

Description

Literary Multilingualism Scholarship has for a long time discussed how to define its actual object: Is it ‘multilingual texts’—and if so, how do we define what counts as ‘multilingual’? Is one to include texts that make use of dialects or sociolects? How about texts that simply subvert the integrity of a language, such as Georges Perec’s novel *La disparition* (1969) which makes no use of the letter E? This lecture and workshop follow Brigitte Rath’s suggestion of the term ‘nonmonolingualism’ (Rath 2017). After all, what interests us most in so-called multilingual texts, or in texts like Perec’s, is how they subvert what Yasemin Yıldız calls the “monolingual paradigm” (Yıldız 2012): the notion that it is the norm for persons as well as for texts (or, indeed, for any utterance) to exist ‘in one language only’. Looking at nonmonolingualism in literary texts therefore means to detect structural elements which go against this very notion—such as, for example, the workings of wit and paronomasia. One can even go so far as to argue that all texts are in some sense nonmonolingual—which, if accepted, could make nonmonolingualism a truly new paradigm for Literary Studies.

This lecture and workshop will be led in English by **Till Dembeck**, an Associate Professor in German Literature and Media Didactics at the University of Luxembourg. Over the last years, his work has largely focused on literary multilingualism: he has notably co-edited the compendium *Literatur und Mehrsprachigkeit* and is a founding member of the editorial board of the *Journal of Literary Multilingualism*. In 2023, he published *Der Ton der Kultur. Lyrik und Sprachforschung im 19. Jahrhundert*, a book on 19th century lyric poetry and linguistics. Till Dembeck is currently working on a book manuscript concerning the ongoing Ethification of the Digital.

This doctoral workshop is organized by **Fanny Audeoud** (UNIGE) & **Sabrina Sampaio Martins** (UNIGE).

Avec le soutien du Programme doctoral suisse en Littérature générale et comparée / Unterstützt mit Mitteln der interuniversitären Doktoratskooperation "Allgemeine und Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft" (Université de Fribourg, Université de Genève, Université de Lausanne, Universität Zürich).

Nonmonolingualism as a Paradigm for Literary Studies

with Till Dembeck (University of Luxembourg)

26-27 February 2026
University of Geneva
Les Maraîchers, Room 102

Registration by January 31, 2026: fanny.audeoud@unige.ch & sabrina.sampaiomartins@unige.ch

Program

Thursday, 26 February | Les Maraîchers 102

14:00	Introduction by Fanny Audeoud and Sabrina Sampaio Martins
14:30	Lecture by Till Dembeck <i>"The Subversive Powers of Wit: Nonmonolingualism as a Paradigm for Literary Studies"</i>
15:30	Coffee break
16:00	Workshop led by Till Dembeck <i>"Nonmonolingualism as a Paradigm for Literary Studies"</i> <i>Reading materials will be sent in advance as preparation.</i> <i>Exchanges will take place in English, French and German.</i>
19:00	Dinner at Café du Marché (Plainpalais)

Friday, 27 February | Les Maraîchers 102

8:45	Introduction
9:00-12:30	Writing workshop, with a coffee break at 10:30.

From 9:00 to 12:30, we will discuss writing extracts from our on-going research in order to get feedback and address methodological questions. PhD students in Comparative Literature (or that work closely with approaches from the discipline) will be able to share 4-6 pages in English, French or German. Due to restricted time, the discussion will focus on 4-5 submissions. You can e-mail your extracts to the organizers by January 25, 2026: fanny.audeoud@unige.ch and sabrina.sampaiomartins@unige.ch.

Registration

Till Dembeck's lecture on the 26th is open to the public, without registration. For his workshop, please write by January 31 to receive the reading materials.

PhD students, post-docs and professors in literary studies can also join the writing workshop's discussion on the 27th and register by January 31.

Reimbursements

PhD students who are part of a Swiss University will be able to have their travel, hotel and dinner expenses reimbursed by the Swiss doctoral program in General and Comparative Literature. Those enrolled in a Comparative Literature program will be given priority if there are too many registrations. Please notify the organizers for a room by January 25.

Access info

Room for the workshop: **Les Maraîchers, 102 (first floor)**

Address: **Rue des Maraîchers 13, 1205 Genève**

How to access from Cornavin station:

Take Bus 1 at Cornavin, stop at 'École de Médecine', then walk for 5 min.

or

Take Bus 19 at Cornavin, stop at 'Musée d'éthnographie', then walk for 3 min.

View from Google Maps:



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