



Cognitive Futures in the Humanities  
Helsinki 2016

Newsletter  
March 2016

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## Editorial

Welcome to Helsinki!

Dear friends and colleagues,

We are delighted to present the first newsletter connected to the Cognitive Futures in the Humanities Conference in Helsinki (13-15 June 2016). Here, you can get useful information about registering for the conference and finding a place to stay during your time in Helsinki, and you can also learn more about our keynote speakers.

Since the beginning of the Cognitive Futures in the Humanities project, the yearly conference has been steadily growing in terms of the number of participants and the variety of perspectives their papers bring to the cognitive study of literature, art, film, theatre and music.

For the Helsinki conference, an exciting programme is shaping up, including sessions on empirical approaches to literature, reflections on method, concepts and the challenges that come with bringing together the two cultures of the sciences and the humanities. We are currently assembling a draft programme, taking into account your scheduling requests, which we will publicise in the next newsletter.

Our keynote speakers are renowned for their work that has shaped different aspects of the cognitive approaches in the humanities, from the philosophy of art (Jean-Marie Schaeffer), linguistics (Deirdre Wilson), literary studies (Peter Garratt and Pirjo Lyytikäinen) and the empirical study of reading in the digital age (Anne Mangen).

We have conducted short interviews with them to introduce their views on cognitive approaches in the humanities and their thoughts on how this endeavour might develop. The series opens in this newsletter with Anne Mangen and Pirjo Lyytikäinen. Have a look at the interviews here, get to know them and continue the conversation in Helsinki!

You can also find basic information on registration and accommodation on the final pages of this newsletter. If you have any questions regarding these matters, please don't hesitate to get in touch with our conference coordinator Esko Suoranta ([esko.suoranta@helsinki.fi](mailto:esko.suoranta@helsinki.fi)).

We look forward to seeing you in Helsinki in June!

Best wishes,  
Karin Kukkonen and Merja Polvinen

**Meet the Keynote Speakers:****Anne Mangen**

*What do the disciplinary connections inherent in the field of cognitive humanities mean to you? How do you engage with these different methods of research and different forms of knowledge in your work?*

Cognitive humanities, per se, is a new field to me. However, I have quite some experience with interdisciplinary research, most recently within a European research network (COST Action) in which more than 120 researchers from a range of disciplines (arts & humanities + social sciences + natural sciences and technology) are engaged in empirical research on the impact of digitisation on reading.

Interdisciplinary collaboration has been pivotal to my own research, ever since, during my Ph.D. I spent six months at the technology think tank Xerox PARC. At PARC, I was working with the research team called RED: Research in Experimental Design. This research group consisted of a robotics engineer, an audio/sound designer, an information architect, an electrical engineer, a media theorist/cultural studies professor, and was led by a cartoonist with experience as a toy designer.

RED labelled their epistemology “speculative design”, and this entailed a radically interdisciplinary approach in which the perspectives and expertise from design joined forces with conceptual and theoretical approaches of science and academia, arts and engineering. The stay with RED at Xerox PARC was definitely a

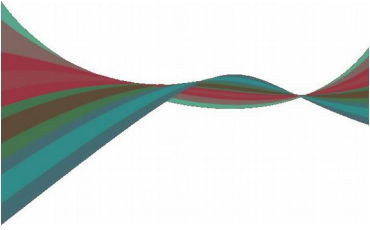
genuinely interdisciplinary experience, in a playful but at the same time very thorough and intellectually talented setting.

After completing my Ph.D., I began collaborating with, first, a neurophysiologist/-biologist in the field of writing research, and then spent half a year in the interdisciplinary reading research lab of David Miall and Don Kuiken, University of Alberta, in 2012.

The collaboration that came out of this stay has fundamentally shaped the way I think about the value of interdisciplinarity and the necessity to combine theoretical and methodological approaches, perhaps in particular between the arts & humanities and experiment-based empirical science. The Miall-Kuiken lab is exemplary in combining conceptual and theoretical knowledge from arts & humanities and psychology towards a common goal (advancing our understanding of processes and mechanisms involved in literary reading).

*There is a great drive from European governments to bring digital learning technologies into the classroom. Many educators, however, wonder how these new technologies can be employed fruitfully, and how to work against the “shallow” attention associated with digital formats. What are the central questions that should be addressed in such a debate?*

First and foremost, we should inquire the research base underlying decisions and recommendations, whether they concern what



technologies to use, how to use them, or the claims made about their potential for, and effects on, learning outcomes. Then, I strongly encourage more nuanced perspectives with respect to the kinds of reading (and writing) in question when discussing advantages and disadvantages of the different technologies.

Whenever we discuss “new” vs “old” technologies, we should always keep in mind the content of whatever material is in question (e.g., differences between reading long, linear texts vs short, nonlinear texts), purpose (e.g., leisure/literary vs textbook reading), and also expectations to and experiences with technology. There should also be some degree of consensus with respect to what one considers key properties or aspects of, say, reading as a concept and skill.

For instance, does it matter whether so-called deep reading – that is, reading of longer, more dense and possibly complex, texts requiring sustained attention and focus over time – is not part of what people consider a core property of what one understands as “reading” (cf. Naomi Baron’s concluding paragraph in her recent book *Words Onscreen*)? I think it matters, and at least I think we should pause and reflect on this issue and how it may affect future generations of readers.

*E-Readers and digital libraries have been with us for about a decade now but they have not displaced the physical book, especially in reading fiction. Why do you think that is? Where do you think the development will go in the future?*

It seems to me that e-readers (Kindles) will compete with print for certain kinds of texts and certain kinds of reading – such as serial literature, page-turners, etc., whereas print seems to still be preferred for other kinds of texts – perhaps typically, more cognitively challenging texts (whether novels or textbooks).

An important task for research (and one that we are currently investigating in the E-READ COST Action) is whether differences, if they continue to exist, between reading on paper and screen (of different kinds: backlit vs e-ink; small and large) are due to visual or tactile/haptic properties, and how much has to do with readers’ experiences and preferences.

**Meet the Keynote Speakers:****Pirjo Lyytikäinen**

*What do the disciplinary connections inherent in the field of cognitive humanities mean to you? How do you engage with these different methods of research and different forms of knowledge in your work?*

I find the research done in many fields of cognitive humanities and even cognitive science outside the field of humanities utterly important in the endeavour to think anew the role and methods of literary studies especially in the context of the study of literature and emotions, which is my current field of interest.

The plurality of the various cognitive approaches to affect and emotion and their role in human cognition is a challenge but it seems possible to navigate in this context with the help of the work done in cognitive poetics and cognitive grammar, especially relaying on the enactive conception entailing that cognition is, necessarily, always already affective (e.g. Colombetti 2014).

The work done with atmosphere and tone in cognitive poetics (e.g. Stockwell 2013) can ground what I have called the study of emotion effects in literature.

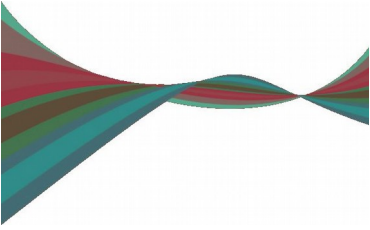
*Your current research focuses on the history of emotions in Finnish literature. Do you think you will find any patterns of feeling that are*

*particularly Finnish – either in the emotions depicted or in the narrative emotions engendered in readers?*

It is an open question how far patterns of feeling are specific to emotional communities, to use Barbara Rosenwein's term (Rosenwein 2006), or to emotions described or expressed in literary texts. Some Finnish authors have themselves sought to describe "arctic hysteria", "northern melancholy" etc. but it remains to be seen if any specific patterns of feeling emerge from their work. For example, modernist author Marko Tapio planned a four-volume novel cycle *Arctic Hysteria*, of which only two novels appeared (1967–1968). It was meant to reflect Finnish history and Finnish mentality through depictions of the fortunes of one family.

The concept itself was discussed at the time more widely and applied as well, particularly to the novel *Maa on syntinen laulu* [land is a sinful song] (1964) by Timo K. Mukka. In the novel, Mukka describes the melancholic combination of agony over one's sins and the "wild" sexuality of people living in Lapland.

Finnish melancholy, on the other hand, was connected, firstly, to the idea that "songs are made of sorrows" taken from Finnish folk poetry and extended to denote the innermost quality of that poetry. Secondly, it was bound to the Nordic nature and climate: to the long



dark winters and short summers where everything blooms quickly, the winter looming always in the background.

*Cognitive approaches to literature (and the humanities more generally) have been steadily on the rise in the Anglo-Saxon world. How do you see the situation in the Nordic countries? And how do you think it will develop in the future?*

I am confident that cognitive approaches to literature will have a prominent place in the future of Nordic literary studies. Cooperative networks still need to be formed between cognitive literary scholars. An initial Nordic meeting was organised by Karin Kukkonen in Turku, Finland in May 2014 with participants from Finland, Sweden, Norway and Denmark, and hopefully, a proper network will be established soon.

In Helsinki, we have worked together with cognitive linguistics in the past, and there is a current interdisciplinary project on Feeling and Thinking that just began its work within the Faculty of Arts, and which is planning an international symposium in the autumn of 2016 (<http://blogs.helsinki.fi/feeling-and-thinking/>).

## Registration

The registration form can be found at <http://blogs.helsinki.fi/coghum-2016/registration/>.

After you have registered, coordinator Esko Suoranta will be in touch with the relevant payment information.

Please note the deadlines for different fees. You can reach the organizers at [coghum-2016@helsinki.fi](mailto:coghum-2016@helsinki.fi) should you have any further inquiries.

Fees:

Full fee (until April 30th): 150 €

Late fee (after April 30th until June 6th): 200 €

Reduced postgraduate fee: 100 €

Conference dinner at Restaurant [Meripaviljonki](#) (June 14th): 55 €

## Travel

The Helsinki-Vantaa international airport, located 19 km from the city centre, can be reached from anywhere in the world. From the airport, you can take a taxi, the [Finnair City bus](#), local bus 615 or the new local train connection "Kehärata" to the Central Railway Station / Helsinki Centre. A taxi to city centre costs approximately 45-50 euros, buses and train are between 5 and 10 euros single fare.

## Accommodation

While we have pre-booked a number of rooms with fixed prices, we recommend that all participants reserve their hotel accommodation as soon as possible.

The pre-booked rooms are guaranteed for us until the reservation deadlines listed below. Please book the rooms directly with the hotels by telephone or email using the booking code.

Please note that by booking early, you may find even cheaper options available at the same hotels. Do make sure to check the reservation and cancellation policy of the hotels when making your reservation.

All hotel prices include taxes, and most include breakfast and WiFi.

For those on a limited budget, Helsinki has a share of hostels and airbnb listings. Further options near the conference venue can be found at our website <http://blogs.helsinki.fi/coghum-2016/travel-and-accommodation/>.

### SCANDIC HOTEL PAASI

Paasivuorenkatu 5 b

Phone: +358 9 2311 700

E-mail: [paasi@scandichotels.com](mailto:paasi@scandichotels.com)

Standard rooms:

138 EUR single per night

158 EUR double/twin per night

Prices include breakfast and WiFi.

Booking code: BHEL120616

Prices guaranteed until 3.6.2016 (subject to availability).

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and

Siltasaarenkatu 14

Phone: +358 9 5466 0100

E-mail: [hakaniemi.cumulus@restel.fi](mailto:hakaniemi.cumulus@restel.fi)

Standard rooms:

111 EUR single per night

131 EUR double/twin per night

Prices include breakfast, WiFi and sauna.

Booking code: Helsingin yliopisto / CogHum2016

Prices guaranteed until 27.5.2016 (subject to availability).