Barcelona Workshop 12

"Fiction, Literature and Beyond"

LOGOS, University of Barcelona
Sala de Juntes (& Online)

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Keynote Papers:

María José Álcaraz León (Universidad de Murcia), "Autofiction in Film and Theatre"

Autofiction has become a popular literary genre drawing attention from writers and literary theorists alike. According to a standard characterization of autofiction, a literary work is autofictional if it is presented both as a non-fictional or autobiographical narration of the author's life, and as a fictionalization –or fictional presentation– of that very content. There is some dispute over whether this attempt is consistent, given that presenting some text as autofiction seems to involve two different modes of perceiving –and responding to– the same narrative content. In my presentation, I will explore the possibility of filmic or theatrical autofiction, focusing on possible examples and upon the aspects of the filmic and theatrical media that may be relevant to acknowledge the work as autofictional.

Jérôme Dokic (Institut Nicod), "Disinterestedness and the Sublime"

Susan L. Feagin (Temple University), "Artistic Functionality"

This paper attempts to clarify, at least to some degree, the notion of artistic functionality. Roughly, something has artistic functionality when artistry—artistic features or properties—enhance its potential to fulfill its (practical) function. I illustrate how the concept can be applied to scripts as having a practical function, as something written to be performed, as opposed to dramatic literature, as something to be appreciated in the reading. But the concept also has broader application, in particular, to artistry in the non-art world of utilitarian objects (and their makers as, to that extent, artists).

Andrew Kania (Trinity University), "The Meaning of Musical Works and Its Relation to Their Authentic Performance"

Julian Dodd has recently discussed the situation of musicians who are torn between (a) following the score of a work of Western classical music, and (b) eliciting understanding of the meaning of the work in listeners by departing from the score. Dodd argues that the values of the practice not only (1) oblige such musicians to depart from the score, but also (2) imply that the result is an authentic performance of the work in question. I argue that Dodd's view depends on an implausible account of the meaning of musical works, and thus that the performances he describes are inauthentic.

Derek Matravers (Open University), "On the Confusion Between Being a Representation and Being a Fictional Representation"

This paper will argue that recent work in philosophy systematically confuses two different issues: the nature of our access to representations and the nature of representations. This confusion occurs across all representational media from literature, through film and video games, to VR. The confusion is all the greater in that both issues operate with a fiction/non-fiction distinction – although the two distinctions are unrelated. Identifying this confusion shows that much recent philosophy (including the (so-called) 'philosophy of fiction') needs to be recast.

Contributed Papers:

Carola Barbero (Università degli Studi di Torino), "Lost in (Literature's) Translation"

It is admittedly hard to grasp the complexity of literary works. And how to preserve it through translation? Gottlob Frege explains how the translation should preserve both sense (Sinn) and reference (Bedeutung). However, in order to be a good translation, it should as well somehow manage to preserve those aspects that Frege presents as "tone" and "color". Therefore, a good translator should be able to preserve the meaning of the original text jointly with the tone and color that distinguish it (and which, as Lamarque has emphasized when describing the opacity of literature, are not secondary aspects). Anything but a simple job. As Joachim du Bellay said, "mieux dignes d'estre appelez traditeurs, que traducteurs", thus highlighting a fundamental point, namely, that to translate literary texts is always to betray. Why? Because, to use the title of a book by Umberto Eco, *Saying almost the same thing*, in the case of literary works, is not enough (or rather, it seems to be not enough). In fact, translation is based on the idea that equivalence can be established between two languages, the original and the target language. Equivalence which, however, in the literary case in which tone and color far from being mere details are (in many cases) the substance, can never be given (which is why we sometimes speak of the "untranslatability" of literature); hence the inevitability of betrayal. For no matter how much one

grasps the structure of the text in a given language and tries to respect and recreate the style and metrics of the original text, one can only be unfaithful to the original writing.

Vanessa Brassey (King's College London), "The Pictorial Narrator"

In our everyday discourse we make frequent reference to pictorial narratives. We exclaim on the hunt scene in the cave painting (Lascaux), mention the frenzy unfolding amidst a human catastrophe in the spray paint (Banksy, 2006), talk about the triumph of the lost toy in the printed illustration and whisper about the wicked degeneracy of a young man in the oil painting (Hogarth, 1743). Yet, a more precise question concerning narrators and their relation to these so-called pictorial narratives remains overlooked (Ranta 2021). This paper has two main aims. The first is to set out what is meant by 'pictorial narrators' by providing a succinct and up-to-date guide to the discussions that have touched on this issue. The second, is to explore the possibility that pictorial narratives imply pictorial narrators.

Chiara Brozzo (University of Birmingham), "On the Proper Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature in Design"

In this paper, I argue for a version of cognitivism, according to which a certain kind of knowledge is necessary for the proper aesthetic appreciation of nature. My argument concerns nature as incorporated in certain instances of design, such as fashion design. My target will be a version of anti-cognitivism according to which awareness of appearances is all we need to properly aesthetically appreciate nature. Against this, I argue that the proper aesthetic appreciation of nature in certain instances of design requires both awareness of appearances and knowledge of the natural kinds of some of their components (e.g., mussel shells).

Sean Clancy (East China Normal University), "Imaginative Resistance as a Methodological Hazard"

Sometimes we experience *imaginative resistance* in response to literary fictions that contain problematic moral claims. I argue that the same phenomenon also occurs in response to certain moral thought experiments; when it does occur, it is likely to interfere with our ability to form useful intuitions about the cases in question. Since imaginative resistance in response to thought experiments may be disguised and therefore difficult to recognize, I outline a set of criteria for identifying thought experiments that are likely to evoke resistance, in addition to a set of recommendations for minimizing the impact of this methodological hazard.

Jacopo Frascaroli (University of York), "Engineers of the Human Soul: The Moral Responsibility of Artists and Designers"

The last few decades of debate in cognitive science and the philosophy of mind have accustomed us to the idea that the human mind might be as much the product of human-made environments as it is their cause. The environments we build alter our minds, leading to new environmental modifications that spur further mental development, in repeated swells of reciprocal influence (Dennett, 1991; Clark, 1997; Knappett, 2005; Malafouris, 2013). If this is the case, however, artists and designers are invested with a moral vocation, and must juggle with a complex moral dilemma: either they build environments that confirm our existing patterns of action and perception and drive no further learning, or they build environments that disrupt our existing patterns of action and perception and stir our developmental trajectories in new directions. In this talk, I will show by means of examples how both these alternatives have crucial repercussions for our sense of agency, freedom and well-being. The upshot will be a picture that rehabilitates the image of the artist as an "engineer of the human soul" and sheds new light on the complex relationships between aesthetic and ethical imperatives.

Patrick Keating (Trinity University), "Light and Time in the Hollywood Film Noir"

For cinematographers, lighting is an essential tool for the representation of time—that is, for the task of rendering *when* the story's events are happening. In this talk, I discuss three different ways that cinematographers use lighting to represent time. First, lighting can represent time of day, as when (simulated) moonlight suggests that a scene is set at night. Second, lighting can represent historical time, as when (simulated) gaslight situates a scene during the 19th Century. The third approach is the most abstract: lighting may represent a stage in a narrative arc, as when a progression from light to dark evokes a tonal shift from hopefulness to despair. My examples will be drawn from classical film noir, a cycle of movies that are still celebrated for their expressive lighting. For the cinematographers of film noir, a crucial challenge of lighting involved balancing these three competing demands.

Dana LaCourse Munteanu (Ohio State University), "Affects for Shock or for Prosocial Behavior? What Journalists Can Learn From Aristotle and Novelists"

A few days ago (October 2022), someone threw a can of soup at a Van Gogh painting inside the British Museum. The protester screamed: ""What is worth more? Art or life? Is it worth more than food? Worth more than justice?" (https://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-63254878). While the act of vandalism appears to us crass and ridiculous, the questions behind it might not be. My paper suggests that, indeed, we often invest more time, emotions, and thought in narrative arts (especially in literature and movies) than we invest in-real life catastrophes – and that with good "reason." Certain techniques mentioned by Aristotle in his *Poetics* and *Rhetoric* (e.g. "bringing before the eyes"), as well as techniques of focalization and repeated familiarity with the characters' thoughts and aims, stir our affects in more effective ways than journalistic reports, which tend to shock us without moving us to action. Paradoxically, we may be more inclined to save an orphan in a Dickens novel than adopt one from a current war zone. However, I conclude

that, by refocusing our narrative lens with the help of fiction, we might be able improve the world around us.

Julia Langkau (Université de Geneve), "Life and Literary Fiction"

In this paper, I argue that non-literary text and ordinary life can give us experiences similar to the ones we have when we engage with literary fiction. I first specify the relevant kind of experience, then show how it can occur in life and finally argue that while living life as if it was literary fiction would be morally problematic, retrospectively understanding life like literary fiction might help us attach meaning and significance to aspects of life or to particular life events.

Bruno Leclercq & Louis Rouillé (Université de Liège), "When Fictive Objects are Visualized: A Challenge for Descriptive Theories"

Fictive objects, even those issued from literature, supersede their descriptive characterization. That, unlike what Neo-Meinongians claim, they have (nuclear) properties over and above their constitutive ones (those explicitly attributed to them in their native work) is shown by the fact that, to the naïve reader, they seem to be complete and to have their properties contingently (to exemplify them rather than to encode them). This is even more obvious when these objects reappear in other books. And yet even more patent when these entities become visualized in paintings, comics or movies. Indeed, the possibility of diverging visual adaptations is challenging for descriptive theories of fictional characters: one may add properties to fictional characters in incompatible ways while still identifying the same character. Gregor Samsa, from Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*, is a case in point: there are many incompatible visual representations of it/him; it/he is deliberately vaguely described in the original text; it/he thus very plausibly supersedes its/his descriptive characterization.

Elisa Paganini (Università degli Studi di Milano), "Fiction as Non-assertive Communication"

I propose to consider fiction as a communicative act in which conformity to truth (a fundamental commitment of assertion) is suspended. The general idea, which will be further developed, is that fictional authors transmit content to their audience without being bound to truth. This proposal will be compared to the main theories of fiction in the literature, including not only the pretense theory (Searle, van Inwagen, Lewis, Thomasson), but also the more recent debate between intentionalists (Currie, Davies, Stock), weak intentionalists (García-Carpintero, Abell) and hypothetical or anti-intentionalists (Levinson, Walton) on imagined content. It will also be shown how this proposal can account for alleged assertions within fiction and for communicated content.

Amber Ross (University of Florida), "Silent Narratives—Searching for the Fundamentals of Narratives Beneath Their Linguistic Form"

Narrative is typically assumed to take a literary or linguistic form; in order for something to be a narrative, it must take a linguistic form, and to understand a narrative one must possess language. I suggest that this is overly limiting and a misunderstanding of the nature of narrative. At root, a narrative is a story, and understanding something as a story only requires imposing a kind of meaningful order on events. I propose the most fundament features of narrative—and narrative understanding—involve only a small set of concepts: causal or temporal structure, *goals* or *purposes*, *intentions*, and *agents* for whom there is a difference between *can't* and *won't*. These concepts, combined in the appropriate way, are the fundamental features of stories. Infants can understand and impose story-structure on a series of events, young children can understand and create stories, and research has shown that there are non-human animals who have the conceptual resources necessary to create and understand stories as well.

Merel Semeijn (Institut Nicod), "Common Belief and Make-Believe"

On Walton's account of make-believe, unknown facts concerning the existence and nature of props can influence fictional truth. Inspired by Lewis's and Walton's discussion of indirect fictional truth, I explore the tenability of a version of Walton's theory that avoids interference of unknown facts about props by making fictional truth rely on participants' *common beliefs* about props: conditional principles of generation are only valid if they quantify over props whose existence and nature is common belief between participants of the game of pretence. I discuss two possible complications for this version of Walton's theory that are both based on the intuition that fictional truth should be something that is objective and independent of participants' mental states.

Mario Slugan (Queen Mary University), "Potential Mechanisms Behind the Hypothesis That Fiction Influences Real-Life Beliefs"

Recently, the idea that fiction can provide real-world knowledge has been gaining currency (McGregor 2021). Although it is reasonable to assume that fiction sometimes does convey truths (Friend 2020), less has been said about why the audiences would treat anything in fiction as true (or false) if the dominant mode of engagement with fiction is make-belief. In other words, how do audiences in fictional contexts parse truths and falsehoods from each other and from merely matters to be make-believed? In this talk I argue against Currie's (2020) proposals that audiences come to have real-life beliefs because they assume 1) significant overlap of fictional and real-life truths and 2) veracity of author's beliefs. I pursue other potential mechanisms for how fiction could influence real-life beliefs but also raise concerns that whether fictions actually change real-life beliefs is still an open empirical question (cf. Braddock and Dillard 2016).

Gerard Vilar (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona), "Cognitivism and Artistic Research of the Future"

Although, strictly speaking, the future is not knowable, the efforts of various social and human sciences to know future trends and scenarios, what is called future studies, have gained momentum due to the crises of the present. Artistic research practices have also begun to show interest in research on the future, although there is an evident cognitive interest not in possible scenarios, but rather in desirable scenarios for humanity. This presentation will show three examples of this type of recent practice and the philosophical problems that they pose to aesthetic cognitivism.