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Thursday 11 December

13:00

Neuroliterary time travel: It's in the interdisciplinary details

Contribution | **Location:** Locaux Interfacultaires, Pedro Arrupe / 103 - PA11 | **Speaker:** Emma-Louise Silva

Description

For literary authors who revisit their experiences of youth to write autobiographical books, imaginatively drawing on memories plays a prominent role in the creative process. On the basis of cognitive literary studies and the archival study of creative writing processes, I have examined notes, mindmaps, manuscripts, and typescripts to chart how authors reconstruct their memories. The authors in the corpus, David Almond, Roald Dahl, and Jacqueline Woodson, writing in their fifties and sixties about childhood and teenhood, demonstrated a striking skill for remembering details across the lifespan. This raises questions as to their heightened capabilities for detail recall of what-where-when conjunctions. Studies have argued that whereas semantic memory (our collections of general knowledge and facts disconnected from the spatiotemporal context of learning) shows relatively little decline during the ageing process, episodic memory (our recollections of specific episodes linked to their spatiotemporal contexts) is affected by age-related deficiencies. Yet recollections of the spatiotemporal contexts of past experiences are essential for imaginative autobiographical storytelling, especially in the case of older authors writing about their youth. By drawing on these authors' manifestations of literary craftsmanship, this presentation aims to delve into detail recall across the lifespan by means of a neuroliterary lens, all while time travelling through the ontogeny of my own interdisciplinary trajectory.

13:45

13:45

The development of memory across childhood

Contribution | **Location:** Locaux Interfacultaires, Pedro Arrupe / 103 - PA11 | **Speaker:** Markus Werkle-Bergner

Description

The development of memory across childhood is a central theme in developmental cognitive neuroscience, linking maturational changes in neural architecture to the emergence of increasingly flexible cognitive abilities. A core challenge of adaptive memory formation lies in balancing two competing demands: extracting regularities across experiences to enable generalization and inference, while preserving distinct representations to maintain memory specificity. In childhood, this tension is particularly pronounced due to the asynchronous development of generalization and specificity. Yet, it remains poorly understood how children achieve a consolidation of both forms of memory. Computational models suggest that individual experiences are first encoded as hippocampus-dependent episodic traces, which only gradually become integrated into more generalized representations through consolidation processes—often facilitated by post-learning sleep.

In this talk, I will present new insights into the neural and cognitive foundations of memory development. Drawing on examples from ongoing work in our group, I will highlight current research trends that integrate computational accounts with behavioral, electrophysiological, and structural imaging data. Together, these studies aim to advance a mechanistic framework for understanding how adaptive memory functions emerge and transform across childhood.

14:30

14:30

Feeling at home: The importance of (life) stories

Contribution | **Location:** Locaux Interfacultaires, Pedro Arrupe / 103 - PA11 | **Speaker:** Winny Ang

Description

How can stories support our wellbeing and mental health? As Ali Smith writes: *"Books mean all possibilities, they mean moving out of yourself, losing yourself, dying of thirst and living to your full."* Stories help us navigate our social and emotional worlds by transforming the continuum of lived events into a narrative—sometimes coherent, sometimes fragmented or even contradictory—reflecting life's peaks and valleys. Making meaning of the world is a fundamental part of being human. It allows us to explore different spaces of belonging. In this presentation, I will reflect on my work on identity, trauma, resilience, and imagination, focusing on the fascinating intersections between literature and mental health.

15:15

15:15

Coffee break

Break | **Location:** Locaux Interfacultaires, Pedro Arrupe / 103 - PA11

15:45

15:45

Is it only language that changes or do language users also change? ... and so what if they do?

Contribution | **Location:** Locaux Interfacultaires, Pedro Arrupe / 103 - PA11 | **Speaker:** Peter Petré

Description

While attention to the linguistic study of lifespan change has been growing over the past two decades, we are still only just starting to understand how grammar fits in. For a long time, the dominant view has been that grammatical change primarily happens between generations. Lifespan change was considered to be limited to age grading, the shift between different styles or language habits among a repertoire in line with the stage of life one was in, such as adolescence, professional life, or retirement. Most of these findings are based on apparent time studies (which compare different age cohorts in a synchronic snapshot), or panel studies (which compare comparable cohort data collected at different points in time). True lifespan data are still quite rare. One reason is that ego-documents such as private letters or diaries, which are typically used for this type of research, do not contain enough data to do meaningful lifespan research on less frequent aspects of grammar. In this talk I will show what can be gleaned from large data sets from prolific authors with regard to the nature and frequency of lifespan change. Three case studies will provide evidence that lifespan change in grammar entails more than age grading. Data of the use of *be going to* as an emerging future auxiliary shows continued adaptation by individuals to ongoing change, including the adoption of structural innovations in the grammar, although still constrained by existing habits. Data on the complementation patterns of the verbs *remember*, *forget* and *expect* shows that authors 'get better' at their grammars across the lifespan, and that these developments arguably also have an impact on the language conventions in the community. Data on the use of the progressive show that members of the specific community of practice of 'fire and brimstone preachers', also seem to 'get better' at preaching, and that this will have an impact on their understanding of grammar. In general, significant lifespan change appears to be relatively common, even if not the rule, and its role in language change in the long term should be taken more seriously.

16:30

16:30

Ambitionz az a ridah: 2Pac's changing African-American English accent and rap flow

Contribution | **Location:** Locaux Interfacultaires, Pedro Arrupe / 103 - PA11 | **Speaker:** Steven Gilbers

Description

Regional variation in African-American English (AAE; hip-hop's primary language variety in the US) is especially salient to its speakers involved with hip-hop culture, as hip-hop assigns great importance to regional identity, and regional accents are a key means of expressing regional identity. For rappers, using a regionally marked rap style (i.e., "flow": the rhythmic and melodic characteristics of a rap performance) is another important tool to represent where they are from.

Comparing East Coast and West Coast AAE prosody, West Coast AAE is marked by greater melodic variation and greater rhythmic variation. Similarly, West Coast rap flows exhibit more melodic and rhythmic variation than East Coast flows. This suggests a strong link between language and music in the AAE/hip-hop context, showing that rappers follow similar patterns in the domains of language and music when expressing their regional affiliations.

So what would happen to the speech and rap of a prominent rapper if they moved to another region, switching regional allegiances? To answer this question, this study diachronically tracks the speech and rap of the late rapper 2Pac throughout his career. 2Pac was originally from the East Coast, but later moved to California, where he would become West Coast hip-hop's leader in a conflict with his native East Coast scene.

The results show 2Pac's speech and rap became more West Coast-like over time, with the rate of this development towards West Coast norms increasing once he turned his back on the East Coast. He also regularly 'overshot' the target during this time, sounding more West Coast-like than his Californian peers. These observations suggest 2Pac consciously manipulated his speech and rapping to sound like a Californian when his changed regional identity demanded it, indicating that second (linguistic/musical) dialect acquisition involves both passive and active processes.

17:15

17:15

Mêmebruxelles: Language, memory and identity

Contribution | **Location:** Locaux Interfacultaires, Pedro Arrupe / 103 - PA11 | **Speaker:** Patrick McGuinness

Description

Having had the good fortune to be brought up in two languages - English and French - I spent a great deal of my childhood thinking it was not good fortune at all: arriving in England aged 9 with a French accent but an Irish name, and being asked where I was 'from', caused me huge anxiety and *dépaysement*, much of it quite raw. I spoke to my mother in French, my father in English, and so going to English boarding school seemed like an imposed choice (not mine - children don't choose much, which is why parents make such a show of letting them choose things like sweets or toys or cakes - the agency they do not have), and someone else's life I'd been fitted with. Much like my grandmother from Bouillon made me my school suits - clothes I fitted but which were not mine - I felt I was being given a life that belonged to someone else. In Bouillon, my mother's town, I felt both at home and always on the cusp of losing it all. It gave me a relationship to my languages that for a long time was quite painful, but which later in life became the seam from which I started to write: poetry first, because poetry is a language, as Valéry says, within a language (to which I'd add a language *between* a language), then fiction, then memoir. In my memoir-writing, I speak often frankly about these questions, and how they shaped me for good or ill. I now live in Wales, where I speak a third language, Welsh, the language of my partner and our children. My identity as a writer was in fact liberated by moving between Welsh and English as I once moved between French and English. So I think of myself as a Welsh writer from Belgium writing in English. In this talk I'll try to untangle this.

18:00

Friday 12 December

09:15

Welcome coffee & registration

Break | **Location:** Locaux Interfacultaires, Pedro Arrupe / 103 - PA11

09:45

Conference opening

Contribution | **Location:** Locaux Interfacultaires, Pedro Arrupe / 103 - PA11 | **Speakers:** Emma-Louise Silva, Lieven Buysse, Lieven Vandelanotte

10:00

A lifelong love for children's books: Crosstextuality in the works of Angela Carter

Contribution | **Location:** Locaux Interfacultaires, Pedro Arrupe / 103 - PA11 | **Speaker:** Vanessa Joosen

10:00

Description

Angela Carter is one of Britain's best known and most studied authors of the twentieth century. Whenever her work is associated with children's literature, her collection *The Bloody Chamber* is mentioned – a set of daring rewritings of fairy tales aimed at adult readers. Few scholars mention that Carter also authored several children's books herself. In this lecture, Vanessa Joosen approaches Carter's work through the lens of "crosstextuality," a term coined by Sara Pankenier Weld to describe intertextual links that connect children's literature and adult works across oeuvres of authors who write for both audiences. While Carter kept a life-long interest in the books that she had loved as a child, she approached childhood quite differently when addressing young readers themselves, especially when late in life, she had a son of her own.

11:00

Break

Break | **Location:** Locaux Interfacultaires, Pedro Arrupe / 103 - PA11

11:00

11:15

Models of the beginning and the end (of language): Symmetries and asymmetries

Contribution | **Location:** Locaux Interfacultaires, Pedro Arrupe / 103 - PA11 | **Speaker:** Michael Erard

11:15

Description

In *Bye Bye I Love You: The Story of Our First and Last Words* (2025), I addressed the following asymmetry in the language sciences: while they are richly endowed with models of language's beginnings, they have not paid sufficient attention to how language ends for individuals, which means that language across the lifespan has never truly been explored. In this talk, I inquire into the sources of this asymmetry from different angles and present the concept of the "interaction window," the abstract social space in which humans interact with each other, as a conceptual tool for balancing out scientific attention. In the words of ancient Greek physician Alkmeon of Croton, "human beings perish because they are not able to join their beginning to their end." Alkmeon meant that the human lifespan is not a cycle, but it also points to the value of creating models of both the beginnings and the ends of phenomena like language that involve the individual and the species, the self and the body, and organic abilities and cultural expectation.

12:15

Lunch break

Break | **Location:** Locaux Interfacultaires, Pedro Arrupe / 103 - PA11

12:15

12:45

BAAHE 2025 Annual General Meeting

Contribution | **Location:** Locaux Interfacultaires, Pedro Arrupe / 103 - PA11 | **Speaker:** Lieven Vandelanotte

12:45

13:15

BAAHE 2025 Thesis Award ceremony

Contribution | **Location:** Locaux Interfacultaires, Pedro Arrupe / 103 - PA11 | **Speakers:** Caroline Gentens, Lieven Vandelanotte

13:15

13:30

'Contemporary' literature

Session | Location: PA21 | Convener: Noémie Nelis

13:30–14:00

Islands of Memory: Human Lifespan, Community, and Social Phenomenology in Michael Crummey's *Sweetland***Speaker**

Sławomir Koziol

Description

Michael Crummey's *Sweetland* (2014) is frequently examined as a novel about resettlement, outport decline, and ecological loss, but it can also be read as a meditation on the human lifespan and its embedding within communal life. This paper proposes to interpret *Sweetland* through the lens of Alfred Schutz's social phenomenology, which emphasizes the intersubjective constitution of meaning, the role of memory, and the tension between individual biography and collective "stock of knowledge."

At its centre stands Moses Sweetland, an elderly fisherman who refuses to leave his Newfoundland island even after the government resettlement program empties the community. Sweetland's decline and solitude dramatize the human confrontation with mortality, yet his story also reveals how life's meaning is shaped through shared practices and memories. Schutz insists that our biographical experience only becomes significant when situated within intersubjective contexts. Sweetland's memories of family, neighbours, and a once-thriving community exemplify this: his past gains coherence from the lifeworld he once shared, even as that world dissolves.

The decline of the outport settlement mirrors the trajectory of a human lifespan—birth, flourishing, decline, disappearance—demonstrating Schutz's point that communities, like individuals, possess finite "time perspectives." In *Sweetland*, the erosion of collective life means that Moses's memories risk becoming unintelligible once detached from communal validation. His resistance is not only against physical displacement but also against the existential loss of a shared world in which his biography makes sense. Furthermore, Schutz's concepts of "finite provinces of meaning" and the "stock of knowledge at hand" illuminate the interplay between individual and environment. Sweetland's island constitutes a province of meaning saturated with local practices of fishing, storytelling, and survival. As modernization and resettlement dismantle these practices, both the community's and Sweetland's lifespans converge toward closure.

Mortality, then, is experienced not only biologically but socially: when the lifeworld disintegrates, so too does the horizon that sustains an individual's existence.

This paper will argue that *Sweetland* enacts a phenomenology of aging and mortality that resonates with Schutz's insights. By portraying lifespan as simultaneously personal and communal, Crummey links individual decline with the dissolution of intersubjective worlds. Reading *Sweetland* through Schutz allows us to see mortality less as an isolated endpoint and more as the unravelling of the social fabric in which human life is embedded.

Selected Bibliography

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14:00–14:30

Branching Form and Starting from the Middle in Richard Powers' *The Overstory***Speaker**

Nils Van den Keybus

Description

In Western thinking, especially since evolutionary theory and classification, branching patterns are firmly established as a dominant way of understanding the world ontologically and epistemologically. Outward branching—the splitting apart of different branches—has been mobilized to justify hierarchy, privileging the human petiole of the evolutionary tree. *The Overstory* reverses this directionality by emphasizing branching as a process that begins from a common node, employing connection to collapse dichotomy. These branching patterns connect trees and humans, but are also disclosed as structuring computer code, evolution, ancestry, narrative, time, and even language itself. In this presentation, I explore the different ways in which the novel employs branching as a way to get at a decentered middle, achieving an arboreal perspective.

On the verbal level, I compare the branching language of *The Overstory* to Kimmerer's grammar of animacy in *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous wisdom, scientific knowledge, and the teachings of plants* (2013). Especially interesting is how Powers makes language branch through anaphora, starting sentences with the same words, as if their endings branch out of a common beginning.

Structurally, *The Overstory* is divided in Roots, Trunk, Crown, and Seeds, as we observe several storylines coming together and splitting apart like roots and branches. This structure entangles stories with one another, exposing them as always ongoing and never separated.

Thematically, different branching patterns are connected through Powers' use of metaphor and metonymy. For example, through transgenerational photography, the branching of a chestnut is shown to have the same form as the branching of a family tree, on the condition that we overcome the constrained perspective of human individual timelines. Using the same branching patterns, the common ancestry of all life forms is highlighted, the evolutionary process resembling a node of branching possibilities. This idea is echoed in the development of *Mastery*, a game in the novel created by branching code that in turn replicates real-world evolutionary branching. Even time seems to be a branching pattern, as Powers describes the choices we have as individuals.

Thus, *The Overstory* offers a counternarrative to an emphasis on outward branching and difference. It overcomes the human-tree dichotomy by drawing attention to branching as an always ongoing process, something that happens in an in-between. The arboreal cannot be grasped by empirically investigating isolated branches, but needs to be understood from the perspective of connection, focusing on the nodes. This phenomenological access to knowledge is already present in Indigenous epistemology, resulting in an extended sense of self in a non-totalizable assemblage of interspecies multiplicities. *The Overstory* thus shows branching to be about connecting at least as much as about splitting apart.

14:30–15:00

The cozy mystery genre and its bittersweet taste: analysing old age and care in Richard Osman's *The Thursday Murder Club*

Speaker

Àngels Llorca

Description

Age studies scholarship has increasingly interrogated the intersection of care for older adults and neoliberal market ideologies. This presentation explores how popular culture, specifically the cozy mystery genre, negotiates the language and optics of care for older adults in terms of costs and accessibility. Taken as a whole, the stories with ageing detectives offer invigorating alternatives to the traditional decline narratives by featuring older detectives who stay autonomous, independent, and, more importantly, productive by solving cases. While such representations offer alternatives to ageist stereotypes, they also make the value of older protagonists depend on productivity and activity, while obscuring their potential care needs and the issue of access to care services from the reader.

In this presentation we will discuss Richard Osman's debut novel *The Thursday Murder Club* (2020) (with a Netflix film adaptation released in August 2025), and explore the idealized depiction of later life care within a luxurious retirement village—the fictitious *Coopers Chase*. More specifically, we examine how genre—in this case the cozy mystery—determines and shapes the age discourse in the novel. The analysis reveals that while the generic parameters of the cozy guarantee a sugar-coated and comfortable reading experience, the novel also allows for a reflection on how social changes impact the community, particularly regarding later life care. Ultimately, we argue that the idealized depiction of the protagonists' later life care facilities exposes a key reality of care under the neoliberal ethos: enjoying quality of life and care in older age becomes a luxury, taken for granted only by those with the means to pay for it.

15:00–15:30

The words that reach but do not touch: the evolution of the poetic language of David Shapiro

Speaker

Katarzyna Wywiał

Description

David Joel Shapiro (1947-2024) was an American poet, critic and scholar who authored several books of poetry published between 1967 and 2017. Between the dates, one can observe an interesting and perhaps counterintuitive evolution of the poetic language that departs from Symbolism going through the stage of complex Ashberyian assemblages to noble lucidity of relatively simple “farewell poems” in the last volume. Trained from a very early age as a violinist, recognized for his poetry as a teenager, befriended by de Kooning, Pollock, Ashbery, Warhol, O’Hara, Koch and many others, he succumbed to Parkinson’s disease in May of 2024.

He rose to non-artistic notoriety in 1968 during a six-day campus uprising and protest at Columbia University, New York (where he would later teach), photographed in the dean’s office, sitting at his desk with his cigar. The iconic photograph was published in Life magazine and made the poet both famous and infamous, as Joyce Carol Oats wrote on X after he died.

Literature never seems to be mere biographism, but it cannot be built on antibiographism. Spanned between the two extremes, poetry is a reworking or recycling of personal experiences, reflections, and observations. Followed through years, Shapiro’s poetry presents the evolution of the poetic self of the poet from his teenage years into maturity.

From his early years until maturity, this poetry revolves around language and the limits of description.

My mother said, The worst words in the English language

Are these David - Don’t move.

And what do you think the best words are: Here’s some water

(To An Idea, 67)

As the poet explains, “[My] grandmother wrote poetry and so did my uncle, who would tease me about not rhyming. I started to write when I was nine years old. I imitated poets and could ‘speak’ their voices - Thomas, Eliot etc. At ten I tried to memorize ‘The Waste Land’ (from an interview, 1997). He was also forced to memorize passages from Rilke, Rimbaud and other poets whom his father considered aesthetically prominent. The lessons in classical literature laid the foundations of both Shapiro’s poetic material and method: the passages from the classical works, their scattered extracts, misquotations, reminiscences and flashbacks often contribute to this poetry.

During his teenage years, the poet was inspired by the French symbolists, and with time, he moved towards greater lucidity that employed simpler language. Throughout the years, the poet achieves a highest degree of language awareness; he focuses more and more on language as a means, on what language conveys and what its limitations are. Along the way, the poet performed a few field studies of a sort: together with his friend Kenneth Koch, he co-wrote poetry with children; he then repeated the exercise on a more personal level when his son Daniel was born and poetic collaborations became possible; and finally, as he was ageing, his last poems reflect on his forgetfulness and being lost for words.

15:30

13:30

Acquiring language

Session | **Location:** Locaux Interfacultaires, Pedro Arrupe / 208 - PA23 | **Convener:** Lieven Vandelanotte

13:30-14:00

Verbal and gestural protolanguage**Speaker**

Kristin Davidse

Description

Halliday's (1975) study of the beginning of language in the human infant and the nature of that early language broke new ground in comparison with contemporary studies such as Brown (1973) and Bowerman (1973). Hitherto, the beginning of language had been equated with the acquisition of words recognizable as lexical items from the adult language around 12–18 months. The acquisition of syntax was situated around 24 months. Against this, Halliday (1975: 6) posited that children "start to mean" from about 9 months by creating their own linguistic signs, i.e. idiosyncratic fixed associations of meaning and form. Having grasped the principle of symbolic communication, infants first create their own protolinguistic symbols, in which sounds or gestures are associated with general functional meanings. The latter are subcategorized into specific developmental functions, e.g. instrumental: demanding objects; regulatory: commanding people; interactional: mediating joint attention. One of the earliest signs (9–13.5 months) of the child studied by Halliday sounded [nā], typically repeated, e.g. /nānānānā/, and meant 'give me that'. To express this meaning, the child also used the gesture of firmly grasping an object, which contrasted with touching the object lightly to convey 'don't give me that' (id.: 148ff). Such protolinguistic signs might pass as meaningless babble or gesturing if not decoded by caregivers. Following the protolanguage (9–16 months), Halliday (1975: 41, 111) posited a transition towards the adult language, in which lexicogrammar (words-in-structure) is inserted between the expression and meaning sides of the sign and dialogue (assumption and projection of speech roles) begins to be construed. This becomes a full-fledged move into the adult language from 18 months onwards. We confront this account with the development of gestural signs by two infants, Zeno and Luca, as audiovisually recorded from 12 months on by their mother. While verbally and gesturally interacting with them, she recognized, consolidated and co-created her children's fixed idiosyncratic associations of gestures and meanings. This confirms Halliday's basic claims about protolanguage. For instance, from 12 months on Luca signalled 'more' by establishing with her right hand a reference point in the palm of her left hand, from which she then drew an arc. Luca used this sign to ask for e.g. more food or for a repeat of rough-and-tumble play. By the same token, study of these data leads us to query some of Halliday's analyses and distinctions such as the emergence of dialogue and syntactic structure in the transition stage from 16–18 months. In fact, Luca signposted dialogue already at 12 months. For instance, she demanded action with the 'more' sign, which request her mother queried, and which Luca then confirmed by reiterating the 'more' sign. Likewise, Luca construed structures already at 14 months, e.g. indexing her brother Zeno (in reality or on a photo) and then identifying him as 'Zeno' by drawing the letter Z in the air. Finally, we consider the question whether the abstract distinction between representational and interpersonal organization emerges only in the adult language (as posited by Halliday 1975) or is already present in the protolanguage (cf. McGregor 2019).

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14:00–14:30

The social meaning of English: age patterns in acquisition**Speaker**

Melissa Schuring

Description

Background and aim | Cognitive sociolinguistics investigates the mental processes underlying the acquisition of socially-meaningful variation patterns (see e.g. Kristiansen & Dirven 2008). So far, studies focusing on children's development have found mixed results regarding age patterns. For instance, Kristiansen (2010) investigated N=150 Spanish-speaking children (6-13 y/o) and found their identification of Spanish regional varieties improves with age. Yet, variation between children persisted, which Kristiansen connects to children's differing bottom-up experience with individual speakers of the Spanish varieties. Similarly, Zenner et al. (2021) and Kaiser (2022) found general age trajectories accompanied by idiosyncrasies at the micro-level. Adding to these previous studies, this paper aims to shed more light on the role of age in children's development of social meaning.

Method | To address the research aim, we investigate how children in Flanders develop the social meaning of English lexemes in Belgian Dutch. The study is based on a large multi-methods research project investigating N=26 Belgian Dutch-speaking preadolescents (6-13 y/o, 12 boys and 14 girls). The preadolescents participated in 8 methods, among which are a sociolinguistic interview, roleplay tasks, a metalinguistic interview and peer group conversations. The resulting corpus consists of 131 hours of video recordings (7h per participant) and includes over 70,000 child utterances. In the corpus, all English lexemes were identified following an extensive identification protocol (Authors 2022).

Results | A bird's eye perspective on 4 studies | Based on the multi-methods corpus, we conducted 4 quantitative studies. **Study 1** investigates children's use of English lexemes in a Dutch roleplay task. The findings demonstrate children use more English for roles like rapper and soccer player (25% of English) than for those of farmer and minister (5% of English). No age effects were found. **Study 2** adds data from a questionnaire and a metalinguistic interview to the roleplay data. Here too, no clear age effects could be identified. Next, **Study 3** zooms in on English in the participants' conversations with a researcher. We find an overall frequency of 3% of English which, again, is not stratified by age. Lastly, in **Study 4**, we zoom in on the participants' use of English vs. Dutch evaluative adjectives in a peer group context. Relying on the participants' own assessment of their age group, age does turn out to play a role, with older participants (7%) inserting more English adjectives than younger participants (<1%).

Implications | Overall, the findings illustrate the complexity of the age variable: while most studies did not reveal age stratification, study 4 did. Theoretically, we discuss these findings with regard to the usage-based learning mechanism of exemplar theory (Docherty & Foulkes 2014): idiosyncrasies in the data are potentially due to children's diversified bottom-up exemplars. Methodologically, we reflect on the importance of triangulating methods and argue for the promotion of 'social' rather than 'chronological' age in cognitive sociolinguistics (Eckert 1997).

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14:30-15:00

Learning to Cross Boundaries: Motion Conceptualization in Turkish Learners of English

Speaker

Aybike Canan

Description

Languages differ typologically in how they encode motion (Talmy, 1985), especially in boundary-crossing (BC) contexts. Özçalışkan (2015) demonstrated striking differences between Turkish and English in expressing path and manner of motion. English, a satellite-framed language, typically uses a manner verb and a path satellite. Turkish, a verb-framed language, uses a path verb and expresses manner peripherally, often in a separate clause or omitted altogether. Özçalışkan (2015) also found that English tends to use compact clauses and explicitly marks BC, while Turkish often segments events into multiple clauses, expressing BC implicitly or omitting it. Such contrasts make Turkish and English an ideal pair for testing the Thinking-for-Speaking (TFS) hypothesis (Slobin, 2004), which maintains that language shapes conceptualization during speech. Bilingual and second-language (L2) speakers are particularly useful in studying this effect. Prior research (Brown & Gullberg, 2008, 2010, 2011; Alonso, 2013, 2016, 2020) shows that bilinguals often diverge from both of their monolingual baselines, reflecting cross-linguistic influence. Proficiency plays a key role—less proficient speakers rely more on L1 patterns, while more advanced learners may adopt L2-like structures (Cadierno, 2004; Hohenstein et al., 2006). However, little is known about how L2 proficiency affects motion event framing among Turkish-English bilinguals. This study investigates how L1 Turkish speakers at different English proficiency levels express BC motion events. We aimed to answer three questions: (1) How do Turkish learners of English express BC motion compared to English and Turkish monolinguals? (2) To what extent do L1 patterns persist in L2 production? (3) Does higher L2 proficiency promote more English-like framing? We used a Picture Description Task from Özçalışkan (2015), with twelve BC scenes. Participants included: (i) English monolinguals, (ii) Turkish monolinguals, (iii) beginner-intermediate Turkish learners of English, and (iv) advanced Turkish learners of English. Responses were analyzed for BC type (explicit vs. implicit), verb choice (manner vs. path), and segmentation (number of descriptive clauses). Findings revealed that learners diverged from both monolingual baselines. Learner output showed that while learners' verb choices increasingly aligned with English speakers, BC type remained strongly influenced by their L1, even at advanced levels. No significant differences emerged in segmentation, likely due to the time constraint. This shows that lexical alignment occurs more easily and with less L1 influence compared to syntactic alignment in motion event expression. The results support the TFS hypothesis, suggesting that language-specific patterns continue to shape motion conceptualization in L2 output, even at higher proficiency levels.

15:00–15:30

Introducing the L2 English component of the STAR corpus: A constellation of learner written and spoken registers

Speaker

Sylvie De Cock

Description

Register variation is a crucial aspect of language production. Corpus-based explorations of language have raised awareness of register variation and have yielded valuable insights into linguistic patterns associated with different registers (Biber et al. 1999). While register has important implications for any type of language production, it is particularly relevant to explore in learner language, because second language learners as novice users of the target language may not show the same register awareness as native or expert writers/speakers (Gilquin & Paquot 2008). However, studies comparing learner language registers are still relatively rare, with a few exceptions such as Fuchs et al. (2016) and Larsson et al. (2021).

One reason for the lack of register studies in learner corpus research is that, until recently, the most widely used learner corpora have covered a limited range of registers, most notably argumentative essays for writing (as in ICLÉ, Granger et al. 2020) and interviews for speech (as in LINDSEI, Gilquin et al. 2010). In addition, when different registers have been compared, the analysis has mainly been based on texts produced by different groups of learners (e.g. argumentative essays produced by one group of students and interviews produced by another group). However, collecting texts written by the same learners across registers offers the opportunity to investigate how they adapt their language use to different communicative situations (e.g. Kerz et al. 2022).

This paper sets out to describe the compilation of the Student speech and writing Across Registers (STAR) corpus, a new corpus of student language productions that brings together texts from multiple registers produced by the same L2 English or L1 English students. The focus is on the L2 English component of the STAR corpus which contains data collected at UCLouvain from French-speaking learners of English who are students in their second year of English major studies.

The paper details the written and spoken registers included in the L2 English component of the corpus (e.g. career readiness essays, diary entries, a debate and an informal conversation between two students) as well as the steps that were taken to ensure comparability across the dataset. Rich metadata were collected about the L2 learners and the pedagogical tasks used to elicit language production across registers, relying on Paquot et al.'s (2024) Core Metadata Schema for Learner Corpora.

Once completed, the STAR corpus will be released in open access format and will make it possible for researchers to compare student language productions across registers while controlling for individual variables and styles, and to explore the effect of register on the linguistic features of novice writers and speakers of English.

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15:30

13:30

Modernist literature

Session | **Location:** Locaux Interfacultaires, Pedro Arrupe / 103 - PA11 | **Convener:** Emma-Louise Silva

13:30-14:00

Children and marine life in Katherine Mansfield's writing**Speaker**

Imola Nagy-Seres

Description

Katherine Mansfield's fiction and personal writings abound in marine life forms: 'decorative starfish', 'velvet sea anemones', 'pink tinted sea shells' – these are just a few of the animals that inhabit her fictional waters. She describes her short story, 'At the Bay' (1922) as a kind of literary rock pool, 'full of sand and seaweed, [...] and the tide coming in' – images based on her own childhood memories. In Mansfield's oeuvre, the coastal pool and its inhabitants become charged with aesthetic and affective energies, which allows her child characters to reimagine and redraw scientific, social, physical and emotional boundaries between humans and their environment. Through her depiction of children's engagement with rock pool animals in 'At the Bay', Mansfield questions late nineteenth-century biological and psychological theories, which drew a parallel between marine invertebrates' and children's mental development, arguing that both groups possess a rudimentary form of the adult human mind, which allows them to know and interact with their surroundings in a simplistic and immature way. In contrast with scientific ideas of progressive development, in Mansfield's modernist writing, images of marine animals resurface in relation with her thinking about alternative, non-linear ways of understanding the world and forging intimate bonds with others. Through her engagement with aquatic life forms, Mansfield embraces a distinctly childlike, non-rational and non-teleological mode of creating aesthetic and affective connections.

14:00–14:30

Rewriting Life Through Memory: Ageing and the Experience of Time in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*

Speaker

Saliha SEBGAG

Description

This study explores the intricate relationships among memory, ageing, and the perception of time in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925)—a novel that encapsulates an entire life's journey within the span of a single June day. Utilizing Woolf's modernist stream-of-consciousness technique, the narrative reveals how Clarissa Dalloway's present is continually shaped and enriched, yet occasionally unsettled, by memories of her youth, past romances, and an ever-present awareness of mortality. By juxtaposing fleeting impressions with deeply buried recollections, Woolf redefines ageing not merely as physical deterioration but as an active process of self-reflection and transformation, with memory functioning both as a burden and a source of meaning. Drawing on research in lifespan development and memory studies, this paper examines how Woolf's portrayal of subjective time challenges traditional, linear models of human development—from youth through maturity to old age. Instead, the novel presents life as a mosaic of remembered and anticipated moments, where time flows in both directions—past and present intermingling in a continuous exchange. Special emphasis is placed on Clarissa's oscillation between youthful vitality and the looming reality of death, as well as on the character of Septimus Smith, whose fractured psyche intensifies Woolf's meditation on the fragility of the human experience.

By situating *Mrs Dalloway* within contemporary scholarly discussions on literature, ageing, and memory, this paper argues that Woolf constructs a distinctive poetics of temporality—one that transcends conventional life-stage boundaries and affirms literature's ability to express the universal yet deeply personal nature of human experience across the lifespan.

Keywords:

Virginia Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway*, ageing, memory, temporality, stream of consciousness, modernism, lifespan, subjective time, literature and ageing.

14:30–15:00

Plotting the Lifespan: Emplotment in Interbellum 'New Biography' (Strachey's *Queen Victoria* and Woolf's *Roger Fry*)

Speaker

Thibaut Goossens

Description

The interbellum period witnessed a revolution in life writing, famously dubbed the 'new biography' by Virginia Woolf (1927). This movement explicitly sought to break from what Woolf identified as the Victorians' obsessive adherence to historical facts and their overly reverential treatment of illustrious individuals – an approach strongly marked by Thomas Carlyle's theory of the 'great man' as mover of history. Instead, proponents like Woolf and Lytton Strachey argued for a more literary and critical approach, one that blended fact with creative interpretation to reveal the hidden inner life and construct a coherent narrative from cradle to grave.

Essentially, proponents of 'new biography' pleaded for an emancipation of the biographer, giving them the freedom to interpret – often through Freudian theory – the thoughts and motives of their subjects, and thus representing these as the successive building blocks of a logically unfolding narrative (Marcus 2014). This paper argues that the primary mechanism for achieving this coherence was narrative emplotment – the structuring of a life into a meaningful plot arc.

This paper will analyse how the 'new biographers' represented the entire lifespan of their subjects through specific narrative strategies. Focusing on two key works – Lytton Strachey's *Queen Victoria* (1920) and Virginia Woolf's *Roger Fry* (1940) – I will employ Hayden White's theory of historical emplotment to examine how each author shaped their biographical material. In his seminal work *Metahistory* (1973), White posits that historians (and, by extension, biographers) impose meaning on events through archetypal plot structures: Romance, Tragedy, Comedy, and Satire.

Through a comparative close reading, I will investigate how both Strachey and Woolf instrumentalised the different types of emplotment, or hybrid variants of them, to imbue their life narratives with meaning. I will examine similarities and differences to assess the degree of homogeneity or heterogeneity within the 'new biography'-movement in relation to emplotment, thereby elucidating the concessions its authors were prepared to make to factual accuracy in favour of readability and style. Ultimately, this analysis reveals how the 'new biography' did not merely document a life but actively constructed it, using the tools of fiction to impose narrative order on the complicated chronology of a human lifespan.

By placing these seminal texts in dialogue through White's framework, this paper offers a new comparative perspective on a pivotal moment in biographical history, by revisiting the relatively understudied phenomenon of 'new biography' and by analysing two key works which have not previously been compared directly. This research sits at the intersection of comparative literature and biography studies, directly engaging with the conference's theme by exploring how language and narrative form are used to make sense of a life from beginning to end.

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15:00–15:30

Literary Age Group Politics: WW1 Poetry and Beyond**Speaker**

Rudolph Glitz

Description

Literature does not only reflect, represent, or reveal aspects of age and the life course as conceptualized by a given society, but also affects the latter's dominant age system through illocutionary forces that either reinforce or destabilize it. In my paper, I trace, firstly, the operation of such forces in a small selection of canonical English poems occasioned by the Great War, namely two of Rudyard Kipling's war epithets (1919), Wilfred Owen's "The Parable of the Old Man and the Young" (1920), and A. E. Housman's "Here dead we lie because we did not choose" (1922). All of these poems are concerned with the relations between different age groups in society. By blaming the old for the deaths of the so-called lost generation and casting the war as, primarily, an act of inter-age betrayal, they call into question the props of a contemporary age inequality that remains widely accepted today. They thus provide an unusually stark example of what I refer to as literary age group politics. Having traced the details of these politics in the poems by way of close reading, I, secondly, outline a few more covert and generalizable ways in which age group politics can operate through literature. My very brief textual illustrations here include Shakespeare's second history tetralogy, Emily Dickinson's poem "I'm wife," and the genre of biography, both fictional and non-fictional.

The sociological framework and reference point of my analysis is Matilda Riley et al.'s extensive account of age stratification (*Aging and Society*, vol. 3. New York: Russell Sage, 1972), which – prominent later work notwithstanding – I still consider the most rigorous and convincing theorization of the social dynamics of age. In its holistic concern with potential conflicts between age groups and the mechanisms which keep societies from fracturing along age lines, it usefully complements more narrowly focused advocacy-based approaches or those that centre predominantly on individual experiences of the life course. Nevertheless the life course and its narrativization still play an important role in my paper, namely as central components of the "conflict-reducing mechanism" that Riley et al. describe as "linkages through aging and cohort succession" (443). Insofar as it helps us to recall past life phases and anticipate future ones, and with these the corresponding age group affiliations, literature in the broad sense of imaginative narrative must surely rank among the foremost cultural media through which such linkages are forged.

15:30

15:30

16:00

Coffee break**Break** | **Location:** Locaux Interfacultaires, Pedro Arrupe / 103 - PA11

Generational approaches

Session | Location: PA21 | Convener: Vanessa Joosen

16:00–16:30

Far from Innocent: Children's 'Vitality' and Empire in Mulk Raj Anand

Speaker

Beau Serrus

Description

The turn of the 20th century witnessed the emergence of a widespread challenge to early developmental theories of childhood as an imperfect, transitional phase leading to adulthood. Progressive educationalists such as Rabindranath Tagore and John Dewey emphasised children's situational and embodied experiences, rather than seeing them merely as vessels for future potential. This paper will explore how this new perspective found expression in the writings of Anglophone modernist Mulk Raj Anand as a means of defying prevailing nationalist and imperialist ideologies. In presenting childhood as fluid, processual and affective, not as a safeguard for the nation's future and strength, Anand undermines the idea of linear progress and division on which the British Empire was built.

In *On Education* (1947), Anand calls for a reformed educational system that respects the child's personal needs and interests—its "vitality" (12)—as a means to improve the socio-political state of India. He rejects the idea of education as a tool for assigning children a predetermined vocation and instead envisions a system that allows them the freedom to simply *be*. My paper will examine how Anand's experimental oeuvre, including *Untouchable* (1935) and *Seven Summers* (1951), foregrounds this vision. In *Seven Summers*, Krishan's experiences with colonial education are marked by corporal punishment and peer hostility, but his life outside of school offers him greater autonomy and small opportunities for resistance against British colonial rule. Through his sensory and affective engagements with the world around him, Krishan subtly crosses hierarchical boundaries—class, race, nationality—that were entrenched by British rule, mirrored in formal innovations, such as shifting perspectives and fragmentation.

By focusing on the child in Mulk Raj Anand's work, this paper will (1) revise the critical commonplace of modernism as an adult-centered phenomenon and (2) examine a hitherto un(der)explored context for modernist expressions of anti-imperialism and anticolonial resistance. This paper will read Anand's texts in light of 20th-century progressive educational views and imperial history to show that modernist children were far from innocent in their perspective of the world.

16:30–17:00

The Poetics of Childhood: Gabriela Mistral and José Martí on Education, Memory, and Race

Speaker

Oleski Miranda Navarro

Description

In late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Latin America, positivist and scientific racist discourse prescribed rigid social hierarchies based on gender, race, and ethnicity, effectively excluding women, children, and indigenous populations from formal projects of nation-building. This essay argues that the Cuban intellectual José Martí and the Chilean poet Gabriela Mistral mounted a powerful literary and pedagogical challenge to this hegemonic order. Through a comparative analysis of Martí's children's magazine *La Edad de Oro* (1889) and Mistral's essay "El tipo del indio americano" (1932), this study demonstrates how both authors reconceptualized childhood and education as foundational sites for constructing an inclusive national identity. Martí's work, aimed directly at children, champions the child's right to knowledge and self-formation, rejecting Eurocentric models. Decades later, Mistral's pedagogical proposal explicitly advocates for the recognition of racial and cultural diversity as the very core of American teaching. By rereading these texts together, this research presents an alternative intellectual tradition that contested adult-centric and exclusionary ideologies. It ultimately reveals how Mistral and Martí pioneered a poetics of childhood that reimagined cultural transmission as a process attentive to the entire life cycle and rooted in anti-racist and pluralistic ideals.

17:00–17:30

Contesting the Mythic Mother. Ageing, Reifung and the Critique of Dominant Narratives in Colm Tóibín's *The Testament of Mary*

Speaker

Ewa Rychter

Description

This paper will focus on *The Testament of Mary* (2012)—a novella by the Irish writer Colm Tóibín, whose protagonist-narrator is the ageing mother of Jesus, depicted as spending her last days in exile in Ephesus, remembering her past and reflecting on the events both preceding and following her son's crucifixion. In her old age, Tóibín's Mary finds the courage to establish her own mature voice, contest the soon-to-be-canonical depiction of Jesus, and challenge the patriarchal, sanitized representation of her own role in her son's life (and death). While Mary's defiant narrativization of her life may be read as an example of the *Reifungsroman*—the novel of maturation or ripening (*Reifung*), achieved in old age—the scope and complexity of her story go beyond the feminist agenda customarily associated with the genre (cf. Waxman 1985; Doblas 2005). By making his aged Mary unlearn silence, reject the sacralization of suffering and violence, and reforge herself outside the trope of virginal maternity, Tóibín not only humanizes and individualizes the mythicized woman of Catholic religion, but also challenges her co-option into the discourse of Irish religious nationalism. Insofar as in Irish Catholic nationalism the Virgin Mary is conflated with Mother Ireland (Stubblings 2000; Meaney 2010; Scheible 2025), the fact that the novella's protagonist re-examines her motherhood and refuses to endorse her son's sacrifice can be read as Tóibín's attempt to defy and renegotiate some important aspects of Irish cultural self-understanding. Mary's meditation on her life course—her *Reifung*—is a literary means to reassess and rework the religiously mediated constructions of Irish womanhood and collective identity.

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17:30–18:00

Medical Authority and Age in Conspiracy Discourse: a Cognitive Linguistic Perspective

Speaker

Ewa Konieczna

Description

This presentation investigates the conceptualisation of medical staff in conspiracy theories surrounding childhood vaccination and organ cancer treatment in mature/old age, situating the analysis within the theme of language across the lifespan. Conspiracy narratives (in the sense of Introne et al. 2020) in English-speaking contexts—particularly in the United States and the United Kingdom—have gained momentum in the last decade, with childhood immunisation and cancer treatment emerging as recurrent focal points. These narratives not only dispute medical knowledge but also rely on the conceptualisations aimed at reframing doctors, nurses, and scientists as agents of harm.

My aim is to use the lens of Cognitive Linguistics in order to demonstrate how construal operations, such as metaphor, metonymy and framing (Croft and Cruse 2004, Langacker 2008) structure these representations and how they intersect with age-specific framings of health and vulnerability.

The study draws on the random sample of texts extracted from the LOCO corpus available at: OSF | LOCO: the 88-million word language of conspiracy corpus, marked by the authors as belonging to the topical category of *health*, and containing two key words: *vaccine* and *cancer*. For the sake of comparison, the relevant samples have been extracted both from the conspiracy and mainstream corpus, with the latter treated as the control group (in the sense of Miani 2022).

The analysis conducted within the cognitive linguistic framework reveals systematic contrasts in the conceptualisation of medical staff depending on the age group under discussion. The analysis of LOCO conspiracy subcorpus on childhood vaccination shows that doctors are frequently construed as predators or agents of control, while children are presented as innocent victims whose bodily integrity is threatened. Parents are construed as protective but powerless, caught in opposition to the “white coats” who enforce state and corporate agendas. In texts about adult decision-making (particularly parental consent), medical professionals are construed as manipulative counsellors, exploiting uncertainty and fear. As regards texts on cancer in conspiracy discourse, doctors are conceptualized through negatively charged frames that position them as agents of a profit-driven, morally compromised medical system rather than as caregivers. These narratives activate frames of deception, control, and harm, which reconfigure the doctor figure from a trusted expert to a threatening antagonist, thereby reshaping how audiences construe medical authority.

In contrast, in LOCO mainstream subcorpus medical professionals are conceptualised through metaphors of guardianship and protection, tailored to specific life stages (e.g. safeguarding children, supporting families, prolonging life in old age).

By uncovering conceptualisations behind these antagonistic portrayals, the paper contributes to understanding how language construes authority (as well as vulnerability) across the lifespan. In addition to this, it discusses the way in which metaphor, metonymy and framing shape age-specific discourses in conspiracy theories.

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18:00

16:00

Mixed media & ELT approaches

Session | **Location:** Locaux Interfacultaires, Pedro Arrupe / 208 - PA23 | **Convener:** Dirk Delabastita

16:00–16:30

‘Playing the plays’ in online video games and Machinimas: Rejuvenating Shakespeare’s theatre through online performances**Speaker**

Asseline Sel

Description

Because of their potential to confer “prestige, gravitas, and humanist principles to emerging platforms” (Sullivan 2022, 163; see also Bührlé 2018, 8), Shakespeare and his plays are prime targets for new media keen on legitimizing themselves, especially in the face of criticism. It is hardly surprising, then, that online performances of Shakespeare’s plays appeared from the early days of video games and the Internet, from a parodic live, written adaptation of Hamlet in an Internet Relay Chat channel in 1993 to the re-creation of the Globe theatre, completed with live reading through voice chat, in the 3D simulation game Second Life (Greatley-Hirsch and Best 2017, 454). As the technological affordances of cyberspaces, gaming interfaces, and online communication evolved, so did such online performance practices, which became increasingly more complex, with actors-players performing Shakespearean characters in real time through gaming avatars and voice chat features in increasingly realistic and complex 3D stages. This paper asks the question of whether and how such digital productions in video game settings, beyond their legitimizing function, can help ‘revive’ and rejuvenate classical works, infusing new life into such classics by using medium-specific mechanics and gameplay elements to help them resonate with contemporary digital cultures and Internet users. I argue that video game productions participate in contemporary Shakespearean discourses by integrating many trends of progressive performance and scholarly approaches, including feminist, queer, and postcolonial perspectives, especially by giving a voice to non-heteronormative and non-white approaches in a ‘safe space’, where identities may be (theoretically) protected. This, I suggest, is facilitated by the participatory and global nature of web culture and of online gaming spaces, which allows for encounters beyond national and cultural boundaries. Seeing how younger people are increasingly moving away from traditional linear screen-based media (TV, cinema), this paper furthermore argues that in-games productions fulfil a central role in cultural dissemination and in rendering Shakespeare relevant for younger generations and audiences, especially seeing how such in-game performances seem to be progressively entering the ‘mainstream’ sphere of Shakespearean discourses through increased professionalization, especially following the Covid-pandemic and the forced digitalization of many theatrical performances. The paper looks at a number of case studies of online Shakespearean production to illustrate the efforts at re-vitalizing Shakespearean plays and at making them relevant in today’s culture, including (but not limited to) recent documentary *Grand Theft Hamlet*, which documents a production of *Hamlet* within the online space of *Grand Theft Auto* and is filmed entirely in Machinima format, i.e., in the form of recorded animations from the game.

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16:30–17:00

Rereading Reconsidered: Towards a Media-Expanded Model of the Lifelong Reading Act**Speaker**

Sonali Kulkarni

Description

This paper departs from the premise that any understanding of literature across the lifespan must account for the ubiquitous practice of readers returning to the books they have already read. While empirical studies on rereading remain scarce, anecdotal and observational evidence suggest that people voluntarily revisit books read in the past (Beckett, 2009; Falconer, 2009; Waller, 2019). In fact, so prevalent is rereading that Amazon-owned reading platform Goodreads introduced a new “rereads” feature in 2017 in response to user demand (Goodreads, 2017). More recently, rereading is also acutely visible on BookTok, the industry-shaping bookish subculture of TikTok (Kulkarni & Burke, forthcoming). Moreover, such narrative returns today take place not only across platforms but also across modalities and modes of engagement. The recent Amazon Prime adaptation of Jenny Han’s YA trilogy *The Summer I Turned Pretty* (2009-2011) offers a topical example. Original readers – now no longer teenagers – revisit the storyworld and often even the novels in relation to the adaptation within a cultural landscape framed by TikTok commentary and engineered nostalgia. Such revisitations at once exemplify and push the boundaries of what Alison Waller calls the “lifelong reading act” (2019: 2).

In this paper, I expand Waller’s model to account for the digital, offering a theoretical intervention into mediated narrative return across the lifespan. Building on Louise Rosenblatt’s concept of the “reading act”, Waller suggests:

Remembering and rereading [...] are not distinct from the reading act, but represent integrated elements that function on a micro level in each tangible, phenomenological encounter with a text, and on a macro level every time that text is conjured up through conscious reminiscence, involuntary memory, rereading projects or shared discourses about childhood books. (2019: 5)

While this model accurately captures the recursive nature of reading and textual engagement, it does not account for the contemporary experience informed by algorithmic and aesthetic affordances of platforms and ideologies of the larger digital landscape. The present paper attempts to fill this gap by drawing on media studies and postdigital aesthetics, adding an important dimension to the study of literature across the lifespan.

I operationalize the media-expanded model of the lifelong reading act via the aforementioned example of *The Summer I Turned Pretty*. The analysis traces how the novels in relation to TikTok commentary, soundtrack nostalgia, and the adaptation itself produce complex, overlapping, and technologically mediated temporalities of narrative return. In doing so, this paper demonstrates how rereading as a narrative practice highlights broader negotiations of memory and temporality across the lifespan in the digital age.

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17:00–17:30

Metaphors of Basic Education in Duterte-Era Policy: A Semiotic Analysis**Speaker**

Dan Henry Gonzales

Description

This presentation examines how the Philippine government memoranda issued during Rodrigo Duterte’s presidency (2016–2022) conceptualize basic education through metaphor. Drawing on Saussurean semiotics, the study treats policy language as a system of signs that reveals deeper cultural meanings. The focus is on directives from the Ministry of Education and related agencies, with attention to how metaphors structure the state’s vision of learners and learning.

Preliminary analysis reveals that education is often presented in contrasting ways: as a “battle” to be fought and won in classrooms, suggesting a combative view of discipline, or as a “kite of dreams” lifted by schooling, conveying a more nurturing and aspirational image. These figurative constructions are not simply rhetorical devices. They encode ideologies about who the learner is (a future soldier, a national asset, or a child of the nation), what learning entails (rigorous training versus holistic growth), and how the state positions itself as a disciplinarian, guide, or provider in shaping citizen-subjects.

Situated at the intersection of linguistics, cultural studies, and policy analysis, this presentation highlights how metaphor shapes public understanding of education across the lifespan. By analyzing the symbolic frames of government language, it argues that educational policy both reflects and reinforces social values, power relations, and visions of national development. In line with the conference theme, the presentation demonstrates how policy discourse contributes to lifelong identity formation, influencing not only how education is delivered, but how citizens themselves are imagined from childhood to adulthood.

17:30–18:00

Teachers' Attitudes and Practices Concerning the Development of Students' Cultural Diversity Awareness and Intercultural Communicative Competence

Speaker

Songul Dogan Ger

Description

Over the past decades, globalisation and increased mobility have led to extensive interaction among diverse languages and cultures. As the development of social and cultural contacts in intercultural or multicultural contexts has accelerated, there has been growing recognition of the need to integrate culture teaching and intercultural communicative competence (ICC) into foreign language teaching and learning.

The primary aim of the present study, which was a part of the author's larger-scale research, was to explore teachers' attitudes and practices regarding the development of their students' cultural diversity awareness (CDA) and ICC. For this purpose, in-depth interviews were conducted with fifteen English language teachers working at an international school in Budapest to investigate how they perceive the concept of culture, what they think about culture learning and teaching, and what practices they use for developing CDA and ICC in their English classes. Besides investigating the development of CDA and ICC, the study also explored the deep and critical teaching of cultures — that is, critical cultural awareness (Byram, 1997) and critical intercultural competence (Olaya & Gómez Rodríguez, 2013; Gómez Rodríguez, 2015a; Gómez Rodríguez, 2015b) — which encourages students to think deeply by examining the reasons behind perspectives, practices and products in their own and other cultures and learning about and critically evaluating controversial cultural issues, such as inequality, poverty, social class, injustice, discrimination, racism, etc.

The results of this study show that most teachers find culture and culture teaching to be important, and that they use a variety of methods to develop their students' CDA and ICC, although these methods are largely limited to transmitting knowledge-based information. The teachers' unwillingness to teach certain topics, primarily connected with elements of deep culture, including controversial cultural topics, in order to develop students' critical ICC, points to the conclusion that they need guidance on analytical culture teaching and on developing their students' CDA and ICC. The insights presented in the study are timely and transformative for teacher training programs. By providing examples of how experienced educators address cultural challenges in their classrooms, this study serves as a valuable resource for preparing future teachers to meet the intercultural demands of modern classrooms. It encourages teacher training programs to prioritise ICC and equips pre-service teachers with strategies to approach critical culture teaching with confidence and sensitivity.

Byram, M. (1997). Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence. *Multilingual Matters*.
 Gómez Rodríguez, L.F. (2015a). The cultural content in EFL textbooks and what teachers need to do about it. *Profile Issues in Teachers' Professional Development*, 17(2), 167-187. <http://dx.doi.org/10.15446/prosfile.v17n2.44272>
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 Olaya, A., & Gómez, L. F. (2013). Exploring EFL pre-service teachers' experience with cultural content and intercultural communicative competence at three Colombian universities. *Profile Issues in Teachers' Professional Development*, 15(2), 49-67.

18:00

16:00

Multidisciplinary approaches

Session | **Location:** Locaux Interfacultaires, Pedro Arrupe / 103 - PA11 | **Convener:** Emma-Louise Silva

16:00-16:30

Gut Health and Female Rejuvenation in 1920s Medicine and Popular Fiction**Speaker**

Louise Benson James

Description

This paper looks at two bestselling novels – Marie Corelli's *The Young Diana* (1918) and Gertrude Atherton's *Black Oxen* (1923) – both of which feature women who regain their youth through the power of science. One British and one American, these novels, which we could call science fiction romance, thematise scientific anti-aging technologies, responding to the rejuvenation craze of the 1910s and 20s. As scholars including Michael Pettit and James F. Stark have discussed, this movement was born out of the convergence of fears about an aging population, concerns about youthfulness and lost youth, and the growing popularity of eugenics. It also spoke to new sciences which suggested the actual potential for regaining or extending youth, particularly endocrinology, and the discovery of vitamins.

This paper discusses the plots of the novels in relation to rejuvenation science. But it also draws out another thread I observed in these texts – mentions of eating and digesting, and how they are related to aging. I look at descriptions of digestion in these two novels: about losing vitality, about the medico-moral pitfalls of greed, about the arteries hardening. These descriptions point to the fundamental significance of metabolism, an idea at the heart of rejuvenation science in the 1920s, yet which often goes unmentioned. I will tease out this connection between rejuvenation theory and digestive health in order to argue that these texts speak to a growing understanding of the role of gut bacteria, and increasing popular awareness of the potential of food, diet, vitamins and probiotics to radically impact the body.

This paper is part of a broader project considering how popular fiction visualised the digestive system during a period in which the science of gut health was burgeoning, and how digestive knowledge was in turn "culturized" through popular fiction.

16:30-17:00

Memories of non-eventful ageing: a pilot study

Speakers

Ester Gubert, Thomas Van de Putte

Description

In memory studies in the humanities and qualitative social sciences, there is a lack of research on memories of ageing. This is counterintuitive, because these memories rely on bigger cultural meanings of ability and age, on meaning-making within groups (e.g. the family), they are highly affective, often inform future imagination, and are key to policy debates. These are all cultural and political processes that memory studies have a high stake in. At the same time, in fields where ageing is central (such as social gerontology), there is abundant research on the meaning of and experience of ageing (Hvalvik and Reiersen 2011; Elias and Lowton 2014; Diodati 2023), but this research takes presentist perspectives and doesn't tap into the memory studies vocabulary.

We believe that the main reasons for this lack of cross-disciplinary fertilization are memory studies' strict focus on events. Memory studies scholarship has incredibly theorized how memories of extraordinary crises that were instantly disruptive for society and which took place in a relatively short time span (e.g. wars, genocides, terrorist attacks, natural disasters) shape the present and the future. Memories of gradual processes of change, such as ageing (but also climate change and deindustrialization), are often sidelined in memory studies research (Jones and Van de Putte 2024, Wustenberg 2023, Craps et al 2017). For these gradual processes, social groups often lack schematic narrative templates and master narratives (see e.g. Wertsch 2021), which are the core empirical materials of memory studies.

In this pilot study, we explore one potential empirical pathway to studying collective memories of ageing, which could also be adapted to the study of other memories of gradual processes. We conduct a micro-analysis of interview fragments with older adults and family carers who were asked to remember and narrate the transition to dependency on informal and formal care for activities of daily living (e.g., walking, eating, dressing). While the underlying process of ageing was not directly asked about, it is so salient for them that participants intertwine their explicit narratives of increasing dependency with mnemonic references to their (often gradual) ageing process. These references to slow ageing are, however, never fully fledged narratives. They are small and implicit stories (Georgakopoulou 2007, Meretoja 2023, 2024): discursive references -often not more than a few words- that emerge in interaction with the interviewer. They reference bigger underlying narratives of gradual ageing that remain unuttered, but whose meanings is understood by both the interviewee and the interviewer and directly supports and justifies more explicit master narratives of eventful personal pasts. We argue that our empirical approach, searching for implicit narrative and small stories within bigger narratives, might also serve as a conceptual and empirical solutions for memory studies scholars who want to grasp how people, and the groups they are part of, attribute meaning to other gradual processes in the past.

17:00-17:30

Living on Repeat: Constructing a Voice for Age-Related Memory Loss**Speaker**

Robert Pickett

Description

Alex Pickett
 PhD Researcher
 University of Westminster
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Amnesic Mild Cognitive Impairment (aMCI), generally, is diagnosed when a person's memory range is below that of what is expected of people their own age. This involves a steep decline in memory function, usually in a person who is later in life, that does not otherwise affect basic cognitive skills. Yet, even as the field of MCI studies grows, the condition has rarely, if ever, been specifically addressed in literary works or examined in literary studies though MCI affects tens of millions of people. And though many scholars assert the importance of facilitating understanding of dementia and other cognitive disorders through fictional representations (Bladon, 2019; Falcus and Sako, 2019), what is possibly aMCI is generally presented as a precursor to—or symptom of—dementia or Alzheimer's, or else as unidentified geriatric memory loss. This minimizes the impact of aMCI by presenting a debilitating condition either as a symptom or as a normal part of aging.

This paper explores how qualitative research and critical analysis can be utilised to create a fictional voice for age-related memory loss. My goal is to animate and offer new directions in literary fiction through the process of writing my novel-in-progress, which is told from the perspective of a septuagenarian living with aMCI. I will discuss my current research study—undertaken with Professor of Neuropsychology Catherine Loveday and in conjunction with the eldercare charity Age UK—combining these findings with 1) critical analyses of linguistic study via “mind style,” 2) literary studies involving character development without the use of memory, and 3) neuropsychological investigations into how the mind functions with age-related memory loss. My goal is to contribute to the existing field of age-related memory-loss literature via the practice of fiction writing, taking up what Jonathan Sterne (2021, p. 13) suggests is one of the aims of a “phenomenology of impairment,” namely, “how to account for an experience of self that is unstable and ultimately not fully available.”

Ultimately, through a discussion of my methods and a reading of my novel-in-progress, I will demonstrate how the creation of a fictional voice for aMCI will offer new narrative possibilities that provide both a literal and metaphorical altered path; one that allows the character to change his relationship with time and prioritises the immediate environs of his experience, shifting from a defunct view of selfhood—i.e. the creation and accumulation of achievements and memories—to a transformed self via an unconventional narrative. This follows Stephen Katz and Annette Leibing's assertion that a potential result of memory-loss narratives (and, I argue, the potential of narratives charting any life course) is to “enlarge the scope of personhood itself, as belonging to a wider community of diverse citizens” (2023, p. 65). By reflexively narrating my methods of creating a fictional voice for the subjective terrain of cognitive impairment, this talk demonstrates how such a voice can challenge representational modes and literary conventions of age-related memory loss.

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Bio

Alex Pickett is a second-year doctoral researcher at the University of Westminster with funding through the Quintin Hogg Trust. He is the author of two books of fiction: a novel, *The Restaurant Inspector*; and a short story collection, *Camera Lake*, both published by University of Wisconsin Press. His short stories have been published in numerous literary journals. His website: www.rapickett.com/

17:30–18:00

Aging beyond the Binary: Transcultural Gerontology, Gender, and Marginality in Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness***Speaker**

Muhammad Abdullah

Description

Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017) offers a fertile site for interrogating the intersections of aging, gender, and marginality in transcultural contexts. Literary gerontology has often been dominated by Western paradigms, where narratives of decline and the male aging experience receive disproportionate attention. In contrast, Roy's narrative broadens the scope of gerontological inquiry by situating aging in South Asia and foregrounding experiences that unfold beyond the male-female binary. The character of Anjum, an aging hijra, embodies this critical shift. Her story foregrounds how old age intersects with non-normative gender identities, religious minority status, and political exclusions, complicating conventional understandings of lifespan and aging.

The novel presents Anjum's trajectory as emblematic of compounded insecurities: social invisibility, the absence of institutional care, and physical vulnerability are aggravated by her transgender identity. When Khwabgah, the space that once provided refuge to hijras, burns down, Anjum relocates to a graveyard, where she builds a shack that is periodically threatened by municipal authorities. Her assertion that she is "not living but dying" near her ancestors' graves resonates as a poignant commentary on the erasure of marginalized aging bodies from the collective imagination of the nation-state. Yet, paradoxically, this deathlike existence is also her cultural presencing: Anjum embodies a transcultural liminality that extends "beyond" herself, to borrow Homi Bhabha's formulation.

By foregrounding Anjum's life course, this paper demonstrates how Roy challenges cultural hierarchies of aging. Historically, women have been punished more severely than men for growing old, their aging bodies perceived as abject or burdensome. Roy radicalizes this asymmetry by extending it to the hijra community, where aging entails a unique convergence of social stigma, gender exclusion, and existential precariousness. Anjum's narrative disrupts binary constructions of both gender and aging, offering instead a model of endurance, memory, and redefined belonging.

The analysis draws upon literary gerontology (Margaret Morganroth Gullette's "narratives of decline" and Kathleen Woodward's reflections on the mirror stage of old age), gender studies, and the lens of transcultural intersectionality. The paper argues that Roy constructs alternative communities of care—however fragile—that resist erasure, while simultaneously revealing the persistence of institutionalized abandonment. By placing *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* within a transcultural gerontological framework, the paper highlights how South Asian literature contributes to global aging studies, not as derivative of Western models but as an expansion of them.

Ultimately, this reading of Roy's novel underscores how aging narratives, especially those situated outside binary gender categories, can deepen our understanding of literature across the lifespan. It demonstrates how the aged body, often coded as decline, can instead function as a site of resilience, memory, and transcultural survival.

18:00

18:00

18:30

Send-off drink

Break | **Location:** Locaux Interfacultaires, Pedro Arrupe / 103 - PA11