

Spring School “The Role of Empathy and Emotion in Understanding Fiction” – March 27-31 2017

Keynote lectures

Currie, Gregory University of York	t.b.a.
Green, Melanie University of Buffalo	<p>First lecture: Transportation into Narrative Worlds</p> <p>This talk will describe research on the process of being transported into a narrative world, or immersed in a story. It will focus on the experience of being transported, as well as the antecedents and consequences of transportation.</p> <p>Second lecture: Creating Empathy (and Emotion) Through Narrative Content</p> <p>This talk will discuss current research directions linking emotion, empathy, and action, drawing on psychological and communication theories.</p>
Jacobs, Arthur Freie Universität Berlin	<p>Empathic, immersive, and aesthetic processes in prose and poetry reception: a neurocognitive poetics perspective</p> <p>When scanning a phone book for a number, reflecting upon the first lines of Finnegans Wake, getting lost in a passage from Harry Potter, or being enchanted by a verse from a Shakespeare sonnet, readers can experience a wealth of feelings that are shaped by an even bigger affluence of factors, such as reading perspective and motivation, textual qualities and task demands, or personality and context. In this talk, I will use a comprehensive model of literary reading, the neurocognitive poetics model (NCPM; Jacobs, 2011; 2015), to derive hypotheses about possible effects of these factors on two theoretically rival processes, immersive and aesthetic ones. Results from neurocognitive and behavioral studies of both prose and poetry reception will be discussed in the light of these hypotheses with a special look on the role of empathy and fiction feelings. With regard to prose, the fiction feeling hypothesis of the NCPM will be examined, i.e. the assumption that narratives with emotional contents invite readers more to be empathic with the protagonists and thus engage the affective empathy networks of the brain, than do stories with neutral contents. As concerns poetry, the mood empathy hypothesis (Jacobs et al., 2016; Lüdtke et al., 2014) will be scrutinized, according to which poems expressing moods of persons, or situations should engage readers to mentally simulate and affectively resonate with the depicted state of affairs. The data collected so far using materials from the Black Stories, Harry Potter, ETA Hoffmann’s The Sandman, and a collection of German poems from authors such as Hölderlin, Rilke,</p>

	<p>Ausländer, or Grünbein, support both hypotheses and strengthen the NCPM’s basic dual-route architecture opposing a fluent and a dysfluent reading mode driven by different text features and their implicit vs. explicit processing, i.e. background and foreground elements and immersive vs. aesthetic feelings.</p> <p>Jacobs, A. M. (2011). Neurokognitive Poetik: Elemente eines Modells des literarischen Lesens (Neurocognitive poetics: elements of a model of literary reading), in Gehirn und Gedicht: Wie wir unsere Wirklichkeiten konstruieren (Brain and Poetry: How We Construct Our Realities), ed. R. Schrott and A. M. Jacobs (München: Carl Hanser Verlag), 492–520.</p> <p>Jacobs AM (2015). Neurocognitive poetics: methods and models for investigating the neuronal and cognitive-affective bases of literature reception. Front. Hum. Neurosci. 9:186. doi: 10.3389/fnhum.2015.00186</p> <p>Jacobs, A. M., Lüdtke, J., Aryani, A., Meyer-Sickendiek, B., and Conrad, M. (2016). Mood- empathic and aesthetic responses in poetry reception: A model-guided, multilevel, multimethod approach. Scientific Study of Literature, 6(1), 87–130. doi:10.1075/ssol.6.1.06jac</p> <p>Lüdtke, J., Meyer-Sickendiek, B., and Jacobs, A. M. (2014). Immersing in the Stillness of an Early Morning: Testing the Mood Empathy Hypothesis in Poems. Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts, 8(3), 363–377. doi:10.1037/a0036826.</p>
<p>Keen, Suzanne Washington and Lee University</p>	<p>First lecture: “Recuperating <i>Einfühlung</i> for Narrative Empathy.”</p> <p>This lecture introduces an example of literary representation of the objects of empathy from a contemporary novella, Patrick Rothfuss’s <i>The Slow Regard of Silent Things</i> (2014). It situates <i>Einfühlung</i> among the nine phenomena that go by the label of “empathy” in contemporary discourse, expanding on C. Daniel Batson’s disentanglement of the eight different phenomena that coexist under the single label “empathy.” I add to Batson’s list a ninth phenomenon, Mark Davis’s “fantasy empathy,” since narrative empathy is a subset of fantasy empathy, one that deserves our attention. I conclude by discussing an older research tradition into aesthetics that preserves an interest in <i>Einfühlung</i>, especially as it pertains to literary texts (and <i>especially</i> in those texts that evoke narrative empathy).</p> <p>Second lecture: “Narrative Personal Distress and the Embodied Reader”</p> <p>Not all narrative aims to induce pleasure, as narrative theorists since Aristotle have understood. In this lecture, I redress my neglect of an intense form of narrative empathy, narrative personal distress (NPD). I reconsider the particular forms of readers’ narrative empathy that invite intense, aversive bodily responses to fictional representations of others. In the psychological literature, personal distress is regarded as a form of empathy oriented primarily towards the <i>self</i>, causing aversion from the source: people experiencing personal distress seek to avoid or discontinue contact with the cause of their feelings. Unlike other-oriented empathy, which could lead to mature sympathy or even prosocial action on behalf of others, personal distress shows when the people feeling it push away, tune out, or refuse to engage. I</p>

	re-evaluate and revise my earlier judgment that NPD has no place in a theory of narrative empathy, reporting on the feelings of readers experienced empathic personal distress in response to narratives.
Matravers, Derek The Open University	<p>First lecture: 'Are Readers Empathetic?'</p> <p>Readers represent the content of narratives to themselves; this is called 'the situation model'. This talk will look at evidence for the nature of that model, and discuss the relation between this evidence and the claim that readers are empathetic.</p> <p>Second lecture: 'Empathy and Criticism'</p> <p>This talk will examine the relation between the psychology of text processing and the humanistic discipline of criticism. It will touch on problems with psychological experiments (the sophistication of the participants and the sophistication of the test narratives). It will then consider some solutions to these problems, before concluding that the relation between psychology and criticism is indeed problematic.</p>
Robinson, Jennefer University of Cincinnati	<p>First lecture: Does responding emotionally to a literary fiction contribute to its literary value, and if so how? The case of character.</p> <p>Second lecture: Does the arousal of empathy by a fictional work contribute to its literary value, and if so how? The case of the implied author.</p>