

VAL Symposium 2023

Digital Literature, AI and Literary Studies

Book of Abstracts

17 November 2023

10:00-18:00

University of Antwerp

City campus

Klooster van de Grauwzusters

Lange Sint-Annastraat 7

Introduction

Digitization is having significant effects, including on literature. Literary scholars study various developments of e-literature or digital literature, such as generative literature (e.g. Code Poetry or Machine Poetry) and web literature (e.g. Instapoetry or Twitterature). Research projects examine new forms of literary criticism on social media (e.g. Goodreads and #Bookstagram) or the mass production of fanfiction (on platforms such as fanfiction.net and fanfiktion.de). The question to what extent the possibilities of artificial intelligence have already changed and will continue to change literary and academic writing processes is very acute. In addition, the question arises as to which digital methods literary researchers can – or even should – use to analyse these disparate phenomena. It is also important in literary education to determine which forms of digital literacy are indispensable today to understand literary developments in a digital society.

However, the rise of digital literature, social media and artificial intelligence has even more far-reaching implications for literary studies, affecting its fundamentals. What is still ‘literature’ on social media anyway? What is still ‘authorship’ in a world of artificial intelligence? Which new literary genres can we identify and describe in digital literature? In what ways do writing and reception processes change when they are mostly digital? Does this change the aesthetic and social significance of literary techniques such as montage? What digital methods and concepts from Digital Humanities and Critical Code Studies help us examine these phenomena appropriately? What effects do such developments have not only on the conceptual categories of literary theory but also practically on copyrights, the literary market, literary education? Do we perhaps even need our own subdiscipline, such as a ‘Web Literary Studies’, that looks specifically at these questions?

At the VAL Symposium 2023 (VAL = Vlaamse Vereniging voor Algemene en Vergelijkende Literatuurwetenschap) we aim to look more broadly and historically at these developments from an international perspective to reflect on such questions – with a focus on digital literature on the one hand and the interaction between artificial intelligence and literature on the other – as challenges for literary studies in Flanders. The debate will be fuelled by two international keynote speakers: Astrid Ensslin (Professor of Digital Cultures and Communication, Regensburg), who will take a look from the perspective of Game Studies at research on digital literature since 1990, and Nick Montfort (Professor of Digital Media, MIT / Bergen Centre for Digital Narrative), who will look historically at developments within generative literature since the 1950s. In a panel debate with colleagues from various Flemish universities, we will discuss which international impulses from these disciplines Flemish literary studies has already adopted or should yet adopt.

By definition, the annual VAL symposium consists of two components. On the one hand, we organize the plenary sessions with keynote lectures and a panel debate, focusing on a pre-defined theme – this year the topic is “Digital literature, AI and literary studies”. On the other hand, during the afternoon, literary scholars from Flanders (or neighbouring regions and countries) have the opportunity to present their own research in parallel sessions. Thus the VAL wants to create a place where primarily doctoral and postdoctoral researchers come to share insights and findings from their research. For this part in the afternoon, the proposed topics are free.

The VAL symposium is organized annually by the Literary Studies Departments of KU Leuven, VUB, UGent and UAntwerpen. It rotates between the participating institutions and receives practical and logistical support from the host institution. This year, for the first time, it is also financially supported by the Flemish Interuniversity Council (VLIR).

Venue: The conference takes place at the University of Antwerp, Klooster van de Grauwzusters (Building S), Lange Sint-Annastraat 7, 2000 Antwerp.

Web: <http://www.vval.be/studiedag2023.html>.

E-Mail: Local organizers are Thomas Ernst and Leonore Nassen (University of Antwerp): valstudiedag2023@uantwerpen.be.

Programme Schedule of VAL Symposium 2023

09:30-10:00 | Patio | Registratie en ontvangst met koffie

10:00-12:00 | Promotiezaal

Plenaire Sessie “Digitale Literatuur en haar onderzoek in een digitale maatschappij”

Welkom en inleiding

Bart Eeckhout (UAntwerpen, VAL)

Thomas Ernst / Leonore Nassen (UAntwerpen, lokale organisatie)

Keynotelezing → see p. 4

Astrid Ensslin (University of Regensburg):

Historicizing E-literature Research: A Ludic Approach

Panel- en publieksdebat → see p. 6

“Digital Literature and AI: Challenges and Inspirations for the Literary Studies of the Future”

Sprekers: Leah Budke (KU Leuven) | Astrid Ensslin (University of Regensburg) |

Robbe Vandersmissen (UGent)

12:00-14:00 | Patio | Lunch

14:00-16:00 | Verschillende lokalen

Parallele sessies → see p. 7 for a detailed programme

Section 1: Digital Literary Studies and Digital Humanities

Section 2: Literature, Authorship and Literary Criticism in a Digital Society

Section 3: Bodies and Objects, Identity and Representation in Literature, Theatre and Film

Section 4: Biographies, Characters and Identities in Radio, Children’s and Youth Literature

16:00-16:30 | Patio | Koffie

16:30-17:30 | Kapel

Plenaire sessie “Literatuur, letterkunde en artificiële intelligentie”

Keynotelezing → see p. 5

Nick Montfort (MIT / Bergen Center for Digital Narrative):

Seventy Years of Computer-Generated Literature in English

17:30 | Patio | Receptie

**Astrid Ensslin (University of Regensburg):
Historicizing E-literature Research: A Ludic Approach**

In this talk, I offer a historical overview of electronic literature research and scholarship since its inception in the 1990s. I trace its growth and genealogy alongside and in response to techno-aesthetic developments from the early days of computation to the present day, taking into account its transmedial embeddedness and medium-specific materiality. I shed light on the development of the e-lit community and its institutionalization, internationalization and diversification through the Electronic Literature Organization from the late 1990s onwards. My orientation is positioned in Anglophone digital-born fictions and literary games, and I will use vignettes from my own research to illustrate the unfolding of waves of e-lit and generations of e-lit scholarship, from analyzing playful pre-web hypertext to studying reader-players of VR fiction. I also offer some projections on the future of the field and its main potential for evoking social change.

Astrid Ensslin is Professor of Digital Cultures and Communication at the University of Regensburg, where she teaches and supervises students in Media, Communication, Literary, Cultural and Area Studies. She is also a Research Affiliate in Digital Culture and Narrative at the University of Bergen and an Adjunct Professor of Digital Humanities and Game Studies at the University of Alberta (CA). Her research interests are:

- Digital Media Aesthetics, Communication and Culture, with a specific emphasis on:
 - Electronic literature as literary media: digital-born fictions; literary games; e-literatureS; pre-web e-lit; medial reading; medium-specific analysis; feminist and applied approaches to e-lit; critical making; empirical reader/player research; body image and critical, digital-born bibliotherapy; e-lit curatorship
 - Videogame studies: literary gaming; regional and decolonial game studies; World Games and folk mechanic; metagames; the language(s)/discourse(s) of gaming; life formation games; ludonarratologies
 - Cultural Studies: esp. gender and the body; postcolonial and decolonial theory; digital spaces
- Language in the media: videogame discourses; metalanguage; language ideologies (e.g. videogames, online fandom, and Wikipedia); critical sociolinguistics; gender and language
- Specialized language corpora: gamer language (GameCorp); written learner language (WHiG); Early Modern German newspapers (GerManC); Language in the Media.

More information on Astrid Ensslin:

- <https://astridensslin.wordpress.com/>
- <https://www.uni-regensburg.de/citas/area-studies-professuren/prof-dr-astrid-ensslin/index.html>

**Nick Montfort (MIT / Bergen Centre for Digital Narrative):
Seventy Years of Computer-Generated Literature in English**

Hypertext fiction, interactive fiction, multimedia works and online performance are just a few of the types of literary art where computational and the digital are essential. Because social media and the news media have recently seized on a few corporate products that are “generative,” we may now be particularly attuned to another type of work: computer-generated literature. This sort of work did not emerge recently from a San Francisco startup company, however. Even restricting the discussion to English-language work (and work well-known in English translation), literary generation dates from 1953, and has many distinctive features. Much of it is in minor genres: Generating letters, conversational dialogues, and even literary sentences has been at least as important as producing novels and stage plays. Early on, artists and researchers made more significant contributions than writers did. Major advances have been made throughout the decades by people who program computers rather than just managing projects. A wide range of formal techniques have been employed and many different material manifestations have resulted. Finally, while today’s large language models aim to mimic human writing (even when their output is semantically vacuous), historical projects have often taken a radically different approach: Using computers to do overtly non-human writing that nevertheless resonates with human readers.

As a poet and artist, **Nick Montfort** uses computation as his medium. His computer-generated books range from *#!* to *Golem*. His digital projects include the collaborations *The Deletionist* and *Sea and Spar Between*. Montfort is a scholar, researcher, and educator. His MIT Press publications include *The New Media Reader* (which he co-edited) and *Twisty Little Passages*, *The Future*, and *Exploratory Programming for the Arts and Humanities*. He is professor of digital media at MIT and principal investigator in the Center for Digital Narrative at the University of Bergen. He directs a lab/studio, The Trope Tank, and lives in New York City.

More information on Nick Montfort

- <https://nickm.com/>
- <https://cmsw.mit.edu/profile/nick-montfort/>
- <https://www.uib.no/en/persons/Nick.Montfort>

**“Digital Literature and AI:
Challenges and Inspirations for the Literary Studies of the Future”**

The rise of digital literature, social media and artificial intelligence has far-reaching implications for literary studies, affecting its fundamentals. What is still ‘authorship’ in a world of AI? Which new literary genres can we identify in digital literature? In what ways do writing and reception processes change when they are mostly digital? What digital methods and concepts from Digital Humanities help us examine these phenomena appropriately? In this public and panel discussion, the audience will be invited to contribute to these questions, but above all we have three speakers who will help us to deal with these challenges (on a field in transition).

Astrid Ensslin has been keeping an eye on how research into electronic literature is developing and how artificial intelligence has been used to produce literary works for many years. **Leah Budke** has actively worked with digital methods herself and stands for building bridges between Literary Studies and Digital Humanities, now even institutionally. **Robbe Vandersmissen** is working on the transformation of literature and the literary field in the digital society.

Speakers

Leah Budke (KU Leuven) is the Digital Humanities specialist for the Artes Research team at KU Leuven Libraries Artes. Her primary role is to advise researchers on digital tools and methods and to support the growth of the DH community at the KU Leuven Faculty of Arts. Leah first studied in the United States where she completed a BA in Modern Languages (2011) at Fort Hays State University. Thereafter, she moved to Belgium and completed a BA in Spanish and English Literature and Linguistics (2015) and an MA in English Literature and Linguistics (2016) at Ghent University. She holds a PhD in Literary Studies (2021) from Ghent University. Her dissertation, titled *Markers and Makers of Tradition: The Serially Published Modernist ‘Little’ Anthology (1912-1930)*, focuses on the role the anthology form played in the context of the early twentieth-century medial environment.

Astrid Ensslin (University of Regensburg) is Professor of Digital Cultures and Communication at the University of Regensburg, where she teaches and supervises students in Media, Communication, Literary, Cultural and Area Studies. She is also a Research Affiliate in Digital Culture and Narrative at the University of Bergen and an Adjunct Professor of Digital Humanities and Game Studies at the University of Alberta (CA). *More information:* → p. 4.

Robbe Vandersmissen (UGent) is a PhD candidate in Scandinavian Literature at the Department of Literary Studies at Ghent University and previously a visiting fellow at the Section for the Sociology of Literature at Uppsala University. He studied Germanistik, Scandinavian studies and Education in Ghent and Stockholm. His FWO-funded research project “Publishing between profit and prestige”, examines the impact of commercialisation, digitalisation and globalisation on the role, functioning and position of publishing houses in the contemporary field of fiction publishing in Sweden. Robbe’s research interests lie at the intersection of sociology of literature, distant reading and publishing studies. *See also* → p. 18.

Section 1: Digital Literary Studies and Digital Humanities

- Lindsey Geybels/Lien Claeys (UAntwerpen): Drawing Edges between Generations: Social Networks in the Works of Crosswriters
- Luna De Bruyne (UAntwerpen/UGent)/Véronique Hoste (UGent): Emotions in Guido Gezelle's 'Paper Women' letter correspondence
- Lamyk Bekius (UAntwerpen): Too little or too much data? Reflections on genetic criticism applied to floppy disk files and keystroke logging data
- Chiara Cremona (VUB): Studying the transcultural reception of English novels through digitised reviews of Italian periodical press
- Paavo Van der Eecken (UAntwerpen): Thinking Outside of the Bounding Box: A Reconsideration of the Application of Computational Tools on Uncertain Humanities Data

Section 2: Literature, Authorship and Literary Criticism in a Digital Society

Chair: Pim Verhulst (UAntwerpen)

- Giorgio Busi Rizzi (UGent): The Networked Author. Rethinking contemporary authorship through comics after the digital turn
- Michele Marchini (KU Leuven): Mexico and Digital Literature: Evolving Perspectives, from Juan Villoro to Mónica Nepote
- Robbe Vandersmissen (UGent): De toekomst voor oren: het luisterboek als gamechanger in het literaire veld
- Hanne Willekens (UGent): Gegenderde kritiek? Een empirische analyse van gender in literatuurrecencies in het Zweedse dagblad Dagens Nyheter (2018-2022)

Section 3: Bodies and Objects, Identity and Representation in Literature, Theatre and Film

Chair: Helga Mitterbauer (ULB)

- Jonas Vanderschueren (KU Leuven): "Zaraza": Re-imagining corporeality through environmentally adapted bodies in *The Witcher*
- Janina Meissner (UAntwerpen): "Ich muss das Ding haben." Things and their Poetic Potentials in Georg Büchner's *Woyzeck*
- Francis Mus (UGent): Zichtbaarheid en erkenning. Paratekstuele (zelf)representatiestrategieën in literaire vertalingen Frans-Nederlands in de Lage Landen
- Quintus Immisch (University of Tübingen/Aix-Marseille Université/Brussel): Freud and the Naked Truth. Case Study from a PhD Project on Nudity in Modern Literature and Culture

Section 4: Biographies, Characters and Identities in Radio, Children's and Youth Literature

Chair: Janine Hauthal (VUB)

- Iana Nikitenko (VUB): Narrating Lives Over the Airwaves: A Transnational Study of Post-war Radio Biographies in Britain and Germany
- Andrea Davidson and Rosemarie Knobloch (UAntwerpen): Adolescence onstage and behind the scenes: The intergenerational collaboration to adapt Aidan Chambers' *The Toll Bridge* into Ibycus' *De Tolbrug*
- Elena Guerzoni (Bologna/UAntwerpen): Like a River. Adolescence and Youth Literature: Metaphors of Ungraspable Identities
- Katrijn Van den Bossche (VUB): 'It's A Story. It's Not My Life': Reading Natasha Brown's *Assembly* (2021) as a Politically Engaged Anti-Novel

Section 1:

Digital Literary Studies and Digital Humanities

Lindsey Geybels/Lien Claey's (UAntwerpen):

Drawing Edges between Generations: Social Networks in Literary Fiction by Crosswriters

A lack of intergenerational contact, both in real life and as represented in literature, may hinder people's ability to think critically about ageist stereotypes (Deszcz-Tryhubczak and Jaques 2021). As children's literature has been established to play a large role in the socialisation of young people, the portrayal of interactions between fictional characters of diverse ages is paramount. Based on general characteristics of children's literature, Maria Nikolajeva posits that character networks in these books remain relatively small and sees a correlation between the number of secondary characters on the one hand and the age of the protagonist as well as the age of the intended reader on the other (2002, 111). Novels intended for adults usually include more characters and thus larger character networks, which means they – in theory – have the potential for a more diverse literary representation of intergenerational contact. Previous research, however, suggests that in practice, most adult novels include marginally few child or young adult characters and are “made up almost exclusively of adults” (Hollindale 2001, 21). To study the portrayal of intergenerational interactions in books intended for readers of different ages, this paper reports on an ongoing ERC-funded project, “Constructing Age for Young Readers,” that has compiled a corpus consisting of literary fiction by crosswriters. By grouping the texts together according to the age of the intended reader, we examine which generations interact in fiction for readers of different ages by using tools from the field of digital humanities.

Representations of relationships between literary characters have been studied extensively in the field of digital humanities with the use of network analysis. Oelke et al. (2013), for example, look at how social networks change over the course of a story to trace the development of character relations. Static relations can be mapped in either a single novel (see Agarwal et al. 2012) or across a larger corpus (see Smeets 2021). Following Roel Smeets' previous research, who showed that “character-based critiques of literary representation” have a lot to “gain by integrating data-driven methods into the practice of critical close reading” (11-12), we use network analysis on an age-based annotated corpus of 240 books intended for readers of different ages to study the literary representation of intergenerational relationships on a large scale. A recurring issue when using computational tools to study fictional characters, however, is the disambiguation of all references to relevant characters (see Labatut and Bost 2020). To overcome this issue, as well as to ensure the correct assignment of the characters' age, all texts are manually annotated. The character networks generated from these texts represent intergenerational contact based on co-occurrence on sentence-level and on successive speech instances.

Biographical note

Lindsey Geybels is a children's literature researcher at the University of Antwerp, where she is defending her PhD this year as a part of the ERC-funded project “Constructing Age For Young Readers”. Her research focuses on the influence that the age of the intended reader has on the construction of age in fiction for children and young adults. For this study, she uses digital tools to investigate the work of authors who write books for children, adolescents and adults.

Lien Claey's graduated in 2023 with a master's degree in English Literature and submitted an FWO-proposal on portrayals of happiness in queer young adult literature. Her research interests include age studies, queer studies and digital humanities. Currently, she is working as a research assistant at the University of Antwerp, contributing to the ERC-funded project “Constructing Age For Young Readers”.

where she uses both close reading and digital text analysis to analyse constructs of age in children's books and their adaptations.

Works cited

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- Smeets, Roel. *Character Constellations: Representations of Social Groups in Present-Day Dutch Literary Fiction*. Leuven University Press, 2021.

**Luna De Bruyne (UAntwerpen/UGent)/Véronique Hoste (UGent):
Emotions in Guido Gezelle's 'Paper Women' letter correspondence**

The 'Paper Women' citizen participation project has brought together the Guido Gezelle Archives of the Bruges Public Library and dedicated volunteers to create an online edition of Guido Gezelle's letter correspondence with over 200 women. This collection of letters constitutes a treasure trove of ego documents, offering an intimate glimpse into the life and work of the renowned poet while also shedding light on the experiences of numerous women in the 19th century. Currently, 233 letters exchanged with 65 correspondents have been digitized and integrated into the online archive known as GezelleBrOn. Ultimately, the goal of this ongoing initiative is to digitize all 2,300 fragments from Gezelle's correspondence.

The digitization of this collection has opened up new avenues for analysis, leveraging computational methods to scrutinize these letters at scale. In the current study, we are particularly interested in the emotional information within these correspondences. We therefore explore how state-of-the-art methods can be harnessed to map the emotions conveyed within the 'Paper Women' collection. Thanks to the collaboration with volunteers from the Bruges Public Library, we have annotated the sentiment and emotion in 1,482 fragments from 96 letters in the collection. Each fragment has been assessed for its sentiment polarity, annotated as *neutral*, *positive*, *negative*, or *mixed sentiment*. In instances of non-neutrality, we have further assigned one of 13 distinct emotion labels, encompassing *affection*, *hope*, *joy*, *pride*, *respect*, *anger*, *disappointment*, *fear*, *regret*, *sadness*, *other (positive)*, *other (negative)*, or *other (mixed)*.

Several characteristics of this text collection make the automatic processing of these letters especially challenging. The collection spans multiple languages, including English, Dutch, and French. Moreover, the 19th-century linguistic style and orthography differ significantly from modern language conventions, rendering conventional dictionary-based methods ineffective. Additionally, the absence of consistent punctuation in many of the letters presents a hurdle for text analysis at the sentence level.

To address these complexities, we employed various sentiment and emotion analysis approaches. These encompassed a dictionary-based approach, machine learning methods involving fine-tuning a large language model (RoBERTa) on the annotated letters, and the utilization of ChatGPT to classify texts into predetermined sentiment and emotion categories. For the first two approaches, we translated the annotated texts into contemporary English using ChatGPT to mitigate the challenges posed by multilingualism and the archaic language of the collection. We observed that employing the translated texts yielded superior classification results for both approaches. For sentiment analysis, the RoBERTa model showed the best performance, although the model failed to give predictions for 9 of the 13 emotion classes. In contrast, ChatGPT did provide outputs for all emotion categories, albeit with a notably lower degree of accuracy. Consequently, we adopted a hybrid approach, utilizing the RoBERTa model for sentiment analysis and integrating its predictions into ChatGPT prompts. This combination guided ChatGPT to produce an emotion class within the sentiment polarity predicted by the machine learning model. Furthermore, we instructed ChatGPT to pinpoint specific words within the original texts that served as triggers for identifying the conveyed emotions.

In summary, our proposed approach equips us with the tools to systematically analyze the emotional information in Guido Gezelle's letter correspondence. Beyond offering a general overview of the emotional landscape within this collection, we envision that this method can unveil individual correspondents' distinctive emotional profiles within the 'Paper Women' collection.

Biographical note

Luna De Bruyne is an assistant professor at CLiPS (the Centre for Computational Linguistics, Psycholinguistics and Sociolinguistics) at the University of Antwerp. Her expertise lies in natural language processing, with a special interest in sentiment analysis, emotion detection and multilingual NLP. She obtained her PhD on the topic of Dutch emotion detection ("Feeling EmotioNL: Automatically detecting emotions in Dutch texts") at Ghent University. Currently, her research revolves around examining variations in emotion verbalisation across languages and assessing how emotion detection models handle those differences.

Veronique Hoste is Senior Full Professor of Computational Linguistics at the Faculty of Arts and Philosophy at Ghent University. She is department head of the Department of Translation, Interpreting and Communication and director of the LT3 language and translation team at the same department. She is also research director of the Faculty of Arts and Philosophy. Veronique holds a PhD in computational linguistics from the University of Antwerp (Belgium) on "Optimization issues in machine learning of coreference resolution" (2005). She has expertise in machine learning of natural language, and more specifically in computational approaches to the modeling of semantics and discourse, such as event detection, entity and event coreference resolution, irony detection, emotion analysis, etc.

Lamyk Bekius (UAntwerpen):

Too little or too much data? Reflections on genetic criticism applied to floppy disk files and keystroke logging data

What will remain of our literary heritage as writers turn to digital environments for their writing processes? How does this affect their writing process? And, in turn, how can these writing processes still be studied? This paper presents reflection on working with two divergent examples of born-digital literary archival material: floppy disks and keystroke logging data.

The Letterenhuis in Antwerp preserves some born-digital material, including some floppy disks of the Flemish poet Herman de Coninck. The contents of the files on these floppy's have never been closely examined, and nobody knows exactly the contents. From what I have been able to deduce from the files, most of the documents are essays, mostly about poetry and literature in general. For example, some of the files on the disks are related to the following collections of essays: *De flaptekstlezer* (1992), *Intimiteit onder de melkweg* (1994) and *De vliegende keeper* (1995). Herman de Coninck wrote most of these essays for the newspaper *De Morgen*. Some relevant questions that could be answered by using the files are related to the genesis of these collections of essays: Which files are related to one of these publications? Are the files on the disks different from the published essays? Can the files on the disks tell us anything about De Coninck's selection process in compiling these collections of essays? And can digital forensic methods reveal hidden layers of these files?

While in the case of floppy disks the question is whether we have enough data to work with, technological advances also come with challenges from the other side of the spectrum. Keystroke logging tools, for example, allow us – in collaboration with living authors – to log the writing process from the first character typed to the last revision. What can we learn about the writing process when we have such large amounts of data to work with? Is every revision worth the study? I present some findings from my research on the keystroke logged writing processes of Gie Bogaert, David Troch, and Ellen Van Pelt, where I focus on revealing their decision-making process as they wrote their texts. As I draw conclusions from working with material of both sides of the spectrum, I will reflect on the methods available for preserving our born-digital literary heritage in Flanders.

Biographical note

Lamyk Bekius is the coordinator of the University of Antwerp's division of the CLARIAH-VL Open Humanities Service Infrastructure project. On 6 October, she will defend her PhD thesis '*Behind the computer screens: the use of keystroke logging for genetic criticism applied to born-digital works of literature*'. This research was part of the project 'Track Changes: Textual Scholarship and the Challenge of Digital Literary Writing', a collaboration between the University of Antwerp and the Huygens Institute (KNAW) in Amsterdam. Her research focuses on how genetic criticism can be applied to born-digital material, using keystroke logging data as well as digital forensic methods. She is also the coordinator of the platform{DH} and organizes its lecture series.

Chiara Cremona (VUB):

Studying the transcultural reception of English novels through digitized reviews of Italian periodical press

My contribution to the symposium discussion will consist in an insight into my previous research work on the *Transcultural Journalism* project, in the prospect of my forthcoming PhD studies.

I am now starting my PhD at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel, working on the research project *Rebuilding post-revolutionary identities in England, France and Italy: the reception, discussion and stigmatization of unruliness in novels through the periodical press (1816-1831)*, funded by the Research Foundation – Flanders (FWO). This is partly a Digital Humanities project, and therefore I plan to take advantage of my previous research activities and implement the skills I acquired, in terms of digital competences – as well as other aspects, such as the interrelation between literature and the press, and the reception of foreign novels in a particular European cultural and social context.

I worked as a Research Assistant on the project *Transcultural Journalism: English Novels and the Italian Press (1720-1830)* Transcultural Journalism | CWRC/CSEC, a Digital Humanities project at the University of Guelph (CA) whose aim is the study of the reception of English novels published in the reference period in Italy, through the reviews appeared on Italian newspapers and magazines in the same years.

In my presentation, I would like to discuss some of the new digital methods for the analysis of literary texts, with reference to my previous and future research, and show the benefits they can have in terms of deepened results, when confronted to a non-digital approach. I will illustrate how a complex corpus of reviews and announcements of English novels of the Enlightenment and Romanticism can become usable in a much more flexible way than before, in order to face more challenging research questions.

Biographical note

Chiara Cremona holds a Bachelor's degree in Modern Languages and Literatures (with a specialisation in English and Spanish) from the University of Milan, and an Erasmus Mundus Master Crossways in Cultural Narratives, carried out in the University of Santiago de Compostela, the University of Guelph and the NOVA University of Lisbon. During her studies in Canada, she worked as a Teaching Assistant for Italian language courses, and as a Research Assistant for the project *Transcultural Journalism: English Novels and the Italian Press (1720-1830)*, created by Sandra Parmegiani. She is currently a PhD candidate at VUB, working on the project *Rebuilding post-revolutionary identities in England, France and Italy: the reception, discussion and stigmatization of unruliness in novels through the periodical press (1816-1831)*, funded by FWO and supervised by Dirk Vanden Berghe.

Paavo Van der Eecken (UAntwerpen):

Thinking Outside of the Bounding Box: A Reconsideration of the Application of Computational Tools on Uncertain Humanities Data

Recent debate about what to do with books that present outdated or disfavored views has shown that literary representation is a highly controversial issue. Children's books often depict a fictional world, so one could wonder why the content of those works matters at all. The answer lies in the fact that books for children reflect specific worldviews. This turns the process of reading into a contact zone, where readers engage with different ideas about themselves and the world (Čermáková & Mahlberg, 2021). It is a dynamic process, where some social norms are internalized, while others are not (Tatar, 2009; Brown, 2017). The books thus influence to a significant extent how (young) readers perceive reality, themselves, and others (Van den Bossche & Klomberg, 2020). Despite the significance of representation in books for children, we are still missing key information on how it is given shape exactly.

This project works towards a better understanding of the historical evolution of representation along the lines of age, race, class, and gender. It does so by analyzing a diverse corpus of 1,000 illustrated children's books published in Dutch from the period 1800-1940. Taking a digital approach to this question helps us to overcome the disciplinary canon and to provide a general overview of representation in historical Dutch children's literature, something which is sorely missing.

When studying those materials, however, one is confronted with vagueness on multiple levels. Scholars such as Edmond have already pointed out that this vagueness is one of the defining characteristics of humanities data, which are not subject to verifiable, durable laws (2018). In this presentation I will discuss how working with digital tools – which are often created by computer scientists who had entirely different goals in mind – can be complicated by the nature of humanities' data. The goal is therefore not to present the actual results of this research project, but rather to extend the conversation on how we can bridge the digital and the humanities in DH projects, in a way that is mutually enriching to both fields. The question I will try to answer is: what can we gain from image annotations for object recognition in humanities research, and how does its implementation differ from the more technically oriented use in Machine Learning?

To do so I will focus on uncertainty as a valuable research result, rather than purely a limitation. Following Martín-Rodilla and Gonzalez-Perez I make the distinction between ontological vagueness, or imprecision, and epistemic vagueness, which can be described as uncertainty, and provide details on how we have dealt with both in the implementation of this research (2018). During the first phase of this research, a team of annotators has drawn bounding boxes around all the human characters in the illustrations and assigned them attributes according to their age, race, class, and gender. Through an examination of the inter annotator agreement, I will surmise what the differences between annotators - due to epistemic vagueness - can entail for our data. In the second part of the presentation, I will focus on ontological vagueness in the categories we have selected and consider how those choices influence the results of this research.

Biographical note

Paavo Van der Eecken is doctoraal onderzoeker aan Universiteit Antwerpen en Universiteit Gent. Zijn onderzoek maakt deel uit van het interdisciplinaire project Historische Bias. Onder begeleiding van prof. Vanessa Joosen en prof. Julie Birkholz analyseert Paavo de representatie van personages volgens leeftijd, gender, ras en sociale klasse in historische geïllustreerde jeugdliteratuur. In zijn project bestudeert hij tekstuele en visuele vormen van representatie in een corpus van 1000 Nederlandstalige jeugdboeken, gepubliceerd tussen 1800 en 1940. Zijn onderzoek wordt gefinancierd door FWO-beurs 11N4623N.

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Section 2:

Literature, Authorship and Literary Criticism in a Digital Society

Giorgio Busi Rizzi (UGent):

The Networked Author. Rethinking contemporary authorship through comics after the digital turn

This presentation stems from my new post-doctoral project, which will be just started (November 1) the day of the symposium, and aims to investigate networked authorship in contemporary comics, examining how the concept is understood and focusing on comics' shared creation and participatory practices after the digital turn. The project looks into the configurations, structures, and practices of production and consumption that comics give shape to, by combining comics studies with formal and mediological perspectives related to other narrative and visual media, thus seeing comics in communication with their counterparts in the broader media landscape.

Networked authorship refers to structures ingrained in our everyday practices. I argue that comics are an ideal test case for rethinking and problematizing the concept of authorship through media, as they have displayed, in the course of their history, a multitude of structures and practices (with a larger variety than other narrative and figurative media), that have further proliferated with the digital turn and that are still unexplored.

My foundational claim is that, to better understand this landscape, comics studies need to reconsider and reframe the role of the author in light of the dynamics of digital culture; and authorship theory must fully take comics into account when discussing artistic and narrative production after the digital turn. Therefore, I propose a systematic exploration of authorship in comics grounded in literary theory, media sociology, and actor-network theory. Through the latter - which posits that everything works in a system where everything is connected - I will reconstruct the material practices and symbolic structures shaped by a constellation of human and nonhuman actors.

Although the investigation will mostly survey prototypical comics, it will examine more peculiar examples, stemming from post-digital comics (that, comics that bear the inscription of digital technologies and practices): comics apps, comics memes, comics made with AIs, and so on. The categorization I built distinguishes in this sense between (a) collective authorship, resulting from renewed types of i) *collaborative* or ii) *participatory* processes of creation; and new kinds of (b) distributed authorship, divided into I) *algorithmic* creation and II) *rhizomatic* creation, more radically pluralizing the processes of ideation and circulation of texts.

Following this taxonomy, I will reconstruct the landscape of actors producing comics, mapping creators and surveying analogic and digital technologies. I will retrace the evolution of the author figure in comics history and reframe the concept, rethinking the ideas of creativity and literacy, and addressing repercussions on comics labor and aura, and on narrative structures and styles; and finally, I will discuss how engaged authors - representing minority groups - leverage this pluralization of the authorial figure to challenge established power structures. By analyzing comics authorship and its medial trajectory, and connecting comics theory with other media and artistic practices, this project thus wants to shine a light on how the effects of the digital turn call for a rethinking of authorship at large.

Biographical note

Giorgio Busi Rizzi is post-doctoral fellow, working in the ERC project *Children in Comics* at Ghent University, where he is also adjunct professor, teaching the *English Literature* and the *Comics and Graphic Novel* courses. He holds a PhD in Literary and Cultural Studies with joint supervision from the Universities of Bologna and Leuven. His PhD thesis, analyzing nostalgic aesthetics and practices in contemporary graphic novels, is currently submitted for publication. His first post-doctoral project (Ghent University, 2019-2022) investigated experimental digital comics. He is a founding member of the international research group on Italian comics *SNIF – Studying ‘n’ Investigating Fumetti*.

Michele Marchini (KU Leuven):

Mexico and Digital Literature: Evolving Perspectives, from Juan Villoro to Mónica Nepote

In 2013, a new governmental programme was launched in Mexico, with the name *E-Literatura*. The primary goal of this innovative programme was to create and share collective digital literary works while fostering critical reflection on technology usage (<https://editorial.centroculturaldigital.mx/>). Throughout the years, the programme has sparked a range of critiques, concerns, and hopes among intellectuals and has inevitably resulted in an expansion of digital literature, as best exemplified by events such as the *Literatura Digital Word Fest 3.0*. In 2023, the festival reached its sixth edition, still serving as a platform for fostering a creative, dynamic, and real-time approach to cultivating reading habits (<https://patrimonioyserviciosc.edomex.gob.mx/word-fest>).

Over the last decade, many authors have expressed their concerns regarding these new digital platforms for literature. Among these authors, Juan Villoro (born 1956 in Mexico City), one of the most representative voices in the current Hispanic literary panorama, known for his novels and non-fiction texts, has expressed contrasting opinions on the use of technology and social networks in the literary field, while also questioning the broader impact of artificial intelligence on our lives. In a recent interview for the magazine *La Tercera* (2023), he stated, “se calcula que uno de los diez primeros oficios que desaparecerán con la IA es el periodismo. [...] Los más irreductibles serán los poetas. Hay que confiar en ellos” [“it is estimated that one of the first ten professions to disappear due to AI is journalism. [...] The most resilient will be the poets. We must trust them”, my translation].

Another important voice who works primarily within the digital literature field, Mónica Nepote (born 1970 in Guadalajara, Jalisco), has raised similar concerns. Nepote, who works in the Centro Cultural Digital in Mexico City, in a 2020 interview for the newspaper *El Español* rejected the idea of creative artificial intelligence and expressed hope for continued cooperation between humans and machines (“creo que seguirá siendo un trabajo de colaboración entre humanos y máquinas”).

In this presentation, I set out to analyse the state of digital literature in Mexico in order to assess its impact and development within the Latin American literary sphere. I will explore this context through the contributions (mainly interviews and newspaper articles) of two key Mexican writers by looking at how both authors engage in a dialogue aimed at understanding, representing, and mediating the rapidly evolving contemporary reality.

Biographical note

Michele Marchini (he/him) graduated from the Università di Ferrara (MA 2021) with a thesis on Mexican literature and translation. In 2021, he carried out an Erasmus+ Traineeship at the Sorbonne Université, Paris, where he worked at the UNAM-Francia “Centro de Estudios Mexicanos”, extensively training in language teaching with Professor Elin Emilsson and co-curating a Spanish language book with Professor Jenniffer Ortega.

Currently, he is starting a PhD at KU Leuven under the guidance of Professor An Van Hecke. His research focuses on the study of the crónica works by the Mexican chroniclers Juan Villoro and Fernanda Melchor and questions their reception within the European context by looking at the translations of their books and all related epitexts.

Robbe Vandersmissen (UGent):

De toekomst voor oren: het luisterboek als gamechanger in het literaire veld

Over cultuur- en landsgrenzen heen hebben technologie-reuzen de fundamenten van de boekensector aan het wankelen gebracht. Wereldspelers als Amazon, Spotify, Storytel en Netflix vormen een uitdaging voor gevestigde actoren, bestaande bedrijfsmodellen en praktijken (Sundet & Colbjørnsen, 2021). Zo heeft het uitgeversveld de laatste decennia aanzienlijke veranderingen ondergaan die de manier waarop boeken worden geproduceerd, gemedieerd en geconsumeerd voorgoed hebben veranderd.

De verschuiving naar streaming, die vooral in de muziek- en filmindustrie uitgesproken is, is ook in het boekenvak in opmars, met name voor digitale luisterboeken. In tegenstelling tot eerdere digitale ontwikkelingen, zoals de online boekverkoop of fenomenen als Booktok en Bookstagram, die gedreven zijn door Amerikaanse bedrijven, zijn het ditmaal Scandinavische spelers die de regels van het spel herschrijven (Colbjørnsen et al., 2023).

Nu al zijn streamingdiensten, met het Zweedse Storytel op kop, goed voor een kwart van de totale omzet in de Scandinavische boekenmarkt. Aangezien luisterboeken een steeds prominentere plaats innemen, is het waarschijnlijk dat dit de normen zal veranderen voor hoe literaire werken worden geschreven (Storytel Originals) en beoordeeld (Storytel Awards). Zo is o.a. Storytel begonnen met het creëren van eigen inhoud rechtstreeks voor het audioboekformaat, een transformatie die tot verhitte debatten leidt over het culturele belang van het gedrukte boek, leesvaardigheid en taalontwikkeling (Berglund & Dahllöf, 2021; Have & Jensen, 2020; Have & Stougaard Pedersen, 2016). De streaming-economie maakt echter deel uit van een bredere “algoritmische cultuur” (Striphas, 2015) die de asymmetrische machtsverhouding tussen uitgeverijen, auteurs en lezers enerzijds en technologiebedrijven anderzijds verder versterkt (Colbjørnsen, 2021).

De “streaming power” en het primaat van de markt wakkeren de bestaande competitie (Schiffrin, 2000; Verboord, 2011) en polarisatie in het uitgeversveld verder aan (Hertel, 1996; Rimm, 2014; Sundin, 2012), waarbij verkoopcijfers, prestatierapporten en consumentendata steeds belangrijker worden (Andrews & Napoli, 2006; Childress, 2012).

Een kwart eeuw geleden al stelde de Franse socioloog Pierre Bourdieu (1999/2008) dat uitgevers steeds meer geconfronteerd worden met commerciële logica's. Logica's die volgens hem de autonomie van het literaire veld bedreigen. Het doel van deze presentatie is om op een vergelijkbare en geactualiseerde manier de structuur van het literaire uitgeversveld in Zweden te analyseren. Aan de hand van een meervoudige correspondentieanalyse (MCA) (Benzécri, 1992; Rouanet & Le Roux, 1993; Slaatta, 2018) van relevante gegevens probeer ik de machtsverhoudingen in het Zweedse uitgeversveld in kaart te brengen, waarbij bijzondere aandacht uitgaat naar de digitale spelers en het gewicht dat aan hun spel wordt toegekend.

Kernwoorden: luisterboeken, streaming, digitalisering van het literaire veld, veldanalyse

Biographical note

Robbe Vandersmissen (1998) is doctoraatsstudent Zweedse letterkunde aan de Universiteit Gent. Hij studeerde Taal- en Letterkunde (Duits-Scandinavistiek) in Gent en Stockholm. Zijn onderzoeksproject *Publishing between profit and prestige*, begeleid door Prof. Daan Vandenhoute en gefinancierd door het FWO, onderzoekt de impact van digitalisering, globalisering en commercialisering, op de rol, werking en positie van uitgeverijen in het hedendaagse literaire veld in Zweden. Robbes onderzoeksinteresses liggen op het snijvlak van literatuursociologie, digital humanities en publishing studies.

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Hanne Willekens (UGent):

Gegenderde kritiek? Een empirische analyse van gender in literatuurrecensies in het Zweedse dagblad *Dagens Nyheter* (2018-2022)

Literatuurkritiek speelt een belangrijke rol bij het toekennen van waarden aan literaire werken. Ze fungeert als poortwachter en schrijft culturele legitimiteit toe door middel van de *aandacht* die aan een werk wordt besteed en het *discours* dat wordt gebruikt (Kristensen 2019, 2). Mijn bijdrage heeft als doel om te analyseren welke literaire werken onder de aandacht gebracht worden in de hedendaagse Zweedse journalistieke literatuurkritiek (van Rees 1983), en de rol die gender speelt in het selectieproces.

In de periode waarin het moderne literaire veld tot stand kwam, in de 19e en 20e eeuw, stonden vrouwen eerder aan de zijlijn (Svedjedal 1994), niet alleen als auteurs, maar ook als literatuurcritici. De representatie van vrouwen in het discours over literatuur werd dan ook gekenmerkt door een ongelijkheid, die beschreven kan worden aan de hand van twee principes, *dichotomie* en *hiërarchie* (Hirdman 2012). Werken geschreven door vrouwelijke auteurs werden enerzijds beschouwd als een aparte categorie, en daarnaast ook gezien als minder kwalitatief (Samuelsson 2013; Williams 1997).

In de loop van de voorbije decennia heeft echter een opvallende verandering plaatsgevonden. In de Zweedse media wordt er gesproken van een feminisering van het literaire veld (Beckman 2021; Haidl & Lindkvist 2019). Onderzoek hiernaar bevestigt dat het aantal vrouwen in verschillende posities is toegenomen, zowel in het literaire veld (Fürst 2019; Samuelsson 2013) als in de bredere cultuursector (Kulturanalys Norden 2017). In een internationale context krijgen vrouwen echter nog steeds minder aandacht en worden ze ook minder vaak gerecenseerd (Berkers et al. 2016; Koolen 2018; Kim & Chong 2022).

In mijn bijdrage analyseer ik de boekrecensies die in de periode 2018-2022 werden gepubliceerd in *Dagens Nyheter*, een van de grote nationale kranten in Zweden. Met behulp van *multiple correspondence analysis (MCA)* en logistische regressie wordt een vergelijking gemaakt met boekpublicaties uit dezelfde periode, op basis van de database *Nationalbibliografen* van de Zweedse Koninklijke Bibliotheek (KB). Op deze manier wordt nagegaan welke systematische verschillen er bestaan tussen de boeken die wel en niet 2 gerecenseerd worden. Naast de rol van gender wordt daarbij ook gelet op institutionele factoren, zoals uitgeverij en genre.

Biographical note

Hanne Willekens (1991) is doctoraatsstudent Scandinavische letterkunde aan de Universiteit Gent. Ze behaalde een master in de taalkunde (KU Leuven, 2014) en Scandinavistiek (Universiteit Gent, 2016). In januari 2022 begon ze aan haar doctoraatsonderzoek *Women and criticism. An empirical analysis of gender in contemporary Swedish literary criticism (2018–2022)*, dat de hedendaagse praktijk van de literatuurkritiek onderzoekt vanuit een genderperspectief. Haar onderzoeksinteresses omvatten literatuursociologie, gender en *digital humanities*.

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Section 3:

Bodies and Objects, Identity and Representation in Literature, Theatre and Film

Jonas Vanderschueren (KU Leuven):

“Zaraza”: Re-imagining corporeality through environmentally adapted bodies in *The Witcher*

In recent years there has been a resurgence of interest in the notion of the body in both Cultural Studies and in the Humanities at-large, as new theoretical insights and alternated socio-political realities have shifted and destabilized the traditionally Western dichotomy between body and mind, allowing for ways to rethink corporeality in a more encompassing, non-dichotomous way, which goes beyond conventional and standardized representational practices. It makes it necessary to establish alternative theoretical frameworks which help us to understand how fictional experimentation contributes to this process of re-imagining corporeality “as trans-corporeality, in which the human is always intermeshed with the more-than-human world” (Stacey Alamo 2010, 2). Starting from this vantage point, which is central to the CELSA-funded research project “Uncanny Bodies in Experimental Multi-Media Settings: Re-Framing Corporeality”, a transnational collaboration between KU Leuven, University of Tartu and Jagiellonian University under the supervision of prof. dr. Anneleen Masschelein and prof. dr. Kris Van Heuckelom, this presentation will investigate the narrative, representational, and political strategies that are used in the *Witcher* series of fantasy novels, originally written by the Polish writer Andrzej Sapkowski, and how an ostensibly formulaic genre such as fantasy has bolstered the possibilities of reframing and destabilizing the body-mind dichotomy through trans-corporeal representation and the notion of environmentally adaptive bodies. It will compare the “uncanny” representations in the novels with the video game adaptation of the Polish video game studio CD Projekt Red to establish sites of friction, bodily disorientation, and affective reorientation, and the ways in which environmentally adaptive bodies are not only represented, but also made to be experienced.

In keeping with the research goals of the overarching REFAM project, this presentation will focus on a contemporary rethinking of the Freudian “uncanny”, away from its roots in traditional psychoanalysis and reapplying its notion of disorientation in the familiar to potentially queer-coded representations in *The Witcher*. As this research is in its early exploratory stages, the presentation will focus primarily on the central research question of the uncanny as an experimental site of cultural and artistic production that challenge traditional and normative ways of representing the body, and seek to formulate several hypotheses of how *The Witcher* achieves this through a divergence of the traditional tropes of the fantasy genre, which allows for a fundamentally queer representation to emerge which simultaneously roots itself in a broader Polish cultural context.

Biographical note

Jonas Vanderschueren is a postdoctoral researcher at the Cultural Studies Institute of KU Leuven, where he specializes in contemporary Polish theatre, performance, and culture. He recently obtained his PhD in Cultural Studies under the title “Dissenting Bodies: Queering Polishness in Polish theatre since 2005”, which investigated the artistic strategies that contemporary Polish makers have developed to resist the pressures to comply with Polish normativity, an inseparable collision between Polish nationalism and heteronormativity. He is currently working on REFAM, a CELSA-funded research collaboration between KU Leuven, University of Tartu, and Jagiellonian University

Janina Meissner (UAntwerpen):

'Ich muss das Ding haben.' 'Things' and their Poetic Potentials in Georg Büchner's *Woyzeck*

The 'material turn' in the humanities has brought about new perspectives on literature, focusing not only on 'material' aspects such as book design and typography but also on how texts themselves engage with the concept of 'materiality.' This includes the ability of literary texts to evoke a sense of materiality through language, the interaction between materiality and textual signs and the incorporation of 'things' within the narrative world. This approach proves particularly fruitful when examining theatre texts, as they sustain a unique relationship with the material world. On the one hand, 'textual' props, decorations, and costumes are meant to be 'materialized' on stage (Borgards/Wernli/Köhning 2023), while on the other hand, they represent theatrical signs with genre-specific dynamics, meanings, and functions. However, the study of 'things on stage' remains relatively under-researched, with a few exceptions (e.g. Klotz 2000, Loch 2009, Fliedl 2009).

By using Georg Büchner's unfinished drama *Woyzeck* (1836/1837) as an example, I aim to explore the possibilities that a material and thing-oriented approach can offer when analysing theatre texts. Things and the concept of 'thingness' play a central role in the text, encompassing props such as Marie's earrings and Woyzeck's knife, but also costumes and descriptions that evoke materiality. I will show in which way these elements constitute socio-economic relations, gender dynamics, and power structures. Simultaneously, the text unfolds intricate configurations of 'things' through both intra- and intertextual connections. For instance, the knife becomes a *leitmotif* (Larsen 1985), intertwining language sign and prop in a complex way. Furthermore, the fatal connection between the knife and jewellery is established not only by figures of speech within the text but also opens up intertextual connections to other theatrical works, such as Grillparzer's *Die Ahnfrau* or Goethe's *Faust I*.

Biographical note

Janina Meissner recently obtained her doctoral degree from the University of Cologne and the University of Amsterdam. Her research focused on Exile autobiography during the Nazi era and was funded by Marie Skłodowska-Curie-Actions under the European Union's Horizon 2020. She studied German and Theatre Studies at Ruhr-University Bochum and Paris Nanterre University in France. Additionally, she completed the Teacher Training Programme (SLO) at Ghent University. Currently, Janina is working as Academic interim staff postdoc within the Department of Literature at Antwerp University.

Francis Mus (UGent):

Zichtbaarheid en erkenning. Paratekstuele (zelf)representatiestrategieën in literaire vertalingen Frans-Nederlands in de Lage Landen

Hoewel de internationale roep tot erkenning van vertalers al verschillende decennia luid klinkt, zowel in het literaire veld als binnen de human sciences, blijft het beeld van de vertaler als secundaire figuur erg hardnekkig. De voorbije jaren werden daarom in heel Europa een veelvoud aan initiatieven gelanceerd. De oproepen zijn telkens gericht op concrete engagementen vanuit het literaire veld zelf – met als bekendste voorbeeld het vermelden van de naam van de vertaler op de cover – en worden gestuurd door de overtuiging dat een grotere zichtbaarheid van vertalers en vertalingen leidt tot meer erkenning.

Door hun inbedding in de beroepspraktijk enerzijds en hun resultaatgerichte karakter anderzijds worden deze initiatieven zelden gekaderd binnen een literatuur- en vertaalwetenschappelijke argumentatie. Nochtans stellen we vast dat de vraag naar de zichtbaarheid van de vertaler als *agent* in recent onderzoek aan belang wint, en hierbij steevast gekoppeld wordt aan een bredere sociologische en ethische vraagstelling. Sindsdien is er heel wat onderzoek verricht in dit verband, maar blijft het wachten op een brede en systematische academische studie van (zelf)representatie van literaire vertalers in het Nederlandse taalgebied.

In mijn lezing zal ik de krijtlijnen van een nieuw onderzoeksproject beschrijven, waarin ik zal focussen op paratekstuele (zelf)representatiestrategieën in vertalingen. De centrale onderzoeksvraag luidt: hoe kan het verband tussen *erkenning* en *zichtbaarheid* van vertalers geconceptualiseerd worden? Zijn beide termen onlosmakelijk met elkaar verbonden, of zijn er ook strategieën denkbaar waarbij zichtbaarheid en onzichtbaarheid bewust gecombineerd worden? Ik zal enkele werkhypothesen formuleren, en die ondersteunen met resultaten van een preliminaire studie waarin kwantitatieve data werden bijeengebracht m.b.t. vertalingen Frans/Nederlands in de periode 2011-2022.

Biographical note

Francis Mus (1983) is docent Frans en vertaalwetenschap bij de Vakgroep Vertalen, Tolken en Communicatie aan de Universiteit Gent en geaffilieerd onderzoeker aan de Universiteit Antwerpen. Zijn onderzoek situeert zich op het snijvlak van de (Franse) literatuurwetenschap en de vertaalwetenschap. In zijn doctoraat bestudeerde hij de internationalisering van de Belgische avant-garde: door middel van een discoursanalyse van Franstalige en Nederlandstalige kunsttijdschriften onderzocht hij hoe binnen de literaire kritiek de notie ‘internationalisme’ een invloed uitoefende op de zichtbaarheid en de definitie(s) van vertaling. Daarna interesseerde hij zich voor de internationale circulatie van muziek en literatuur, aanvankelijk aan de hand van de receptie van het werk van Leonard Cohen, zowel in Canada als op internationale schaal. Vervolgens verbreedde hij dit perspectief met de publicatie van een Nederlandstalig boek over muzikanten-schrijvers, *Grondtonen*, en de coördinatie van een special issue, samen met Sarah Neelsen, van het tijdschrift *JoSTrans* over ‘translation and plurisemiotic practices’. In zijn huidige onderzoek werkt hij over zichtbaarheid en discretie bij de representatie van vertalers en vertalingen.

**Quintus Immisch (University of Tübingen/Aix-Marseille Université/Brussel):
Freud and the Naked Truth. Case Study from a PhD Project on Nudity in Modern Literature and Culture**

In this talk I would like to present my PhD project on nudity in German and French modern literature and culture (18th to 20th century), firstly outlining the theoretical framing of the project and secondly, as a case study, taking a brief look at metaphors and imaginations of nudity in the psychoanalytical works of Sigmund Freud.

In the first part of my talk, I discuss some more general considerations on the modern literary and cultural history of nudity that are central to my PhD project. My approach operates on two heuristic levels: on the one hand, on a discursive macro-level that traces the epistemological productivity of nudity. In fact, metaphors and imaginations of the naked body often produce, organize and stabilize knowledge. On this level, nudity interacts, for instance, with the epistemological metaphor of 'naked truth' and is linked to discourses of 'nature' and 'history'. On the other hand, we can identify a textual micro-level on which (not only literary) texts reflect nudity: 'Texts' – as the word itself suggests – often metaphorize themselves as textile coverings of a naked truth and thus reflect the above-mentioned discursive links quite concretely in their textuality. Poetic metaphors of textiles, the idea of 'meaning beyond the text' belong here as well as the phenomenon of narrative tension or the dichotomous sign model of signifier and signified.

The second part of my talk substantiates these theoretical considerations by using Freudian psychoanalysis as an example. Freud presents his *Interpretation of Dreams* (1899/1900) as a revelation of the naked truth about the nocturnal drives of his patients. In doing so, he not only takes up – on a textual level – textile metaphors of unveiling and activates the epistemic figure of naked truth in myth, but at the same time – on a discursive level – interweaves them with the negotiation of nakedness in the context of the nature-culture dichotomy. As these epistemic formations, in Freud's case, are extended into concrete practices and arrangements, such as the symbolization of nakedness in his therapy room, psychoanalysis can be considered a paradigmatic example for the analysis of nakedness in both modern literature and culture.

Biographical note

Brussels-based, **Quintus Immisch** works currently as a research and teaching assistant (Wissenschaftlicher Mitarbeiter) at the University of Tübingen (since 2020), where he is working, within a cotutelle with Aix-Marseille Université, on a PhD project on nakedness in modern literature and culture. Further research interests include idiorrhymy and living-together, decolonial approaches, the colonization of the past, and queer temporalities.

Section 4:

Biographies, Characters and Identities in Radio, Children's and Youth Literature

Iana Nikitenko (VUB):

Narrating Lives Over the Airwaves: A Transnational Study of Post-war Radio Biographies in Britain and Germany

Situated within the broader scope of the project *Broadcast Biographies: Innovations in Genre and Medium (1945–2020)*, my doctoral research aims to analyze radio biographies in post-war Britain and Germany through two complementary lenses: as a distinct narrative form and as a locus for (trans)national (cultural) memory. I employ a multidisciplinary approach, drawing from (audio)narratology, media studies, life writing studies, and historiography, to conduct close readings and broadcast-based analyses of radio dramas, essays, collages, and documentaries with a biographical content, with a particular emphasis on contributions by key literature/radio figures in each country, examined in chronological sequence. This multifaceted approach allows me to illuminate both genre-specific and medium-specific evolutions within these two distinct national contexts.

My research addresses a significant gap in current scholarship by focusing on radio biographies as a unique genre, distinct from the broader field of radio productions. Preliminary findings suggest that these biographies commonly navigate recurring themes, such as (collective/national and personal) trauma, nostalgia, and identity, as well as portraits of renowned personalities and significant locations; the choice of topics often correlates with what is happening in the world at the time of production. This thematic concentration positions radio biographies as valuable tools for societal introspection, offering nuanced reflections on both historical and contemporary issues.

Additionally, the study delves into the semiotic aspects of radio biographies. It examines how these works employ a complex system of signs—ranging from linguistic constructs to auditory elements like voice and music—to craft narrative meanings. Thirdly, by exploring these narratives from a (trans)national perspective, the research enhances our understanding of radio as not merely a form of entertainment but as a sophisticated institutionalized medium for shaping and reflecting individual and collective identities within the post-war European context. This research contributes not only to genre/medium-specific studies but also enriches broader academic discourse on sound, memory and historiography.

Biographical note

Iana Nikitenko is a PhD candidate at the Centre for Literary and Intermedial Crossings at Vrije Universiteit Brussel in Belgium. She is currently involved in an FWO-funded research project titled *Radiobiographies: Innovations in Genre and Medium (1945–2020)*, where she focuses on English and German radio productions. Iana earned her International Master's degree (EMJMD) in Children's Literature, Media, and Culture from the University of Glasgow in the UK. Her dissertation explored how biographical graphic narratives depict the traumatic Soviet past. Her research interests include literary and media studies, radio studies, life writing, as well as aural and visual narratives and transmedia storytelling.

**Andrea Davidson and Rosemarie Knobloch (UAntwerpen):
Adolescence onstage and behind the scenes: The intergenerational collaboration to adapt Aidan Chambers' *The Toll Bridge* into Ibycus' *De Tolbrug***

Through creative processes undertaken in the company of collaborators—and of characters—theater directors, actors, and even novelists are experts in exploring differences of perspective. In an essay about the Flemish theater company Ibycus' 1998 production of *De Tolbrug*, the stage adaptation of his 1992 Young Adult novel *The Toll Bridge*, British author Aidan Chambers reflected on the effect that multiple perspectives from artists with diverse skills and backgrounds can have on the way that a collaboratively-created artwork is remembered: “working with Dirk Terryn and the three wonderful actors [...] was one of the happiest experiences of my professional life. I expect their accounts of what we did together would vary from mine and from each other's, as accounts of shared experience always do. But I think they would agree with most of what I say about the difference between a novel and its adaptation for the stage” (2011). Following Chambers' train of thought, for our research upon the twenty-fifth anniversary of *De Tolbrug* we have interviewed Chambers, Terryn, and some of the actors to investigate the effect of one category of diversity on their collaboration: age.

This paper will discuss how the collaborators reached a new, shared understanding of adolescence as an experience that can extend throughout the life course, rather than a temporary state during a limited period of life. This paper is motivated by two research questions addressing themes that are significant to the Constructing Age for Young Readers project: firstly, what characterized the process of adapting *The Toll Bridge* into *De Tolbrug* as an intergenerational collaboration? Secondly, what elaborations on the kinship model of intergenerational relations (Gubar 2016) can we offer through analysis of that process and its outcome, the stage performance of *De Tolbrug*?

In our analysis, we identify a tension between the way in which *De Tolbrug* represents adolescence as a temporally-defined stage of life onstage and the intergenerational dynamics of collaborative creation and stage performance behind that representation. We find that, to varying degrees, all the stakeholders in the collaboration revised previously-held conceptions of adolescence as a result of *De Tolbrug*'s creative process. We propose to apply this new understanding of adolescence to reach towards a way of understanding the complexity of creative processes in general, especially when those processes are collaborative, and when that collaboration is intergenerational. That the creative process behind *De Tolbrug* also involved transmedia adaptation, intercultural communication, translation, and risk for conflict between stakeholders throughout the process only exaggerates the complexity at the heart of the collaborators' collective reconsideration of the construction of adolescence in culture and art.

Biographical Note

Andrea Davidson is a postdoctoral researcher on the Constructing Age for Young Readers project. She also teaches English literature at the University of Antwerp, where she defended her PhD in January 2023. The title of her PhD dissertation is *Writing Talk: Constructions of Adolescence in the Early Genesis of Aidan Chambers' Dance Sequence Novels*. Her research can be found in the *International Journal of Young Adult Literature and Humanities* (forthcoming). She is also the author of *Eggenwise & other poems* (The Emma Press, 2023).

Rosemarie Knobloch just finished her Master's degree in English literature and general linguistics. She is currently finishing her second Master's degree at the Antwerp School of Education and works as a research assistant on the Constructing Age for Young Readers project.

Elena Guerzoni (Bologna/UAntwerpen): Like a River. Adolescence and Youth Literature: Metaphors of Ungraspable Identities

This presentation is concerned with my doctoral research, which investigates the representations of adolescence through metaphors in contemporary youth literature. My research focuses specifically on the youth literature which has been published from 1990 to the present, with a special attention paid to those critically acclaimed authors who received prestigious national and international awards. Within this literary framework, I am analysing the recurrent metaphors which shed light on adolescence and its peculiar traits and phenomenologies. Youth authors like Aidan Chambers, David Almond, Melvin Burgess, Robert Westall, Sharon Creech, Marie-Aude Murail, Anne-Laure Bondoux, Patrick Ness, and John Green – just to mention some of the most gifted ones – have created philosophically as well as pedagogically enlightening metaphors for adolescence which reveal hidden sides of the adolescent mind, shedding light on opacity, silence, often incomprehensible aspects of this liminal age.

The research problem from which my studies start refers to the possibility of identifying a specificity, a distinctiveness of adolescence in youth literature, namely the retrieval of literary clues referred to adolescence as a state of mind, a state of being which is different from the other stages in life. The aim of my research is to grasp the experience of adolescence in its complexity, depicting it in its traits of ambivalence, as youth literature does, and thereby questioning those representations of adolescence which emphasise only the binomial ‘adolescence-problems’. The study and interpretation of metaphors and of some recurrent themes in youth novels will provide hermeneutic keys to access different aspects of the adolescent experience (which, in my research, is framed in the context of contemporary Western culture). These interpretations could then be useful to all those figures – teachers, educators, sport instructors, parents, etc. – involved in the process of educating adolescents.

The analysis takes a multi- and interdisciplinary perspective, relying on an evidential paradigm (Ginzburg 1992) and on contemporary theories of metaphors (Eco 2005; Gibbs 1994, 2008; Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Stockwell 2020).

Biographical note

Elena Guerzoni is Ph.D. student in Pedagogical Sciences (academic discipline M-PED/02 – History of Education and Children’s Literature) at the Department of Education Studies “Giovanni Maria Bertin” of the University of Bologna. After classical studies, she graduated with honours in 2007 in Linguistic Mediation (BA degree), studying English and German at the Institute of High Studies “Carlo Bo” (Bologna Campus). In 2016 she graduated with honours in Primary Education at the University of Bologna, Department of Education Studies, discussing an MA thesis in children’s and young adult literature titled *Le radici e le ali. Storie, metafore e interpretazioni del rapporto profetico tra l’infanzia e i suoi nonni (Roots and Wings. Stories, metaphors and interpretations of the prophetic relationship between the Young and the Old)*.

Her fields of interest are children's literature, its history and its contemporary developments; young adult literature; representations of childhood and adolescence in literature, cinema and illustrations; literary education. Her current research project is concerned with the representations of adolescence through metaphors in contemporary young adult literature. She collaborates with the Centre for Research in Children’s Literature (CRLI) of the Department of Education Studies of the University of Bologna; she also collaborates as a reviewer with the Italian specialised magazine “LiBeR. Libri per Bambini e Ragazzi”. She translated British author Aidan Chambers’ latest novel, *Don’t Talk About Love* (Italian edition: *Non parlarmi d’amore*, Rizzoli, 2019).

Katrijn Van den Bossche (VUB):

'It's A Story. It's Not My Life': Reading Natasha Brown's *Assembly* (2021) as a Politically Engaged Anti-Novel

Assembly (2021) by Natasha Brown, the self-reflexive narrative underlies the refutation of the social myth that "meritocracy as a metric affords her [an unnamed Black woman, the narrator] opportunities that 'race' would have disqualified her from" (Brown qtd. in *Ex/Post Magazine*). In accordance with the theme of identity (de)construction, *Assembly* reflects on genres as having the potential to constrain representations of self and other: the narrator's own sense of identity is torn between her narrating "rationalizing" self, that operates at a distance from the daily discrimination, and her physical "experiencing" self (Brown 41). She insists upon an "untethering of self from experience" (41), which leads to an almost complete absence of embodied experience and invites reflections on both the 'inevitability' and 'impossibility' of "assimilation" (83).

Understanding genres as "repositories of cultural memory" (Rupp) and as a "means of constructing what we perceive as reality" in the current system of capitalism (Wolf), this paper will explore the aesthetic and political functions of self-reflexive devices that refer to novelistic genre conventions in *Assembly*. The expected 'novelistic story' of the strong "black millennial woman genre" leaves no room for her lived "dissatisfaction", so the protagonist resigns from her role as narrator in an act of resistance (Brown qtd. in *Women's Prize for Fiction*): "It's a story [...] It's not my life" (Brown 9). However, through techniques like intertextuality and multimodality, the narrator gradually gains narrative agency and is able to take charge of her own modes of expression (e.g. recognition of (internalized) patterns through essayistic passages, tweets, poetry...).

Taking into account the novel's coupled representation of the 'social form' of meritocracy and the 'literary form' of novelistic conventions, I will explore how metanarrative comments of disnarration double as a refusal to participate in meritocracy and thus may further develop the metafictional genre of "the anti-novel" and its political functions (McHale). Thus, this study complements previous studies of metafiction that have dissociated self-reflexive art from political engagement (Fenstermaker) and revises the pervasive historical tendency within the academy to assess "'black' fiction on a basis of activism" alone (Brown qtd. in *Ex/Post Magazine*).

Biographical note

Katrijn Van den Bossche started as a doctoral researcher at Vrije Universiteit Brussel in June 2022, as part of the FWO-funded research project "Self-Reflexivity and Generic Change in 21st-Century Black British Women's Literature" (under the supervision of Janine Hauthal and Elisabeth Bekers). Recently, she completed a research stay at the Centre for Narrative Research, where she presented on her methodological framework (Bergische Universität Wuppertal; 2023). Prior to this, she obtained an MA in Literature and Linguistics (German and English) from the University of Ghent in 2021, with a thesis on the intersection of ecocriticism and memory studies in *Die Kinder der Toten* (1995) by the Austrian Nobel Prize winner Elfriede Jelinek. She was an Erasmus exchange scholar at University of Sheffield (2020) and participated in the University of Gent Summer School on climate change (2021). Currently, she is also completing an additional MA in Teaching (2024).