

COGNITIVE FUTURES IN THE ARTS AND HUMANITIES

Stories in Mind

Narrative in Cognition and Culture

15-17 July 2026 | Universidade Católica Portuguesa, Lisbon

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Fritz Breithaupt
Gregory Currie
Elspeth Jajdelska
Maiya Murphy

COGNITIVE FUTURES
IN THE ARTS AND HUMANITIES

Stories in Mind

Narrative in Cognition and Culture

Program and Abstracts

July 15-17 2026 | Lisbon

Research Center for Communication and Culture
Universidade Católica Portuguesa

Organizing Committee

Ana Margarida Abrantes
Peter Hanenberg

Local Scientific Committee

Ana Margarida Abrantes
Peter Hanenberg
Olga Husch
Verena Lindemann-Lino
Rita Bueno Maia
Adriana Martins
Filipe Resende
Federico Rudari
Luísa Santos
Augusto Soares da Silva

Welcome!

Cognitive Futures in the Arts and Humanities is an annual international conference and research network that originated from a project supported by the UK's Arts and Humanities Research Council. The first conference was held in Bangor, Wales, in April 2013, and since then, the network has grown to include scholars working in literary studies, cognitive science, philosophy of mind, performance, film, theater, linguistics, and media studies. Together, they explore the relationship between human cognition and the cultural environment that both informs and shapes it.

Building on the previous editions of the Cognitive Futures in the Arts and Humanities series, the 2026 conference, *Stories in Mind: Narrative in Cognition and Culture*, addresses narrative as a cognitive and cultural constant, as both a strategy to make sense of the world and experience, and a structuring foundation of cultural life.

Welcome to the Research Center for Communication and Culture (CECC) and the Catholic University of Portugal. We wish you a productive and rewarding conference and a pleasant stay on campus and in Lisbon.

Ana Margarida Abrantes and Peter Hanenberg

Program

WEDNESDAY, JULY 15

8.30-9.30	Registration			
9.30-10.00	Opening Session			Auditorium 512
10.00-11.00	Keynote lecture Fritz Breithaupt <i>The Narrative Brain</i>			Auditorium 512
11.00-11.30	COFFEE BREAK			
11.30-13.00	Stories, Narrativity, and Sense Making Room 520-A Mark Turner <i>Stories in FutureMind</i> Jonas Heß <i>Epistemic Effects of Literary Narratives. A Theory of 'Literary' Knowledge</i> Michael Wheeler <i>Implicit Narrativity in Self-Making and Sense-Making</i>	Multimodality Room 520-B Elin Ivansson and Anne Holm <i>Reading Multimodal Archival Fiction: An Empirical Study</i> Francesco Parisi and Gioele Silvestro <i>Pip's Tragic Dualism: The Self, The Body, and Art</i> Anna Bonifazi <i>Multimodal Macro-segmentation in Oral-traditional Storytelling: The Case of "Halil Hmjičić and Miloš the Highwayman" (PN 662)</i>	Disrupted Self Room 522-A Laura Castillo Bel <i>Disrupting the Self: The Emotional Shift in Hybrid Narratives of Dementia</i> Josephine Balfour-Oatts <i>From Friend to Demon: Metacognitive Metaphor Shifting and the Construction of Divided Selves in Eating Disorder Recovery</i> Cristina Loi and Victoria Pöhls <i>The Storyworld Possible Selves Scale: Measuring Self-Concept Activation During Narrative Engagement</i>	Performance, Song, Opera Room 522-B Eliška Halodová <i>Staging Suicide in an Opera Performance</i> Šárka Havlíčková Kysová <i>Embodied Sharing in Operatic Performance: A Psychophysiological Study of Multimodal Experience</i> Sharon Lattig <i>Cognitive Song to Cognitive Story: Collective Lyric as a Precursor of Communal Narrative</i>
13.00-14.30	LUNCH BREAK			
14.30-16.30	Pre-formed Panel: Modes of Mind: Literature and its Social, Material and Imaginative Scaffoldings Room 520-A Stefka G. Eriksen <i>Writing, Performing and Solving Riddles in Old Norse Literature and Manuscripts</i> Karin Kukkonen <i>Storytelling, Literary Games and the Secret of Spontaneity</i> Esko Suoranta <i>Scaffoldings of Close Reading: Expert Experience and China Miéville's Iron Council</i> Merja Polvinen <i>Writing as a Mode of Reading in Literary Studies</i>	Narrative and Cinema Room 520-B Zsuzsanna Bak <i>The Dramaturgy of Narrative Short Films: The Invisible Pre-Story and Dominant Structural Forms</i> Dan Leberg <i>Flowing in the Moment: Screen Acting and Cognitive Load Management</i> Bruce McChonachie <i>Tragic Emotions and Narratives in US Climate Movie</i>	Performance and Play Room 522-A Allie Marotta <i>Making Sense of Masquerade: How Audience Participants Learn the World of the Show Through Cognitive Cues and Strategies</i> Marie Adamová <i>Not Just a Feeling: The Importance of Proprioception and Kinaesthesia in Performing</i> Alexandru Berceanu et al <i>The Role-Playing Brain: A Functional MRI Study of Role Playing in Actors and Non-Actors</i>	Extended Minds Room 522-B Line Cecilie Engh <i>Wayfinding with Monks</i> Martina Musilová <i>Story as a search for meaning</i>
16.30-17.00	COFFEE BREAK			
17.00-18.30	Reading, Attention, Memory Room 520-B Noor Dabbas <i>Reading as a Memory Process: A Reader Response Theory of Narrative Experientiality and Comprehension</i> Daria Baryshnikova <i>Archiving Consciousness: Extended Mind, Place, and Affect in Brion Gysin's "The Last Museum" (1986)</i>	Multilingual Narratives and Documentation Room 522-A Natalia Gagarina et al <i>Multilingual Assessment Instrument for Narratives as a Lens into the Mind: A Study of 5379 Children's Stories in 44 Languages Around the Globe</i> Charles Cheung <i>Multimodal Storytelling in Multilingual Film: The Marginalization of Portuguese in Macao in Empire Hotel</i> Carla Fernandes <i>Multimodal Video Annotations for Performing arts Documentation</i>	Performance and Embodiment Room 522-B Abire Abbou <i>Embodied Narratives</i> Joelle Arp-Dunham <i>Embodied Stories of Pleasure: The Effects of Performing Heightened Material on the Enactor & Ways to Make it Better</i> Silvie Hajdíková <i>Perception of Materiality in the Scenography of Marta Rozskoplová</i>	

THURSDAY, JULY 16

9.30-10.30	Keynote lecture Auditorium 521 Maiya Murphy <i>Cognition as Always Already Cultural: Training to Perform Intercultural Stories</i>			
10.30-11.00	COFFEE BREAK			
11.00-13.00	Pre-formed Panel: Somatic Stories in Acting Practice Room 520-A Richard Kemp <i>Micro-narratives in Play: Stories before Words in Acting Practice</i> Fatou Su Özkarataş <i>Transformation of the Somatized Actor</i> Hansel Tan <i>Covert Narratives: An Actor's use of Inner Speech</i> Brad Krumholz <i>Ingredients of Craft: Preparing the Actor to Embody Narrative</i>	Narrative, Ambiguity, and Inference Room 520-B Manuel Carvalho Coutinho <i>Storytelling and Ambiguity in Investigative Journalism: How to Read Between the Lines</i> Márta Horváth <i>Silences and Gaps in the Social Novel</i> Srinandini Mukherjee <i>Visualising ambiguity and its effects on vividness</i>	Trajectories, Subjects, Lives Room 522-A Valentina Di Cataldo <i>Stories in the Body. Narrative Affordances as creative Tools for a Shared World</i> Annimari Juvonen <i>Whose Story is this? - On Narrative and Credibility in Asylum Interviews</i> Isadora Fonseca <i>African Subjectivities about Art and History: Postcolonial Lessons from Fiction</i>	Stories and Things Room 522-B Myène Garin <i>The Unstable Cognitive Life of Objects in Narratives: Reading Early Modern Material Anchors</i> Ana Margarida Abrantes and Marília dos Santos Lopes <i>Narrating Color: Cognitive Science, History, and Enacted Human Experience</i> Tania Casimiro <i>Stories in the Cupboard: Mugs, Embodied Micro-Narratives, and Domestic Memory</i> Gilberto Gauche <i>A Story's Worth a Thousand Worlds: Classification, Conflict, and the Pastoral Ideal</i>
13.00-14.30	LUNCH BREAK			
14.30-15.30	Keynote lecture Auditorium 521 Elsbeth Jajdelska <i>'There's nothing as practical as a good theory' (Kurt Lewin, 1943): Cognitive Humanities and the Replication Crisis</i>			
15.30-16.00	COFFEE BREAK			
16.00-18.00	Pre-formed Panel: Myrfield Institute for Cognition and the Arts Panel: The State of the Field in Cognition / Poetics / Cognitive Literary Studies Room 520-A Amy Cook Mark Turner Renata Gambino Grazia Pulvirenti	Young Reading Room 520-B Tina Ternes <i>Shared Reading and Young Adults: Impacts on Well Being and Reading Habits</i> Patrick Errington, Simina Pişur, Elena Santi, Sarah McGeown, Daniel Mirman <i>Re-Narrativising the Poetry Reading Process for Young Readers</i> Sylvia Klos <i>When we tell (and retell) stories, do we think in words, images or both and if so, how? - Some Considerations on Cognitive Aspects of Creating (and Recreating) Humorous Stories for Children</i> Pascal Nicklas, Gerhard Lauer, Annemarie Deser, Jette Trzebiatowski, Timur Sevincer <i>Book Boyfriends Revisited</i>	Media and Storytelling Room 522-A Grauben Navas, Aura Marina Boadas, Jefferson Plaza <i>Imagological Perspectives on Urban Violence: Images of Caracas in Karina Sainz Borgo's La hija de la española</i> Patrícia Bilimória-Fernandes <i>Harry Styles and Gender: The Multimodal Narrative of Pop Masculinity</i> Carla Ganito, Cátia Ferreira, Patrícia Tavares, João Simão <i>Co-Authoring the Self: Fan Videos as Narrative Technologies and Transmedia Identity Construction at the Eras Tours</i>	Narrative, Self, Identity Room 522-B Gijs Versteegen <i>The Shaping of Courtly Identity Through an Invented Mirror for Princes</i> Inês T. Almeida <i>Honmoon as Narrative Self: Co-Authoring Identity and Collective Memory in K-pop Demon Hunters Fandom</i> Stacey Dowswell <i>How to Live After the World Ends: Attenuated Storyworlds and Betweenness in Yoko Tawada's The Emissary</i> Massimo Roberto Beato <i>Beyond Narrative Frames. Immersion, Embodied Sense-Making and the Construction of the Self</i>
20.00	CONFERENCE DINNER			

FRIDAY, JULY 17

10.00-11.00	Keynote lecture Auditorium 521 Gregory Currie <i>Sophocles and the Uses of Folk Psychology</i>			
11.00-11.30	COFFEE BREAK			
11.30-13.00	Reading, Language, and Stories Room 520-A Yanna Popova <i>Narrativity, Enactive Reading and the Use of the Present Tense in Narration</i> Francesco Garbelli <i>From Free Indirect Speech to Polyphony</i> Eve Sweetser <i>Embedded Viewpoint and Joint Attention in Jane Austen</i>	Narrative, Automation, and AI Room 520-B Brook Miller <i>The Path to Automated Narrative Processing</i> William Hasselberger and Carla Ganito <i>Data-Driven Afterlives and Narrative Meaning in the Digital Age</i>	Narrative and Imagination Room 522-A María Jimena Clavel Vázquez <i>Social and Collective Imagination: What's the Difference?</i> Madeleine Frings <i>Making Sense of Loss, Grief, and Coping: Figurative and Non-figurative Conceptualisations in German and English Picturebooks</i> Thomas Eder <i>Literary Reading and Imagining: / Imagination - The Case of Franz Kafka</i>	Worlds, Frames, and Identity Room 528 Sherehan Saad <i>From History into Literature: Framing Narrative in Literary Translation</i> Maria Pacheco de Amorim <i>A Multitude of Drops: Narrative and Personal Identity in David Mitchell's Cloud Atlas</i> Changiz M. Varzi <i>Necropolitics and Media Narrative Cognition</i>
13.00-14.30	LUNCH BREAK			
14.30-16.00	Pre-formed Panel: Participatory Narratives: Thinking Through Conspiracies and Paranormal Experiences Room 520-A Alberto Colombo <i>How do you believe? The Narrative Enactment of Conspiracy</i> Valentina Cardella <i>Paranormal for Dummies: The Increasing Availability of Paranormal Experiences</i>	Self and Agency in Media Supports Room 520-B Cátia Ferreira <i>Empathy as Agency: Cognitive Narratology and Autobiographical Game Design in Path Out</i> Yasemin Hacıoğlu <i>"Verdas Første Bygde-Pride": Re-Composing Narratives of Self, Agency and Queer-Rural Futures in Norway's First Rural LGBTQ+ Pride</i> Ana Soares <i>Narrating the Self: Mythopoetics, Cognition, and Identity in the Lyric Poetry of David Mourão-Ferreira</i>	Literary Narrative and Emotions Room 522-A Peter Garratt <i>'The Long, Barely Understood Poem': Lyric Cognition in Narrative Worlds</i> Eileen Pfeiffer-Flores and Bianca Rogoski <i>Understanding Literary Empathy in Light of a Theoretical-Conceptual Analysis</i> Radhika Koul <i>Rasa Theory and the Limits of Cognitive Narratology</i>	4E Performance Room 528 Kangjia Shen <i>Mental Simulation: On the Spatial Cognitive Practice of Contemporary Theatre Creation</i> Ramona Zăvoianu-Petrovici <i>Performative Hypomnemata - Narrative Sense-Making in Performance Poetry from a 4E Perspective</i> Christina (Xristina) Penna <i>Holding Stories</i>
16.00-16.30	COFFEE BREAK			
16.30-17.00	Closing session and looking ahead Auditorium 521			
20.00-22.00	SUNSET CRUISE			

Keynote Speakers

The Narrative Brain

Fritz Breithaupt

University of Pennsylvania, USA

What makes stories so captivating? I suggest that storytelling allows us to solve the problem of sharing real and imaginary experiences. The first part of the talk will propose a model of narrative cognition that focuses on a set of specific narrative emotions that anchor stories and reward audiences. I will present empirical evidence based on Telephone Game experiments to support my claims, in fact, the largest such experiments to date. In the second part, I will consider narrative emotions for which we lack proper emotion names, but that function as rewarding narrative emotions as described above. An example of such an emotion is comeuppance of characters (the punishment of bad guys). I will suggest a list of such successful emotions in everyday narratives and fiction, but which do not fit out proper emotion names.

Sophocles and the uses of folk psychology

Gregory Currie

University of York, UK

Engaging with fictions of any kind requires us to occupy two perspectives (almost) simultaneously: an internal perspective which presents characters as people with (largely) intelligible cognitive and emotional states, and an external one, according to which they are (in my view) abstract entities created by authors. These two perspectives interact in multiple ways; sometimes they conflict. I illustrate the conflict with some moments from Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*. That conflict has been responded to in different ways by classical scholars; I favour a way that appeals to the idea of trade-offs between psychological plausibility and sustained narrative tension. Can we, as interpreters and critics, make rational judgements about these sorts of trade-offs? I appeal to the idea of trust, an attitude which is, sometimes, rational.

'There's nothing as practical as a good theory' (Kurt Lewin, 1943): Cognitive Humanities and the Replication Crisis

Elsbeth Jajdelska
University of Strathclyde, UK

In 2011, The Open Science Collaboration, a broad network of scientists in the Centre for Open Science, announced the findings of a three-year project on 'replication'. Replication is a measure of a finding's reliability; results which 'replicate', that is produce the same or very similar findings as the first investigation, reassure researchers round the world that their methods, social organisation are robust.

The findings were a shock: Only 36 per cent of the studies 'successfully replicated'*. This was the start of a 'replication crisis'. A period of intense discussion produced some worthwhile changes. More recently, however, the sense of a crisis has dispelled, alongside some ambitions for change. I ask whether and how cognitive humanists can support better replication, and better theorisation.

(British Psychological Society: <https://www.bps.org.uk/psychologist/children-replication-crisis>).

Cognition as Always Already Cultural: Training to Perform Intercultural Stories

Maiya Murphy
National University of Singapore

In much research on cognition, it is often at least implicit that findings are likely applicable beyond the cultural conditions of the research and theorization (Justus xi). Some research directly aims toward discovering universal mechanisms for cognition (Memory & Cognition). Theatre and performance studies, allied with both artistic and humanities research styles, have developed within disciplinary traditions that have increasingly emphasized the constitutive nature of culture in both art and knowledge production. Because of this, theatre and performance researchers are sometimes skeptical of incorporating a scientific positivism that they worry makes mistakes such as wielding universalism as a mask for specific social and political oppressive forces (such as colonialism, imperialism, and Eurocentrism to name a few) (Nellhaus). By collapsing a narrow view of science on to the cognitive sciences,

cognitive theatre and performance studies researchers have experienced pushback from our own home disciplines. Skeptics worry that science-informed research on theatre and performance may fall back into the old habit of erasing difference, power, and oppression. However, this talk proposes ways in which the cognitive humanities are particularly well suited to develop a deeper and more complex interdisciplinary understanding of cognition precisely because of our strength in navigating the constitutive complexities of culture.

To illustrate such strengths, this presentation features performer training as an example of how detailed and insider expertise in the arts and humanities can flesh out how the “always already” of culture works alongside the “always already” of biology, neurophysiology, and other factors to mutually constrain and inform cognition. By focusing on performer training for not only the interpretation of roles, but also the creation of performance material, this talk outlines how performer training fosters cognition and metacognition required for the contemporary performance landscape. Focusing on contemporary performer pedagogy that deliberately mixes cultural forms, or “intercultural training,” this talk illustrates how the very constraints and affordances of difference give rise to optimal cognitive development for the contemporary actor. In this light, the difficulties and dissonances in intercultural training are, cognitively speaking, features, not bugs. With its commitment to and techniques for negotiating the complexities of engaging different cultural training traditions, intercultural performer training makes obvious how dissonance, prediction, embodiment, emergence, and sensemaking are expertly wielded to perform intercultural stories. By emphasizing our ability to explain the “always already” cultural qualities of the material that we research, this talk suggests that researchers in the cognitive arts and humanities just might be the key to training our interdisciplinary teams how to tell a more complete story of human cognition.

References:

- Justus, Timothy. *Cognition and the arts: from naturalized aesthetics to the cognitive humanities* (Oxford UP, 2025).
- Nellhaus, Tobin. "Science, history, theatre: theorizing in two alternatives to positivism." *Theatre Journal* 45.4 (1993): 505-527.
- Memory & Cognition (51:3) Special Issue: Exploration of Human Cognitive Universals and Human Cognitive Diversity, April 2023.

Pre-formed Panels

Modes of Mind: Literature and its Social, Material and Imaginative Scaffoldings

Convener: Merja Polvinen

4E approaches situate narrative at the interface between culture and cognition. Narrative is a powerful tool for shaping our minds in various contexts, but in doing so, it draws on different scaffoldings borrowed from social practices, material substrates and imaginative traditions in cultural history. This panel explores how these scaffoldings allow us to work out “modes” of a mind extended socially, materially and imaginatively. The four papers take up case studies from the Middle Ages, the early-modern period and the present day, and discuss reading, writing, oral storytelling and riddling.

Writing, Performing and Solving Riddles in Old Norse Literature and Manuscripts

Stefka G. Eriksen

University of Oslo, Norway

The focus of this paper will be on oral entertainment and more specifically on riddle-contests as represented in Old Norse literature and manuscripts. The case-study will be based on the fourteenth-century legendary Old Norse saga, The Saga of Hervör and Heiðrekr, which retells of the riddle-contests organized by king Heiðrekr at his court. At one of these occasions, the king is visited by an ambiguous figure, who turns out to be the pagan god Óðinn, and the two engage in a riddle-contest, which is eventually won by the god, who is known both for his wisdom and trickery. The riddles are in poetic eddic form (while the saga is in prose); their solutions are very varied, pertaining to natural elements, handcraft tools, and board games; and, most interestingly, various manuscript versions of the riddle-contest include various riddles, as well as different solutions to the same riddles. The riddles in Hervarar saga have previously been discussed from philological (Burrows 2013), narratological (Mitchell 2020), and political perspectives (Waugh 1997). In this paper, I will discuss the riddle-contests on three other levels that pertain to their nature as “modes” of engaging socially, of writing of worlds and ecologies, and of performing. First, I will study the significance of the riddle-contest as a mode of socially and intellectually extended engagement between the characters in the saga. Second, I will focus on the manuscript variance of the riddles as revealing the

scribes' agency when forming the cognitive ecology of their own manuscripts, where riddling becomes one navigation mode among a great variety of other modes. Third, I will discuss the riddles' affordances during a public reading of the saga, their potential to engage the attention of a listening audience and thus to change the social dynamics of a reading/performance session. This three-leveled investigation aims to reveal the role of riddling and gameplaying during writing and reading practices in medieval Iceland, and their contingency on the material and social contexts within which they were preserved and performed.

References

Burrows, Hannah. 2013. "Enigma Variations: Hervarar saga's Wave-Riddles and Supernatural Women in Old Norse Poetry," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 112, no. 2: 94-216.

Mitchell, Stephen. 2020. "Old Norse Riddles and Other Verbal Contests in Performance," in John Miles Foley's *World of Orality: Text, Tradition, and Contemporary Oral Theory*, ed. Mark C. Amodio (Leeds: Arc Humanities Press), 123-35.

Waugh, Robin. 1997. "Literacy, Royal Power, and King-Poet Relations in Old English and Old Norse Compositions," *Comparative Literature* 49, no. 4: 289-315.

Storytelling, Literary Games and the Secret of Spontaneity

Karin Kukkonen

University of Oslo, Norway

Literary games provide a little researched means to investigate the interaction between oral and written modes in literary creativity. In early-modern France, novelists regularly played literary games in the salons. Here, written modes of language composition, such as the letter, would be re-inscribed into oral, collective contexts, when the salonnières improvise letters orally. Oral modes of storytelling and literary composition would draw on written elements, for example, when players draw paper slips in a lottery providing written prompts for storytelling or when they improvise poems orally on the basis of earlier written texts they have memorised, for example from Petrarch's *Canzoniere*. Oral modes of literary composition draw on written sources and prompts, while written modes of composition draw on oral elements in the literary games of early-modern France.

Spontaneity was a key aesthetic value of the salons (Viala 2008), and numerous authors in the period discussed how the easy, spontaneous manner of oral speaking in conversation could translate into the written form in poetry and narrative fiction (Denis 1998; Génétiot 1997). The salonnières turned to literary games, exactly, because these games provide settings which frontloaded spontaneity in language use. Language extends the mind, because its realisation in spoken and written modes externalises elements of thought that come to be manipulable (Clark 2008). Game rules provide the means to reshape the probability designs of particular literary forms (Kukkonen 2020) in order to draw out modes of devising letters, poems and stories, which do not draw on learned patterns and probabilities, but require players to reconfigure them spontaneously. This talk will discuss Madeleine de Scudéry's novel *Clélie, histoire romaine* (1654-1660) as a creative experiment, where the novelist and salonnière Scudéry deploys literary games in order to spark spontaneity in her written, long-form storytelling. It will trace how the patterns of expectations connected to rhyme schemes, plots and stylistic registers are re-designed through the change of mode facilitated by the game rules and by the social setting of multiple participants in the game of spontaneous, playful literary composition.

References

- Clark, Andy. 2008. *Supersizing the Mind: Embodiment, Action and Cognitive Extension*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Denis, Delphine. 1998. *'De l'air galant' et autres conversations. Pour une étude de l'archive galante*. Paris: H. Champion.
- Génétiot, Alain. 1997. *Poétique du loisir mondain, de Voltaire à La Fontaine*. Paris: H. Champion.
- Kukkonen, Karin. 2020. *Probability Designs: Literature and Predictive Processing*. NY: Oxford University Press.
- Viala, Alain. 2008. *La France galante: Essai historique sur une catégorie culturelle, de ses origines jusqu'à la Révolution*. Paris: PUF.

Scaffoldings of Close Reading: Expert Experience and China Miéville's Iron Council

Esko Suoranta

University of Helsinki, Finland

An enactive understanding of cognition accounts for a multitude of factors that affect readers as they make use of the affordances of literature. As such, enactivism is able to respond to the potential avenues for cognitive literary study that Marco Caracciolo (2016) outlines: it can approach reading 1) as interpretation of texts that both reflect and thematize mental processes, 2) as illuminating the underlying cognitive processes of reading, and 3) as an activity that has an impact on readerly cognition. The different emphases enactivism is given – its embodied, embedded, extended, or enactive dimensions – play out differently as literature and reading are approached from these different angles.

In my presentation for the Stories in Mind conference, I explore how the enactive approach can be further developed when literary scholars turn their gaze into their own practices and methods of reading. By analyzing scholarly close reading, I hope to show that literary scholars engage with the cognitive environment of literature by bringing into the mix not only their expert skill in generating interpretations but also a multitude of material and cultural scaffolds. In other words, literary scholars are able to employ the affordances of both the literary text and their expert context as they strive for what Menakhmem Perry (1979) has called maximal reading, making sense of as many textual elements as possible vis-à-vis the text as a whole (cf. Kukkonen 2014).

China Miéville's novel *Iron Council* (2004) serves as my case study as I chart how to make sense of its obscure references to Russian Kubo-Futurist poet Velimir Khlebnikov – without an interpretation of which, I argue, a maximal reading of the novel will inevitably fall short. In the process, an enactivist account of close reading will be seen to require a concurrent account of the various material, cultural, and social scaffoldings employed in the scholar's practice.

References:

Caracciolo, Marco. "Cognitive literary studies and the status of interpretation : an attempt at conceptual mapping." *New Literary History* 47:1, 2016, 187–207.

Menakhem, Perry. "Literary Dynamics: How the Order of a Text Creates Its Meanings (With an Analysis of Faulkner's 'A Rose for Emily')." *Poetics Today* 1:1, 1979, 35–64.

Kukkonen, Karin. "Presence and Prediction: The Embodied Reader's Cascades of Cognition." *Style* 48:3, 2014, 367–84.

Writing as a Mode of Reading in Literary Studies

Merja Polvinen

University of Helsinki; Finland

As a field of research, literary studies has always valued the way individual scholars are able to craft, slowly and effortfully, rich readings of texts, the value of which is maintained even if no empirical test shows other readers reacting in the same way to the same text. This presentation discusses the role of the crafting of readings in the expert performance of literary scholars. While an individual's skill in experiencing texts to the fullest forms one crucial part of this process, my focus is on the methodological specificity of literary studies, where new knowledge about texts and about reading is generated through writing.

The presentation takes a 4E-cognitive perspective to the writing of literary readings. It builds on the hypothesis that literary close reading is an enactive sense-making skill where scholars' embodied minds – their personal experiences, prior expertise, and cultural background – are entangled with the cognitive environments of literary texts, interpretive traditions, and material scaffolds. However, even the expert experience itself, however skilfully generated, does not yet constitute new knowledge in the field of literary studies. 'A close reading' presented in a research article is not a report of a scholar's singular reading experience but the result of a culturally and materially scaffolded practice that includes those skilled first readings, additional and fragmentary re-readings, writing of notes, reading of scholarship, writing of drafts and rewriting them (Hayot 2014; Kramnick 2023; Sinykin & Winant 2025).

Sarah Bro Trasmundi (2025) has discussed reading as a cognitive process that involves perception of invariant structures in both material and imaginative dimensions. In a similar vein, I will suggest that in the practice of writing, literary scholars are able to refashion invariant structures of various dimensions into new configurations, crafting meanings even they themselves did not experience during any individual reading. Writing is not only the engine with which scholars translate impressions, instincts, and intuitions generated in reading into words, but also "craft knowledge" (Kramnick 2023, 11), a materially entangled cognitive mode that in itself produces those impressions, develops those instincts and generates the interpretation as a piece of aesthetic criticism.

References:

Hayot, Eric. 2014. *The Elements of Academic Style: Writing for the Humanities*. New York, Columbia UP.

Kramnick, J. 2023. *Criticism and Truth: On Method in Literary Studies*. Chicago and London, U of Chicago P.

Sinykin, D. and J. Winant (eds.) 2025. *Close Reading for the Twenty-First Century*. Princeton UP.

Trasmundi, S. B. 2025. "Exploring reading as a social practice with Gibson and Goodwin." *Topoi*, np.

Somatic Stories in Acting Practice

Convener: Richard Kemp

This panel brings together theatre practitioner-scholars whose research is grounded in acting practice and who approach theatrical activity as a productive site of inquiry for the cognitive arts and humanities. Collectively, the papers investigate how narrative emerges through embodied, somatic, and pre-reflective processes in performance, positioning the actor's body as a primary medium of narrative cognition rather than a vehicle for textual representation alone..

Micro-Narratives in Play: Stories before Words in Acting Practice

Richard J. Kemp

Indiana University of Pennsylvania, USA | Kocaeli University, Turkey

Acting practice grounded in the physical approach of Jacques Lecoq can be used as a methodological approach to cognitive narratology, treating the acting studio as a laboratory for observing how stories emerge through physical actions in improvisational play. Rather than beginning with text or character psychology, this method foregrounds movement, rhythm, spatial relation, and collective dynamics as primary narrative forces. This offers a phenomenological corollary to the hypothesis of Delafield-Butt and Trevarthen that narrative sense-making emerges from pre-reflective sensorimotor intentionality, as developmentally early action structures provide embodied foundations for narrative meaning (Delafield-Butt and Trevarthen).

This proposal aligns with a growing consensus in cognitive neuroscience that social understanding depends on embodied processes that operate prior to reflective thought. Gallese argues that embodied simulation operating through mirror systems supports not only action understanding but also communicative intentions and language, making it central to social cognition without requiring propositional reasoning (Gallese). Complementing this view, research on emotion recognition demonstrates that bodily movement and posture engage shared neural substrates beyond facial expression, enabling rapid, non-reflective interpretation of affective states (Heberlein and Atkinson).

These embodied mechanisms are increasingly understood through the framework of active inference, which models cognition as a process of prediction and error minimization. Friston and Frith propose that perception and action are inseparable, arguing that both operate as inference within a self-organizing neural system. In social contexts, agents actively infer others' intentions through predictive systems in which successive actions progressively reduce uncertainty (Friston and Frith). In the active inference framework, narrative creates and manages predictions at multiple levels of representation, integrating cognitive and social functions (Bouizegarene et al.). These multi-level models align with mirror-system research demonstrating anticipatory motor representations during action observation and with fMRI evidence that interpreting body postures recruits overlapping perceptual, motor, and affective networks. Together, these findings suggest that social meaning arises through ongoing predictive engagement rather than retrospective interpretation.

Nonverbal theatrical improvisation places performers in conditions of real-time uncertainty that demand continuous prediction, adjustment, and alignment with others' actions. Narrative here is not a pre-given structure but emerges as an enacted and dialogic meshing of embodied intentions. Offering a novel methodology for cognitive narratology, this paper proposes theatrical improvisation as a research site for studying how narrative arises from embodied simulation, intersubjective alignment, and pre-reflective social cognition, extending narrative theory beyond text toward performance as a mode of cognitive inquiry.

Transformation of the Somatized Actor

Fatoş Su Özkarataş

Kocaeli University, Turkey

In this paper, I describe Neurosomatic Acting, which has as its theoretical backbone the philosophy of 13th century Sufi master Mevlâna Celaleddin Rumi. He expresses human beings' experience within the material world throughout their journey of existence: "I was soil, I became a plant, I became a bird, I became a man, and then I shall become light". According to this philosophy of tekâmül (the journey from mineral to light), human beings travel through time having inkişaf (direct experiences) within the material world. During this journey, the individual experiences many states and forms within its specific space-time, acquiring knowledge and experience through the specific perception of each state or form, thus creating their own subjective myth.

Within Neurosomatic Acting, this philosophical perspective is integrated with the modern cognitive neurobiological theories of “Embodied Simulation” and “Theory of Mind”. By navigating fictional story worlds through mental simulation, the actor internally derives these diverse forms with their own soma. The “Somatized Actor” discovers their own subjective path of narrative and performance through a series of structured exercises, resulting in a unique and singular performance. The concept of “Soma” is treated as the immanent expression of the mind-body wholeness that has experienced all stages of tekâmül, the journey of existence. Soma is not merely a biological body but a “meaning-bearing” entity that carries every kind of information related to its existential journey steps. The “Somatized Actor” (Somalaşmış Oyuncu) is a performer who, through the awareness of this immanent wholeness, can experience not only a character but any role - the state of being a tree, bird, fire, water, or historical and tragic figures like Joan of Arc, Macbeth, or Antigone. This perspective redefines performance so that it is not merely a representation, but an evolutionary memory archive encompassing all these stages. The actor's transformation is not merely the construction of a fictional character but the “unfolding” of somatic memory and the biological re-enactment of universal forms. Consequently, this work presents the contribution of the performing arts to the cognitive humanities by utilizing the soma as a phenomenological evolutionary research laboratory. Furthermore, by emphasizing the central importance of the body in an increasingly digitalized world, it advocates that art is an experiential journey of evolution (tekâmül) that explores the profound depths of the human mind and spirit.

Covert Narratives: An Actor’s Use of Inner Speech

Hansel Tan

Villanova University, USA

The scientific study of ‘the little voice inside the head’ – also known as inner speech (IS) -- has received increasing attention over the past 60 years. Evidence from behavioral, neuroimaging, psycholinguistic, phenomenological, philosophical and sports psychology studies characterize the phenomenon as a uniquely embodied experience guiding a variety of task-specific cognitive functions such as action planning, emotional regulation, problem-solving, creative thinking, and self-motivation. However, less has been written about the function of IS as a widely-used acting technique employed by performers to embody a real-time first-person perspective within a dramatic narrative. This paper seeks to unpack how actors

manipulate IS as a covert 'inner narrative' to support circumstantial obligations supplied by the playwright, highlighting how the practice broadly (1) filters out dramatically irrelevant embodied and environmental stimuli by directing attention, (2) frame perceptually-relevant stimuli into a character first-person perspective to guide action, (3) ensures dramatic timeline-relevancy, (4) marshals semantic associations to induce movement and affect, and (5) promotes creative agency and spontaneity, contributing to the illusion that an actor is 'living in the moment.' Taken together, I argue that an actor's use of IS can be taken to be a technical practice of stitching distributed cognitive artefacts into a coherent and linearized inner narrative to support fictional events, while guiding and organizing the actor's sensorimotor capacities to inspire embodied action.

Ingredients of Craft: Preparing the Actor to Embody Narrative

Brad Krumholz

North American Cultural Laboratory, NACL, USA

In a significant contribution to the field of Embodied Cognition, Philosopher Shaun Gallagher elaborates with great clarity the concepts of body image and body schema. Body image, he says, is "either a conscious representation of the body or a set of beliefs about the body." This conscious awareness of "having a body" changes along with the flow of the subject's phenomenal experience and can be seen as an ongoing story that one tells oneself about oneself. The body schema, on the other hand, functions as an unconscious bodily guidance system, allowing "holistic" off-line system control of the various parts of the body as the subject navigates the world in an ever changing series of environmental interactions. While the body schema operates unconsciously, it is possible for conscious attention to affect and alter it, as when a music student consciously guides the fingers to learn patterns on a guitar fretboard; the acquisition of proficiency is a process of consciously guided development of the body schema via the body image. In other words, through practice, the body can be made to change its unconscious patterns of movement and behavior by repeatedly telling itself new stories about itself.

Performance scholar Gabriele Sofia employs these concepts to formulate what he calls the performative body schema, which is developed by actors as they embody roles onstage. According to Sofia, actors can entrain the holistic network of active bodily awareness to function together with, but also somehow distinct from, the body schema of their daily lives. The performative body schema can thus be seen

as a fabricated story of the body as it lives in the fictive reality of the stage, woven into the larger narrative fabric of the performance text.

In this paper I focus on the characteristics that actor-training exercises must contain if they are to help actors gain proficiency at creating new performative body schemas, which allow them to exist seamlessly within the context and conventions of a given performance. In so doing, I create a “list of ingredients” for performing artists and teachers to use as they craft such exercises for the training studio. As I elucidate this complex set of embodied methodologies, I simultaneously examine how the ability of actors to embody narrative, to tell stories about, with, and through their bodies, is bound up with their engagement in such training exercises.

Myrifiel Institute for Cognition and the Arts Panel: The state of the field in cognition/poetics/cognitive literary studies

Convener: Amy Cook

The state of what, exactly? We should be able to name this panel, but as Margaret Freeman has pointed out: cognitive poetics “implies a poetics that is not cognitive, which is not true” and many of these terms absent the role of the emotions and the body, which may not be how any of us imagine understand cognition, but what can we do to make more legible the important work that has been done in the past few decades at this intersection? Another way to frame this might be: what is the recent history of the cognitive futures and how might our rhetoric and field focus to move forward with greater clarity and legibility? What is the ground on which we stand? What is the impact of AI on the field? What is the role of empirical studies and what counts as evidence? How do we each answer the question: “who cares?” This panel will address the challenges, the differences, the stakes, and the pleasure of cognitive poetics and the narrative mind.

This panel will present very brief (500 words) provocations about the state of cognition/poetics/cognitive literary studies from 4-6 panelists and then devote the majority of the time to discuss with the audience. We hope the session suggests some future directions while illuminating coherence and elevating differences or contentions.

Participatory narratives: thinking through conspiracies and paranormal experiences

Convener: Alberto Colombo

The panel takes as its objects paranormal experiences and conspiracy theories by investigating their narrative, performative and cognitive dimensions. Different perspectives developed within the social and the cognitive sciences will be integrated so as to elucidate how these epistemically suspect beliefs (ESBs) are used as narratives for meaning-making, identity construction, anxiety reduction and even for quenching existential concerns – it is debated whether this is successfully achieved or not.

Paranormal experiences and beliefs and conspiracy theories are especially relevant nowadays, when their form and development is influenced by recent technological advancements and sociocultural factors. The prominence of these ESBs can be observed in their effects within the sociopolitical sphere and in the spread of communities dedicated to their exploration and transmission.

The advent of digital social arenas together with peculiar approaches to truth and knowledge – e.g., the privatization, individualization, democratization and decentralization of the development of worldviews according to a do it yourself spirit, or the development, revitalization and (re)habilitation of an imagination unbound – have clearly influenced individuals' orientation. Furthermore, certain current dynamics of meaning – in particular, (the perception of) its absence – may motivate individuals to adopt or enact alternative or countercultural narratives (these ESBs are often defined as stigmatized knowledge).

By paying particular attention to the narrative and performative dimensions of meaning-making as well as to their relation to wellbeing (e.g., agency, sense of control, sense of adventure), this panel thus aims at deepening our understanding of individuals' relation with the paranormal and with conspiracy ideations.

Paranormal for dummies: the increasing availability of paranormal experiences

Valentina Cardella

University of Messina, Italy

The term 'paranormal' typically refers to phenomena, such as precognition, hauntings, astrology, which violate basic limiting principles of science (Dean et al. 2022). Despite their status, paranormal beliefs are widespread in our society: around the world, surveys show that about 50 percent of people hold one or more paranormal beliefs and, of these, about 50 per cent believe that they have had a genuinely paranormal experience (Watt and Wiseman 2009).

Paranormal beliefs share key features with religious beliefs, notably their reference to the supernatural and their resistance to empirical verification (Bainbridge 2004; Draper and Baker 2011), placing them in tension with institutional science and leading to their classification as stigmatized knowledge or pseudoscience (Goode 2000). In response to this marginalization, paranormal groups often seek legitimacy by adopting scientific vocabularies, titles, training programs, and investigative procedures (Cross 2004; Bader, Mencken and Baker 2010). At the same time, paranormal research has become increasingly accessible to non-specialists, transforming it into a participatory and popular activity (Cross 2004).

This contribution examines the spread and transformation of paranormal beliefs, starting from the so-called Paranormal Discovery, which emerged in the United States during the 1990s (Molle and Bader 2014). The term refers to an emergent form of paranormal culture characterized by the democratization of access to paranormal experiences and investigations, the increasing use of scientific and pseudo-scientific language, and the widespread availability of practices through which anyone can investigate paranormal phenomena.

The aim is to investigate, on one hand, the nature and function of paranormal beliefs, and, on the other, the role of contemporary media in the normalization and global circulation of paranormal beliefs, focusing on the way paranormal beliefs have changed due to the increasing diffusion of the performative paradigm.

References

Bader, C.D., Mencken, F.C. and Baker, J.O. (2010). *Paranormal America: Ghost Encounters, UFO Sightings, Bigfoot Hunts, and Other Curiosities in Religion and Culture*. New York: New York University Press.

Bainbridge, W.S. (2004). After the New Age. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 43, 381–94.

Cross, A. (2004). The flexibility of scientific rhetoric: A case study of UFO researchers. *Qualitative Sociology* 27(1), 3-34.

Dean C.E., Akhtar S., Gale T.M., Irvine K., Grohmann D., Laws K.R. (2022) Paranormal beliefs and cognitive function: A systematic review and assessment of study quality across four decades of research. *PLoS ONE* 17(5): e0267360.

Draper, S. and Baker J.O. 2011. Angelic belief as American folk religion. *Sociological Forum*, 26(3), 623-43.

Goode, E. (2000). *Paranormal Beliefs: A Sociological Introduction*. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press

Molle, A., Bader, C. D. (2014). 'Paranormal science' from America to Italy: A case of cultural homogenisation. In O. Jenzen and S. R. Munt. Farnham (Eds.), *The Ashgate research companion to paranormal cultures* (pp.121-138). Farnham, UK: Ashgate.

Watt, C., Wiseman, R. (2009). Foreword, in H. J. Irwin, *The Psychology of Paranormal Belief. A researcher's handbook* (pp.vii-viii). Hatfield, Hertfordshire: University of Hertfordshire Press.

How do you believe? The narrative enactment of conspiracy

Alberto Colombo

University of Messina, Italy

Research on conspiracy theories (CTS) has primarily focused on the questions WHO (the believers' personality and cognitive tendencies) and WHEN (sociocultural context). Fewer scholars have focused on the question HOW (Roberts & Risen, 2022). How are beliefs developed, endorsed and maintained? And what kind of beliefs are they? It is well known that the acceptance of narratives and interpretive lenses has a prominent social dimension oriented toward the formation of a social identity (Riva, 2018). Instead of belief in "social facts", we should maybe talk of social performance. Recently, ludological approaches have been proposed which conceive of CTs as LARP (live-action role-playing) games and "conspiracy fictioning" (Zeeuw & Gekker, 2023). Viewing belief endorsement as narrative enactment or as ("serious") play (Levy, 2022) makes us reflect on the believer's epistemic style. Are CTs held ironically, through an as if mentality? Are these "social facts" believed in the same way as the material reality of a chair is? Furthermore, beliefs and narrative

identities depend upon environmental prompts, making them highly dynamic and harder to investigate in laboratory settings (Levy, 2020; Fabry, 2023).

This issue becomes especially interesting when we consider the phenomenon of “conspiritoriality”, the intersection between CTs, paranormal beliefs and spiritual practices (Asprem & Dyrendal, 2015) – e.g., David Icke’s reptoid hypothesis (Lewis & Kahn, 2005). In these cases, CTs become more akin to religious beliefs, as suggested by Robertson’s (2014) notion of “metaphysical conspiracism”.

The aim of this presentation is to clarify the epistemic style – and its effects – associated to these beliefs (conspiracy theories, paranormal, conspiritoriality) by making use of frameworks developed within narrative psychology, cognitive narratology, 4E-cognitive science and performance studies. Research on the interplay between narrative and bodily aspects of selfhood shows how (self)narratives affect one’s bodily meaning-making by shaping the organism’s habits (Dings & Newen, 2023; Miyahara & Tanaka, 2025). I will explore this interplay by building on Dings’s (2019) concepts of “narrative background” and “narrative self-programming”, further developing them in relation to emerging frameworks in cognitive science (Vervaeke et al., 2012; Gallagher, 2021). This enables us to better understand: 1) the maintenance of beliefs even when individuals are aware of their irrationality (Lindeman, 2018; Risen, 2016); and 2) the features of a fictionalist “as if” mentality and its influence on meaning-making, authenticity, self-ambiguity and wellbeing. Conspiritoriality is finally considered in comparison with fiction-based religions (Cusack, 2016), possibly illuminating what it means to “think through myths” (Schilbrack, 2002).

References

- Asprem, E., & Dyrendal, A. (2015). Conspiritoriality reconsidered: how surprising and how new is the confluence of spirituality and conspiracy theory?. *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 30(3), 367-382.
- Cusack, C. M. (2016). Fiction into religion: imagination, other worlds, and play in the formation of community. *Religion*, 46(4), 575-590.
- Dings, R. (2019). The dynamic and recursive interplay of embodiment and narrative identity. *Philosophical Psychology*, 32(2), 186-210.
- Dings, R., & Newen, A. (2023). Constructing the past: The relevance of the narrative self in modulating episodic memory. *Review of Philosophy and Psychology*, 14(1), 87-112.
- Fabry, R. E. (2023). Distributed autobiographical memories, distributed self-narratives. *Mind & Language*, 38(5), 1258-1275.

Gallagher, S. (2021). Performance/art: The venetian lectures. Mimesis.

Levy, N. (2020). Belie the belief? Prompts and default states. Religion, Brain & Behavior, 10(1), 35-48.

Individual papers

Embodied Narratives

Abire Abbou

University Ibn Tofail Kenitra, Morocco

This paper examines narrative as an embodied and pre-reflective process within the context of acting, taking Eugenio Barba's theatre anthropology as a lived and practical example of embodied narratives. While phenomenological approaches and findings from neuroscience increasingly argue that narrative emerges from lived bodily experience rather than from representational or purely cognitive structures, this study situates these claims within theatrical practice. Drawing on phenomenological accounts of embodied meaning-making—particularly Phillip Zarrilli's analysis of the actor's psychophysical body—and on Vittorio Gallese's work on embodied simulation and mirror neuron mechanisms, the paper argues that narrative perception is grounded in bodily resonance. These perspectives suggest that narrative meaning originates in the interior dimensions of the body, structured through proprioceptive and interoceptive processes that organize lived experience. In a parallel manner, Eugenio Barba's theatre practice and acting techniques anticipate this embodied understanding of narrative, insofar as the actor's work is based on invisible structures such as breath, muscular tension, rhythm, balance, and energetic intention, operating prior to conscious interpretation. From this perspective, narrative in Barba's theatre functions as a bodily meaning-making system that unfolds through affective resonance within both the actor's and the spectator's bodily experience. Through processes of embodied simulation, spectators do not first interpret narrative cognitively but instead experience it through embodied and affective activation.

Within the framework of Barba's Theatre Anthropology, this interior organization of sensations and intentions corresponds to what Barba defines as the *subscore*: the invisible, pre-expressive structure that precedes and sustains the visible score of actions. Barba's concept of pre-expressivity can be understood as anticipating contemporary findings in neuroscience and embodied cognition, particularly those emphasizing pre-reflective, sensorimotor processes in meaning-making. Long before these scientific frameworks were articulated, Barba's practice identified the organization of energy, balance, muscular tension, rhythm, and intention as the primary conditions through which meaning emerges in performance. Pre-expressivity thus operates as a practical methodology through which actors cultivate agency over their embodied narratives, generating meaning at an affective and sensorimotor level before character psychology, representational intention, or verbal text.

This study aims to apply phenomenology and neuroscience in order to investigate the hidden embodied cognitive structures underlying embodied narratives within Eugenio Barba's theatrical practice. It focuses on the actors' embodied work to examine how experience can be intentionally articulated through the body. In doing so, the study explores the possibilities and limits of explaining a specific lived experience intentionally through embodied action..

Narrating color: cognitive science, history, and enacted human experience

Ana Margarida Abrantes and Marília dos Santos Lopes
Catholic University of Portugal

The study of human cognition has established that the mind happens "out of our heads" (Noë 2009), and it is instead shaped by the body, situated in the environment, and emerging in an ongoing process of interaction with the world (Newen, Gallagher and De Bruin 2018). An ecologically valid study of the mind, therefore, needs to draw a balance from the search for universals that arose in an evolutionary process, and accommodate the specificity of culture in which the mind happens. In this approach, history as the study of the past with an eye on the future, and historiography, as a cultural technique and narrative discipline, can shed important light on how the mind works.

The narrative mind, a significant shift in human evolution (Merlin Donald 1991), is paralleled by the narrative structure constitutive of individual experience (Bruner 1991). Between these two temporal scales, the narratives of historical time give significance to the universal predisposition for narrative and to subjective lived experience. As medievalist Johannes Fried put it: "In the physicality of thought processes, cultural history always plays a role" (Fried 2011, 75). The inevitable consequence is that history, as the science of lived experience, is inevitably a cognitive science.

Building on the 4E cognition paradigm, as well as on the theory of material engagement (Malafouris 2013), this paper proposes to investigate how early European explorers and cartographers perceived the newly found lands of the Portuguese Atlantic through the concept of color and the related concept of heat (Lopes 2017). Drawing on an analysis of historical maps and colonial accounts, the paper seeks to demonstrate how the intentional use of color in cartography and the saturated color vocabulary of the narrative accounts by the explorers led to an

ideation of these far lands as a terrestrial version of paradise, resonating with both the imagery of biblical accounts and their artistic visual representations. However, color and its related concept of heat were also used in depicting colored skin and ritual body paints of the indigenous inhabitants, elements that were frequently used by Europeans in the moral condemnation of these peoples and to justify their colonial subjugation. Color thus served as a powerful tool for aesthetic enchantment and the depiction of the land's fertility and prospective economic exploration, as well as for social prejudice and subjugation.

This historical example contributes to scholarship on visual cognition (Maule, Skelton and Franklin 2023) and on the relationship between language and thought (Boroditski 2012) by proposing a situated account of color perception. We explore how categorization of new objects and experiences results from engagement with the densely cultural environment, primed by available shared narratives and available iconography. This cognitive engagement with new realities results in sustained representations, with relevant consequences for the subsequent cultural and historical developments.

References

Boroditski, Lera. 2011. How the languages we speak shape the ways we think, *Scientific American*, Vol. 304, No. 2, pp. 62-65.

Bruner, Jerome. 1991. The Narrative Construction of Reality, *Critical Inquiry* 18, 1-21.

Donald, Merlin. 1991. *Origins of the Modern Mind*. Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Fried, Johannes. 2011. *Die Aktualität des Mittelalters. Gegen die Überheblichkeit unserer Wissensgesellschaft*. Stuttgart: Jan Thorbecke Verlag.

Lopes, marília dos Santos. 2018. Color Visions: Perceiving Nature in the Portuguese Atlantic World, In: Hacke, Daniela and Paul Musselwhite (Eds.). *Empire of the Senses. Sensory Practices of Colonialism in Early America*. Brill.

Malafouris, Lambros. 2013. *How Things Shape the Mind. A Theory of Material Engagement*. Cambridge Massachusetts: MIT Press.

Maule, John, Alice E. Skelton, Anna Franklin. 2023. The Development of Color Perception and Cognition. *Annual Review of Psychology*. 74:87-111. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-032720-040512>

Newen, Alber, BRUIN, Leon de e GALLAGHER, Shaun. 2018. "4E Cognition: Historical Roots, Key Concepts, and Central Issues" in: Newner, Alber, Bruin, Leon and

Gallagher, Shaun (eds.). The Oxford Handbook of 4E Cognition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 3-15.

Noë, Alva. 2009. Out of our heads. New York: Hill and Wang.

Not Just a Feeling: The Importance of Proprioception and Kinaesthesia in Performing

Marie Adamová

The Institute for Research into and Study of Authorial Acting AMU, Czech Republic

Proprioception/kinaesthesia, our "sixth sense", is deeply connected with the concept of body awareness and embodiment itself. These words are quite often used, but what they mean and how this "sense" demonstrates itself on the work of an actress?

In this conference paper, I will discuss the matter of proprioception and kinaesthesia in relation to performing. I will focus on the topic from different perspectives such as philosophical (SHEETS-JOHNSTON, 2019), somatic (VÉLE, 2006) and performative (ZICH, 1931, HONZL 1948/2016, VYSKOČIL, 2008).

Next, the connection to the performer's work and her body awareness, in discussion with phenomenological understanding of the body on the stage (GALLAGHER 1985, SOFIA 2013, ZARILLI, 2019) will be drawn. I will articulate the crucial moments for the proper functioning proprioception alignment in the performer's work - such as specific stages in the actor's preparation or certain moments of stage presentation.

Opening the discussion about kinaesthesia and proprioception for performers can argue the necessity of embodied movement awareness for performers as a cornerstone of their education and stage creation.

Honmoon as Narrative Self: Co-Authored Identity and Collective Memory in K-pop *Demon Hunters* Fandom

Inês T. de Almeida

Catholic University of Portugal

K-pop *Demon Hunters* has rapidly become a central focus for globally networked K-pop fandom, yet there is little research on how its fans use participatory practices to create narrative selves and shared identities within the film's storyworld. To address this gap, this paper examines how fan-produced content, such as TikTok challenges, reaction videos, recap cartoons, memes, and AI-generated stories, co-author narrative identities and collective memories that extend and rework the film's central metaphor of the Honmoon as a protective, collective connection.

This paper presents a qualitative, multi-sited digital ethnography across TikTok, YouTube, and image based platforms, including Instagram. It utilises purposive and varied sampling of approximately 80-120 public fan-made posts published in the months following the film's release in June 2025. It applies iterative thematic and narratological coding to these posts, focusing on identity talk, relational and temporal framing, focalisation, world building, and character work.

Initial analysis suggests that fans frequently insert themselves into the storyworld and map characters' vulnerabilities and powers onto their own autobiographical experiences, thereby externalising processes of narrative self-construction. Cross-platform patterns show that forms such as POV clips, recap cartoons, and AI-generated content function as shared cognitive resources through which the fandom negotiates authenticity, belonging, and the acceptable boundaries of story extension.

This paper argues that the K-pop *Demon Hunters* fandom demonstrates how narrative, cognition, and culture are entangled in platformed environments where narratives are collectively authored, policed, and remembered. More broadly, it proposes "co-authored narrative self" as a valuable framework for future research on structuring versus disruptive narratives of self and identity in highly mediatised fan cultures, and invites closer dialogue among cognitive narratology, audience studies, and K culture scholarship.

A Multitude of Drops: Narrative and Personal Identity in David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas*

Maria Pacheco de Amorim
Catholic University of Portugal

In *After Virtue* (1981), Alasdair MacIntyre claims that the relationship between the concepts of narrative, intelligibility, accountability and personal identity is one of mutual presupposition. If much has been made of how personal identity can be defined in terms of a narrative, an equally interesting angle is the contribution of personal identity to the unifying of a story. It is, of course, trivial to say that the individuation of narrative depends crucially on the main character, on whose story it is (even cases of subversion acquire their meaning within the framework established by the default, general case). What may be informative is explaining this near platitude from the perspective of MacIntyre's concept of personal identity, and its interdependence with the ideas of intelligible action and accountability. What counts as one story and how far does that depend on there being a single main character at its core? In what way is the meaningfulness of a narrative determined by this character's coming into (or losing their grip on) a certain degree of intelligibility of their life and accountability for it? How much does the meaning of a narrative, its eventfulness, depend on the agent's change of mind and character arc throughout it, depend on his crucial moment of anagnorisis?

One may read David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* (2004) as intending to present a single, unified narrative of the many reincarnations of a soul throughout human history. Or as a large and loose picture of humanity, built out of a contingently interconnected set of six stories, showing our tendency to make the same mistakes all over again and the possibility (whether real or doomed) of choosing not to. I claim that the project ultimately fails or succeeds at it (depending on how we interpret the novel), precisely because of narrative's dependence on personal identity, as defined in *After Virtue*. In the end, *Cloud Atlas* still remains, or manages to remain, a collection of short stories (albeit an intricately and meaningfully organized one), because the unity of narrative lies on it being the story of someone, whose identity is inseparable from their body.

'The Library Window' as an "Attention Narrative"

Hannah Armour

University of Stuttgart, Germany

Through a close analysis of Margaret Oliphant's 1896 tale 'The Library Window', this paper considers the influence of mechanisms of attention on short fiction. To do so, this paper reads the tale as an "attention narrative" (Baumbach 2019, 44), examining how attention is represented, created, and maintained within the narrative.

Published in 1896 by Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, the narrative follows an anonymous protagonist whose attention on the library window across the street and the figure within it becomes obsessive: "It was a sort of breathless watch, an absorption." (1896, 12) Connecting the visual with attention, this paper considers the portrayal of a protagonist with such a high capacity for deep absorption that her imagination takes over, seeing a figure in what "never was a real window". (1896, 23)

Following eighteenth- and nineteenth- century empiricist views that emphasise the role of the visual in commanding attention, the Gothic tale oscillates "between perception and misperception, understanding and misreading" (Botting, 5) and, as this paper argues, it is this perceptual uncertainty and observational obscuring which encourages the development and maintenance of a reader's attention.

To define attention, the paper contextualises Oliphant's knowledge of Maria Edgeworth, who, in her educational treatise *Practical Education* (1798) details two "habits of attention" (113) necessary for "versatility of mind" (110): "abstraction, the power of withdrawing the attention from all external objects, and concentrating it" (105) and "transition of thought, the power of turning attention quickly from one subject, or one employment, to another". (110) By considering how these two are balanced within the narrative, this paper examines how attention and education are interconnected in Gothic tales, both as physical spaces within the narrative (libraries, universities) as well as through presentations of monomaniacal study. In the case of this tale, it is in the protagonist's inability to access these educational spaces due to her gender which incites this "state of great exaltation and commotion of mind" (1896, 17).

Embodied Stories of Pleasure: The Effects of Performing Heightened Material on the Enactor & Ways to Make it Better

Joelle Arp-Dunham

Kansas State University, USA

What happens in the brain-body when actors confront a physically intimate scene or when they have to touch another actor? This question was at the top of the scholarly part of my being when I started incorporating Consent and Staged Sexual Intimacy protocols into my practical directing work. Actors are incredibly brave and sensitive people – they must be in order to accept relentless rejection and yet remain emotionally available enough to act truthfully. They'll trudge through their discomfort performing intimate scenes because that's what has been required of them in the past, but this can cause anxiety and embarrassment that hinder the acting process. It may bring up past traumas and can even go so far as to re-traumatize the actor. In addition, the ever-destructive 'showmances' can develop (unhealthy conflagration of positive emotional and/or sexual feelings between the character and the actor with whom one is partnering). To examine these problems and their solutions more in depth, this presentation will discuss memory and emotion processes, consider the physical implications of anxiety and fear, and see how physical touch (including kissing) enters the process. I assert that by reducing actors' anxiety and embarrassment, they retain more cognitive space for following direction and for making creative, strong choices in their acting, leading to more effective storytelling. Additional techniques for reframing positive affective states will also be offered to help actors regulate their bodies after experiencing the chemical flood that so often results from heightened storytelling.

From friend to demon: metacognitive metaphor shifting and the construction of divided selves in eating disorder recovery

Josephine Balfour-Oatts

University of Edinburgh, UK

Many popular narrative fiction depictions of eating disorders characterise those disorders using familiar structures, such as linear emplotment, narrative 'arcs', and conclusive resolutions, but those experiencing eating disorders/living in recovery tend to use more complex narrative structures. Indeed, eating disorder researchers like Wetzler et al. (2020) highlight the effectiveness of personal recovery frameworks like CHIME as an "active, life changing, unique, nonlinear, multidimensional, and ongoing process", recalling Alison's *Meander, Spiral, Explode* (2019) and experimental literature like Carson's *Float* (2016).

In this conference paper, I will present some preliminary findings from a recent qualitative study of year-long email correspondence of young people with eating disorders and peer befrienders from Beat, the UK eating disorder charity, and apply those findings to a study of literary texts. This study examined metaphorical patterns in peer correspondence, particularly how participants negotiated between multiple, seemingly contradictory metaphorical frames to construct agency, selfhood, and recovery, and how shifting between frames configured the relationship between self and eating disorder over time.

Using Anderson's *Wintergirls* (2009) as a case study text, I will show how the results of the qualitative analysis reveal fundamental discrepancies between typical novel structures and lived eating disorder experiences, building on Troscianko's (2024) work. In concluding this presentation, I will discuss how these findings offer an important cornerstone of my AHRC-funded PhD project, which investigates disconnections between traditional anorexia fiction and the complex cognitive realities of eating disorder recovery, and audiences will be encouraged to offer questions and suggestions to help guide this still-nascent research.

Archiving Consciousness: Extended Mind, Place, and Affect in Brion Gysin's "The Last Museum" (1986)

Daria Baryshnikova

Independent researcher, Germany

Brion Gysin, the experimental writer and artist who re-invented the cut-up technique which was later developed and popularised mostly by William S. Burroughs, worked across painting, music, sound poetry, performance and multimedia. He extended his experimentation into, as Laura Hoptman (2010: 59) puts it, "something more ineffable that might be called 'perception'." His novel *The Last Museum* (1986) reads less like a story (although can be viewed as an autofictional account of the Beat hotel) than as a psychic collage: a fragmentary narrative fusing the cut-up method, time slips, and the Beat generation's legacy into a meditation on memory, archiving, and consciousness. Written over nearly two decades (1968–1986), the novel explores what happens when objects, memories, and people become exhibit and artifact.

This paper approaches *The Last Museum* with help of 4E (embodied, embedded, enactive, extended) approaches to cognition as represented in narrative form (Caracciolo 2014, 2019; Kukkonen 2018), examining how Gysin's novel enacts memory as a materially and distributed process. Drawing on enactivist and extended models of mind (Clark & Chalmers 1998; Clark 2008; Thompson 2007; Hutto & Myin 2013, Sutton & Williamson 2024; Fabry 2026), I argue that Gysin's late work models cognition as a dynamic system dispersed across bodies, places, technologies, and temporalities. Through the analysis of Gysin's narrative strategies of fragmentation, repetition, shifting voices, and recursive self-reference, I demonstrate how the novel constructs itself as a cognitive environment that both archives and models consciousness.

Memory and space are intertwined here on multiple levels: through its non-linear montage *The Last Museum* invites readers to assemble meanings by navigating fragments, enacting the distributed and participatory processes of memory it represents. Built environments such as the Beat Hotel (haunting the text as both ruin and mnemonic machine) function as ecological system structuring temporal experience through persistence and decay, conditioning how events are remembered, repressed, or reactivated. Thus, I suggest that *The Last Museum* can be read as an 'enactive archive': a dynamic environment of recollection in which multiple temporalities, sensory traces, and narrative agents interact.

Approached through the framework of enactivist narratology, *The Last Museum* emerges as an early literary investigation into the ecology of consciousness that

models remembering as an emergent, spatial and material process, where cognition is not contained within the mind but extended across environments, artifacts, and affective atmospheres.

Beyond Narrative Frames. Immersion, Embodied Sense-Making and the Construction of the Self

Massimo Roberto Beato

University of Tuscia, Italy

Narratives are not only cultural artefacts but fundamental cognitive structures through which subjects organize perception, temporality and experience, constructing a coherent sense of self. In contemporary cultural practices, immersive environments and performative settings increasingly function as spaces where narrative sense-making is enacted, challenged, and reconfigured. This paper examines immersion as a condition that reshapes the narrative framing mechanisms supporting cognitive and experiential coherence.

Rather than understanding immersion as a mere amplification of sensory stimulation or as an illusion of presence, the contribution proposes to conceptualize immersive environments as contexts in which traditional narrative frames are progressively destabilized. Drawing on post-phenomenological and sociosemiotic perspectives, this process is described as a form of "narrative de-framing", understood not as the elimination of narrative structures, but as their reconfiguration in environments where perception, space and action become tightly intertwined.

From a cognitive perspective, narrative frames play a crucial role in guiding interpretation, reducing ambiguity and supporting self-models grounded in temporal continuity and agency. Immersive environments – whether technologically mediated or performatively constructed – tend to loosen these framing devices, fostering forms of narrative cognition in which meaning emerges through embodied interaction, spatial navigation and affective engagement. From this standpoint, narrative sense-making can be understood in terms of emplacement: an emergent process arising from the dynamic co-implication of bodies, environments and perceptual practices, rather than as a process located within an isolated cognitive subject.

The paper further argues that such narrative de-framing has significant implications for the construction of the self. As immersive experiences blur the boundaries between storyworld and lived experience, subjects are increasingly confronted with

forms of narrative ambiguity that challenge stable self-narratives. Rather than signalling a loss of narrative cognition, this condition highlights its adaptive and exploratory dimensions, opening spaces for reconfigurations of identity grounded in embodied and situated experience.

By repositioning immersion as a narrative and cognitive phenomenon, the contribution aims to advance current discussions on embodied narrative, immersion and the relationship between storytelling, environment and selfhood, showing how immersive practices provide privileged sites for observing narrative cognition in action.

The Role Playing Brain: A Functional MRI Study of Role Playing in Actors and Non-Actors

Alexandru I. Berceanu

UNATC IL Caragiale, Romania | NYU Jameel Arts&Health Lab, USA | McMaster University, Canada

Role-play, the process of immersing oneself in the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral perspectives of another, is applied in research, education, therapy, and self-growth to develop skills such as therapeutic change, empathy, cognitive flexibility, social functioning, learning.

Our recent rapid review found more than 80 peer-reviewed recent studies quantifying role-play outcomes; however, we found a very limited number of studies on neural processing of role-play. Role-play is a specific type of pretend play, linked also to deceptive behavior and perspective-taking. Current neuroimaging studies show the role of the prefrontal cortex, especially of the midline frontal lobe, regions involved in theory of mind but observe also specific role-play activity. As role-play is not a unitary process, with very different approaches based on setting, acting type, and training method, the question of how similar brain processing is between different types of engaging in role-play emerges as a central one.

Based on our study with 41 subjects, we propose that brain processing of role-play is dependent on the fictional distance between the role-player and the character. We have used a simple role induction method procedure with subjects answering questions from their own perspective (1P), hiding their perspective (DEC), a friend in the third person (3P), friend in first person (O1P), a fictional character, Lucky (FP1), and Shrek (FP2).

Comparing our conditions to answering from the self perspective (1P) We observed a lower activity in the ventromedial prefrontal cortex (vmPFC), with a stronger

decrease in activity in this area when the fictionality of the character and the distance from the self are higher. Deception shares the deactivation in the ventromedial prefrontal cortex (vmPFC) but also presents specifically lower activity within the posterior cingulate cortex (PCC). The dorsomedial prefrontal cortex (dmPFC) seems to emerge as a marker for the fictionality of the role-play.

Our results indicate that brain processing of role-playing shares similarities with theory of mind and deception but also has a specificity dependent on the level of fictionality of the role-played character and the distance between the character and the role-player. Our results bring a complex picture of role-playing, highlighting differentiated brain processing for different types of character to be role-played, pointing to possible different outcomes of role-play in different settings based on type of role-play.

Harry Styles and Gender: The Multimodal Narrative of Pop Masculinity Narratives

Patricia Bilimória-Fernandes

Catholic University of Portugal

This paper examines Harry Styles as a contemporary pop figure whose work contributes to reshaping representations of masculinity through fashion, visuality, and music. While his performances and public image are often framed as entertainment or celebrity spectacle, Styles has become a central reference in debates about gender-fluid fashion and androgynous aesthetics in mainstream culture. Drawing on frameworks from feminist, queer, cultural, and performance studies, this study argues that Styles functions simultaneously as an agent and symbol of shifting gender norms in 21st century popular music.

Employing a qualitative and multimodal approach, the paper analyses three interconnected sites: a landmark fashion magazine cover and editorial in which Styles appears in gender-nonconforming clothing, the visual aesthetics of the album *Harry's House* (artwork, promotional imagery, and styling), and the costumes developed for recent international tours.

Through visual and semiotic analysis, the study explores how fabrics, silhouettes, colour palettes, and accessories intersect with musical performance to produce a pop masculine persona that negotiates the tension between subversion and marketable appeal. Integrating insights from cognitive and cultural approaches to narrative, the paper considers how audiences and media make sense of these

stylistic choices as part of an ongoing narrative about gender, authenticity, and desire.

By situating Styles within broader media reception and public debate, including enthusiastic celebration and critical backlash, the paper highlights how pop masculinity is contested and redefined at the intersection of fashion imagery, musical texts, and social discourse.

Ultimately, this study proposes that Harry Styles should be understood not merely as an individual star, but as a key site where sound, performance, and masculine representation converge to articulate the aspirations, contradictions, and ambivalences of contemporary gender politics in popular culture.

Multimodal macro-segmentation in oral-traditional storytelling: The case of “Halil Hrnjičić and Miloš the Highwayman” (PN 662)

Anna Bonifaszi

University of Cologne, Germany

Segmenting written stories above the clause level conventionally coincides with paragraphing, and the page layout makes the visual marking of paragraphs clear. However, what verbally determines the boundaries between paragraphs is not always straightforward. The identification of macro-segments in non-written storytelling, for example when it is embedded in conversations – combining prosody, words, and co-speech gestures – and in songs – combining voice modulations and instrumental music – is much less easy. Conversation analysts and interactional linguists use the notion of sequence to refer to series of utterances achieving a course of action (or move) across turns-at-talk by different speakers. Western songs canonically include stanzas and refrains, usually featuring musically and verbally distinct blocks. But where are blocks to be seen in storytelling-in-performance that have no stanzas or refrains, and where third-person narratives are added to reported direct speech with no pauses in between?

This paper tackles this problem by empirically exploring the audio-recording of “Halil Hrnjičić and Miloš the Highwayman,” a Serbocroatian sung/chanted story audio-recorded by Milman Parry in 1934 in Novi Pazar (P(arry) N(umber) 662). The starting assumption is that if blocks of lyrics and/or blocks of music are to be identified in PN662, they must encompass not only the special verbal code of oral-

traditional stories but also the special nonverbal codes (or modes) co-occurring in the performance, namely the use of certain vocalizations, melodic and rhythmic variations, and performative micro-pauses. In other words, if 'paragraphs' are given, they are multimodal.

Macro-segments on the word level can be inferred by changes of spatial and/or temporal settings, by special formulas introducing new characters, by shifts between third-person narration and reported speech, and by the insertion of evaluative comments. However, macro-segments in PN662 are suggested also by the altered tempo and melodies of special lines, by the repeated rhythm of line blocks, by the lowering of the base tone, and by the insertion of falsettos here and there.

A detailed analysis follows of all these multimodal (verbal and nonverbal) features, along with their combinations, frequencies and distributions. The results point to a clear lack of consistency in the display of macro-segments. At the same time, precisely this lack is taken as an important, even defining, characteristic of a cognitively complex event where the unfolding in time of the performance does not comply with a map-view process of composition and reception, but rather with a route-view one.

Stories in the Cupboard: Mugs, Embodied Micro-Narratives, and Domestic Memory

Tania Casimiro

University of Stirling, UK

This paper examines contemporary mugs as everyday media that cue domestic storytelling and its affective charge across households in Portugal, the UK, and Italy. While some homes keep uniform plain sets and others curate clusters of similar decorated mugs, many cupboards hold eclectic ensembles acquired as gifts, workplace tokens, and travel souvenirs, objects that condense attachment, humour, comfort, pride, nostalgia, and sometimes grief. I treat the mug as a portable archive and an affective memory item: an object that can trigger cued recall, structure social interaction, and stabilise emotionally inflected micro-narratives through routine handling (warmth, weight, grip) and repeated use.

Methodologically, the study combines cupboard inventories with short interviews and photo-elicitation, integrating object biographies with morphological aspects, use-wear observations, and semiotic/iconographic coding. Comparative attention

to national drink routines (espresso, galão, tea) and to “non-mug” households foregrounds how the category of “mug” is culturally negotiated and how such negotiation shapes which memories become narratable, shareable, or quietly retained.

Analytically, mugs operate simultaneously as icons (images of places, teams, institutions), indices (stains, chips, heat marks as embodied traces of repetition), and symbols (belonging, intimacy, status). Mapping motifs and origins against household narratives shows how everyday vessels cue story fragments at breakfast and late-night work; how duplicate designs choreograph sharing, care, and kinship; and how kept-but-chipped pieces function as affect-laden residues, markers of repair, endurance, and loss. The paper argues that mundane containers do not merely represent memory, but they organise narrative and emotion together, distributing remembering across bodies, routines, and material cues, and revealing how domestic storytelling is sustained through the smallest, warmest objects at hand.

Disrupting the Self: The Emotional Shift in Hybrid Narratives of Dementia

Laura Castillo Bel

Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Spain

If stories are “foundational for generating a sense of self”, what happens to the narrative mind when memory disintegrates? While traditional illness narratives often evoke pity through external observation, this paper explores a corpus of “hybrid” fictions—specifically Latin American fantastic and noir narratives—that disrupt the reader’s expectations to generate a more complex form of cognitive engagement. Focusing on works such as Samanta Schweblin’s *La respiración cavernaria* (2015) and Emma Healey’s *Elizabeth is Missing* (2014), I argue that these texts utilize genre conventions to portray dementia not merely as a medical condition, but as an ontological destabilization. In line with Suzanne Keen’s (2007) assertion that narrative empathy is not a reflex but a strategic rhetorical effect, these authors initially block empathy by presenting the narrator as unreliable or monstrous. This estrangement frustrates what Fritz Breithaupt (2025) identifies as the narrative brain’s biological compulsion to organize experience into causal episodes.

By denying the reader the comfort of a structured plot, the text triggers an emotional shift. Drawing on Dominique Rabaté’s recent work *Les limites de*

l'empathie (2025), I propose that these narratives do not aim for a seamless identification with the sufferer. Instead, they test the boundaries of the reader's empathy by confronting them with the impersonal or the terrifying void of a dissolving subject. This friction creates an emotional shift: the reader's initial reaction of unease –triggered by the unreliable nature of the narrator– transforms into a profound cognitive simulation.

To explain this mechanism, I rely on recent neuroscientific findings by Broom et al. (2021), who demonstrate that identification with fictional characters creates a specific "neural overlap" in the ventral medial prefrontal cortex (vMPFC), effectively blurring the distinction between self and other. I contend that the structural fragmentation in these texts –temporal dislocation and syntactic gaps– hacks this mechanism. It forces the reader to not just observe, but to inhabit the in-between state of the dementia sufferer, effectively simulating the neural struggle to structure information on agency and temporality.

Ultimately, this paper posits that by navigating these spaces of indetermination, readers engage in a mental simulation that goes beyond simple sympathy. By pushing the reader to the very limits of empathy, these fictions validate literature as a crucial cognitive tool for reframing the social perception of neurodegenerative disease, moving from a gaze of pity to an embodied understanding of the disintegration of the self.

Multimodal Storytelling in Multilingual Film: The Marginalization of Portuguese in Macao in Empire Hotel

Charles Cheung

Catholic University of Portugal | Nova University of Lisbon, Portugal

Multimodal storytelling research treats film narrative as emerging from the interaction of semiotic channels (Page 2010; Bateman et al. 2017). However, this scholarship often does not treat multilingualism as a distinct analytical dimension across modalities. Multilingual film studies, meanwhile, show how language diversity shapes sociocultural identities in cinema (Beseghi 2017), but they often focus on dialogue and its mediation (e.g., dubbing and subtitles). Bringing the two lines of research together helps explain how languages are orchestrated across modalities to cue identity positioning on screen.

This paper addresses this problem through a case study of *Empire Hotel* (2018; dir. Ivo Ferreira), a four-language film set in post-1999 Macao, after the handover from Portugal to China. Against a cityscape shaped by casino-driven development, the film follows Maria and her father as their Portuguese-run motel, the “Empire Hotel”, is threatened by real-estate pressures. Building on Costa’s (2020, 28) observation that the film depicts the Portuguese as “victims” unable to maintain their language and identity, I explore how the film mobilizes different modalities to construct the marginalization of the Portuguese in Macao.

Methodologically, I first trace where Portuguese becomes audible (e.g., speech and song), visible (e.g., signage and on-screen bodies), or absent, and compare its communicative and symbolic functions with Cantonese, Mandarin, and English. I then conduct a close multimodal analysis of two sequences in which Portuguese is arguably marginalized across modalities.

The analysis shows that the Portuguese language is foregrounded as a symbolic presence but sidelined as a communicative means across the film. Portuguese is concentrated in heritage display and intra-group interaction. By contrast, Cantonese coordinates local life, and English and Mandarin index the market-facing city. In the close multimodal analysis, a nightclub scene shows that Portuguese fado – co-articulated with costume, staging, and lyrics – frames Portuguese identity as commodified heritage-labor. The other sequence in which the film cuts from a Portuguese-centered conflict to a series of fixed long shots of Chinese residential life implies that the Portuguese “tragedy” is peripheral to Macao’s dominant social rhythms.

By bringing multilingual film studies into dialogue with multimodal storytelling, this paper reframes multilingualism as a problem of multimodal orchestration. It shows that multilingual films distribute languages across speech, performance, written urban space, and audiovisual form to cue identity positioning in a storyworld.

Social and collective imagination: what's the difference?

María Jimena Clavel Vázquez

Tilburg University, The Netherlands

It's the dead of winter, so you start planning a summer trip with friends. One of you proposes to head to the beach. Another one adds that it might be too warm in some places, so perhaps going to the North of Spain could be a good idea. Little by little you all start to paint a picture of what this trip might look like. You are all imagining it together. Simple as it is, it is an exercise of collective imagination (and a common one at that). Regardless, in philosophy of imagination, it remains under-theorized.

The aim of this paper is to introduce a couple of distinctions that will allow for an articulation of this imaginative exercise. Firstly, I propose to distinguish collective imagination from social imagination. By social imagination, I mean cases in which more than one imager performs an imaginative exercise with the aim of participating in a shared representation that isn't of their authorship. This is the way Walton (1990), for example, thinks of our interactions with fiction. In contrast, by collective imagination, I mean cases in which more than one imager collaborates in an imaginative exercise with the aim of giving rise to a shared representation, as opposed to merely participating in one.

Secondly, I propose a distinction between two ways in which we might encounter the two sorts of exercises introduced above, namely, social and collective imagination. Direct imaginative exercises that are shared with others are those that arise from interaction with others. Mediated exercises, in turn, arise in virtue of the involvement of an environmental element (e.g., a book).

The upshot of these distinctions is that they allow us to better understand exercises of imagination that are carried out with others. To show how, I will briefly turn to a paradigmatic case of shared imagination: social imaginaries (see Taylor (2004), Anderson (2016)). A social imaginary is the common understanding members of a community have of themselves. Using the proposed distinction, I will show that the development of a social imaginary involves both social, collective, direct and mediated imagination.

Storytelling and Ambiguity in Investigative Journalism: How to Read Between the Line

Manuel Carvalho Coutinho

Catholic University of Portugal

In early 2022, after months of military build-up, a massive army moved from the Russian border into Ukraine for what it deemed a “special military operation”. Immediately news outlets reported on the ensuing war and the stories of those caught in the crossfire. However, not all journalists sought to tell the story of Ukraine in instant video clips, radio interviews, or daily news sound bites. Indeed, for many investigative journalists on the ground, the war in Ukraine was one that needed to be told with a more detailed narrative, one that used storytelling techniques to convey the news with more immersion. Such works seem to be in line with Susan Greenberg’s definition of slow journalism, a medium that “takes its time to find things out” while communicating “to the highest standards”, thus following through on the principles of factual and verifiable information.

Nevertheless, when reading such narratives, one is often confronted with another reality, one that is uncommon in works of journalism and which, invariably, raises questions. This specific reality seems to fit within the concept of ambiguity, which can lead to a sense of doubt or even an erroneous identification with its author, two problematic characteristics in journalism. In this context, while it is true that ambiguity can serve as a useful tool in storytelling, by gripping the reader with a sense of anticipation, its place in journalism, however, is questionable given this medium’s structural focus on clarity, restraint, and information as some of its core guiding principles. It would seem, then, that the presence of ambiguity, as an intentional literary tool or as an unplanned outcome, can and should be the focus of a wider analysis, given its relevance.

It is with this focus in mind that this study will seek to analyze the concept of ambiguity in written works of investigative journalism. By examining the work of contemporary journalists covering crucial moments of our time – from the Arab Spring to the War in Ukraine, from historical deep dives to international political events – this study will consider how ambiguity is and can be used in investigative journalism. At the same time, this research will also focus on how to read between the lines of investigative journalism, in order to consider how ambiguity can serve as more than just an enticing literary device to convey meaning in a narrative, shaping how readers interpret and make sense of complex realities.

Reading as a Memory Process: A Reader Response Theory of Narrative Experientiality and Comprehension

Noor Dabbas

Durham University, UK

While the immersive experience-inducing nature of fictional narrative is a long-studied topic, our understanding of the role simulation plays in narrative comprehension and reception stands to benefit significantly from accounting for the Constructive Episodic Simulation Hypothesis (CESH). According to the CESH, all simulation-based cognitive processes, including reading, remembering, and imagining, are mediated by the neural substrates of the Default Mode Network (DMN) (Schacter and Addis, 2007; Addis et al. 2007; Addis and Schacter, 2008; Addis, 2018). The brain responds to cues triggering the construction of a simulative representation by recombining multimodal perceptual and factual knowledge details, derived from lived experience and stored in modal-specific cortices of the brain, to generate the necessary representations. By characterizing the constructive simulative process reading constitutes, this paper argues that narrative experientiality and repertoire-based reader response theories of narrative reception (Iser, 1978) can be more accurately understood by conceptualizing reading as a memory process. Consequently, memory is integral to any discussion of reading as a “simulation of experience” (Caracciolo, 2014). This paper specifically demonstrates how reading functions as “externally-guided remembering”, wherein the constructive memory-based processes of semantic comprehension inherent to the act of reading prompt the production of embodied perceptual simulations of experience representing the meaning of a text. Furthermore, reading is also a memory process on the level of recall. Prior narrative experiences shape readers’ reception of and reaction to later scenes as the reading act progresses. This “reading as a memory process” account reconciles repertoire-based assertions about narrative experientiality and how readers make meaning with the idea that all simulative processes are based in the systems that make memory possible. The “reading as a memory process” paradigm therefore provides a theoretically grounded, empirically-supported hypothesis of how it is possible for words to create simulated experiences as exemplified by examining samples from contemporary literature.

Stories in the Body. Narrative Affordances as creative Tools for a shared World

Valentina Di Cataldo

Universidad de Alicante, Spain

Stories are a powerful tool for identity-shaping and world-building. As Marc Johnson wrote (1987, ix), "without imagination, [...] we could never make sense of our experience, [nor] of reality". According to the Skilled Intentionality Framework (Rietveld, Denys, van Westen, 2018), perception, speech, and actions are shaped by the chances and challenges offered by the environment, as much as by the individual response and openness towards those affordances. Meaning is built and shared through a dynamical, relational, and open-ended process of continuous re-attunement between the subject and the world, both on an individual and intersubjective level. Every time we experience something, we are actually building a narrative through our bodily, spatial, relational, and narrative patterns. 4E Cognition assumes that language is embodied, embedded, extended, enactive, and ecological. Thus, our (un)conscious word choices depend on our affective response, while influencing our sense of self and agency. This implies an exercise of perspective, and a metaphorical, creative response towards reality, not in the sense that we should abandon all criteria of plausibility, but rather that, as in cultural anthropology, what we call raw data are actually thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973): i.e. affective, social, and conceptual constructions that work as a mapping both for the physical and the theoretical world. As the writer Flannery O'Connor wrote (1969), in order to find a good story, we need to develop an ability to see in a certain paradoxical way, since each detail brings in itself the whole universal meaning, if looked long enough and standing at the right distance. If so, we can awaken our gaze through a deliberate exercise of attention, i.e. through a practice of philosophical meditation, dialogue and collective writing.

Building on these theoretical assumptions, my project works on the mechanisms of perspective through an original, interdisciplinary method that blends creative writing and philosophical dialogue, towards an affective-relational re-signification of the concepts of agency, places, identities, communities, and otherness. Acknowledging our political, geo-socio-cultural, historical, and biographical relations to a context reshapes our narrative of it as well as our (im)possibility to inhabit it. A shared practice of awareness can help overcome the clichés of categorisation and reintegrate those aspects that the dualistic prejudice excluded as too irrational, fictional, artistic, and literary and that are indeed essential for life.

How to Live After the World Ends: Attenuated Storyworlds and Betweenness in Yoko Tawada's *The Emissary*

Stacey Dowswell

York University, Canada

This paper argues that *The Emissary* depicts life after the end of the world, not through dramatic collapse but through the gradual thinning of the structures that once made experience meaningful. Following Marie-Laure Ryan, I treat the storyworld as the cognitive and affective framework that enables orientation, action, and the imagining of futures. In Tawada's novel, this framework remains, but is attenuated: bodies weaken, language erodes, mobility contracts, and the future ceases to function as a horizon.

To articulate what remains when a world can no longer world itself, I turn to Watsuji Tetsurō's concept of *aidagara*, the relational "betweenness" out of which subjectivity and world co-arise. When the broader world-model loses coherence, what persists in *The Emissary* is relation itself: the fragile, sustaining, and often sorrowful care between Yoshiro and Mumei. Their bond does not restore meaning or promise renewal; instead, it demonstrates how worldhood can survive in vestigial form through shared existence.

If, as Frank Kermode argues, narratives give shape to time by imagining endings, *The Emissary* presents a condition in which the end has already arrived and yet life continues. The novel dwells in post-apocalyptic betweenness: a world no longer livable, yet still lived.

Literary Reading and Imagining/Imagination – the Case of Franz Kafka

Thomas Eder

University of Vienna, Austria

Reader's imaginations when reading literary texts can become the subject of literary studies. The focus here is on mental processes that readers can report on and that are examined in the context of empirical questions and with empirical methods or on the basis of theoretical considerations. Such introspective reports on the

processes involved in reading and understanding literary texts pose a number of difficulties (cf. e.g., Lashley 1923, Nisbett and Wilson 1977, Russo et al. 1989, Massen and Bredekamp 2005, Hurlburt and Schwitzgebel 2007).

According to the predictive processing framework (PPF), the brain is assumed to be a hierarchically arranged prediction machine (Clark 2013, 2016; Hohwy 2013), and the brain's primary task is to minimize errors between predicted and actual sensory input. How, then, does the PPF accommodate imagination? Andy Clark states that the PPF "means that perception (at least, as it occurs in creatures like us), is coemergent with (something quite like) imagination" (Clark 2015: 26). The view that all conscious experience involves imagination, however, is controversial. An alternative perspective is that perception is the online, primary process, while imagination is an offline process that emerges later and reuses perceptual resources. A subset of imagination also enables us to engage with others' creative works, such as fiction. In doing so, imagination is constrained both by our general beliefs about reality and by expectations shaped by genre-specific narrative conventions. Understood as involving possible actions and experiences, imagination is constrained by two main factors: bodily characteristics and past experience. Stable relationships between action and sensation–sensorimotor contingencies shaped by the body–form part of the brain's predictive model, and they therefore limit what can be imagined, even during purely imagined actions. Yet, "neither approach [to imagination] seems able to walk the tightrope between imagination being entirely unconstrained and freewheeling, on the one hand, and too closely tied to reality, on the other. A potential solution may lie in exploring the role that language plays in structuring our imaginative episodes." (Jones and Wilkinson 2020, 106)

As a case study, I will focus on Kafka's gaps: In Kafka research elucidated by cognitive sciences, the focus is on the process of imagining triggered in readers by his texts. According to Emily Troscianko in her monograph from an enactivist perspective, the decisive factor is that Kafka's texts are cognitively realistic. The argument proposed is that Kafka's non-representational, enactive depiction of vision aligns with fundamental aspects of perception while conflicting with common assumptions about how vision works, producing in readers both cognitive engagement and a sense of unease.

I will critically address these theoretical considerations (PPF and imagining, "cognitive realism") by analyzing short passages from the work of Franz Kafka (The first paragraphs of "The Process", and his story "Jackals and Arabs / Schakale und Araber" [Kafka 2002/1917]).

References

Clark, Andy, 2013. Whatever Next? Predictive Brains, Situated Agents, and the Future of Cognitive Science. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 36(3), 181–204.

Clark, Andy, 2015. Perception as Prediction. In D. Stokes, M. Matthen, and S. Biggs (eds.), *Perception and its Modalities*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 23–43. punishment of bad guys). I will suggest a list of such successful emotions in everyday narratives and fiction, but which do not fit out proper emotion names.

Wayfinding with monks

Line Cecilie Engh

University of Oslo, Norway

The paper explores the concept of wayfinding in monastic pedagogy in the Latin Middle Ages. Wayfinding is a theoretical term drawing on theories of conceptual blending, prospection, and situated cognition that refers to the process of navigating into the future, through physical, social, and conceptual environments (Fauconnier & Turner 2002; Seligman et al. 2013; McCubbins, McCubbins & Turner 2021; Engh & Turner 2024). I discuss two twelfth-century treatises on education and the liberal arts connected with monastic schools: Honorius Augustodunensis' *De exilio et patria animae* ("On the exile and homeland of the soul") and Hugo of St. Victor's *Didascalicon - de studio legendi* ("Guide to the study of reading"). Both texts represent education in general and the liberal arts in particular as a road from exile to homeland, from separation to salvation and God. Honorius even imagines the arts as cities that the wayfinder (the student/aspiring monk) must pass through. He points to city gates, streets, towers, quarters, doorways, etc., which he relates to features and principles in each art. The cities also have surrounding villages, which are books belonging to each art. Clearly, this imagery has to do with medieval monastic memory work (Yates 1966, Carruthers 1990, Carruthers 1998). My emphasis, however, is on the idea of education as immersive, mental travel (an idea still very much with us today). In a wayfinding perspective, the roads, the cityscapes, and the in-between spaces are multimodal designer environments—visual and multisensory, albeit mental and imagined—into which readers are invited to immerse and blend themselves (cf. Kukkonen 2019, Engh 2019). Driven by imaginative, creative blending processes, such as simulation, view-point blending, and narrative navigation, wayfinding in monastic pedagogy goes beyond just memory work, offering possibility spaces to reflect and evaluate, explore and navigate possible futures. The paper creates a dialogue between modern and medieval approaches

to cognition, including emotion, embodiment, attention, and the senses. The focus on the wayfinding aspect complements the predominant focus on the material aspects of environments in current scholarship on situated cognition, offering perspectives on how mental and material processes are interconnected.

References

Carruthers, Mary (1990) *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*. Cambridge University Press.

Carruthers, Mary (1998) *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400-1200*. Cambridge University Press.

Engh, Line Cecilie & Mark Turner (2024) "Flexibility, Predictability, Standardization: The Difficult Art of Creating Stable Selves." In L.C. Engh, H.J. Orning, and S.H. Gullbekk (eds) *Standardization in the Middle Ages. Vol. 1: The North*. De Gruyter, 109-134.

Engh, Line Cecilie (2019) "Imaginative Immersion in the Cistercian Cloister." *Acta archaeologica et artium historiarum pertinentia* 31, 133-160.

Fauconnier, Gilles & Mark Turner (2002) *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities*. Basic Books.

Kukkonen, Karin (2019) "The Literary Designer Environments of Eighteenth-Century Jesuit Poetics." In M. Anderson, G. Rousseau, and M. Wheeler (eds), *Distributed Cognition in Enlightenment and Romantic Culture*. Edinburgh University Press, 187-203.

McCubbins, Colin, Matthew McCubbins & Mark Turner (2021) "Building a New Rationality from the New Cognitive Neuroscience." In R. Viale (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Bounded Rationality*. Routledge.

Seligman, Martin et al. (2013) "Navigating into the Future or Driven by the Past." *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 8(2), 119-141.

Yates, Frances (1966) *The Art of Memory* (new edn.: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

Re-Narrativising the Poetry Reading Process for Young Readers

Patrick Errington, Simina Pițur, Elena Santi (Sarah McGeown, Daniel Mirman)

University of Edinburgh, UK

Reading poetry is a highly complex, dynamic process, one that is frequently made comprehensible and teachable by means of certain, commonly accepted metaphors and metanarratives. One such example in early poetry education is the isolation and identification of poetic features – rhyme schemes, rhythmic patterns, etc. – through a ‘reader-as-cataloguer’ metanarrative; in later years, narratives of ‘reader-as-detective’ and ‘reader-as-decoder’ (among others) predominate, as scholars like Rita Felski have documented. Common across such metanarratives – often collected under the label ‘critical-analytic’ reading – is an identified, finite goal and corresponding measures of success or failure in achieving it. A great deal of contemporary lyric poetry, however, deliberately eschews narratives of ‘achievable goals’, asking readers instead to remain ‘in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts’, as Keats famously articulated.

This presentation will begin to sketch, using a combination of recent empirical neuroaesthetic experiments and qualitative interviews with young readers/writers, how the narratives of critical-analytic reading limits the breadth of aesthetic experience in reading. Alternatively, what we term ‘cocreative’ reading activities – imitative composition, recitative performance, erasure/blackout poetry etc. – may help readers avoid framing their reading in terms of clearly achievable goals, thereby enhancing the breadth of affective and embodied experiences during reading. These include what Don Kuiken and colleagues term ‘expressive enactment’ and what Vittorio Gallese and others frame as ‘embodied simulation’. The presentation will conclude by introducing the 4-year programme of coproduced qualitative and neuroaesthetic research called Rewriting Worlds, which is just beginning and will build upon these themes, a programme recently funded by the UKRI’s Future Leaders Fellowship.

Multimodal video annotations for performing arts documentation

Carla Fernandes

Nova University of Lisbon, Portugal

In this (visual) talk I will show a retrospective of my work in multimodal video annotations for performing arts documentation since 2005. It will mainly focus on the affordance of idiosyncratic video annotations as indispensable metadata when digitally documenting performing arts materials or visible intangible heritage in general.

Annotating and tagging directly over video in real-time have started (Cabral et al. 2011) to be mostly a personal practice used by those involved in the footage or analytical processes of video documentation for dance, but they have not yet been perceived as complementary metadata by Cultural Heritage archivists.

Based on previous experience with the TKB and BlackBox projects, we have continued to research on multimodal annotation practices as part of the creative process in contemporary performing arts. Within TKB, the innovation was to accept individual tagging as indexation cues and means of interaction amongst the artists who were self-curating their works, therefore generating dynamic and personal “archives of processes”. Under subsequent EU-funded projects, we developed a friendly video annotator in real-time to work as a digital notebook, replacing paper notes. “MotionNotes” is now freely available in the web and is being used by choreographers, ethnographers, sportspeople, and educators in general.

Throughout the talk, examples will be given of different genres of annotations we have developed and used in different projects, namely: manual video annotations with ELAN; animated infographics (Fernandes and Jürgens 2017); real-time annotations over 2D video (Rodrigues et al. 2019); 3D point-cloud renderings (Kuffner, Ribeiro, and Fernandes 2018); 360° multiple viewpoints (Jurgens and Fernandes 2018); and Virtual Reality: embodied interactions and interactive storytelling (Jürgens, Fernandes, and Kuffner 2020).

We would like to discuss with the audience the future usability of those idiosyncratic multimodal annotations in new AI and machine-learning approaches (as in semi-automatic recognition of human movements, for instance) to documenting, archiving and sharing intangible cultural heritage video content. Since more and more AI models are relying on multimodal real-world data, companies will also require multimodal annotations to curate a larger variety of datasets. This will

eventually lead museums, art galleries, researchers and artists to innovate in this aspect as well.

Empathy as Agency: Cognitive Narratology and Autobiographical Game Design in Path Out

Cátia Ferreira

Catholic University of Portugal

Autobiographical digital games offer a distinctive lens on narrative cognition by embedding lived experience within interactive structures that solicit mental simulation, inference, and ethical reflection. Drawing on cognitive narratology and theory of mind, this study conceptualizes players' interpretive work as worldmaking and mind-tracking rather than passive feeling (Zunshine, 2006; Herman, 2017). Simulation theory further informs the analysis, highlighting how design primes embodied perspective-taking: motor and affective resonance that scaffolds social understanding (Gallese & Goldman, 1998).

The case study examines *Path Out* (2017), an autobiographical role-playing game co-created with Syrian refugee Abdullah Karam. Through JRPG-style (Japanese role-playing game) spatial navigation, ironic cues, and in-game video meta-commentary, the game orchestrates oscillation between immersion and critical interpretation, foregrounding testimony over spectacle and inviting players to rehearse risk, agency, and cultural frame negotiation. This synthesis of emotion by design (Isbister, 2016) and procedural rhetoric (Bogost, 2007) demonstrates how interface, movement, and rule systems stage empathy as an active interpretive practice.

The theoretical framework integrates cognitive narratology (Ryan, 2001; Murray, 2017), media-specific narrative cognition (Bogost, 2007), and autobiographical storytelling (Smith, 2019; Sicart, 2013). Methodologically, the study employs a three-fold qualitative approach: 1) Consalvo and Dutton's (2006) qualitative game-analysis toolkit, which combines object inventory, interface analysis, rule mapping, and paratextual examination to interpret how design elements and surrounding discourse co-produce narrative meaning; 2) multimodal discourse analysis (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001) to trace how visual layout, spatial routes, textual prompts, and audio/silence cue cognitive and affective response; and 3) a reflexive play protocol inspired by ethnographic principles (Boellstorff et al., 2012), with structured play logs and screenshots documenting moments of inferential effort, ethical hesitation, or ironic reframing.

Findings highlight three dynamics: 1) embodied navigation and spatial cognition, where border-like obstacles and failure states simulate vulnerability and teach risk; 2) meta-design and humor, interrupting immersion to expose cultural scripts and invite reflective stance-taking; and 3) self-authorship and identity, where autobiographical narration repositions refugee stories within, and against, global gaming conventions. The paper concludes that autobiographical game design expands the cognitive affordances of narrative, reframing empathy as agency and interpretation rather than passive sentiment.

References

- Boellstorff, T., Nardi, B., Pearce, C., & Taylor, T. L. (2012). *Ethnography and virtual worlds: A handbook of method*. Princeton University Press.
- Bogost, I. (2007). *Persuasive games: The expressive power of videogames*. MIT Press.
- Consalvo, M., & Dutton, N. (2006). Game analysis: Developing a methodological toolkit for the qualitative study of games. *Game Studies*, 6(1). https://gamestudies.org/0601/articles/consalvo_dutton
- Gallese, V., & Goldman, A. (1998). Mirror neurons and the simulation theory of mind-reading. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 2(12), 493-501. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1364-6613\(98\)01262-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1364-6613(98)01262-5)
- Herman, D. (2017). *Storytelling and the sciences of mind*. MIT Press.
- Isbister, K. (2016). *How games move us: Emotion by design*. MIT Press.
- Kress, G., & van Leeuwen, T. (2001). *Multimodal Discourse: The Modes and Media of Contemporary Communication*. Hodder Education.
- Murray, J. H. (2017). *Hamlet on the holodeck: The future of narrative in cyberspace* (Updated ed.). MIT Press.
- Ryan, M.-L. (2001). *Narrative as virtual reality: Immersion and interactivity in literature and electronic media*. Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Sicart, M. (2013). *Beyond choices: The design of ethical gameplay*. MIT Press.
- Smith, S. (2019). Autobiographical inscription and the identity assemblage. In J. R. Resina (Ed.), *Inscribed identities: Life writing as self-realization* (pp. 75-90). Routledge.
- Zunshine, L. (2006). *Why we read fiction: Theory of mind and the novel*. The Ohio State University Press.

African subjectivities about art and history, postcolonial lessons from fiction

Isadora Fonseca

Catholic University of Portugal

In the fictional trilogy *Prospero's Sons*, the writer and anthropologist Ruy Duarte de Carvalho (RDC) proposes a paradigmatic turn in the approach to knowledge by Western scientific rationalism. At the centre of this change and of the novel, the experience and criticism of the 'black African' on postcolonialism and postmodernity, which proposes a turn that "would allow Western knowledge to think that it is time to pay a different attention to the so-called archaic discourses, time to listen the other as the 'other'" (Carvalho, 2009, 398).

This paper wants to learn from the knowledge of the African man introduced by the literature of RDC. The paper sheds light on the understanding of the characters about music, sculpture, painting and literature, as well as their role in the cognitive processes of knowledge, identity and perception of the other. The study also discusses the African critique of the human sciences, with an emphasis on the postcolonial historical approach. In summary, the goal is to learn from the novel, the African subjectivity and its criticism of the biases of Western positivism. It is from this interpretation of the world that the characters propose other structures and hypotheses to understand themselves and the other, the past and the present, claiming a humanism that includes a diversity of knowledge.

Ruy Duarte de Carvalho (1941-2010), PhD from the *École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales*, was an anthropologist and writer that dedicated himself to the study of the shepherd peoples of the Namibe region. The trilogy *Prospero's Sons* is composed of *The Englishman's Diary* (2000), *The Propitious Landscapes* (2005) and *The Third Half* (2009). The novel puts on stage the pre-Bantu man, the Bantu man and the white man. The narrative covers the last two centuries and the Southern Africa implication (physical environment, man and sociopolitical reality) in the world and its becoming.

The author combines a global approach to history (Conrad, 2016) with microhistory (Ginzburg, 2010). RDC expresses his interpretation of History through characters located 'on the margins', to whom he gives voice to explain the processes, ruptures and implications in which these individuals participated as actors. The novel is also a "Fanon's pharmacy" (Mbembe, 2016), by promoting a radical decolonization in which the voice of the African man makes the critique of contemporaneity to imagine a common and shared human future.

By recognizing African thought, RDC fulfils a paradigmatic change in which the ideas introduced by the characters are on the same level with 'Western rationality', allowing the establishment of intelligibility between cultures (Viveiros de Castro, 2009). Finally, RDC literature proves to be a contribution to history, memory, and the postcolonial present, constituting another narrative in cognition and culture (Göttsche, 2023).

References

Carvalho, Ruy Duarte (2002). *Os Papéis do Inglês* [The Englishman's Diary]. Lisboa: Cotovia.

Carvalho, Ruy Duarte (2005). *As Paisagens Propícias* [Propitious Landscapes]. Lisboa: Cotovia.

Carvalho, Ruy Duarte (2009). *A Terceira Metade* [The Third Half]. Lisboa: Cotovia.

Conrad, Sebastien (2016). *What is Global History?* Oxfordshire: Princeton University Press.

Ginzburg, Carlo. "Microhistory and world history", in *The Cambridge World History*, Vol. VI, *The Construction of a Global World 1400-1800 CE*, Part 2: *Patterns of Change*, Jerry H. Bentley, Sanjay Subrahmanyam and Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks (editors). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 446-473.

Göttsche, Dirk (2023), "German Colonialism in East Africa and its Aftermath in Abdulrazak Gurnah's novels *Paradise* and *Afterlives* and in Contemporary German Literature", *German Life and Letters*, Volume 76 (2), April 2023, 269-284. <https://doi.org/10.1111/glal.12374>

Mbembe, Achille (2013). *Critique de la raison nègre*. Paris: Éditions de la Découverte.

Viveiros de Castro, Eduardo (2009). *Métaphysiques cannibales: Lignes d'anthropologie post-structurale*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

Making Sense of Loss, Grief, and Coping: Figurative and Non-figurative Conceptualisations in German and English Picturebooks

Madeleine Frings

University of Cologne, Germany

Human beings are naturally drawn to the usage of metaphorical constructions to express their thoughts and feelings (Lakoff & Johnson (1989, 2003 [1980])). In picturebooks, this is realised by combining different modes/modalities such as text and image. As multimodally designed objects, picturebooks are particularly useful for an analysis: they convey meaning through each mode and across modes, in the present case to represent the overall process of grief and coping with the loss. However, picturebook research on grief so far only includes either literary approaches or focuses on content analyses, while metaphorical representations and metonymic components are disregarded. Therefore, my research attempts to fill this gap by contributing linguistic as well as literary research with a multimodal cognitive focus.

The present study embraces the discursive and dynamic dimensions of the cognitive-emotional processes around someone's death as stories unfold, by considering the multimodal representation of source domains for loss, grief, and coping in text and image and their dynamic development in the storytelling process.

This paper applies a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods. Annotations consider textual and pictorial cues as separate input frames that are blended and compressed (Fauconnier & Turner 2002, Dancygier & Sweetser 2014). Moreover, the level of metaphoricity in the textual parts and in their pictorial counterparts is compared. Indeed, the textual material usually shows a lesser degree of elaboration in both length and content, compared to the images.

The results concern the extent to which expected source domains, such as Darkness, Force or Container (McMullen & Conway 2002) change metaphorically and metonymically on the textual and on the pictorial level, and the extent to which the representation of mental states shows a higher metaphoricity with respect to the representation of bodily reactions.

References

Dancygier, Barbara & Eve Sweetser (2014). *Figurative Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Fauconnier, Gilles & Mark Turner (2002). *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Minds Hidden Complexities*. New York: Basic Books.

Lakoff, George & Mark Johnson (2003[1980]). *Metaphors we live by*. Chicago/London: Chicago University Press.

Lakoff, George & Mark Turner (1989). *More than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor*. Chicago/London: Chicago University Press.

McMullen, Linda & John B. Conway (2002). Conventional Metaphors for Depression. In: Susan R. Fussell (ed.) *The verbal communication of emotions. Interdisciplinary perspectives*, p. 167–181.

Salisbury, Martin & Morag Styles (2020). *Children's Picturebooks. The art of visual storytelling*, 2nd ed.. London: Lawrence King.

Multilingual Assessment Instrument for Narratives as a lens into the mind: A study of 5379 children's stories in 44 languages around the globe

Natalia Gagarina

Leibniz-Centre General Linguistics, Germany

Introduction. Stories, and especially fictional narratives, are indispensable for our life and functioning in societies. Jonathan Gottschall (2013) wrote in his book *The Storytelling Animal: How Stories Make Us Human*: "We are, as a species, addicted to story. Even when the body goes to sleep, the mind stays up all night, telling itself stories. Story ... continues to fulfill its ancient function of binding society ... Story enculturates the youth. It defines the people. It tells us what is laudable and what is contemptible." Thus, stories are a lens into the mind.

Based on this assumption and driven by scientific curiosity and the wish to understand how narratives can serve as a lens into the mind in children belonging to different cultures and speaking different languages, a group of European researchers developed the picture-based Multilingual Assessment Instrument for Narratives (MAIN, Gagarina et al. 2019) within the EU COST Action IS0804). It has since been adapted to 106 languages and dialects (<https://main.leibniz-zas.de>).

The goal of the present study is to understand how children develop their storytelling skills overall and how they express factual and inferred components of a story. This study presents the first large-scale cross-linguistic investigation using a

unified theory-driven framework based on the multidimensional theory of narrative organization.

Method. 5379 comparable fictional picture-based oral narratives from 2763 monolinguals and bilinguals aged 3-13 years across 44 languages in 33 countries were examined. Children told and retold stories elicited with four MAIN parallel picture sequences: Cat, Dog, Baby Birds and Baby Goats. Narratives were manually transcribed and analyzed—based on the MAIN evaluation scheme—for inclusion of five core story components (internal states as initiating events, goals, attempts, outcomes, and internal states as results), overall narrative structure, use of factual and inferred information, and presence of complete episodes. Analyses and quality checks were performed by the respective lab teams responsible for the languages of the study.

Results and Conclusion: Overall, children developed storytelling skills remarkably consistently across languages, suggesting universal cognitive-linguistic mechanisms. For instance, children expressed factual (observable) story components both to a higher degree and earlier than inferred (mental/emotional) components, with attempts and outcomes appearing earlier and more frequently than goals and internal state terms.

The findings reveal both universal and language-specific pathways in narrative development and underscore the value of structured, theory-based assessment for understanding how children across diverse linguistic contexts make sense of the world through narratives.

Co-Authoring the Self: Fan Videos as Narrative Technologies and Transmedia Identity Construction at the Eras Tour

Carla Ganito, Cátia Ferreira, Patrícia Tavares, João Simão
Catholic University of Portugal

The Taylor Swift Eras Tour operates as a complex transmedia system where the boundaries between artistic canon and personal biography are collapsed. This paper examines how fan-generated concert videos function not merely as documentation, but as cognitive and narrative technologies that construct and externalize identity. Drawing on a qualitative analysis of 171 fan-generated videos collected internationally between 2024 and 2025, this study argues that the act of

filming serves as a mechanism of "choreographed engagement," allowing fans to insert themselves as protagonists within a global media event.

By integrating sociosemiotic analysis with theories of participatory culture, we investigate how the "Eras" concept provides a cognitive scaffold for identity work. We posit that fans utilize the artist's discography as "emotional scripts" to negotiate moral dilemmas and simulate "imagined futures" rather than simply archiving the past. Through the creation of "micro-myths"—short, curated audiovisual clips—fans engage in a form of distributed storytelling that links their individual affective experiences to the star's evolving mythology. This process transforms the passive spectator into an active co-author, utilizing "aesthetic co-creation" and "narrative echoes" to align personal narratives with the larger cultural text.

The analysis reveals that identity within this space is not a static property but a dynamic, socially performed construct. Through "connective action," fans mobilize "affective resonance" to produce publicly legible identities. Specific sociosemiotic resources, such as "ritual exchanges" of friendship bracelets and "performative belonging" through synchronized chanting, function as the grammar of this collective identity. For instance, visceral reactions captured in the footage, such as the exclamation "Oh my god," serve as "sonic emphasis" that authenticates the fan's narrative presence within the event,.

Ultimately, this paper proposes that Eras Tour videos represent a shift in how identity is cognitively processed and socially signaled. By offloading "emotional labor" onto digital platforms, fans create "transmedia narratives" that stabilize the self in a networked environment,. The concert video thus becomes a tool for "identity work," allowing subjects to perform, edit, and broadcast a cohesive self-concept that is simultaneously personal and collectively validated.

From free indirect speech to polyphony

Francesco Garbelli

Università degli Studi di Milano, Italy

Studies in cognition have widely recognized the importance of narratives in the processes through which people – individuals and collectives – make sense of the world. A particular emphasis has been placed upon the assumption that narration structures how enunciation is carried out and, consequently, displays how one should conceive of it, as well as of the enunciating instances involved. But what narration? A prominent choice is narration performed with the method of free

indirect speech (as it has been theorized in the last century by Gilles Deleuze and Pier Paolo Pasolini), for it has the merit of synthesizing direct and indirect focalizations in the attempt to achieve a more “ecological”, complete effect. On this basis, it has been possible to support the thesis of impersonal enunciation, according to which the origin of subjectivity and sense-making activities lies in a field that reunites personal and non-personal instances that are redistributed according to an evenemential structure opening up occupiable positions (Paolucci 2021). Of course, these conclusions are sound and heuristic. However, the method of free indirect speech that inspires them is not the only suitable one to raise points. Indeed, a different way to narrate by keeping together direct and indirect speech consists in adopting the method of polyphony (or, if you want, of free direct speech). This method has been studied, among others, notably by Mikhail Bakhtin, and in the context of the theory of enunciation has a semiotic advocate in Oswald Ducrot. After all these premises, I will inquire about the method of polyphony to see if taking it as a primary model for narration may supplement, confirm or refute the impersonal enunciation theory. In order to do that, I will comment on the works by Roberto Bolaño, António Lobo Antunes and Gian Marco Griffi, three recent authors who largely employ polyphony, showing its relevant features. Then, I will attempt to find a common terrain between free indirect speech and polyphony by tackling Franz Kafka’s works, where the two methods are inextricably tied. It will hopefully appear a more complete model to think in terms of collective assemblages of enunciation (Deleuze and Guattari 1975) and to understand how people perform sense-making, thus cognizing the world and finding their place in it.

The Unstable Cognitive Life of Objects in Narratives: Reading Early Modern Material Anchors

Mylène Garin

University of Oslo, Norway

Cognitive literary studies have extensively mapped how narratives simulate the human mind, yet they have devoted less attention to how stories simulate distributed cognition in the material environment (Hutchins 1995). Drawing on Edwin Hutchins’ theory of “material anchors” (2005), this study analyses the cognitive significance of material clues in early modern European literature. The concept of script erosion is introduced to examine the instability of these anchors in narratives, and to explore how narratives can structure, manipulate or reprogramme the distributed cognition of the material world.

The paper distinguishes between different cases of script erosion. Firstly, it considers the historicity of reading, investigating the cognitive consequences for readers when the sensorimotor and/or semantic affordances (Buxbaum & Kalénine 2010) of staged objects are lost. This script decay is passive and is caused by an archaeological deficit. The second case of script erosion explored is the result of authorial choices. The paper indeed explores the collision of various material scripts that occurs when contemporary objects appear anachronistically in early modern narratives set in the past. Whether these insertions are intentional or not, they act as cognitive prostheses, importing modern affordances into the past and altering the reader's embodied simulation. My research then distinguishes cases in which script erosion is a deliberate authorial strategy, fostering a reprogramming of the material script and the distributed cognition it conveys. Here, I examine cases in which literary narratives dismantle the social cognition of specific objects to reconfigure it, often with ideological or political purposes. Using the example of the early modern folding fan, the paper demonstrates how narratives can reprogram the generative models (Kukkonen 2020) of material artefacts, transforming tools of agency into instruments of containment.

References

- Buxbaum, L. J., & Kalénine, S. (2010). "Action knowledge, visuomotor activation, and embodiment in the two action systems." *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*.
- Hutchins, E. (1995). *Cognition in the Wild*. Cambridge Mass.:MIT Press.
- Hutchins, E. (2005). "Material Anchors for Conceptual Blends." *Journal of pragmatics*, 2005-10, Vol.37 (10), p.1555-1577.
- Kukkonen, K. (2020). *Probability Designs: Literature and Predictive Processing*. New York: Oxford University Press.

'The Long, Barely Understood Poem': Lyric Cognition in Narrative Worlds

Peter Garratt

Durham University, UK

What happens when poetry features in, or intrudes on, fictional prose narrative? Lyric poems, customarily designated as non-narrative discourse, can be embedded in diegetical worlds by the act of novelistic appropriation or invention, and thereby

elevated from the merely paratextual domain of prefaces and epigraphs. An overcited contemporary example here would be the spoken rendition of Matthew Arnold's 'Dover Beach' (1867) in the climactic scene of Ian McEwan's novel *Saturday* (2005), which, barely believably, has the effect of neutralising a violent domestic intruder who hears Arnold's lines for the first time. As this might imply, lyric cognition has the potential to arrest or suspend progress: one could talk about 'lyrical narrative pauses' in the classic nineteenth-century Bildungsroman, as Elisha Cohn has done, to explain the occurrence of episodes 'privileging feeling and mood over plot, event, and development'. Or one might agree with Jonathan Culler that 'lyric foregrounds the present of discourse, whereas narrative emphasizes the past of story'. So what, then, of their mingling and mixture, not in the form of narrative poems per se but in fiction where lyric disruption is the supplement of narrative ends? McEwan – a writer once regarded as a leading exponent of the 'neuro-novel' – provides my main case study of this phenomenon. His most recent novel, *What We Can Know* (2025), narrated from a post-catastrophic future, has a central plotline involving the search for a lost manuscript of a famous poem written in the year 2014. The absent poem, rumoured to rival the stature of T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (itself a fragmented lyric and semi-narrative work), becomes the focus of a secular grail quest – another faint echo of Eliot. Standing in for the poem is an elaborate, multi-perspectival account of its author reading his masterpiece before a small private gathering, after which its one vellum fair copy vanishes. No other version exists, making the poem coextensive with its one live rendition. And when performed, its sounds and images barely cohere in the minds of the half-drunk crowd: gone is the idea of poetic affect as pedagogy implied by McEwan in *Saturday*, replaced by ambivalence, irritation, inattention, and sexual jealousy. In analysing *What We Can Know*, I'll suggest that lyric/narrative discord lies at the heart of the novel's interest in other minds and our relation to environmental crisis.

A story's worth a thousand worlds: classification, conflict, and the pastoral ideal

Gilberto Gauche

Università di Bologna, Italy

Pastoral literature, dating back to Ancient Greece, is traditionally set in an ideal place, often referred to by the name of Arcadia, which has been somehow lost, where humanity lived in harmony with nature and with itself. Although the pastoral declined as a genre, it did so not before achieving massive popularity in prose,

poetry, painting, music, architecture, and even politics- and health-related discourse, having become part of a set of narrative and aesthetic conventions lasting up to the present day. The present work, based on the work of Mary Douglas, showcases the range of the expressive possibilities of the pastoral ideal and its corresponding potential as a cognitive device. It can, and historically has been put to work as a tool of both social discipline and critique in contrasting claims on way things should be with the way things are, producing and strengthening a morally imperative nature/culture divide, which can be superposed onto further distinctions, such as inside/outside, homogeneous/heterogeneous, right/wrong, and pure/polluted. As philosophically fragile as the latter binaries may be, they can be articulated in myriad forms that, following Douglas, persuasively legitimate, e.g., particular forms of power, principles of classification, patterns of accountability, descriptions of the human body, and solutions to societally relevant afflictions - in sum, different forms of life. The pastoral ideal, thus, functions as a narratively structured, socially distributed device of cognitive coordination which not only affords many diverse (and even contradictory versions) of itself, but successfully masquerades the latter beneath a veneer of homogeneity, bringing those espousing conflicting views to collaborate with reduced (or, even, merely latent) contentiousness.

“Verdas Første Bygde-Pride”: Re-Composing Narratives of Self, Agency and Queer-Rural Futures in Norway’s First Rural LGBTQ+ Pride

Yasemin Nurcan Hacıoğlu

Volda University College, Norway

Research in Pride studies recently complicates the assumption that Pride events necessarily foster democracy and inclusivity, especially in regard to the growth of large-scale, centralised and commercially driven events (Conway, 2025; Glass, 2020). Alternative and smaller-scale Pride events—that have developed in parallel to this context—have been hypothesised to potentially afford different ways of supporting inclusivity and as being possible models for recentring marginalised communities (Ammaturo, 2025; McCartan and Nash, 2022). Despite these insights, the cultural mechanisms through which local, grassroots Pride events operate—and the forms of democratic engagement they could enable—and not yet well understood.

This paper analyses interviews with grassroots organisers and Pride participants about their experiences of Norway's first rural village Pride. "Bygdepride" which was launched in Volda (a small town on the rural west coast of Norway) in 2018. Volda is situated in what is commonly described as the "Bible Belt" of Norway. The event expresses a change linguistically by connecting "bygd" [rural village] and Pride in its name. Using walk-along interviews led by Pride participants along the parade route alongside an interview with a founding organiser, I trace how the narratives and slogans composed by the organisers as well as experiences of the parade itself enable self-reflexive, dynamic reconsiderations of rurality-queerness and individual-communal identity.

Studies in "4E" cognition (that is, cognition is embedded, embodied, extended and enacted) have theorized how language and narrative can be utilised as toolkits to construct new emotional experiences, ways of navigating environments, and making decisions (e.g. Clark, 2008; Colombetti, 2014; Bernini, 2014; Barrett, 2017). Literary and cognitive narrative studies have described how language and narrative choices are, through these perspectives, cognitive tools, that do not only reflect or express experiences or social change, but can scaffold new concepts and ways of thinking (e.g. Kukkonen, 2020; Hacıoglu, 2024). The processes of editing language and narratives have been theorized to constitute training for political agency including in situations of gendered inequality (e.g. Merritt, 2014; Hacıoglu, in press). However, these narrative studies of composition thus far largely focus on individual interventions, rather than processes of collective deliberation and re-composition. I analyse the narrative reflections of organisers and participants to determine how rural Pride events and the cultural modes through which they manifest may scaffold changes to individual identity, navigations of the locale, and communal, sustainable deliberations over rural-pride futures.

Perception of Materiality in the Scenography of Marta Rozskopfová

Silvie Hajdíková

Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic

In this paper, I examine scenographic concepts, or more precisely, scenography as a material, affective, and agentic practice understood as a relational and environment-mediated structure that shapes the audience's possible perceptual orientations already during the design phase.

Building on the idea that perception is an active process dependent on body-environment interaction (the audience, performers, space, and material), rather than on merely internal representation (Gallagher 2017, 2023), I argue that the material environment does not simply frame perception but co-organizes the narrative structures. I draw on the perspective of new materialism according to which „all matter, including non-human matter, is agential: even so called inanimate objects and materials have what Bennett calls ‘thing power’,“ (Wiens 2019, p. 59), and agency is distributed across human and non-human elements.

The analysis follows the trajectory from scenographic design to staged performance through two scenographic concepts by Marta Rozskopfová (*Villon a ti druzí*, 1978; *The Producers*, 2023). It shows which material and affective qualities of the design are transferred to the stage, which disappear, and which are transformed by technological, medial, or other staging frameworks. Special focus is given to the position of materiality in the performance itself—how its presence, variability, and situatedness actively contribute to shaping not only the audience’s perception but also to structuring the implicit narrative frameworks and temporal orientations through which the performance is cognitively and affectively experienced.

Staging Suicide in an Opera Performance

Eliška Halodová

Masaryk University, Czech Republic

Opera has long provided a space in which questions of human finitude, suffering, and death can be articulated and experienced. This paper examines the staging of suicide in opera performance in relation to its historical, cultural, and ethical perceptions.

The theoretical framework of the paper draws on the concept of “death by proxy” developed by Linda and Michael Hutcheon in their article “Narrativizing the End: Death and Opera” (2005). The Hutcheons argue that narratives of death allow audiences to confront their own mortality through a mediated, representational experience. Opera spectators thus find themselves suspended between emotional engagement and critical distance, empathising with the suffering protagonist while remaining aware of the fictional and staged nature of the portrayed events.

The Hutcheons further suggest that human anxiety is fundamentally rooted in the fear of death. Confrontation with mortality through operatic performance may therefore offer a way of facing this fear, enabling its articulation and reflection within

the safe framework of aesthetic experience. In the case of staged suicide, this confrontation also brings into focus the persistent social stigmatisation of suicide in contemporary society.

Within present-day Western culture, death is frequently marginalised and subjected to processes of medicalization, whereby dying is perceived as a failure of medicine (HUTCHEONS 2004: 20). Suicide, in turn, is predominantly framed as a consequence of mental illness, contributing to a broader death-denying society (WILDFEUER; SCHNELL; SCHULZ 2015: 367). Against this backdrop, operatic representations of suicide can function as a means of destabilising taboos surrounding death. As the Hutcheons note, "such a performance might act as a commemoration or even as a form of therapeutic reassurance in the face of bereavement," (HUTCHEONS 2005: 445) pointing to opera's potential role in negotiating loss, memory, and ethical reflection.

Using the example of Leoš Janáček's *Káťa Kabanová* in the Brno production directed by Robert Carsen (National Theatre Brno, 2016), the paper explores how staged suicide operates as a site of emotional engagement and ethical confrontation for contemporary audiences. The analysis is complemented by a questionnaire-based audience study focusing on spectators' emotional responses to the suicide scene and their ethical attitudes toward voluntary death. The paper ultimately seeks to contribute to scholarly discourse on how suicide may be represented and discussed within today's cultural and social context.

Data-Driven Afterlives and Narrative Meaning in the Digital Age

William Hasselberger and Carla Ganito

Catholic University of Portugal

Human beings are narrative, story-telling, meaning-making animals, argue philosophers such as Charles Taylor, Alasdair MacIntyre, and Byung-Chul Han. Several technology companies are tapping into the human desire to articulate, share, and preserve a life story, a biographical narrative that embodies who we are. For instance, the firm HereAfter AI—whose tagline is: "Your Memories and Voice. Forever."—offers the following: "Preserve memories with an app that interviews you about your life. Then, let loved ones hear meaningful stories by chatting with the virtual you." For some, this implies a kind of digitally-driven afterlife or postmortem presence.

But can digital applications really preserve your essence and life story? Drawing on key concepts from Taylor, MacIntyre, and Han, we argue that the narrative structure of the human subject is currently being recast in terms of what Han calls "dataism," the idea that essence of a person can be captured in the form of digital information and (non-conscious) algorithms. Han claims that society is undergoing a "crisis of narration," a shift where the "human being is no longer the sovereign subject... of knowledge" but rather a passive recipient of data produced without consciousness.

This paper explores the cognitive and cultural implications of this shift, specifically examining the rise of "grieftech" and AI simulacra. While memory and grief are fundamentally phenomenological and narrative tasks—processes of "relearning the world" and rewriting the "play" or "artwork" of one's life after a character disappears—emerging technologies like AI simulations and interactive "griefbots" threaten to short-circuit this cognitive work. By simulating the deceased's voice and personality, these technologies offer a "fix" for mortality that denies the irreplaceability of persons, and the "finality" of death required for narrative reconstruction.

We argue that the turn toward "depersonalized intimacy" with machines represents a refusal of the "negativity" of death, which Taylor, MacIntyre, and Han argue is essential for the dialectical movement of a true narrative. Instead of a living story with a beginning and an end, stretching from birth to death, the digital afterlife creates simulation persons, with the promise of a life-story frozen "forever." By focusing only on those aspects of persons that can be digitally stored and replicated, and by outsourcing the labor of remembrance to algorithms that offer "sycophancy" rather than silence or resistance, we risk losing the capacity for "deep attention" and the ability to construct the "thick" narratives necessary for human flourishing.

Embodied Sharing in Operatic Performance: a psychophysiological study of multimodal experience

Šárka Havlíčková Kysová

University of Pennsylvania, USA

The paper presents results from the project ESOP-01: Embodied Sharing in Operatic Performance, which investigates audience engagement in live opera from the combined perspectives of Cognitive Theatre Studies (CTS) with research on human physiological responses. Focusing on the concept of embodied sharing as a broader alternative inspired by the concept of embodied simulation (Gallese, 2025) and 4E cognition, the study explores how performers and spectators co-participate in a performative event on bodily and affective levels. The research builds on the author's long-term analysis of contemporary stagings of Baroque opera, marking a methodological shift toward experimental approaches that integrate physiological measurement, music and emotion research, and neurophenomenology.

The empirical core is a short operatic performance created for the study, centered on the lament aria "Ah! mio cor" from Handel's *Alcina*, performed live by Opera Diversa Ensemble (approx. 12 minutes). The lament was chosen as a paradigmatic scene of heightened affective intensity, historically linked to Baroque affect theory and conceptually aligned with opera as an "art of dying" (Hutcheon & Hutcheon, 2009).

Data were collected from ca. 30 audience participants using physiological measures (heart rate, galvanic skin response, respiration, and EEG for a subset) and post-performance interviews. Results indicate convergences between physiological patterns and reported affective engagement, with partial synchronization suggesting the emergence of a shared affective field. The paper concludes by arguing that live opera can serve as a valuable experimental model for studying complex, embodied, and relational human experiences.

Epistemic Effects of Literary Narratives. A Theory of 'Literary' Knowledge

Jonas Heß

Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz, Germany

The question of whether fictional narrative and literature in general are able to convey or induce knowledge has been debated widely in the recent past. While some argue that the fictional character of most literary narratives prohibits them from doing so, others maintain that they are of epistemic relevance nevertheless. In doing so, both sides of the debate typically ground their respective views on different definitions of knowledge. While those, who deny literature's epistemic value, mostly apply a narrow definition of propositional knowledge (justified true belief), defenders of literature's ability to convey knowledge, often make use of a wide non-propositional conception of knowledge (e.g. Elgin 2002). Interestingly though, in talking about literature both sides most of the time focus on the aspect of content of the literary text, seldom the aspect of form comes into view (rare exceptions provide Huemer 2007 or Sprang 2017, for example).

This paper in turn, also applying a wider conception of knowledge, aims at defending literature's ability to convey knowledge while focusing especially on formal aspects of the literary text. Thus highlighting that not only what is told by a literary narrative, but also how it is told can reshape our perception of the world. Following a systematic, theoretical approach, the paper relies on the concept of (semantic) frames (cf. Ziem 2009) for modelling the structure of knowledge (in a wide sense) (cf. Cook 1994) and highlighting sometimes gradual and processual character of insight. The acquiring of knowledge thereby can be perceived as the adequate reconfiguration of an existing frame.

Such effect, however, can be caused by aspects of content as well as of aspects of form presented by the literary narrative. Oftentimes formal textual features can cause an adequate reconfiguration of frames in an implicit, non-propositional manner. Texts that are specifically rich with respect to formal features thereby can be provided with an additional layer of epistemic potential. Alleging that literary works in general define themselves by making extensive use of such formally rich language—as proposed namely by Russian formalists (famously Jakobson 1960)—one might furthermore even call this effect a genuinely 'literary' way of acquiring knowledge.

References

Cook, Guy (1994): *Discourse and literature: The Interplay of Form and Mind*. Oxford.

Elgin, Catherine Z. (2002): "Art in the Advancement of Our Understanding", in: *American Philosophical Quarterly* 39, pp. 1-12.

Huemer, Wolfgang (2007): "Why read Literature? The Cognitive Function of Form", in: Wolfgang Huemer / John Gibson / Luca Poggi (ed.): *A Sense of the World. Essays on Fiction, Narrative, and Knowledge*. New York / London, pp. 233-245.

Jakobson, Roman (1960): "Closing Statement. Linguistics and Poetics", in: Thomas A. Sebeok (ed.): *Style in Language*, New York / London, pp. 350-377.

Sprang, Felix (2017): "The Confines of Cognitive Literary Studies: The Sonnet and a Cognitive Poetics of Form", in: *Journal of Literary Theory* 11:2, pp. 240-254.

Ziem, Alexander (2009): "Frames im Einsatz. Aspekte anaphorischer, tropischer und multimodaler Bedeutungskonstitution im politischen Kontext", in: Ekkehard Felder / Marcus Müller (ed.): *Wissen durch Sprache. Theorie, Praxis und Erkenntnisinteresse des Forschungsnetzwerkes „Sprache und Wissen“*, Berlin / New York, pp. 208-244.

Silences and Gaps in the Social Novel

Márta Horváth

University of Szeged, Hungary

This paper explores how perceptual gaps in narrative influence the reader's understanding, inference-making, and moral judgement. By analyzing selective narration and focalization in social novels, this study examines whose perspectives are amplified, marginalized, or omitted, and how these narrative strategies shape the reader's cognitive and emotional engagement with different ideologies. Drawing on cognitive narratology and reader-response theory, the paper investigates how gaps in perception, such as restricted viewpoints or omitted voices, prompt readers to generate inferences that bridge narrative indeterminacies and construct coherent mental models of characters, situations, and social realities. Rather than merely compensating for missing information, these inferential processes actively shape readers' interpretation of ideological positions and ethical conflicts. Particular attention is paid to how these gaps influence empathy and moral judgement by requiring readers to infer motivations, intentions, and causal relations that remain implicit in the text. Through a close reading of Juli Zeh's novel *Über Menschen* (2021), I argue that narrative absences are powerful rhetorical tools that guide readers' inferential activity, define the boundaries of social visibility and agency within fiction, and encourage critical reflection on competing ideological perspectives.

References

- Coplan, Amy. 2012. "Understanding Empathy: Its Features and Effects." In *Empathy. Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives*, edited by Amy Coplan and Peter Goldie. Oxford University Press.
- Hakemulder, Frank. 2004. "Foregrounding and Its Effect on Readers' Perception." *Discourse Processes* 38 (2): 193–218.
- Iser, Wolfgang. 1970. *Die Appellstruktur Der Texte. Unbestimmtheit Als Wirkungsbedingung Literarischer Prosa*. Universitätsverlag.
- Peer, Willie van, and Henk Pander Maat. 2001. "Narrative Perspective and the Interpretation of Characters' Motives." *Language and Literature: International Journal of Stylistics* 10 (3): 229–41. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0973-9470-20010803-04>.
- Phelan, James. 2005. "Narrative Judgments and the Rhetorical Theory of Narrative: Ian McEwan's *Atonement*." In *A Companion to Narrative Theory*, edited by James Phelan and Peter J. Rabinowitz. Blackwell Publishing Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470996935.ch22>.

Reading Multimodal Archival Fiction: An Empirical Study

Elin Ivansson and Anna Holm
Linnaeus University, Sweden

This paper offers a snapshot from an on-going research project investigating readers' reception of multimodal archival fiction—verbal narratives that incorporate visual, fictional, and factual archival material. The multimodal composition of archival fiction positions readers to engage in complex reading strategies, interpreting both text, images, and other semiotic modes which together raise questions about the fictional and/or factual status of the text. Therefore, this project aims to investigate how the multimodal and ontologically ambiguous composition of archival fiction affect readers' cognitive processing and invite them to draw on real-world knowledge.

This study combines cognitive stylistics' empirical reader response methods with techniques from multimodality and behavioural research by collecting both online (eye-tracking data) and offline responses (questionnaire) to investigate both

readers' implicit behavioural data and their explicit verbal responses. By synthesising these methodologies, we aim to advance the cognitive stylistic paradigm by demonstrating how linguistic and cognitive analyses can be enriched through real-time data of readers' multimodal processing. Furthermore, the results will be used to revisit theoretical assumptions within cognitive stylistics, about readers' cognitive processing of multimodal and fictionally ambiguous narratives.

In the paper, we present an overview of the study design and its theoretical underpinnings, as well as some preliminary results. Based on these results, we will discuss readers' strategies of assessing truthfulness and fictionality in the context of archival fiction but also multimodal media environments more generally.

Whose story is this? – On Narrative and Credibility in Asylum Interviews

Annimari Juvonen

Catholic University of Portugal

Asylum interviews are often multilingual situations in which officials assess the life situation of the applicant by focusing on detail and coherence of their story. The accuracy of denotational information, such as the names of relatives and the place names, as well as narratives produced by the asylum seekers, are tested in order to assess their credibility and their need for an asylum. These processes are shaped by ethnocentric cultural assumptions and national concerns imposed by state bureaucrats (Jacquemet 2015, 73). This places asylum seekers in a position in which the success of their interview may depend on their ability to decode these patterns and encode their own narrative successfully within this specific cultural context. The narratives by asylum seekers are often related to trauma embedded in cultural discourses about grief, tragedy, struggle and displacement that are to be made consistent with the language of international regulation (Shuman and Bohmer 2004). Therefore, the consistency and the flow of information are crucial for the success of the claim – any contradiction might be detrimental to the credibility of the asylum seekers and the outcome of the asylum process.

This paper discusses the role of narrative in asylum interviews through the analysis of two cultural products; the documentary film *The Hearing* (2024) (81') by Swiss director Lisa Gerig and the activist performance *Finnish Anti-Immigration Service [Maahanmuuton torjunnan virasto]* by a group of NGO representatives and activists that took place at Kääne Festival in Helsinki, Finland, in January 2025. Both

performative acts question the moral grounding of asylum policies by (re)enacting the encounter between asylum seekers and the immigration officials conducting the asylum interviews. In the film, real-life asylum seekers reenact their interviews with a recruited cast of state officials. In the performance, festival-goers were recruited to act as asylum seekers and to sit through an interview, claiming a narrative fusing their personal details with a fictionalized narrative based on real-life stories of asylum seekers.

The analysis was conducted through visual analysis of the film and interviews of three participants who took part in the Finnish Anti-Immigration Service performance as "state officials." Through this analysis, this paper interrogates the role of narrative by looking at performative reenactments as providing a space for reflection and reevaluation of human experiences with different interpersonal and cultural configurations.

When we tell (and retell) stories, do we think in words, images or both and if so, how? – Some Considerations on Cognitive Aspects of Creating (and Recreating) Humorous Stories for Children

Sylwia Klos

University of Silesia, Katowice, Poland

In children's literature, a meaning is often hidden not only in words but also in images. When we read a story, words and images stay in contact, overlap or live their separate lives in our mind, but, combined, they stimulate our imagination and evoke emotions.

The article attempts to describe cognitive processes involved in the creation (and recreation) of humorous stories accompanied by pictures. Based on the theory of conceptual blending (Fauconnier & Turner), the theory of mental maps (author) and the theory of creative cognition (Finke et al.), the article shows how the human mind works at verbal and visual levels and how the knowledge on these cognitive mechanisms can be applied in the creation and translation of humorous texts dedicated to children.

To illustrate the cognitive processes, the paper refers to some examples drawn from English children's literature (Julia Donaldson, Roald Dahl, Francesca Simon and Michael Bond) and its translation into Polish and Portuguese.

Rasa Theory and the Limits of Cognitive Narratology

Radhika Koul

Claremont McKenna College, USA

Contemporary cognitive narratology, particularly Lisa Zunshine's influential work, argues that narrative comprehension depends on Theory of Mind (ToM)—our capacity to attribute mental states to others. Readers engage in "recursive mindreading," tracking embedded intentionalities: "Character A believes that Character B wants Character C to think X." Zunshine demonstrates that literary texts exercise this cognitive capacity, with readers comfortably processing multiple levels of embedding before experiencing cognitive strain.

However, an 11th-century Indian aesthetic framework articulated by the philosopher Abhinavagupta offers a strikingly similar account of how minds process narrative. Abhinavagupta's commentary on Bharata's *Natyaśāstra* (circa 200 BCE-200 CE) describes how dramatic performance produces *rasa*—aesthetic savor or relish. The formula: *vibhāva* (determinants/causes) combined with *anubhāva* (consequents/physical manifestations) and *vyabhicari bhāva* (transitory emotional states) produce *rasa*.

This paper argues that Abhinavagupta's *rasa* theory functions as a Theory of Mind account of aesthetic response with a crucial addition that contemporary cognitive narratology has overlooked. Like Zunshine's model, *rasa* theory describes how we process causality in minds: *vibhāva* are the stimuli (Romeo encounters Juliet), *anubhāva* are the observable physical manifestations (tears, trembling), and *vyabhicāri bhāvas* are the fleeting cognitive-emotional states (anxiety, jealousy, memory) that color the experience. This tripartite structure maps onto contemporary models of emotional processing: appraisal of stimulus → physiological arousal → subjective feeling.

Where *rasa* theory diverges from Zunshine is in accounting for why tracking mental states produces aesthetic pleasure. Zunshine describes ToM as cognitive exercise but struggles to explain why simulating others' suffering in tragedy should be pleasurable. Abhinavagupta addresses this through *sādhāranīkaraṇa* (generalization): the spectator does not simulate Hamlet's specific grief but experiences a generalized form of grief that Abhinavagupta terms *alaukika*—"not of this world," transcendent of individual subjectivity. The pleasure comes not merely from cognitive workout but from this universalized experience.

Moreover, rasa theory insists on embodiment in ways that challenge mentalist ToM frameworks. Anubhāva—physical manifestations—are not merely consequences to be inferred but essential constituents of aesthetic experience itself. The actor's trembling, the spectator's involuntary tears—these are integral to how rasa arises.

By examining Abhinavagupta's account, we can identify gaps in contemporary cognitive narratology: its struggle to account for pleasure in painful narratives and its tendency to marginalize embodied response. Rasa theory suggests that aesthetic experience requires both recursive mindreading and the dissolution of boundaries between self and other through generalized, embodied affect.

Cognitive Song to Cognitive Story: Collective Lyric as a Precursor of Communal Narrative

Sharon Lattig

The University of Connecticut, USA

The proposed paper analyzes collective lyrics—poems and songs recited or sung (hereafter “sung”) in unison by groups who identify as a community—for the way such performances function cognitively and thus as a means of staking a space in which narratives may be shared. Such lyric subgenres—hymns, prayers, slave songs, anthems, pledges, sports chants, work, war and hunting songs, for instance—are performed across cultures, at times spontaneously, but more often when incorporated as ritual into communal events.

Building upon Sharon Lattig's argument that lyric poetry is fundamentally perceptual, the paper explores how the dynamic of enactive perception (perception incorporative of emotion and action) might play out when examples of this notoriously individualistic genre are performed by multiple, synchronized voices. It posits that the end of such cooperation is the alignment of the perceptions of individual group members. As perception transpires in space, cooperative singing is argued to serve as a form of collective intentionality marking a space as communal: co-singing functions in a sense as an implied agreement to co-habit. Notably, the occasions on which collective lyrics tend to be uttered often involve the literal demarcation of communal territory or its reinforcement as such: our divinely sanctioned sacred site, our killing field, our symbolic or actual land, our path to freedom.

The work of Marie-Laure Ryan on space perception and narrative illuminates the way that such collective spaces might become the basis for the communal narratives

recited at or in relation to the same events (stories told as a part of a religious service, the after-the-fact tales of hunting and war, or the journalistic reports of sporting events, for instance). Physical spaces sung into existence, whether they are literal or abstract, are argued to afford shared versions of the mental models of spatial relations in which narratives are inscribed, per Ryan. Understood cognitively, collective lyrics facilitate the comprehension, alignment and retention of the stories that serve, ultimately, to reinforce common beliefs and values, and in turn, group cohesion.

Flowing in the Moment: Screen Acting and Cognitive Load Management

Dan Leberg

University of Groningen, The Netherlands

My research focuses on the cognitive and embodied underpinnings of how (film) actors transform themselves into their characters and thereby tell stories. In my earlier research on film acting as a practice of soliciting empathetic connections with the actor's character, fellow actors-as-characters, and audiences, I considered how the search for these kinds of empathetic relationships creates an experience of being "in the moment" wherein the actor-as-character is swept up in the act of storytelling. I now wish to further interrogate this experience of being "in the moment" because of the possibilities that it opens for analyzing what it means for the actor's bodymind to sustain herself within the moment.

In this presentation, I propose that the actorly phenomenon of being "in the moment" is an experience of flow. Flow theory has been widely applied to other kinds of creative performance, from jazz music to modern dance, and so it stands to reason that the immersive and challenging continuity of action that actors experience while performing sounds a lot like being in a flow.

Positioning the experience of being "in the moment" as an immersive flow state through which actors tell their part of the narrative opens the cognitive study of acting practices to an intriguing series of questions about the management of bodymind resources in order to remain in the "flow tunnel". In particular, Joshua Bergamin's conception of flow's parallel tracks of continuity and rapid (re)adjustment to changing circumstances begs the question of how actor training conditions actors to navigate both tracks and thereby remain in flow.

This presentation explores how ideas in modern flow theory, such as creative discoveries from within flow's "insight cascade" and the creative benefits of cognitive load reduction. From this perspective, acting practices like script analysis, skill acquisition, and improvisation prime the actor's bodymind for storytelling in part by training technical tools for managing the actor's cognitive load and thereby remaining in the flow throughout the performance.

The Storyworld Possible Selves Scale: Measuring Self-Concept Activation During Narrative Engagement

Cristina Loi and Victoria Pöhls

University of Basel; Switzerland | RWTH Aachen University, Germany | University College Dublin, Ireland | Max Planck Institute for Empirical Aesthetics, Germany

Research demonstrates that engaging with fictional narratives can yield a wide range of psychological benefits (Kuiken & Jacobs, 2022), yet why these occur remains unclear. Storyworld Possible Selves (SPS) theory (Martínez, 2018) proposes that narratives exert their transformative power through the "mental projections of the self into story worlds", partial blends that occur during narrative experiences. Within the SPS framework, the self-concept is understood as a dynamic network of self-schemas and possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1987; Borkowski & Thorpe, 2023). An SPS may be activated when a character reminds the reader of who they used to be (past self), mirrors aspects of their current identity (present self), embodies traits/ circumstances they aspire to (desired possible self), or in response to characters who represent feared or undesirable future selves (feared/undesired possible self).

Empirically testing it may indeed reveal that the activation of our self-concept during engagement with narratives underlies their transformative effects. However, no reliable instrument to measure self-concept activation in narrative contexts currently exists. Building on preliminary SPS quantitative assessments (Loi et al., 2023; 2024; Pöhls et al. 2025), this presentation focuses on the development of the Storyworld Possible Selves scale, and presents preliminary evidence regarding the relationship between SPSs activation and a specific transformative effect, i.e., enhanced coping skills for situations similar to those encountered in a given narrative.

We designed a pre-post study in which participants are first presented with future-oriented scenarios (some representing the topic/ circumstances of the narrative that they will be asked to engage with; adapted version of the Brief COPE scale: Carver,

1997), then read one of two selected short stories (matched for length and complexity, varying in thematic content) before completing the newly developed 16-item SPS scale (4 items per SPS type), along with the Identification and Story World Absorption (SWAS) scales (Cohen, 2013; Kuijpers et al., 2014), and repeating the same scenario-task.

We predict that (a) activating SPSs (particularly desired and feared possible selves) increases coping towards the scenarios thematically related to the story (predictive validity); (b) scores on SPSs will be positively related to emotional engagement (subdimension of the SWAS) and identification (convergent validity) and negatively related to focused attention (subdimension of the SWAS), as it obstructs self-referencing (discriminant validity).

Overall, the SPS scale – presented here for the first time and shared in open access – has significant potential for use among scholars interested in cognitive approaches to the study of narratives.

References

- Borkowski, J. G., & Thorpe, P. K. (2023). Self-regulation and motivation: A life-span perspective on under achievement. In *Self-regulation of learning and performance* (pp. 45-73). Routledge.
- Carver, C. S. (1997). You want to measure coping but your protocol's too long: Consider the Brief COPE. *International Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, 4, 92-100.
- Cohen, J. (2013). Audience identification with media characters. In *Psychology of entertainment* (pp. 183-197). Routledge.
- Kuijpers, M. M., Hakemulder, F., Tan, E. S., & Doicaru, M. M. (2014). Exploring absorbing reading experiences. *Scientific Study of Literature*, 4(1).
- Kuiken, D., & Jacobs, A. M. (Eds.). (2021). *Handbook of empirical literary studies*. Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co KG.
- Loi, C., Hakemulder, F., Kuijpers, M. and Lauer, G. (2023) 'On how Fiction Impacts the Self-Concept: Transformative Reading Experiences and Storyworld Possible Selves', *Scientific Study of Literature*, 12(1), p. 44-67.
- Loi, C., Scapin, G., Alber, J., & Martínez, M. Á. (2024). Measuring storyworld possible selves in depression stories: Linguistic features, personal relevance, and the narrative experience. *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts*.
- Markus, H., & Nurius, P. (1986). Possible selves. *American psychologist*, 41(9), 954.
- Martínez, M. Á. (2018). *Storyworld possible selves* (Vol. 37). Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co KG.

Pöhls, V., Bulfin, A. and Martínez, M.-Á. (2025) "An empirical study of fictional abuse narratives and prosocial reader outcomes using storyworld possible selves" (pp. 103-132). In *Storyworld Possible Selves and Narrative Intersubjectivity*, edited by María-Ángeles Martínez. De Gruyter.

Making Sense of Masquerade: How Audience Participants Learn the World of the Show Through Cognitive Cues and Strategies

Allie Marotta

The Graduate Center, CUNY, USA

In this paper, I analyze "Masquerade," Andrew Lloyd Webber and Diane Paulus's new immersive and participatory interpretation of the classic megamusical, *The Phantom of the Opera*. This paper asks how "Masquerade" teaches audience participants the rules of the world of the show and how they are meant to engage with it. "Masquerade" requires cognitive flexibility from audience participants as it shifts the social contract of theatre throughout the experience: at times, audience participants are meant to be seated and observing a performance, and at other times, they are meant to be communicating with performers and participating in activities. This paper asks, how do the audience participants know when each behavior is expected?

Using a methodological framework based in 4e cognition, cognitive load theory, and multimodal learning, the paper investigates which cognitive strategies are built into the performance experience that either help or hinder audience participant understanding of the rules of the world. This paper applies these theories to key structural elements of *Masquerade* to create a comprehensive understanding of how the world of the play is built, such as onboarding and offboarding sequences, experiential and narrative structures, and specific scenes and moments in which the audience participants are offered instructions.

The paper builds a theoretical cognitive framework upon which immersive and participatory productions can be assessed in terms of viability of audience participation. This research also translates cognitive processes into artistic tools that theatremakers can incorporate when creating participatory and immersive work in order to foster a higher chance of audience participants understanding the expectations of their participation, thus participating "correctly." This contributes to larger field conversations surrounding 4e cognition and embodiment in immersive

theatre, while also building on the conversation with the addition of practical learning theories.

Tragic Emotions and Narratives in US Climate Movies

Bruce McChonachie

University of Pittsburgh, USA

I recently completed *Biocultural Ethics and Hollywood Climate Movies*, published by Ethics Press in 2025. My book deploys Stephen Asma's and Rami Gabriel's *The Emotional Mind: The Affective Roots of Culture and Cognition* (2019) to examine a range of emotions and narrative genres that shaped popular climate movies from *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004) to 2024. Although I discussed the tragic impact of *First Reformed*, writer-director Paul Schrader's 2017 masterpiece, I did not directly connect it to Dr. Britt Wray's insights into the psychological effects of climate disasters on young Americans in her *Generation Dread: Finding Purpose in an Age of Climate Disaster* (2022).

Chair of a program on Climate Change and Mental Health at Stanford, Wray speaks directly to what is already happening to young people who do not know how to process the panic and grief they feel in response to increasing climate calamities. Specifically, she addresses how public health interventions in the US can "secure death awareness as a tool for the greater collective good in times of ecological unravelling" (134). Wray convincingly demonstrates that knowing how to grieve is particularly relevant to surviving and resolving our ongoing climate crisis.

In Western cultures, performances of many tragic plays (eg. *Oedipus*, *Hamlet*) typically modelled such situations and helped survivors to resolve their griefs and prepare for a difficult future. Hollywood films, however, have rarely tackled this problem and most climate disaster films, including *Don't Look Up* (2021), simply ignored it.

Tragic panic and grief come early in the action of *First Reformed*, however. Schrader's protagonist, Reverend Ernst Toller (played by Ethan Hawke) initially counsels a young couple, Mary and her husband Michael, a radical climate activist in despair, to persevere and have faith. Ernst agrees to meet Michael at a local park, but arrives to find that he has killed himself with a shotgun. The action spirals downward from there, with the Reverend doubting his faith, struggling against his attraction to Mary, falling into self-disgust and alcoholism, and finally deciding to blow himself up with Michael's suicide vest to take the life of a local industrialist-

polluter along with his own. Only Mary's intervention saves him and their embrace signals a possible life together of service to realize Michael's hopes. Tragic panic and grief resolve into love and cooperation, the commitments needed for long-term climate solutions.

The Path to Automated Narrative Processing

Brook Miller

University of Central Florida, USA

How does narrative figure into the drive towards artificial intelligences that bear comparison to human cognition? There is a robust literature about narrative computation, focusing on the analysis of narrative structures, as well as large language models' ability to generate narratives. While these directions automate two high-level human cognitive activities, the processes do not resemble how narrative structures are generated and processed into abstractions and memories in human thinking. This presentation describes the function of ongoing narrative processing in low-level cognition, followed by consideration of two robust areas of research that might advance our understanding and anticipate the role it might play in artificial intelligence. The presentation begins by considering the problem ongoing narrative processing helps us solve. I will review and update a model of narrativity as an emergent feature in event processing predicated on parsing event boundaries via extant cognitive models, uncertainty reduction, affect, and attributing meaning (Miller, 2024). I then focus on two key, but limited, topics within this field. In cognitive science, new models of decision-making theorize of key role for uncertainty in time segmentation and abstraction in event processing (Wang et al., 2025). In artificial intelligence, 'slow feature analysis' works to identify event constituents and define event boundaries (Song & Zhao, 2022). I will argue for relationships between these processes and emergent narrativity in event processing. Taken together, these perspectives contribute to research directions in cognitive studies, artificial intelligence, and narrative theory around the question of what human-like event processing would look like in AI. Finally, I consider embodiment, processing limitations, and the ethics of this research direction.

References

Miller, B. (2024). *Narrativity in cognition*. Springer.

Song, P., & Zhao, C. (2022). Slow down to go better: A survey on slow feature analysis. *IEEE Transactions on Neural Networks and Learning Systems*, 35(3), 3416-3436.

Wang, M. B., Lynch, N., & Halassa, M. M. (2025). The neural basis for uncertainty processing in hierarchical decision making. *Nature Communications*, 16(1), 9096.

Visualising ambiguity and its effects on vividness

Srinandini Mukherjee

Independent Scholar, UK

Narrative ambiguity is an essential part of fiction; introducing multiple possible explanations for a narrative event encourages the reader to think more deeply about the plot and likely increases their interest. Another key aspect of reading fiction is mental imagery, or visualisation. Visualising the narrative helps comprehension (Boerma et al 2016), may increase emotional responses (Krasny and Sadoski 2008), and engages the reward system in our brain (Starr 2015). It is thus arguable that the more vivid the visualisation, the more engaged the reader. The relationship between vivid visualisation and ambiguity however seemingly contains an inherent juxtaposition because ambiguity denotes a lack of clarity and visualising is improved by clearer instructions. For my doctoral research, I conducted a series of experiments to investigate how readers visualise fantastique/fantastic French texts using Guy de Maupassant's *Lui?/Him?* and *Apparition/Apparition* (both 1883), which contain ambiguity in their descriptions of possibly supernatural incidents. Using my experiment's quantitative and qualitative results, I would like to present two important findings about the relationship between narrative ambiguity and mental imagery.

The first finding is that introducing narrative ambiguity can temporarily heighten vivid visualisation despite reducing the epistemic clarity of the narrative. I will highlight three factors that contribute to vivid visualisation: the perceptual strength of the words, emotion-evoking writing, and kinaesthetic imagery. For the experiments, Maupassant's texts were divided into smaller segments and participants rated how vividly they visualised each segment on a scale from 1 to 5 while reading. Using the data from these ratings and participants' open responses, I will outline the relationship of the above factors to narrative ambiguity in *Him?* and *Apparition*.

Research to date often focuses on the effects of text content on a reader's visualisation, but an additional significant contributor is the reader's baseline skills and personality traits. The second key finding from my experiments was that a reader's vividness of visualisation when reading ambiguous content also depends on their ambiguity tolerance. My results indicate that readers with lower ambiguity tolerances report larger increases in their vivid visualisation when ambiguous content is introduced compared to more ambiguity-tolerant readers. Additionally, readers with lower ambiguity tolerances reported less of a drop in vivid visualisation following the introduction of ambiguous text content, while more ambiguity-tolerant readers reported a sharper drop in vivid visualisation after ambiguity was introduced. I will unpack these results in the second part of my presentation and outline some possible explanations for these visualisation patterns. I will end the paper with some hypotheses about how these findings may be applied to different genres and different kinds of narrative ambiguities.

Story as a search for meaning

Martina Musilová

Academy of Performing Arts in Prague (DAMU), Czech Republic

In my contribution, I will present the story of two Czechs and their understanding of stories as a search of meaning. The first is Jan Patočka, a philosopher and one of the last pupils of Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger in Freiburg in the 1930s. The second is Ivan Vyskočil, a writer, actor, acting teacher, psychologist, and pupil of Jan Patočka in the mid-1950s. They became friends, and it is therefore no surprise that we find features of a phenomenological approach in Vyskočil's work. In 1963, Patočka wrote a study entitled "The World of Ivan Vyskočil." In this study, however, Patočka, in an attempt to capture the basic features of Vyskočil's stories, uses, among others, formulations that correspond to Husserl's concept of eidetic variation (JANKOVEC 2022), in which the phenomena are reduced through processes of free variation in the imagination to their invariant structures (STUART 2019). Here, too, we can see the influence of Patočka, who in the 1960s explored the essence of modern literature, understanding it as "a path and an effort to find meaning in life, to capture it explicitly through natural language" (PATOČKA 1969, resp. 1979). The intertwining of art and phenomenology raises questions about how we should understand phenomena such as authorship, the author, and the author's responsibility for themselves and the world in which we live.

Imagological Perspectives on Urban Violence: Images of Caracas in Karina Sainz Borgo's *La hija de la española*

Grauben Navas (Aura Marina Boadas, Jefferson Plaza)
Catholic University of Portugal

This paper explores the imagological dimensions of *La hija de la española* (Karina Sainz Borgo, 2019), focusing on how literary discourse constructs mental and cultural representations of Caracas amid contemporary urban violence. Drawing on D.H. Pageaux's imagological framework (1994), the study examines the cognitive mechanisms through which stereotypes, symbols, and narrative patterns shape perceptions of identity and otherness within the urban space. By analyzing the circulation of imaginaries related to fear, survival, marginality, and resilience, the research highlights the tension between ordinary experience and extraordinary disruption in crisis contexts. Methodologically, it combines textual analysis with comparative approaches to uncover how literature functions as a cognitive tool for negotiating collective images and cultural memory. The paper argues that Sainz Borgo's novel offers a critical "x-ray" of the city, contributing to debates on urban imagery, identity construction, and the social role of literature in times of instability. This work seeks to enrich interdisciplinary discussions on cognitive futures by linking imagology, narrative strategies, and the mental processing of urban violence in contemporary Venezuelan literature.

Book Boyfriends Revisited

Pascal Nicklas, Gerhard Lauer, Annemarie Deser, Jette Trzebiatowski
(Timur Servincer)

Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz, Germany

Falling in love with fictional characters has been described as parasocial relationship (PSR) since the advent of mass media (Horton & Wohl 1956). In literature the phenomenon has been already observed since the 18th century and particularly in the context of the literature of sensibility (Darnton 1999). The emotional relationship (of readers) to fictional characters is part of the complex and manifold emotional responses (Miall & Kuiken 1994; Keen 2007) and figure as a simulation of social experience in literature (Mar & Oatley 2008). The latest and particularly striking development in PSRs is the rise of the "book boyfriend" in New Adult Literature (NAL) which comes along with the social media embeddedness of NAL. Unlike ever before, romantic relationships with fictional characters are not kept secret: readers openly discuss their book boyfriends (of whom they sometimes have several at the same time) in relevant social media forums.

Together with our students, we conducted a large-scale survey at the Frankfurt and Leipzig book fairs ($n > 500$), asking young mostly female readers about their book boyfriends and the meaning and function of their romantic relationships with them. We correlated personality traits with reading preferences in order to understand this popular trend in the context of the gender equality paradox and the role of PSR.

Our data show that readers with book boyfriends tend to score below average with personality traits such as openness, extraversion, or agreeableness, but are associated with neuroticism and lower life satisfaction. We discuss whether book boyfriends could be a coping mechanism.

References

Horton, Donald / Wohl, R. Richard (1956): Mass Communication and Para-Social Interaction. In: *Psychiatry*, Vol. 19, Nr. 3, S. 215-229.

Liebers, Nicole / Schramm, Holger (2017): Friends in Books: The Influence of Character Attributes and Reader Traits on Parasocial Relationships with Literary Characters. In: *Poetics*, Vol. 62, S. 12-26.

Keen, Suzanne (2007): *Empathy and the Novel*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Miall, David S. / Kuiken, Don (1994): Foregrounding, Defamiliarization, and Affect: Response to Literary Stories. In: *Poetics*, Vol. 22, S. 389-407.

Mar, Raymond A. / Oatley, Keith (2008): The Function of Fiction Is the Abstraction and Simulation of Social Experience. In: *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, Vol. 3, Nr. 3, S. 173-192.

The Alternating Engagement of Comics

Francesco Parisi, Gioele Silvestro

University of Messina, Italy

This work adopts a research perspective at the intersection of recent developments in Visual Cultural Studies, in which images – and, in our specific case, comics – are treated not as texts to be deciphered or as mere products of a consumer system, but rather as subjects endowed with agency. From this standpoint, images are understood as entities capable not only of questioning our perceptual processes, but even of modifying them by acting back upon them (Cometa 2017; Malafouris 2007; Mitchell 2009).

Characterized by the juxtaposition of images accompanied by verbal elements, often but not always enclosed within balloons, comics are a form of multimodal storytelling that remains relatively understudied. As Jan-Noël Thon and Lukas R. A. Wilde have observed (Thon and Wilde 2016), the field of comics studies has expanded considerably in recent years, incorporating a wide range of research practices and methodological approaches, including semiotic, narratological, historical, and cultural perspectives (Beaty 2007; Carrier 2000; Chute 2010; Ditschke, Kroucheva, and Stein 2009; McLaughlin 2005). Nevertheless, comparatively less attention has been paid to the medial aspects of comics.

Our proposal is that comics function through a process of alternating engagement operating on at least three interconnected levels. The first level concerns the materiality of the medium (McLuhan 2008). The second involves the iconic dimension, where both the picture/image distinction (Mitchell 2017) and the interplay between word and image come into play. The third level is the narratological one, where sequentiality, temporal structuring, and narrative inference emerge as central processes.

Bibliography

Beaty, B. 2007. *Unpopular Culture: Transforming the European Comic Book in the 1990s*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Carrier, D. 2000. *The Aesthetics of Comics*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.

Chute, H. 2010. *Graphic Women: Life Narrative and Contemporary Comics*. New York: Columbia University Press

Cometa, M. 2017. *Perché le storie ci aiutano a vivere*. Milano: Raffaello Cortina editore.

Ditschke, S., Kroucheva, K., and D. Stein, D. eds. 2009. *Comics: Zur Geschichte und Theorie eines populärkulturellen Mediums*. Bielefeld: transcript.

Malafouris, L. 2007. Before and Beyond Representation: Towards an Enactive Conception of the Palaeolithic Image, in *Image and imagination: a global history of figurative representation*, a cura di C. Renfrew, I. Morley, McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, Cambridge p. 295.

McLaughlin, J. ed. 2005. *Comics as Philosophy*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi.

McLuhan, M. 2008. *Gli strumenti del comunicare* (1964), prefazione di P. Ortoleva, postfazione di P. Pallavicini, il Saggiatore, Milano.

Mitchell, W. J. T. 2009. *What Do Pictures Want?* Tr. It in A. Pinotti e A. Somaini, *Teoria dell'immagine*, Raffaello Cortina, Torino

Mitchell, W. J. T. 2017. *Pictorial turn, Saggi di cultura visuale*, Tr. It. M. Cometa e V. Cammarata (a cura di), Raffaello Cortina, Milano

Thon, J-N., & Wilde, L. R.A. (2016). Mediality and materiality of contemporary comics. *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics*, 7(3), 233-24.

Holding Stories

Christina (Xristina) Penna

Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, USA

The Afterlife Creative Memory Retreat R&D by the immersive theatre company The Other Way Works invited audience-participants to an online retreat via Zoom.

Inspired by the 1998 film *After Life* by Kore-eda Hirokazu, the work invites participants to focus on what they value in life through an in-depth creative exploration of their own important memories, facilitating hope, togetherness and a deeper connection to one's sense of self.

The scenographer was part of the team of artists who devised exercises that were then given to the online audience to help them revisit some of their memories. A playful exercise featuring a red thread was introduced and the participants were encouraged to use it for connecting with each other's screen-spaces. Through the medium of touch and the playful scenographic illusion of the thread extending to other participants' rooms, this tool was used as a way to create a sense of togetherness between the group.

I will unpack the above scenographic action through the lens of 4Es cognition, suggesting that human cognition is an on-going collaboration between brain, body and environment.

If places are shaped by significant historic moments (Hannah, 2011: 56), they are also shaped by the memories we choose to attach to those moments and a certain materiality related to those moments. By understanding thinking not as an individualistic activity but one that is happening within socio-cultural and material knowledge and inextricably integrated with perception and action I will argue that in the Afterlife Creative Memory Retreat the tactile scenographic element of the thread enhanced the sense of memory as story-telling between the screens.

Understanding literary empathy in light of a theoretical-conceptual analysis

Eileen Pfeiffer-Flores (and Bianca Rogoski)

University of Brasilia, Brazil

This work analyses the concept of literary empathy, a concept that has been widely used in psychological and narratology research but often with limited conceptual precision. We address the concept by examining two main questions in the area, through a theoretical-conceptual analysis. We begin by examining the first guiding question: Does literary empathy function in the same way as empathy directed toward real others? Drawing on philosophical analyses of empathy and narrative theory, it is argued that literary empathy should be understood as a borderline case of empathy. While it shares important features with interpersonal empathy, such as emotional understanding and perspective-taking, it does not meet all the criteria traditionally associated with empathic relations, particularly those involving reciprocal interaction. Literary empathy is therefore conceptualized as part of the polysemy of narrative comprehension. The second guiding question concerns a common normative assumption in the literature: Does emotional engagement with

fictional characters make readers more empathetic individuals? Revisiting this question, we critically examine how empirical studies have linked narrative reading, emotional involvement, and prosocial outcomes. It is argued that many of these interpretations rely on conceptual slippage between different meanings of empathy, identification, emotional response, and moral evaluation, leading to overstated or ambiguous conclusions. Finally, we discuss how these conceptual ambiguities affect the interpretation of empirical findings on narrative reading and empathy. By conflating distinct constructs under the label of “empathy,” the literature often obscures what is actually being measured and how narrative engagement operates cognitively and affectively. Clarifying the concept of literary empathy is therefore essential not only for theoretical coherence but also for a more accurate understanding of empirical results in psychological studies of narrative.

Narrativity, Enactive Reading and the Use of the Present Tense in Narration

Yanna Popova

Stefan Wyszynski University, Warsaw, Poland

The enactive approach to cognition has made it possible to theorize the processes of interaction of human beings with works of art in new and more sophisticated ways. Based firmly in phenomenology, these approaches highlight the participatory nature of the exchange that takes place between autonomous subjects and a given artwork, including written or oral narratives. Various theories in the past as ‘reciprocity’, ‘transaction’ or ‘completion’, the view that the reader somehow partakes in the work itself has dominated theories of reader response, such as reader-response criticism (Iser, 1974), affective stylistics (Fish, 1970), or the transactional theory of Rosenblatt (1978). While the more specific theoretical foundation of these theories stems from linguistic pragmatics and the American pragmatist philosophy of John Dewey, it is the non-dualist phenomenological notion of mutual constitution between reader and text in autopoietic enactivism that will be the main concern in this presentation. The enactive theory of social cognition (De Jaegher and Di Paolo, 2007; Thompson, 2011) with its elaboration of notions, such as participatory sense-making, interaction autonomy and interactional asymmetry has made it possible to theorize the reading process further than those earlier approaches in a number of important ways (Popova, 2015; Popova and Cuffari, 2018). This presentation continues my previous work, which has argued for an understanding of reading as

a form of participatory sense-making and explored it in relation to temporal alignment. In this talk I investigate these enactive concepts using the current fashion in much contemporary fiction of narrating a whole novel in the present tense as a test case. It will be argued that human experience has an inherent narrative structure stemming from the very nature of how human beings experience time. In particular, the experience of time as depth, as progression, as alternating modes of acceleration and deceleration of narrative pace, are found to be lost in reading novels written entirely in the present. As it will also be shown, such unnatural and un-mimetic usage of the present tense alters significantly the function of the narrator, as used and theorized in narratology, in addition to producing problems in our very understanding of the workings of episodic memory.

From History into Literature: Framing Narrative in Literary Translation

Sherehan Saad

Catholic University of Portugal

“Narratives are public and personal ‘stories’ that we subscribe to and that guide our behavior. They are the stories we tell ourselves, not just those we explicitly tell other people, about the world(s) in which we live.” (Baker 2006, 19)

This paper employs Baker’s narrative theory (2006) to trace the framing techniques used by authors of historical literature. It attempts to expand the definition of translation to incorporate writing historical fiction as a means of creating knowledge through the translation of history and/or experiences (Blumczynski 2024). Accordingly, the author translates past events, memories, and traumas into writing, posing a distinct worldview based on former experiences and affiliations. Similarly, every translator, consciously or subconsciously, imposes a certain narrative on his/her work, where narratives are the stories, through which people construct and interpret reality (Baker, 2006).

For this purpose, I apply a close reading technique on a novel about the Jewish departure from Egypt in the mid-twentieth century: *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit* by Lucette Lagnado. In this novel, the author commemorates the memory of her father by telling the story of her family’s “exodus” from Egypt after the change of political tides in the 1950s. The book is heavily influenced by the author’s memories and personal narrative. Throughout her book, the author highlights her belonging

to Egypt through textual and paratextual framing techniques to construct reality through the lens of her own narrative.

This research attempts to answer three research questions: a) what instances of translation of history, experiences, or traumas do these novels display? b) how does the author's background narrative affect his/her rendering of historical events? c) how does the author use framing techniques to construct her personal worldview?

Reading historical fiction as translation sheds light on the significance of the author's narrative not only to reflect past events but to construct a future worldview. It also questions the objectivity of both media as means of documentation.

Mental Simulation: On the Spatial Cognitive Practice of Contemporary Theatre Creation

Kangija Shen

Shanghai Theatre Academy, China

The cognitive paradigm of contemporary theatre is undergoing a fundamental shift from "psychological interiority" to "spatial extension." This paper posits that theatrical creation itself constitutes an "extended mind" practice, wherein the creator's thought processes are systematically externalized and reshaped through interaction with the regulated body, the material space, and the social collective. The argument will proceed through three dimensions: at the bodily dimension, the choreography of movement transforms abstract ideas into perceptible embodied cognition; at the theatrical dimension, the stage is transformed into an operable cognitive model, exploring multiple realities through its spatial configurations; at the collective dimension, the design and dialogue of character relationships become a field for the social externalization and negotiation of internal thought, allowing cognition to be generated within a distributed network. Ultimately, this paper aims to demonstrate that theatrical creation is far from a mere expression of thought; it is fundamentally a cognitive practice conducted through the construction of space and relations. Thus, it provides an embodied, situated, and unique mode of knowledge production for understanding complex issues such as social norms and individual identity.

Narrating the Self: Mythopoetics, Cognition, and Identity in the Lyric Poetry of David Mourão-Ferreira

Ana Soares

University of Porto, Portugal

This paper proposes a reading of the lyric work of David Mourão-Ferreira through the articulation of mythopoetic and narrative-cognitivist approaches, based on the premise that the organization of the poetic corpus derives from a mythopoetic macro-narrative of identity, understood as a virtual narrative of self-construction.

Between erotic ecstasy and the agony of time, the intimate man and the mercurial intellectual mirror one another. From the dialogue between these two narratological instances emerges a narrative identity, symbolically articulated through a mythopoetic universe.

Emphasis is placed on the self-awareness of this process of conceptual integration (blending) between life and writing, synthesized in the neologism *escreviver* ("write-live"). This concept signals a poetic practice that integrates lived experience and symbolic construction, while reflecting the inscription of major literary metanarratives of Portuguese and European tradition, particularly the classical heritage and its mythical models.

The author primarily understands himself as a poet. However, the deliberate reorganization of his *Obra Poética* (1988) establishes a macrostructure grounded in a deep cognitive schema—the archetype of the journey—recognized by specialists in Davidian criticism. This schema organizes lyrical moments into a coherent, albeit virtual, narrative of identity.

This simulation of a mythical narrative structure suggests not only a rigorous project of self-reflection and cognitive coherence, but also reveals narrative as a mode of mental organization. Thus, lyrical moments are read as segmented episodes of an implicit mythical macro-narrative, identitarily cohesive, within a scheme of symbolic compression that integrates fragments into a global architecture. To illustrate these dynamics, selected excerpts from exemplary poems will be addressed.

This system of symbolic modeling of experience entails a teleological function, insofar as ephemeral time is transfigured through mythical temporality. It also results in a cognitive strategy for integrating autobiographical memory and affective experience, particularly the liminal dimensions of existence.

Based on a brief transversal reading of Mourão-Ferreira's *Obra Poética*, this study will highlight features that reveal the persistence of a mythopoetics, both at the

ontological level, as a form of constructing the subject and meaning, and at the formal, linguistic, imagistic, symbolic, and prosodic levels.

Finally, the article seeks to discuss the possible cognitive advantages of a mythopoetic structure: promotion of processing economy; symbolic compression and pattern recognition; integration of experience, memory, and affectivity; authorial coherence as a narrative continuity of the self; and the reader's interpretative engagement.

Embedded viewpoint and joint attention in Jane Austen

Eve Sweetser

University of California, Berkeley, USA

Literary embedded viewpoint (Dancygier 2012, Vandelanotte, 2009, Nikiforidou 2012) is often achieved by systematic combinations of linguistic forms suitable to the narrator and the embedded character. In gesture and in signed language, embedding often involves representing two physical viewpoints, a character one and an observer one (Sweetser 2013). Jane Austen exploits a similar technique of embedded viewpoint: the narrator tracks one character's visual attention to another character's visual attention. In a chaperoned, limited-privacy culture, communication (romantic and otherwise) was necessarily often indirect, giving added importance to non-verbal channels. Austen pays close attention to characters' processes of theorizing other characters' minds; her socially "discerning" characters in particular observe multimodal behavior, especially gaze – not just the publicly-displayed speech channel.

In *Emma* (III, 5), Mr. Knightley notices Frank Churchill (ostensibly courting Emma) betraying knowledge of local news unknown to his stepmother, his recognized correspondent (the news was actually received via secret correspondence with Jane Fairfax). Knightley then watches Jane ignore Frank's subsequent nonverbal efforts to get her attention. At Frank's suggestion, the larger group then plays a jumbled-letter game of word-decipherment (meanings are irrelevant). When Frank offers Jane a "jumble," Knightley sees her (1) check for surrounding attention, (2) decipher it and smile slightly, (3) look across the table at Frank, then (4) blush when the letters are publicly deciphered by another player as blunder (Frank's apology for carelessness). Other players show no such responses; Knightley (still unaware of Jane and Frank's secret engagement) knows that for Jane the letters must evoke

secret, potentially embarrassing meaning based on shared knowledge with Frank. Blunder - just an English word to the others - evokes a cognitively-active frame for them.

Unspoken communication via shared attention to objects (here including a written word) indicates tacit shared knowledge and thus implies intimacy; here, it does the communicative work without speech to or by Jane. Everyone present has visual and auditory access to this exchange - but amid other ongoing interaction, they remain unaware of Knightley's silent observation, of Frank and Jane's unspoken exchange, and of the conflicting nature of that exchange with Frank's courtship of Emma. Emma in particular is not a very discerning observer at this moment, which is why we unusually for Austen) follow a male character's viewpoint instead. The narrator has given us insight into Knightley's process of insight, not only into the minds of those he observes.

References

Dancygier, Barbara and Eve Sweetser. (eds.) 2012. Viewpoint in language. Cambridge University Press.

Dancygier, Barbara. 2012. The language of stories. Cambridge University Press.

Nikiforidou, Kiki. 2012. The constructional underpinnings of viewpoint blends: The PAST + now in language and literature. In Dancygier and Sweetser (2012).

Sweetser, Eve. 2013. Creativity across modalities in viewpoint construction. In Mike Borkent et al.(eds), Language and the Creative Mind. Stanford CA: CSLI Publications.

Vandelandotte, Lieven. 2009. Speech and thought representation in English. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Shared Reading and Young Adults: Impacts on Well Being and Reading Habits

Tina Ternes (and Moniek Kuijpers, Antonia Vogler)

Digital Humanities Lab, Basel, Switzerland

Young adulthood is characterised by a number of challenging transitions - gaining independence, facing increased academic or professional demands, and establishing new social networks - that are currently met with global difficulties such as growing up during the COVID-19 Pandemic, the climate crisis, and growing social injustice (Krokstad et al., 2022). Compared to other age groups and previous

generations, today's young adults are particularly affected by mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression (Gustavson et al., 2018; Bie et al., 2024). Additionally, there are rising concerns about young people's reading habits and a possible decline in their ability to engage with texts attentively (Hakemulder & Mangen, 2024).

Shared Reading (SR), a live reading group practice developed by The Reader Organization in Liverpool, has gained considerable interest in research for its therapeutic effects (Järvholm et al., 2025), such as alleviating symptoms of depression (Billington et al., 2010) and increasing interpersonal trust, hope, and well-being (Liebling et al., 2022) in addition to reports on changes in participants' private reading habits (Billington et al., 2010). However, research on SR as an intervention has primarily focused on clinical samples and older adults.

To address this gap, we conducted a 10-week intervention study investigating whether participation in SR leads to changes in mental well-being and reading habits among young adults (ages 18 to 25) in Switzerland (N = 17) and the UK (N = 4). We measured mental well-being using the short version of the Psychological Well-Being Scale (Ryff & Keyes, 1994) and a short version of the Self-Compassion Trait Scale (Raes et al., 2011). Reading habits were assessed through the Predictors of Leisure Reading Scale (Martin-Chang et al., 2021) and an adapted version of the Reading Habits Questionnaire (Kuijpers, Douglas & Kuiken, 2020). The questionnaires also included open-response questions regarding participants' experience with sharing in the group, the impact of SR on their lives, their relationship with other group members, and whether they engaged in other forms of social reading. Questionnaires were filled in before, after, and eight weeks after the intervention, with participants also taking part in a focus group interview.

This presentation will discuss the effects of the intervention as measured by self-report psychological instruments, integrating the qualitative data from the questionnaires and focus group to illustrate how the trends identified in our statistical analysis are expressed in the participants' own words and highlight findings that were not captured in the quantitative data.

References

- Bie, F., Yan, X., Xing, J., Wang, L., Xu, Y., Wang, G., Wang, Q., Guo, J., Qiao, J., & Rao, Z. (2024). Rising global burden of anxiety disorders among adolescents and young adults: Trends, risk factors, and the impact of socioeconomic disparities and COVID-19 from 1990 to 2021. *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, 15. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsy.2024.1489427>
- Billington, J., Dowrick, C., Hamer, A., Robinson, J., & Williams, C. (2010). An investigation into the therapeutic benefits of reading in relation to depression and

well-being. Liverpool: The Reader Organization, Liverpool Health Inequalities Research Centre.

Gustavson, K., Knudsen, A. K., Nesvåg, R., Knudsen, G. P., Vollset, S. E., & Reichborn-Kjennerud, T. (2018). Prevalence and stability of mental disorders among young adults: Findings from a longitudinal study. *BMC Psychiatry*, 18(1), 65. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12888-018-1647-5>

Hakemulder, F., & Mangen, A. (2024). Literary Reading on Paper and Screens: Associations Between Reading Habits and Preferences and Experiencing Meaningfulness. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 59(1), 57-78. <https://doi.org/10.1002/rrq.527>

Järnholm, K., Ohlsson, A., Bernhardsson, K., Gustafsson, A. W., Johnsson, P., Malmström, M., Wistrand, J., & Forslid, T. (2025). Shared reading as an intervention to improve health and well-being in adults: A scoping review. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 16. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2025.1484839>

Krokstad, S., Weiss, D. A., Krokstad, M. A., Rangul, V., Kvaløy, K., Ingul, J. M., Bjerkeset, O., Twenge, J., & Sund, E. R. (2022). Divergent decennial trends in mental health according to age reveal poorer mental health for young people: Repeated cross-sectional population-based surveys from the HUNT Study, Norway. *BMJ Open*, 12(5), e057654. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2021-057654>

Kuijpers, M. M., Douglas, S., & Kuiken, D. (2020). Capturing the ways we read: Introducing the reading habits questionnaire. *Anglistik: International Journal of English Studies*, 31(1), 53-69.

Liebling, P. A., Auty, D. K., Gardom, J., & Lieber, E. (2022). An Evaluation of the Experience and Meaning of Shared Reading in Psychologically Informed Planned Environments in Prisons.

Martin-Chang, S., Kozak, S., Levesque, K. C., Calarco, N., & Mar, R. A. (2021). What's your pleasure? Exploring the predictors of leisure reading for fiction and nonfiction. *Reading and Writing*, 34, 1387-1414.

Raes, F., Pommier, E., Neff, K. D., & Van Gucht, D. (2011). Construction and factorial validation of a short form of the Self-Compassion Scale. *Clinical Psychology & Psychotherapy*, 18, 250-255.

Ryff, C. D., & Keyes, C. L. M. (1995). The structure of psychological well-being revisited. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 69(4), 719-727. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.69.4.719>

Stories in FutureMind

Mark Turner (and Tiago Torrent)

Case Western Reserve University, USA | Federal University of Juiz de Fora, Brazil

Stories are not chiefly entertainment; story is a basic mental operation. Most of human experience, knowledge, and reasoning comes organized as stories, from small spatial episodes to extended narratives that support prediction, planning, evaluation, and explanation.

Future imagination runs on the same machinery. Because the future cannot be perceived, it is built as a story-based simulation: prompts activate conceptual frames, open mental spaces on a time line, and drive blending that produces emergent structure.

This talk asks how prompting for conceptions of the future operates when its purpose is public coordination—getting an audience to imagine, as closely as possible, the future scenario envisioned by a communicator. The talk starts with the fictive “Privée Mystique” advertisement from the Future Today Institute’s Tech Trends Report, which invites viewers to imagine a near-future world where makeup can conceal identity from facial-recognition systems. The ad establishes a mediated blended joint-attention scene, activates the Body_decoration frame, and projects from that base a mental space network for the future. That mental space network includes extensive blending, most notably of body decoration with protection and privacy to reframe makeup foundation as an identity-protection device.

Prompted future imagination is storytelling whose success depends on culturally grounded base frames that persist—and sometimes fracture—across comprehenders. We introduce FutureVision, a method for measuring the degree of success by combining multimodal frame-semantic annotation, cosine-similarity metrics, and eye tracking. Our method uses viewer eye fixation as a measure of semantic similarity between the intended future story and the understood future story. In a pilot with pairs of participants, eight ads were grouped by valence (optimistic/pessimistic) and counterfactual distance (near/far future); in sets of paired viewers, one participant explained each ad to a partner while gaze and pupil dilation were recorded. Semantic similarity was higher for near-future than far-future scenarios, and tended to be higher for optimistic than pessimistic scenarios. Yet “Privée Mystique”—intended as near-future optimistic—elicited betrayal/theft framings and low similarity; gaze patterns were typical, pointing to a base-space violation rather than lack of attention. Cognitive load tracked the mismatch: pupil dilation increased with temporal distance and with divergence, accounting for 23% of variance in semantic similarity.

We offer an analysis of future-oriented stories and a method for behavioral experiments on the match between intention and reception.

Necropolitics and Media Narrative Cognition

Changiz M. Varzi

Catholic University of Portugal

The Cameroonian theorist Achille Mbembe (2003) developed the theory of necropolitics to explain the conditions that shape relations between the coloniser and the colonised. This theory has been widely taken up by scholars in political and social studies, exploring the life and death of marginalised groups such as Indigenous Peoples in Canada (Martensen 2021) and people living under neo-colonialism in places like Puerto Rico (Khoshnevis 2024). However, media scholars have also used necropolitics to analyse media narratives. Despite this growing interest, there is still no shared understanding of what exactly “media necropolitics” means or how to use the concept as a tool for studying media narratives.

Mbembe brings together Foucault’s theory of biopower (1998) and Agamben’s work on the state of exception (2005), arguing that the highest expression of power is the sovereign’s ability to decide “who may live and who must die” (Mbembe, 2003, p. 11). He calls the places where this occurs “death-worlds”, where people live under conditions that reduce them to what he names “the living-dead” (ibid., p. 40).

Media scholars have used the concept of the death-world to study journalism in contexts affected by conflict, colonialism, and broader inequalities, focusing on how media narrative cognition shapes which lives matter and how death is understood. Deprez (2023) develops “visual necropolitics” in relation to news imagery from Palestine; İşleyen and Çoban (2025) examine Turkish media coverage of violence against women and gender minorities; and Lewis (2023) analyses necropolitical governance on digital platforms. Together, these studies show the breadth of necropolitics in media research, while also revealing the lack of a clear definition of media necropolitics.

This study aims to address this gap by providing a clear conceptual and explanatory framework for applying a necropolitical perspective in media studies. It also proposes a working definition of media necropolitics to guide future research. The study asks a central research question: How can necropolitics be applied in media studies, and what conceptual gaps need to be addressed to build a clearer framework for “media necropolitics”?

This paper uses a scoping review approach to examine academic articles, book chapters, and conference papers published between 2003 and 2025 that employ necropolitics to study media. By comparing the various uses of Mbembe's theory, this study identifies key themes and frames drawn from necropolitics in media studies.

References

Agamben, Giorgio. 2005. *State of Exception*. University of Chicago Press.

Deprez, Miriam. 2023. "Visual Necropolitics and Visual Violence: Theorizing Death, Sight, and Sovereign Control of Palestine." *International Political Sociology* 17 (3): olad016. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ips/olad016>.

Foucault, Michel. 1998. *The History of Sexuality the Will to Knowledge*. Penguin Books, Limited.

İşleyen, Melike, and Barış Çoban. 2025. "Mediation of Gendered Life and Death Within Intersecting Regimes of Patriarchy, Authoritarianism, and Necropolitics." *Media and Communication* 13 (0). <https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.10626>.

Khoshnevis, Hadi. 2024. "State of Exception, Necropolitics, and Puerto Rico: Naturalizing Disaster and Naturalizing Difference." *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 35 (1): 75-89. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10455752.2023.2279957>.

Lewis, Kelly. 2023. "Colonising the Narrative Space: Unliveable Lives, Unseeable Struggles and the Necropolitical Governance of Digital Populations." *Information, Communication & Society* 26 (12): 2398-418. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2023.2230260>.

Martensen, Sophia. 2021. "Necropolitics, Colonialism, and Indigenous Peoples in Canada." *York University Criminological Review* 3 (1).

<https://csri.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/default/article/view/115>.

Mbembe, Achille. 2003. "Necropolitics." *Public Culture* 15 (1): 11-40.

The Shaping of Courtly Identity through an Invented Mirror for Princes

Gijs Versteegen

Universidad Rey Juan Carlos, Madrid, Spain

Around 1524, the Spanish chronicler and preacher Antonio de Guevara wrote a mirror for princes for Emperor Charles V, titled *El libro áureo de Marco Aurelio*. This book contained a biography of the Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius, whose life was presented as an example for Charles of Habsburg. However, the life of the Roman emperor was almost entirely invented. Guevara fabricated sources, letters and discourses, and concocted stories, sometimes hilarious, about the Roman emperor's private life, such as his disputes with his wife Faustina. Through his invented story, Guevara was able to covertly criticise Charles V, and the courtly life of his times. This intimate, and often humorous account of the life of Marcus Aurelius, was therefore an ambiguous mirror. The invented narrative was hugely popular within the Spanish Monarchy and beyond its borders, and Charles V himself seemed to have appreciated it greatly. The success was partly due to how Guevara addressed and raised the interest of both the emperor and a wider audience of readers. This paper explores how this invented narrative, which was both humorous and ambiguous, enabled Spanish courtiers to redefine their identity as servants of the emperor in a changing court that was open to European influences.

Implicit Narrativity in Self-Making and Sense-Making

Michael Wheeler

University of Stirling, UK

No one could seriously doubt that the stories that we construct about ourselves figure in our cognitive processing as tools for self-interpretation, self-reflection and self-management. However, some thinkers have been attracted by the more radical view that selves come into being only through their being narrated. Call this the strong narrative self hypothesis (SNS). On the most obvious reading, SNS implies that coherent self-experience is always narrative in form, meaning that it would be falsified by cases of coherent self-experience that are not. In attempts to deal with what look to be such cases, the notion of implicit narrativity has been pressed into service. The idea is that although the experiences that look to be troublesome are not explicitly narrative in form, they nevertheless possess some sort of implicit

narrativity. If this is right, then SNS is potentially alive and well. But what precisely is implicit narrativity? I'll begin by noting that this question is relevant not only to our self-making practices, but also to a broader range of practices through which we make sense of the world. Then I'll attempt to get a grip on the target notion. What will quickly become clear is how difficult it is to throw off a more complex version of the very problem with which we began, and to which implicit narrativity is supposed to be the solution. Indeed, we are in danger of oscillating between an account of implicit narrativity that is too demanding (because it requires cognitive agents to store in their heads unconscious structures that are articulated explicitly as narratives) and an account that makes the notion of implicit narrativity trivial (because it identifies implicit narrativity with narratability). Via a consideration of psychological studies of narrative listening to music (the phenomenon in which listeners produce self-generated narratives in response to wordless music), I shall navigate a path between the horns of this dilemma. The result will be an account of implicit narrativity that is arguably at odds with SNS, but which makes productive connections with recent work in narratology and enactivist cognitive science, and, for good measure, provides a science-friendly take on what Sartre was driving at all along in his existentialist notion of freedom.

Performative Hypomnemata – Narrative Sense-Making in Performance Poetry from a 4E Perspective

Ramona Zăvoianu-Petrovici

University of Bucharest, Romania

Our contribution examines performance poetry as a site where narrative sense emerges through embodied, situated, and technologically mediated practices. While drawing on 4E cognition and the Skilled Intentionality Framework, we argue that narrative in performance poetry is enacted through skilled engagement with an evolving field of affordances that spans bodies, voices, technical setups, and material memory supports.

As a case study, our contribution focuses on the work of the Slovak poet and intermedia artist Zuzana Husárová, particularly on to her poetry collection *Hypomnemata* and its performance ecology. While *Hypomnemata* can be read as a printed text, its narrative layer is revealed most clearly across performances that mobilize vocal modulation, rhythmic timing, sonic processing, and spatial arrangements, which do not merely accompany a pre-existing story but actively

participate in shaping narrative coherence, affect, and temporality. We introduce the notion of performative hypomnemata to describe how textual scores, recordings, and technical presets function as affordance-stabilizing devices across iterations of reading and performance. We argue that such hypomnemonic supports structure a field of possible skilled actions, allowing narrative sense to emerge through repeated, situated coordination. From this perspective, reading and live performance constitute distinct but nonetheless interconnected modes of engaging with the same narrative ecology.

By linking 4E cognition with recent cognitive-narratological work on literary practices (e.g., Karin Kukkonen), we address a key theoretical tension between propositional literary knowledge ("knowing-that") and skill-based engagement ("knowing-how"). We consider that conceptual knowledge—such as intertextual reference or cultural memory—operates as a class of culturally stabilized affordances whose narrative relevance is realized only through skilled enactment. Performance poetry makes this coordination visible, showing how narrative emerges from the dynamic interplay of memory, action, and environment. Last but not least, we contribute to cognitive narrative theory by demonstrating how multimodal performance practices foreground narrative as an ecological, enactive process, expanding current models of narrative cognition beyond text-centered accounts.