupy literary scholars and in more recent years, following an increasing concern with cultural studies methodologies and interdisciplinary approaches, new formalisms have emerged. They have broadened their definitions to incorporate forms outside of literature, and are concerned with the material, political, social dimensions of form alongside its aesthetic affordances.¹ Building on Caroline Levine's new formalist conception of form, we understand form broadly as "*an arrangement of elements—an ordering, patterning, or shaping*".² By drawing on Caroline Levine's definition we hope to understand the various uses of form(s) and how they interact with one another in order to produce (often unexpected) political effects.

Workshop Format: For this interactive, collaborative workshop we invite participants to consider what it means for us to pay renewed attention to a broad definition of form in literary studies. We are hoping for presentations that focus on the theoretical, methodological and pedagogical elements of new formalism(s) and, rather than focusing on individual readings of literary or cultural works, use them as case studies to illustrate or exemplify these broader considerations. Instead of expecting fully rounded contributions, we are looking for work-in-progress papers that allow us to think through and discuss the challenges and opportunities of new formalist approaches in an informal and productive workshop space (rather than a more rigid conference-style event). For this purpose, papers will be pre-recorded and made available to participants two weeks before the workshop, so that we can use the workshop time for discussions.

We invite proposals for 10-minute workshop papers within the following three sections:

1. Theorising New Formalism

For this section, we invite papers that consider form and formalist approaches from a theoretical perspective. This includes diachronic perspectives that take into account the long tradition of formalist reading practices and suggest ways of mobilising them to develop new formalism(s), as well as synchronic approaches that look at the diversity of formalist approaches such as strategic formalism,³ speculative formalism,⁴ historical formalism⁵ or activist formalism⁶.

Equally, we are interested in critical forays into the connection between new formalism(s) and reading practices such as postcritical reading,⁷ distant or surface reading⁸, and reparative reading⁹. Other possible topics include looking at the future of formalism(s) in and beyond literary studies and the innovative theoretical perspectives that develop new formalism(s) further.

2. Applying New Formalism

The methodological uses of new formalism(s) are still underexplored despite the breadth of theorisations. What are the opportunities, challenges, and limitations of new formalist methodologies in our research?

For this section we are looking for papers that discuss how participants apply new formalist methodologies in innovative and constructive ways in their research projects, including PhD dissertations. In particular, we are interested in the reading practices it engenders or transforms, the value of close reading and the portability of form. How do new formalist approaches that highlight forms' portability transform our methodologies and foster new ways of reading literature, for example in the development of transhistorical, transnational or transmedial projects?

3. Teaching New Formalism

In literary and cultural studies, the distinction between theory and methodology is often blurry. Classroom discussions often allow only a limited amount of intense close reading in favour of broader political discussions which can result in a disconnect for students between theory and method, and between literary studies and politics.

For this section we invite papers on how we can teach new formalism(s) and incorporate formalist pedagogies into literary studies curricula. What is the "pedagogical potential" of new formalism(s)?¹⁰ How can new formalist methodologies help us integrate literary analysis and politics as vital elements of literary scholarship more productively and fully? How do we teach attention to form that considers the interaction between political and aesthetic forms?

Possible topics for all sections include but are not limited to:

- new genre studies, genre theory & an attention to forms and their portability
- different reading strategies: close reading, distant reading, surface reading, deep reading
- formalism(s) and suspicious or post-critical reading
- digital humanities methodologies and form
- potential for transhistorical projects - portability across time, vs historicist approaches
- comparative analyses, transnational approaches - portability across space (e.g. Friedman)
- intersectionality and form, e.g. queer of colour formalism // the affordances of form for queer studies/analyses
- decolonising approaches to form

- differences in approaches to form generated in different geographic cultures // geographies
- 'close reading' new media forms and new formalist methodologies
- pedagogical reflections on methodology from a diachronic and synchronic perspective
- best practice examples of teaching new formalist theories and methods

Please submit a 300-word proposal and short author bio (3-5 sentences) to Julia Ditter (julia.ditter@northumbria.ac.uk) and Anne Korfmacher (a.korfmacher@uni-koeln.de) by **18 March 2022**. Please indicate the section in which you would like to present when sending in your proposal. We particularly encourage submissions from PGR and ECR colleagues, and from people who identify with groups that are currently underrepresented in literary studies.

The short 10-minute papers must be submitted as text or presentation (with subtitles or transcript) before the workshop by **3 June 2022** and will be made available in a password-protected space to all participants two weeks prior to the online workshop.

To get the most out of the online workshop and to generate a productive discussion, we hope that attendants will participate in the full workshop where possible. We will plan a number of comfort breaks and children and companion animals are very welcome! If you have any accessibility needs, please let us know.

For more information about the workshop visit our website at www.theusesofform.wordpress.com.

¹ For a recent overview see, for example, Funk, Wolfgang, Irmtraud Huber, and Natalie Roxburgh. "What Form Knows: The Literary Text as Framework, Model, and Experiment." *Anglistik*, vol. 30, no. 2, 2019, pp. 5-13; Theile, Verena. "New Formalism(s): A Prologue." *New Formalisms and Literary Theory*, edited by Verena Theile and Linda Tredennick. Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 3-28

² Levine, Caroline. *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network*. Princeton UP, 2015 (p. 3).

³ Ibid.

⁴ Eyers, Tom. *Speculative Formalism: Literature, Theory, and the Critical Present*, Northeastern UP, 2017.

⁵ Cohen, Stephen. *Shakespeare and Historical Formalism*. Routledge, 2007.

⁶ Wolfson, Susan. "Introduction: Reading for Form." *Reading for Form*, edited by Susan J. Wolfson and Marshall Brown. U of Washington P, 2000.

⁷ Felski, Rita. *The Limits of Critique*. U of Chicago P, 2015.

⁸ Moretti, Franco. *Graphs, Maps, Trees*. Verso, 2005. Moretti, Franco. *Distant Reading*. Verso, 2013. Best, Stephen and Sharon Marcus. "Surface Reading: An Introduction." *Representations* vol. 108, no. 1, 2009, pp. 1-21.

⁹ Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Touching Feeling*. Duke U Press, 2003.

¹⁰ Tredennick, Linda. "'One Another's Hermitage': New Formalist Pedagogy." *New Formalisms and Literary Theory*, edited by Verena Theile and Linda Tredennick. Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 3-28 (p. 224).