

Australian Reception Network (ARN) Newsletter

Issue 2, 6 October 2023

Interdisciplinary research into the history and future of reading

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'READING FOR LIFE' 2023

—An overview by symposium organiser **Juliane Roemhild**

Ours are uncertain times—politically, ecologically, economically. It takes a certain optimism to consider reading as a crucial means to encourage, inspire, reassure, or simply entertain us as the world around us seems to shift gears again. Our symposium, hosted by *English & Creative Writing at La Trobe University* and supported by the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, elicited a range of responses to the challenges we are facing.

We started off with a Q&A with Professor Josie Billington (University of Liverpool), leading researcher into the mental health benefits of reading and therapeutic reading groups. The conversation focussed on her concept of reading as its own form of thinking, the resonances with psychoanalytic theory and postcritical thinking, as well as the challenges of working as a literary scholar within a medicalised discourse of health.

Two round table conversations focussed on the historical and practical implications of reading as a beneficial practice. Maggie Nolan (UQ), Sara Haslam (Open University UK), Ben Davies (University of Portsmouth) and Liz Brewster (Lancaster University) discussed reading as a form of “literary caregiving” (Sara Haslam) in moments of crisis while bibliotherapists Christopher Smith (Shared Reading NSW), Sonya Tsakalakis (The Literary Hand), Susan McLaine (Bibliotherapy Australia) and Kate Middleton (The Reading Revolution) discussed questions of cultural difference and how to raise the profile of bibliotherapy in the health sector.

Presentations clustered around critical approaches to reading and reception (Edsel Parke, Jean François-Vernay, Maryam Daghigh Kia & Firouzeh Ameri), and the role of fiction in the nexus of environmental disaster and political engagement (Inna Häkkinen, Haritha Unnithan, Julie Hawkins), as well individual case studies in reception (Amy Lee, Niloofar Mansour). The symposium closed with a Shared Reading session led by author Christine Cohen Park, who has led a shared reading group for 13 years in Sussex.

Overall, the complexity and interest of the questions raised will hopefully lead to further conversations facilitated through an informal network of academics and practitioners working in the field.

*If you are interested in joining the conversation,
please email me at j.roemhild@latrobe.edu.au*

ANU VISITING FELLOWSHIPS 2024

Millie Weber draws our attention to this fantastic opportunity at ANU. Applications are currently open for the ANU's Humanities Research Centre Visiting Fellowships. The theme for 2024 is 'Everywhen'... which could incorporate, from a reception standpoint, how cultural objects and practices act as connectors across space and time. Applications close **20 October**. For more information, visit <https://hrc.cass.anu.edu.au/annual-theme-visiting-fellowships>

*I carried the plots and atmosphere of fiction about with me,
and tried to cram random events into those ready moulds.*
— Edmund White, "A Boy's Own Story"

UPDATES FROM OUR MEMBERS

The *ANU Reporter* recently interviewed **Katherine Bode** about the fascinating history of Australian newspaper serials. Read more and tune into the podcast episode [here](#).

Congratulations to **Julianne Lamond** for bringing home ASAL's Walter McRae Russell Award, in recognition of her work *Lohrey* (2022). The prize is given to the best book of literary scholarship on an Australian subject published in the preceding two calendar years. This year, it was jointly awarded to Julianne and to Roger Osborne (*The Life of Such is Life*, 2022).

Congratulations as well to UOW PhD candidate **Lucy Rouse** who recently presented on social media and reception within Colleen Hoover's *It Ends with Us* duology at the *2023 International Association for Studies of Popular Romance Conference*. The conference's theme was "romance revitalized" and Lucy explored how affective language is mirrored between the primary texts and their social media reviews, such as those posted on GoodReads or TikTok. Lucy argued that these platforms streamline the transmission of affect from author to community, and vice versa, creating an interactive literary landscape. Lucy hopes to expand this research in her PhD project, where she intends to analyse Colleen Hoover's rise to literary fame through social media, and explore how these social reading practices impact the way we create and engage with fiction.

Fellow UOW PhD candidate **Edsel Parke** (your humble ARN admin assistant) presented a talk at this year's *Reading for Life in Uncertain Times* digital symposium, his topic being "Reader agency and literary instrumentalism: Why bibliotherapy should pay close attention to naturalistic studies of reception".

Having also presented at the *Reading for Life* symposium, **Jean-François Vernay** will be delivering a talk on "Literary Studies, Fiction, Well-Being, and Care: Interdisciplinarity to the Rescue in the Post-Literature Age" at the upcoming *Futures of Literature* conference (part of CHASS) on 28 November. Conference details can be found [here](#). He has also been recently appointed series editor in Cognitive Literary Studies for *Routledge Focus*. Congratulations!

Juliane Roemhild shares some of her recent publications on the timely topic of reading for well-being:

- James, S., & Roemhild, J. (2023). Practising creative bibliotherapy down under: Understanding diverse approaches to literature as therapy. *Journal of Poetry Therapy*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08893675.2023.2253374>
- Roemhild, J., & Turner, M. (2023). Reading in Uncertain Times: Shared Reading for Eudaimonic Wellbeing. *M/C Journal*, 26(4). <https://doi.org/10.5204/mcj.2983>

If you have news items which you would like included in future issues of the newsletter, feel free to contact us.

RECEPTION: TEXTS, READERS, AUDIENCES, HISTORY

Reception is the official journal of the US Reception Study Society.

Volume 15, co-edited by our very own **Ika Willis**, is out now! Read all about it [here](#).

The theme of this special issue is *Reading Time: Or, Tl;dr*.

‘NOW’S THE TIME’: DELEUZE, GUATTARI AND THE WRITER’S BLOCK

—A meditation on creativity and the thought of Gilles Deleuze, from PhD candidate **Marc Haas**

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s collaboration may have formed one of the most iconic duos in the history of philosophy. Their concepts are part of everyday academic jargon (“transversality”, “rhizome”, “desiring machines”...), and their creative quest has blasted the hegemony of classical and Lacanian psychoanalysis—no small feat indeed, seeing the prominence of the discipline in France at the time.

What is lesser known, however, is how their collaboration came to be—how they overcame the difficulties that necessarily occur whenever two different tempers must collaborate: it is said that Deleuze was more of a systematic worker, while Guattari was more of a creative type.¹ Perhaps you could say that Deleuze was a “morning person” while Guattari was more of a night owl.

One of the early problems they had to solve was the working rhythm: should the square adapt to the circle, meaning the worker to the creative type, or the circle to the square? In a touching letter that is part of their early exchanges, Deleuze wrote the following to Guattari, discreetly but firmly urging him to anchor his creativity in a practice:

“I also feel that we’ve become friends before meeting one another. So please forgive me for insisting on the following: it is clear that you invent and use a certain number of very new, complicated and important ideas that have been developed in relationship to the practical research at La Borde [the clinic where Guattari was working as a therapist]. For example group fantasy, or your notion of transversality, which I think makes it possible to get beyond the old but still powerful duality between personal and collective unconscious” (quoted in Dosse 2010, 5).

The practice Deleuze had in mind was, of course, writing. Deleuze disagreed with Guattari’s argument that the current situation, France in the late 1960s, was not the most propitious for theoretical works, because the watchword at the time was “spontaneity”: people were under orders to reject orders, and Guattari, as a creative type, often suffered from writer’s block.

*Let us not wait for the “propitious moment”
to write (or to read), for we may be waiting ad aeternam.
It is from the heart of the most repetitive habits that novel ideas emerge.*

Deleuze, in this early exchange, argued that waiting for the propitious time to write is tantamount to saying that “we can only really write when things are going well instead of seeing writing as a modest but active, affective way of leaving the battle for a moment and feeling better oneself” (Ibid.)

This injunction must have been successful, seeing the spectacular results of their collaboration. And perhaps there is a lesson to be taken, a moral to the story, for all writers and even readers. Namely, let us not wait for the “propitious moment” to write (or to read), for we may be waiting *ad aeternam*. It is from the heart of the most repetitive habits that novel ideas emerge. If you find yourself blocked, then, just create a new habit—seat at your desk every day and write. If you don’t know what to write, just type “It is forbidden to forbid” over and over again until an idea pops up and you become able to leave the battle for a moment. *Because creativity, ultimately, is a matter of repetition much more than inspiration.*

¹ See Dosse (2010), the Introduction: “Betwixt or Between”, pp. 1-17.

OTHER ANNOUNCEMENTS



Our friends over at *Literature, Cognition and Emotions* (University of Oslo) have an excellent podcast series on how literature may help to shape our thoughts and feelings.

In the most recent episode, Professor Thomas Schubert speaks on the experience of being moved as a natural and cultural situation of social bonding.

Check out this episode and other past interviews [here](#).

The 2023 conference of *IGEL* (*International Society for The Empirical Study of Literature*) recently took place in Monopoli, a beautiful Italian town by the shores of the Adriatic Sea.

The conference was co-located with the 7th conference of the *European Narratology Network* (ENN), and the final event of *ELIT*, the Empirical Study of Literature Training Network.

The combined conference programme can be found [here](#).



Thank you to PhD candidate and ARN member **Fryderyk Kwiatkowski** for drawing our attention to a couple of websites that regularly post updates about various kinds of (Classical) reception-related initiatives:

<https://caneweb.org/cane-blog/>
<https://www.saveancientstudies.org/>

UPCOMING EVENTS

'Love Your Bookshop' Day 2023

7 Oct

<https://www.loveyourbookshop.com.au/>

Independent Publ. Conference: Research day

23 Nov

[Research Day Program | 23 November - The Small Press Network](#)

Congress of HASS

27 Nov–1 Dec

[Congress of HASS 2023 - The Council for the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences \(chass.org.au\)](#)



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australianreceptionnetwork.com

Subscribe to the ARN mailing list:

groups.electricembers.net/lists/subscribe/arn

Newsletter enquiries:

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CURRENT CALLS FOR PAPERS

Title: *23rd Annual South Asian Literary Association Online Conference*

When: 6-7 April 2024

Where: Virtual

Deadline: 15 December 2023 (250-word abstract)

Website: <https://southasianliteraryassociation.org/>

Details: This conference aims to explore narratives that destabilize, question, and re-script the normative mainstream representations of trauma, violence, and precarity. The scope of this conference encompasses the ethics of representation, forms of resistance, and interventions that have shaped the narratives of discomfort. In what ways does the ethics of representation shape narratives of dissent and discomfort? How have writers and artists navigated the narratives of discomfort to highlight the experiences of the marginalized, the minorities, and the underprivileged?

Title: *Failures in Print and Audiovisual Culture*

When: 6-7 June 2024

Where: Université Côte d'Azur, Cannes, France

Deadline: 6 November 2023 (300-word proposal and 100-word biography)

Website: All enquiries to Dr Isabelle Licari-Guillaume isabelle.licari-guillaume@univ-cotedazur.fr

Details: We invite contributions exploring the role of failure in Anglophone print and audiovisual culture, including comics, children's books, magazines, novels, videogames, films and series. In particular, we would like to explore the many ways in which failure and canonicity are not mutually exclusive, if only because failure, no less than the canon, is a discursive and highly contingent notion. We also welcome submissions discussing such failures from a transnational perspective.

Title: *Affiliations: Towards a Theory of Cross-Temporal Comparison*

When: 24-25 May 2024

Where: University of Oxford, UK

Deadline: 15 November 2023 (300-word abstract & 100-word biography)

Website: <https://medieval.ox.ac.uk/2023/09/14/cfp-affiliations-towards-a-theory-of-cross-temporal-comparison/>

Details: In recent years, comparison and comparability have generated thorough critical discussion within the fields of cultural and literary studies. This conference seeks to provoke discussion of and experimentation with asynchronous encounters, to stage interactions between texts and fields of research routinely kept separate, and to develop collectively a theory of cross-temporal comparison.

Title: *Happiness and Culture—National Conference of the Popular Culture Association*

When: 27-30 March 2024

Where: Marriott Downtown Magnificent Mile, Chicago, USA

Deadline: 30 November 2023 (150-word abstract for papers / 250-word abstract for panels)

Website: <https://pcaaca.org/page/nationalconference>

Details: Papers may focus on any aspect of the relationship between happiness (tentatively understood as subjective well-being) and broadly defined popular culture. Our topic explores the role that culture and its products and institutions (such as popular arts and rituals, social and other media, advertising, education, and dominant scientific paradigms) play in constructing and/or popularising different ideas about happiness and how best to pursue it. We are considering proposals for individual papers and/or complete panels. Sessions are scheduled in 1.5-hour slots, typically with four papers or speakers per standard session. Individual presentations should not exceed 15 minutes.

more overleaf...

Title: *Routledge Focus on Dialogues in Cognitive Literary Studies* (book series)

Website: <https://www.accel.s.rwth-aachen.de/cms/ACCELS/Forschung/Publikationen/~wdpng/Book-Series-Routledge-Focus-on-Dialogue/>

Details: Cognitive Literary Studies have seen a dynamic development in the last decades. This new book series will: disentangle, volume by volume, central terms and concepts from confusion by looking at them from the perspective of (at least) two disciplines involved that enter a dialogic exchange; critically discuss the explanatory reach of major concepts and terms, both in the various disciplines in which they play a role, and in interdisciplinary exchange; discuss both the theoretical and methodological implications that the respective research traditions bring to the discussion; assess the applicability in actual research on phenomena of central interest to Cognitive Literary Studies.

Title: *New Directions in Telecinematic Stylistics* (call for chapters)

Deadline: 30 October 2023 (<500-word abstract)

Website: All enquiries to Dr Kimberley Pager-McClymont kimberley.pager-mcclymont@abdn.ac.uk

Details: Telecinematic stylistics aims to draw on fields such as film studies, adaptations, psychocinematics, or musicology to conduct stylistic analyses on the telecinematic medium. This volume invites contributions which focus on the following themes in line with the aims of Telecinematic Stylistics: Adaptations; Authors and Auteurs; Ethnocinema; Feminism and Queer Approaches; Digital Media; Metaphor; Narratology; Postcolonial and Transnational Perspectives; Pragmatics; Psychoanalysis and psychocinematics; Sound; Translation and transcription; Viewer-response and spectatorship.