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Introduction

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Abstract – Introduction to European Narratology Network 7 *Rhythm, Speed, Path: Spatiotemporal Experiences in Narrative, Poetry, and Drama*.

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The 7th European Narratology Network international conference was held from 26th to 28th September 2023 in Monopoli (Bari, Italy), with sessions taking place in two museums, the Diocesan Museum and Archaeological Museum. The conference was co-located with the final meeting of the Empirical Study of Literature Training Network (ELIT) and the 19th edition of The International Society for the Empirical Study of Literature (IGEL) conference (28-30 September).¹ The common theme of ENN7 and IGEL conferences was *Rhythm, Speed, Path: Spatiotemporal Experiences in Narrative, Poetry, and Drama*. The Call for Papers encouraged submissions on various topics, including:

- Measures of narrative speed and duration in literature and in a transmedial perspective;
- Rhythm in narrative, rhythm in poetry;
- Wandering minds and bodies in poetry, theater, and narrative;
- Walking as embodied storytelling;
- Bodily movement as a prompt of poetic and narrative forms;
- The chronotope of the road;
- Relationships between movement and literary techniques;
- Themes: means of transportation and narrative progression (exodus, odyssey, diaspora, migration, pilgrimage).

Scholars were invited to address formal and thematic perspectives regarding spatial configurations (such as linear, circular, and cyclical structures), spatial patterns (including goal-oriented and free exploration), and spatial attributes associated with various genres, forms, techniques, and themes. Through this broad and inclusive spectrum of topics, welcoming contributions from the most diverse research traditions and theoretical and methodological orientations, the aim was to propose a polyphonic and original reflection on some constitutive moments of aesthetic experience linked to the transcendental axes of space and time: rhythm, speed, path, and their concrete expressions in narrative, poetry, and drama.

Over fifty papers were presented during ENN7, their abstracts having been evaluated through a double-blind peer-review process before the conference. Starting from the proposed prompt, the contributions reflected on categories of literary theory, narratology, stylistics, narrative devices, genres, and works analysed individually or in a comparative perspective within aesthetic, poetic, literary, and transmedial frames; this way, they provided opportunity for solid and fruitful dialogue.

This special issue of *Enthymema* collects a selection of articles that reflect the diverse perspectives shared at the Conference. These contributions have been put through another peer

¹ The Conference booklet is available here: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1_SvtH-9Lew-mhyBP8lBNFwmhZcu_SOF1r/view

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review process, ensuring high quality and originality, and are expected to inspire further exploration of rhythm and spatiotemporal experiences in narrative, lyrical, and performative works.

Diachronic Narratology

The issue opens with the contributions of two illustrious scholars, pioneers of narratological studies, founders of ENN, and constant points of reference for our studies: Peter Hühn and Wolf Schmid. Both articles present the results of the recent and fundamental survey undertaken in the volume *Handbook of Diachronic Narratology* (2023), and focus on how the various narratological categories underlie changes in their concrete application in different periods and cultures.

Peter Hühn examines the practical realizations of the narratological category of event in two periods within the history of English narrative fiction - the medieval period (1100-1500) and the 18th century - and highlights how the emphasis on *eventfulness* in narratives varies significantly between these cultural contexts and, also within the medieval epoch, among genres.

Wolf Schmid presents the evolution of free indirect discourse in German and Russian literature, distinguishing between traditional analyses centred on speech representation and his “text interference model”, influenced by Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of free indirect discourse as a blend of various speech styles and belief systems (*Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*).

Theories and Experiences of Rhythm

The second group of articles is dedicated to three historical stages of the theory of rhythm: the reflections of Jury Tynianov and the Russian formalists, the Prague structuralists, and the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard.

Stefania Sini presents the theoretical nuclei of Tynianov’s *The Problem of Verse Language* (1924), with a particular focus on the relationship between the conception of the unity of the work and its peculiar space-time configuration, the notion of “equivalents” as both semiotic paradigmatic elements and ‘blanks’ to be filled, and the issue of interest. These nuclei take cue from the points of reference regarding rhythm, the phenomenological approach, and the motoric approach employed in the theoretical framework of Tynianov and the Russian formalists.

Ondřej Sladek highlights key contributions from Czech structuralism (Vilém Mathesius, Jan Mukařovský, Felix Vodička, Miroslav Červenka, and Milan Jankovič) in the analysis of rhythm in epic literature, taking particularly into account Mukařovský’s systematic framework to narrative research. The article summarizes the main approaches by Czech structuralists to the issue of rhythm in epic literature and a reflection on the influence of innovative terms and concepts introduced by Červenka and Jankovič – such as rhythmic focus, rhythmic vocabulary, and stream – on subsequent developments in this field.

Carlo Caccia’s essay explores Gaston Bachelard’s theory of moment and rhythm through the lens of the theory of literature, investigating on key principles from *The Dialectic of Duration* (1936) and the essay “The Poetic Moment and the Metaphysical Moment”, and examining the significance of this theory for the French philosopher’s reflection on literary imagination in the 1940s. Finally, the article proposes a comparison between Bachelard’s literary aesthetics and formalist, structuralist, and post-structuralist thought.

Chronotopic Frames in Short Stories and Novels

The following three articles focus on the connection between narrative spatial-temporal organization and genre and mode specificities concerning narrative storyworlds.

Hans Farnlöf proposes a reconceptualization of the Bakhtinian concept of chronotope to widen its application and rethink its generic relations to the individual text rather than rigid genre classifications (Bakhtin, “Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel”). The article emphasizes the connections between a horizontal and a vertical dimension of the chronotope which may coexist in a narrative, showing how noteworthy are the affinities between the vertical dimension of the chronotope, as outlined by Bakhtin himself, and an extensive theorization of the short story beginning with the German Romantics.

Bohumil Fořt examines the temporal and spatial qualities of realist and naturalist novels, taking as case study Émile Zola’s *Germinal* (1885). Fořt posits that these qualities are fundamentally determined by the pragmatic aspects of literary realism and naturalism, as outlined by early realist thinkers and writers such as Guy de Maupassant, George Eliot, Gustav Flaubert, the de Goncourt brothers, Henry James, Émile Zola, and others, and seeks to elucidate their significance in shaping the genre’s distinctive style and impact, and our understanding of the world.

Aldo Baratta investigates the chronotopic architecture of Don DeLillo’s novel *Zero K* (2016), which is divided into two distinct sections set in two antinomic chronotopes, one of transcendence and one of immanence, through which the protagonist, Jeffrey Lockhart, a sort of chronotopic *Wandersmann*, walks. The close reading of the novel highlights the hybridization between different spaces and times and thus between different literary modes, one related to the utopian and catastrophic novel, and the other to the urban and political novel.

Travelling Heroes’ Identities

The ancestral link between travel and the elaboration of self-consciousness is the common thread between two contributions that explore ancient Greek and Anglo-Saxon medieval narratives through different theoretical perspectives.

Rita Tegon analyzes a passage from the *nekyia* of *Odyssey* containing a reference to the past hero Herakles. Supported by cognitive and neuroscientific researches, she assesses whether this excerpt, presenting a systematic confusion of temporal levels in the light of frameworks related to mind and consciousness, reflects a transitional phase in human cognitive development.

Sir Gawain and The Green Knight is the object of Roberto Talamo’s article, which approaches the 14th-century chivalry romance in the light of Paul Ricœur’s thought. The circular structure of Gawain’s journey, made of brief, action-packed episodes and extended periods of stillness, symbolizes a return to the self, albeit transformed through encounters with the other. Moreover, the paper provides a comparison between the romance with David Lowery’s 2021 film adaptation, which reveals contemporary concerns with identity and otherness.

Transmedial Loops, Ellipses and Multitemporal Planes

If narrative art has always operated through the complex interweaving and the misalignment of the relationships between the time of story and the time of discourse, many late twentieth-century and contemporary narratives – not necessarily identifiable as postmodernism – have brought the play of superimpositions, elisions, and recursions of temporal planes as forms of experience to extreme sophistication, as demonstrated by this section.

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Tamás Csöngé discusses how contemporary culture has overshadowed historical awareness within late capitalism, and shows how narratives of 1980s and 1990s time travel films, thematizing the unnatural structures and causal logics of multiple, co-existing temporal plane, emphasize the dominance of the present while framing history as a linear progression towards the ideal of U.S. liberal democracy, while at the same time depicting any disruption to this trajectory as a threat to social order.

Francesca Medaglia analyzes the cyclical representation of space and time in the dystopian afterlife depicted in tv-series *The Good Place* (2016-2020), showing how its characters are trapped in an infernal loop, where their memories are erased and the narration restarts with slight differences each time their situation is uncovered. In this alteration of the narrative structure, traditional expectations relating to the afterlife are demolished.

Nancy Pedri considers the central role of pictorial embodiment in autobiographical comics in relation to othering, thus examining the popular practice of doubled embodiment in graphic illness narratives. This doubled embodiment speaks to the ill subject's personal experience of time, highlighting how, in a condition of illness, time intersects with considerations of minds and emotional states. In the works of graphic illness studied in the article, doubles address how an ill life is often one "marked not by progress but by recurrence, repetition, and ellipses" (Gardner).

Performing Bodies in Spaces

The analysis of rhythm, speed, and path finds particularly fertile ground in the context of performance. This section, comprising two contributions by specialists in dramaturgical art, offers original investigations into theatrical adaptations and reading-aloud techniques, aiming to foster more dynamic and effective modes of interaction and communication across space and time.

Through the lens of Mobility Studies and Performance Studies, Renato Gabrielli's essay aims to provide insights into the relationship between theatre and the automobile through *Mobile Thriller*, a monologue set in a car traveling on the Milan ring road. This piece was initially performed in traditional theatre venues in Milan and Glasgow; then it was later adapted for a performance inside a real car at the 2004 Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

Giorgina Cantalini examines the *diamesic continuum* from *spontaneous speech* to *written language*, specifically *reading aloud speech*, highlighting how the latter often lacks the immediate responsiveness of face-to-face interactions, leading to less effective communication. The article presents a new teaching method for reading aloud in which visuospatial sensorimotor dynamic instructions exploit the capability of gestures and body movements to trigger a meaningful, effective text interpretation.

Audiovisual Landscapes

The two contributions in this section explore how soundscapes, spatial transitions, and inter-medial techniques shape narrative meaning and audience perception, ultimately constructing immersive cinematic experiences. In this context, the concepts of ocularisation and auricularisation (Schlickers) are crucial, as they effectively problematize and update the traditional narratological notion of focalization in a transmedial direction.

Nikita Samsonov analyzes the role of sound as a narrative device in movies by Fritz Lang, showing how it enhances theme, mood, and meaning. The article traces the evolution of Lang's sound techniques of constructing complex sonic environments from avant-garde experimentation to more simplified auditory landscapes in his shift to film noir in the U.S, reflecting both

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the broader trends of the overall development of sound usage in cinema and his merit in achieving a meaningful unity of sound and image, reinventing the film experience.

Finally, this section includes Aigars Ceplitis's reflection on stereoscopic spherical cinema (3DSC), in which the transitions between spatial frames redefine the supremacy of space through *orientational gaze* and *kinaesthetic flânerie* by a *deputy actant* who explores the *geopsychic* space through the cartographic processes of narrativization. The coordinate system of 3DSC, inherently *patial*, is anchored in narrative pauses, devoid of temporal aspects except for the perpetual "now". Audience perspectives shift between *exocentric* and *egocentric* views, *ocularization* and *locus*, *auricularization* and *situatedness*.

Rhythm, Spatiotemporal Experiences and Transnational Identities

The central themes of the conference were explored also through the transnational lens, highlighting how cultural, historical, and narrative practices interconnect different geographical and linguistic contexts. The contributions of this section illuminate the interrelation of spatiotemporal experiences and transnational identities in contemporary global poetry and narrative, highlighting how rhythm, fragmentation, and transmedial devices mediate the complexities of cultural and personal belonging.

By examining the works of contemporary Korean poets - Don Mee Choi, Emily Jungmin Yoon, and Cathy Park Hong -, Melanie Hyo-in Han analyses the strategic use of fragmentation and prose poetry that enhance the exploration of spatiotemporal experiences and cultural belonging. The interplay between these forms creates a dynamic aesthetic, reflecting the fluidity and dislocation inherent in lived experiences, trauma, and resilience of transnational identities.

The transnational perspective is further examined in Mattia Bonasia's essay which, through the framework of Snyder's screenplay manual *Save the Cat!* (2005), explores the influence of Hollywood film editing on the rhythm of Niccolò Ammaniti's novel *Che la festa cominci* (2009), comparing it with Jhumpa Lahiri's translingual journey within the Italian language *In altre parole* (2015).

Voice, Space and Time Making in Post-Anthropocentric Narratives

By challenging traditional anthropocentric perspectives, the papers in this section explore innovative narrative structures that emphasize interconnectedness, stratification, and the fluidity of temporal and spatial experiences. These contributions offer interesting insights into the evolving dynamics of storytelling from a post-anthropocentric framework.

Annamaria Elia analyzes Antonio Moresco's novel *Gli increati* (2015) through the lenses of material ecocriticism and eco-narratology, framing it as an example of "Anthropocene storytelling". She considers the practice of walking as a prompt for the novel complex temporal and spatial dimensions, proposing that Moresco's narrative structure is governed by "stratigraphic logic" rather than traditional causality.

Piotr F. Piekutowski introduces the narrative instance of the 'tender narrator' elaborated by the Polish writer and 2019 Nobel Prize winner Olga Tokarczuk. This fourth-person narrative is not just a we-narrator model but a post-anthropocentric one. Tokarczuk's project is correlated to the repertoire of econarratological research and, more broadly, non-anthropocentric narrative theories. Analysing how representations of time and space are mediated in the tender stories like Tokarczuk's novel *The Empusium* (2024), aspects such as interdependencies, despatialisation and fragmentation of perspectives are brought to the fore.

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We are convinced that this special issue will provide readers with valuable cues and prompts for critical reflection, contributing to an ongoing and fruitful dialogue. We thank all the authors for their participation at ENN7, their excellent contributions, and the reviewers for their commitment and dedication.

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