

POST-MESH

Simona Adinolfi, Marco Caracciolo, Gabriele D'Amato, Ciarán Kavanagh, Shannon Lambert, Alexander Vandewalle, and Jonas Vanhove

LITERARY INTERPRETATION BEYOND THE HUMAN: NARRATIVE, MATERIALITY, DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

The post-MESH lab at Ghent University picks up where the ERC-funded NARMESH project left off in 2022. It brings together researchers working at the intersection of posthumanism, literary studies, and narrative theory

Unprecedented challenges

How can we develop forms of close reading that are attuned to the challenges raised by the Anthropocene, migration on a planetary scale, or Artificial Intelligence?

New literary practices

How are literary forms and the affective/social practices that surround them changing in response to these challenges?



Fields and Methods

New Formalism (Levine 2015)

Form as a bridge between socio-political or cultural tensions and narrative representation

Narrative theory

In its contextualist form (e.g., Dwivedi, Nielsen, and Walsh 2018), a useful framework for conceptualizing the interplay of context-specific cultural assumptions and narrative forms or strategies

Posthumanism (e.g., Braidotti 2013)

The human as materially embodied and embedded in a thick web of relations that include nonhuman animals, technologies, and the environment

Game studies

Digital gameplay and how it changes the way we think about artistic representation and narration (e.g., Ryan 2006)



Topics

Digital technologies

Digital media inspire a rethinking of literary interpretation as a collaborative practice in online contexts, or in relation to uniquely complex video game experiences. Classical narratological concepts such as the implied author (Schmid 2013), unreliability (Shen 2013) or characterization (Rimmon-Kenan 1983) can be rethought in connection with digital technologies.

Examples

Our interpretive practices engage with topics such as:

- Metareference and posthuman subjectivity in the video game *Inscription* (Mullins 2021)
- The ethics of pessimism or optimism in climate fiction such as Stephen Markley's *The Deluge* or Kim Stanley Robinson's *The Ministry for the Future*
- How the representation and presence of digital technologies in novels of migration, such as *Exit West* by Mohsin Hamid, affect kinship ties and distance perception
- Emotion and ethics in fictional representations of animal experimentation in biomedical literature such as Hanya Yanagihara's *The People in the Trees* (2013) and Karen Joy Fowler's "Us" (2013)
- The application and poetics of literary concepts like characterization in historical and mythological video games such as *Assassin's Creed Odyssey* (Ubisoft 2018) or *Hades* (Supergiant 2020)
- The impact of the Anthropocene on the construction of the child subject in children's literature

Readers and reading bodies

How and why do readers both converge on and diverge from different interpretations and experiences of such texts? An attention to both real readers, their use of and discussions of texts, and conceptual readers, such as the theorized reading body in cognitive narratology, can help foreground not only what readers find in the text, but also what they bring to it, and what happens in their meeting.

Contact

marco.caracciolo@ugent.be
<https://postmesh.ugent.be/>

 Universiteit Gent

 @ugent

 Ghent University

