

PARLANCE

In this post-post-conference issue

Editor's Tuppence-worth

Patricia Canning welcomes you to this slightly late post-conference editions of PARLANCE.

PALA 2021

The Nottingham Crew hosted this year's (ok, last year's) PALA. Read all about it!

Dementia

Jane Lugea (QUB) tells us about the great work she's doing in Ireland with the elderly.

Bee calm

Ruby (surely Ru-bee) tells us how we can be calmer by getting all buzzy about bees.

PALAver

A game of 'Where's Willie?' where Willie (van Peer) is literally everywhere. He's even on my bookshelf (see right). You might remember from the PALA digital conference (seems so long ago now) that Willie appeared ... well... everywhere on whatever Zoom screen he could find. Mostly by accident.

Newsletter for the Poetics and Linguistics Association



Happy New Variant. Sorry, Year.

by Patricia Canning (editor)

There's a dearth of contributions this time round so we've taken tips from our students and made the font bigger.

Ok, not really. My threats worked and we now have a bumper issue for you, albeit from a somewhat terrified bunch of contributors. We are also navigating a new variant of covid (well, hello Omicron. We've been expecting you). But before the more frivolous items, we turn to very serious matters.

As I was about to release this newsletter, Russia invaded Ukraine. For over a week now, the news has brought us terrifying images of trauma, lives lost, lives forever changed. Images that are - should be - out of place, in our time. I received a message during the week from colleagues sharing

links for those who want to help and I'd like to share it with our PALA community. Sociolinguist, Aneta Pavlenko, who has family in Kyiv, offered web-links of some trusted aid organisations. I'm copying the content of the message I received from Margaret van Naerssen (forensic linguistics list) should anyone wish to follow up:

Aneta adds this note to the list below: "all of these organizations have been vetted by Polish colleagues I know personally who worked for them."

The Polish Humanitarian Action is one of the largest NGOs in Poland; their ongoing actions are posted regularly, it will be easy to donate internationally, and their website is also in English: <https://www.pah.org.pl/en/donate/?form=ukraine>

If you prefer a smaller organization - Fundacja Ocalenie. Here is their FB fundraiser for Ukraine: <https://www.facebook.com/donate/275450921370284/> Refugees are also part of the organization team. Here is their website: <https://crm.ocalenie.org.pl/civicrm/contribute/transact?reset=1&id=3<=en>

Chlebem i Sola / Polska Goscinnosc They have a small fundraiser here: <https://www.facebook.com/donate/1157844444989848/324560913032572/>

PALA has always had a strong sense of community and we are committed to doing whatever we can to support our colleagues who are affected, directly and indirectly, by Russia's military action.

Closer to PARLANCE headquarters (Netherlands), a few months after PALA 2021 we received the very sad news that one of our founding fathers, Peter Verdonk, had passed away. Peter was a very generous man and a wonderful scholar. I attended his funeral with Michael Burke and Joanna Gavins and it was lovely to hear the touching tributes from, amongst others, Peter's wife Joke and their children. In this edition of the newsletter, Michael Burke fondly remembers Peter and celebrates his invaluable contribution to stylistics and to PALA.

In what are very dark times, we hope this edition of the newsletter will give you a little lift. Especially with its focus on the hopeful (see Jane Lugea's article on dementia), on nature (Ruby Rennie's article on keeping bees), and the sometimes frivolous (you can count on PALAver for that). Indeed, who can forget digital PALA2021? How many of you were surprised with Willie van Peer's appearances on zoom in various states of undress? Were you too busy playing digital archery to notice? Our excellent mystery artist has immortalised it for you in PALAver, where you're invited to play 'Where's Wally Willie'. We also have contributions from PALA newbies - not the regular PALA virgins, but PALA committee members: our new chair, Stephen Pihlaja, who can tweet and teach simultaneously, the illustrious Martine van Driel who has returned to the PALA committee, this time as Treasurer, and the supremely talented Hazel Price who joins us as book reviews editor (have you seen Hazel's epic home-baked cakes? No? I suggest you keep an eye out... they are legendary). We also introduce a *spotlight on a PALAn* feature, and in this edition it's Brian Walker (Web-Master). So go get your cuppa, kick off your shoes, put your feet up and enjoy this delayed-but no-less-effortful edition of PARLANCE.

Welcome from the PALA Chair

Stephen Pibljaja

Hi everyone

I'm pleased to be addressing everyone for the first time as PALA Chair, having taken over in January of this year. Thanks so much to Marina for all the hard work she has put in over the last three years. She's done an amazing job and left very big shoes to fill. I'm looking forward to working with everyone to continue to make PALA the friendly, challenging place for anyone interested in the study of language and literature.

This last year has been incredibly difficult for so many of us, but I can't wait to read through the newsletter and hear about the continued great work of PALAns around the world. I've been so pleased to see the names of PALA members in book announcements, journal articles, and various leadership roles.



Covid brought us the first online PALA conference and thanks to the hard work of Peter Stockwell and Jess Norledge, as well as Becca Gregory, Pawel Szudarski, and Claire Humphries. PALA 2021 online ran very smoothly and featured incredible talks from different scholars from around the world. In fact, the ability and comfort that we now have meeting online will hopefully mean we can be more in sharing our research and work with one another.

As I've taken over the role of Chair and think about the future, I have three priorities for PALA that I would like to advance. The first is to expand support for emerging researchers in the association, including not only financial support, but ensuring that researchers at all levels are represented as invited speakers at PALA events and leadership opportunities are offered with support. The second is to continue to build our presence throughout the world, and continue to support and develop connections between scholars through online platforms, and support and sponsor events that allow for these connections. Third, I want to continue to encourage our inclusive attitude towards the study of language and literature, and look to support events that expand the reach and understanding of stylistics to broader audiences. This will, I hope, include advocating for the use of stylistics and the empirical analysis of literature in secondary and high schools, and develop stronger links with and advertise membership to teachers in schools.

I'm excited about what the next few years will bring and seeing many of you when we can meet in person, hopefully in the near future. As always, thanks to Patrica for her hard work on the newsletter. I'm as interested as you in seeing what everyone has been up to...

Best wishes

Stephen

The PALA digital experience - Nottingham, PALA 2021

by Peter Stockwell and Jess Norledge

PALA 2050

28 years from now, where will the PALA conference be, and what will it look like? To gauge the difference, consider what the meeting was like the same length of time in the past: PALA 1994 was at Sheffield Hallam University, in Victorian seminar rooms on Collegiate Crescent. The height of tech was overhead projector transparencies; perhaps a dozen of us there had email addresses; only Mick Short and I owned a personal electronic organiser (with 256KB of memory for the diary, contact phone numbers, and a world clock!). Otherwise, it was entirely an analogue experience.

PALA 2050 will be entirely digital, even for participants who are 'there'. You will not be able to tell who is in the room and who is elsewhere in the world. Parallel sessions will create their own landscapes at the whim of the person chairing: we can sit on a beach, in a treetop, in medieval London, on the surface of Phobos, or even in a Victorian villa on Collegiate Crescent. Presentation slides will float in the air; the presenter gliding through them, pausing to explore a particular phrase, while sending bonus information, arguments, images, sounds, tastes and immersive experiences to the audience through the accompanying experiential channel. Visiting the PALA pub will be no problem, since haptic suits will recreate the room in intricate detail, while conference goers will have to guess who has come as a perfect simulacrum of Charles Dickens, Margaret Atwood, Jacques Derrida or Katie Wales.

Of course, I'm guessing. But it's what you might call an educated guess. PALA 2021 was our first digital conference, with a foot on both sides of the analogue-digital shift. We were able to organize an event entirely online because the technology was good enough, but only just. If the global pandemic had happened only three years previously, we would not have been able to do it. We had to stretch our current common technology to its limits, had to think creatively to give the illusion of a metaverse using our cut-and-paste tools. Underneath the parallel rooms, presentations, on-demand channel and the PALA Gala, there was a huge amount of very analogue racing around and panicking down the actual corridors of Nottingham English department. I think we just about got away with it.

I am delighted that we can meet in-person for the next few conferences, but PALA 2050 is creeping up on us fast. What lessons can we learn from this first experience? Here are the things that I would keep:-

- Digital posters. We tried to coin a new term for these: 'ergograms'. 120 second animated presentations as a short video, playing in a kiosk. These were brilliant. We had 16 ergograms from researchers all over the world, and they were regarded as

the equivalent of an in-person paper – often better. We should do this as a slot at every PALA conference.

- Online presentation of papers, live questions. We had people attending PALA 2021 who probably cannot ever attend, for reasons of economics, politics, distance, and personal circumstances. The digital format levelled everybody. PALA 2021 had the greatest international reach of any PALA conference. I would keep at least one thread of all future conferences as an online session, would stream the on-campus papers, and would make every presentation available as a recording in an on-demand channel. Just as we did last year. Unlike at Nottingham, I would in future remember to ask everyone's permission for us to make the papers available as open-access online after the conference so that the Proceedings of the conference were instantly and permanently available.

- A digital producer. Just like some people now live-tweet individual papers, we could have a producer at every PALA conference who could do an online digest of each session, and make it available to the world in near-real time. Just like we had every presentation available as a recording by the end of each day, we could have a digital slot for every paper. Anyone participating remotely could engage with these, post questions, talk to the presenter, and almost feel like they were really there.

- Keep the fees down. We charged a tiny fee for the conference, mainly to make sure those who registered actually turned up. Of course, we didn't need any actual rooms; we didn't print anything out; and we didn't have to feed anybody, particularly that stuff that Stephen Pihlaja eats. But we still had enough money to send everyone a copy of Jon McGregor's novel as essential prep reading for his plenary, and had money left over that we donated to PALA for future events. There is no excuse for a high fee for an online conference (other events around us took a lot of deserved flak for their expenses). An on-campus meeting is always going to be more expensive, but building in online threads as I've suggested will allow many others to experience PALA at a highly reduced rate, even if remotely. And – who knows – they might even decide that travelling to PALA in the future is worth it once they've had a glimpse of what the future holds.

Peter Stockwell and Jess Norledge

Hiving the time of my life

Ruby Rennie

Keeping up with the buzz

A few years ago, I decided to fulfil a dream and start a new hobby. After paying out several hundreds of pounds for equipment, attending a local course, reading lots of new books, and collecting a colony from a neighbour, I finally became a beekeeper. At that point, I realised I knew very little about bees; I also realised that I had found yet another niche part of society that had its own committees, activities, language and culture. I have since discovered that I'm not the only academic (or, in my case, semi-retired academic) with an interest in honeybees. It's very possible that your University already has a beekeeping group, and could have hives on the campus (maybe on a roof). But I warn you - we can be a bit of an eccentric bunch.



There's a whole load of terminology to grasp, starting with the basics of Queen (there's only one in a colony), workers (all female) and drones (all male, created from unfertilised eggs). There's the naming of types of bees; mine are most likely a hybrid of *Apis Mellifera Mellifera* (the native Scottish or Northern European Black Bee) and *Buckfast* (I kid you not), imported from Italian stock into the UK some decades ago and now very common. The importing of bees also imported various diseases and mites, particularly the varroa mite, which can destroy a colony and has to be treated (and is one of the reasons honeybees find it hard to survive in the wild in the UK now). To understand how to care for your colonies, you also need to know about the basic life-cycle of the bees (workers live 5 or 6 weeks during the summer months; the Queen can live for 3 years), how they forage (a five-mile radius, roughly), how they make honey (from gathering nectar), and all the checks and changes you have to keep track of during the summer months. In Scotland the bees will go into a "torpor" during the winter months by collecting into a cluster around the Queen to keep her warm, although some workers might emerge (for a quick toilet flight) if the outside temperature gets to above 10 degrees. Incredibly, we are still discovering aspects of bees and colonies, such as how on earth do the bees get the message from the "waggle dance" when it's performed in complete darkness (see - doesn't everything come back, eventually, to linguistics and communication?! Ed.).

There's a tradition of "telling the bees" whenever something happens in the beekeeper's family - so, telling them of a death, or a marriage, or a particularly difficult time in the family's life

For me, this scientific and health information about bees is interesting enough, and necessary to know (as a beekeeper), but it's the long history of narratives surrounding bees and beekeeping that I personally find

incredibly compelling. There's a tradition of "telling the bees" whenever something happens in the beekeeper's family – so, telling them of a death, or a marriage, or a particularly difficult time in the family's life. Poems and stories document this phenomenon of 'telling' and point to an era when having bees in the garden was so common that it didn't need explanation, and all the family members learned the associated craft and skills*. If there are any *Outlander* fans out there – the new book is titled *Go Tell the Bees That I'm Gone*. Sylvia Plath kept bees and wrote a series of poems about bees, Tolstoy was also known as a beekeeper. In fiction, Sherlock Holmes kept bees and while I'm still curious about the references to bees, it seems that there's a desire to create "wholesomeness" associated with someone who would choose to spend solitary time surrounded by a remarkable part of nature.

I'm also aware of controversies surrounding beekeeping. There are arguments that because beekeepers focus on honey bees, they are creating an imbalance so that other species of bees have less food for foraging (for what it's worth, my personal stance is that we ought to have more than enough foraging for all the bees and the way to tackle this is to have more bee-friendly plants and stop using dangerous pesticides). There are also scare stories about urban beekeeping and how this could be dangerous also. I'm curious about the arguments by some vegans (not all) that taking honey is depriving the bees of their food. In learning about beekeeping, I've also learned about other species of bees, particularly bumblebees, and have spent several weeks in the summer months going to visit concerned neighbours who think they've got a swarm of bees but I can identify them as a particular species of bumblebee (for example, spotting the tree bumblebee, which has moved north in the UK in recent years but was unseen in Scotland a decade ago). It's gratifying to see the change in attitude once they are identified, given information about them and how long they'll be in the eaves of the house, and when they'll disappear in the autumn. I guess as a former teacher I still get a warm fuzzy buzz when understanding transforms attitude.

*here's something for the kids: a bee has 1 head, 2 antennae, 3 parts to the body, 4 wings, 5 eyes and 6 legs

Spotlight on a PALA committee member: Brian Walker

Brian Walker

Webmaster / webster / website administration officer / Webilicious / When-are-we-done-with-the-Ws?

I seem to remember Michael Burke propositioning me in a lift in a hotel in Malta at PALA2012. His proposal was for me to take over as PALA's webmaster as the current post holder, Martin Wynne, wanted to step down. I had no idea how to master a website, I thought a Uniform Resource Locator (hereafter URL) was the local Army and Navy stores, and the only domains I knew about were source and target (see Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). Naturally, I said yes immediately.

I took over as master of the web in January 2013, and the first task was to migrate the original website over to a new platform and host. The



existing website was built from scratch by Martin and was hosted by Oxford University. The migration was to secure continuity of hosting and to allow others to take on the role in the future who were less endowed with web-type knowledge and skills than Martin.

“I thought a Uniform Resource Locator (hereafter URL) was the local Army and Navy stores, and the only domains I knew about were source and target (see Lakoff and Johnson, 1980)”

I chose Weebly out of the many web-hosting providers available to host the PALA website. Web-hosting services usually provide online tools that allow websites to be constructed without any knowledge of programming (or coding as it is now known, apparently). However, the tools and interfaces (they used to be called GUI, but no one says that anymore)

differ in user friendliness (or unfriendliness depending on your Point of View; see Fowler 1986). Reviews of Weebly consistently praised its ease of use. Reviews of Weebly also said some other things that were less positive (negative if you like, but it depends on your point of view; hereafter POV), but I reckoned that ease of use pretty much trumped everything else.

I imagined migration would largely be an automated event involving something like a webcrawler (whatever they are). I envisaged clicking a ‘start-migration-now-and-come-back-in-five-and-twenty-minutes’ button and, hey presto, new website. Unfortunately, the reality (for me at least) was a copy-and-paste fest. I had done my fair share of ~~nicking~~ copying stuff off the web (or corpus building as some prefer to call it), but this was on a totally different, RSI-inducing, scale. The sheer volume of materials on the website was testament to the amount of work Martin had spent creating the online resource originally.

The grand switchover from old to new happened on May 1st 2013. In truth, nothing really changed other than the way the website looked, and this was largely driven by the built-in themes provided by Weebly. The web-based front end provided by Weebly, however, now allows updates to the website to be carried out without any knowledge of coding (AKA programming). Fortunately, Weebly support either via the official helpdesk or through the Weebly community of ~~people who really should step away from the computer~~ enthusiasts is also pretty good. Usually, if there is some feature that you want to add to the website that is not provided by the standard Weebly tools, then somebody has probably written a widget for it. I’ve no idea what a widget is, but I’ve used a fair few over the years and they tend to work [*they are the little gadgets at the bottom of cans of Guinness. Ed.*].

Since the migration, there have been one or two additions to the website, such as the Facebook and Twitter feeds, a page for the PALA newsletter, and a place for summer school materials. There is still plenty to do, such as making the website more tablet and phone friendly. The website has the potential to offer plenty more to the PALA community as the online hub for stylistics and stylisticians. Developing and expanding the website is something that we can all get involved with and I’m always happy to hear ideas for new resources from PALA members.

Brian Walker

Your New Treasurer is Autistic

by Martine van Driel



Hello everyone,

As the new treasurer of PALA, I couldn't refuse Patricia's request for a newsletter contribution. Some of you will already know me as the former student membership secretary and I'm excited to be back on the committee as Treasurer this time. While this piece is not about my new role, I do want to point out that I'm always open to hearing ideas on what PALA could spend money on. As you know from previous years, we have a decent amount of funds available. If you have any ideas, you can reach me via my email listed on the PALA website.

I currently work as a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at Queen Mary, University of London with Prof Nelya Koteyko. Our project examines how autistic adults use social media to build and maintain social bonds. While I was certainly interested in the research, I initially applied for the role primarily because I needed a job. My previous contract ran out in middle of Covid lockdowns, at the time when universities in the UK stopped hiring. You can imagine the stress. However, I have been exceptionally lucky with this new role. Nelya is a wonderful mentor. If you currently function as someone's mentor, here are some great things she has done for me: (1) assigning me first-authored papers to write, (2) finding and suggesting potential grants to apply for, (3) including me on invited talks, (4) helping me understand how to present myself and my work in a way that ticks university management's boxes. In particular this final point is useful for me as I am autistic.

Throughout the research project, I have been reading a lot about autism and started to recognise myself in the literature. In addition, interviews with participants were full of little 'aha' moments *que an Oprah meme*. I realized I might be autistic, and I was right! While I've only known I am autistic for a short period of time, I've always felt the effects. The difference with a diagnosis is that I now understand myself better. I want to share a little bit with you about what it is like to be autistic in academia. Before I go into that though, a few pointers on how to talk about autism.

1. Most autistic people prefer identity-first language (i.e. 'autistic person' rather than 'person with autism'). I do too. This is because autism shapes my entire experience of the world. It is not a characteristic I have or a disease, it is part of me. We wouldn't say 'person with a tall body' either.
2. Autism is not a disease. Please do not refer to it as such, or as something that needs to be cured. Although I consider autism a disability, a large part of what makes autistic life difficult is that the world is not designed for us.

3. Autism is wildly diverse. Some autistic people are non-verbal, some find social interactions difficult, some hate bright lights, others love them. Autistic people also face discrimination, with black autistic people often affected much more than white autistic people.

4. Finally, autism co-occurs with other conditions including learning disabilities. Autism itself does not affect learning potential, and please never assume that an autistic person is not capable.

Being autistic in academia is not dissimilar to being autistic in the general world. The biggest problem we face is misunderstandings between autistic and neurotypical people. Damian Milton (an autistic researcher) refers to this as the 'double empathy problem'. Whereas earlier work generally lays the fault with autistic people,

“I constantly have to check myself on what I say, how my body language is, whether I am making eye contact. None of this is natural, and it is all extra effort.”

Milton points out that misunderstandings go both ways. If you are neurotypical, I would suggest that you consider how autistic people may experience the world differently: we tend to take things more literally, we may get overstimulated faster from bright lights and loud environments. For me personally, I am exhausted at the end of a week and during a conference, I may need an hour in a quiet room or outside to recover. The reality of (UK) academia is increasing workloads and longer hours, which unfortunately is not conducive for creating a neurodivergent-friendly environment. I think a lot of us (academics) are tired. We are all overworked. For autistic people, add onto that the general exhaustion of living in a neurotypical world while pretending to be 'normal' (we call this masking). I constantly have to check myself on what I say, how my body language is, whether I am making eye contact. None of this is natural, and it is all extra effort. So please do not be offended if I say something that you think is rude or if I don't make eye contact. That stuff is hard work! I don't know how neurotypicals do it!

In addition, academia is filled with unspoken 'rules'. Think for instance of what you should and should not Tweet about. I'm sure you all have your own ideas about what is and what isn't professional. For me, I do not have an instinctive sense of these guidelines. This also applies to how to write emails, how to complete all those wonderful forms we have to fill out, who is and is not eligible for positions, how to 'network', how to start a collaboration. More explicitness would make a massive difference to increasing neurodivergence in academia.

Finally, having an autistic treasurer could be good news for PALA. (Although I don't think PALA has had any problems with Treasurers, the student union at my undergraduate university had a Treasurer who stole all the money, fled the country, and was never heard from again!) A recent study (Hu et al. 2020) found that autistic people "have difficulty in adjusting their behaviors regarding their personal interests that might be associated with immoral consequences": we wouldn't do something amoral for our own benefit even if nobody would ever find out.

Morality: another 'weird' thing autistic people do.

Martine

Dementia

Jane Lugea (QUB)

There's something about 'mind style'... The concept is significant in Stylistic research, but also captures an experience that is very familiar to - and much-loved in - real readers. In *Why we read fiction: Theory of mind and the novel*, Lisa Zunshine observes that one of our main pleasures in reading is 'trying on' fictional minds that differ from our own. Personally, it is one of the main reasons I enjoy reading fiction. Leading a recent research project has given me insight into the effects of a reading a particular *kind* of mind style.



Our AHRC-funded project incorporated the experiences of people who have dementia as well as those who work around dementia, and investigated:

- a. the representation of dementia mind styles in contemporary fiction, and
- b. how real readers responded to (extracts from) that fiction.

I was struck by the rise in fictional representations of dementia (in everything from TV soap *Emmerdale* to Anthony Hopkin's Oscar-winning performance in *The Father*). Obviously, we have an ageing population trying to grapple with a real medical and social challenge. Less obviously, dementia - in its many forms - challenges our society's obsession with memory, with cognitive performance, and with social and pragmatic skills. I think that's why we're seeing a 'boom' in cultural representations of dementia, from film to fiction. I created a Dementia Fiction Corpus: 400,000 words of fiction from the perspective of a character with dementia, to see

'people around [dementia] might have better understanding if they read books like these'

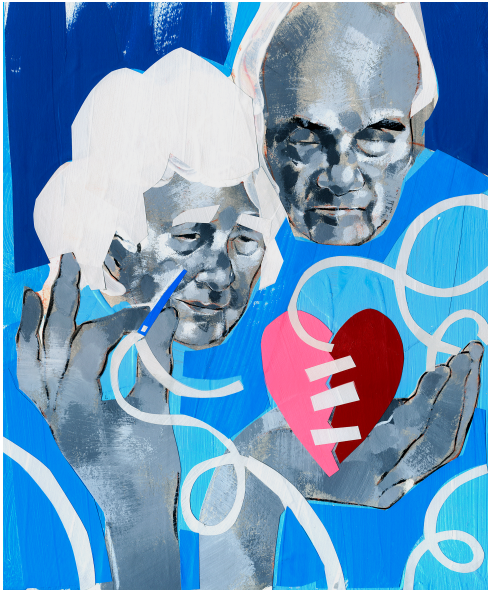
what life is like inside these (fictional) minds (and soon you'll be able to read about the results of the study in *Language and Literature*).

But I was still pretty sure that dementia mind styles were worth more than textual analysis; that real readers might benefit from a window onto the dementia experience, and that people who have lived with dementia might have something interesting to say about the fictional representations. So, working with dementia charities, and Co-Investigators in cultural gerontology and reader response research, I set up four different reading groups:

1. social work students,

2. carers for people living with dementia,
3. people living with dementia
4. general public

Each group met weekly, for six weeks, to read and discuss extracts from the corpus, carefully chosen as they were rich in the kinds of features which contributed to dementia mind styles.



We are still trawling through the vast amount of data generated from these reading groups and the associated questionnaires (note to future methodology-designing self: be careful what you wish for!). However, I don't think it is too early to see the effects of 'trying on minds' on readers. The general public and the social work students report a greater awareness and understanding around the condition, which they can bring to their real-life encounters with people with dementia. The readers living with dementia endorsed the fictional representations for their accuracy and the way they showed the characters as being more than their illness, of having rich inner lives even if their outward symptoms were jarring to others. They suggested that people around them might have better understanding if they read books like these. The reading group for carers - often caring for loved ones with

advanced dementia - was the most fraught with emotion, and taught us researchers that, often, dementia can be hardest on those who *witness* their loved ones affect by it. So this finding brings us back to the point above; yes, dementia is a medical challenge. But maybe more significantly, it is a social one, that we need to better understand. And mind style is one great way of doing that.

"I don't think it is too early to see the effects of 'trying on minds' on readers."

'Dementia in the minds of characters and readers' (May 2021-Oct2021) was funded by the AHRC (Project ref: AH/S001476/) and involved Dr Jane Lugea (PI), Dr Gemma Carney, Dr Paula Devine (Co-Is), and Dr Carolina Fernández-Quintanilla. An extensive outreach and creative writing programme was carried out by Ms Jan Carson. Project partners included the charities Dementia NI and Alzheimer's Society.

Project YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC-wno22Az1Y6X_b1clzmEdw

Project Website: <https://blogs.qub.ac.uk/dementiafiction/>

Twitter: @FictionDementia

Prof. dr. Peter Verdonk (21-04-1934 - 05-11-2021)

Professor of Stylistics, University of Amsterdam



It is with great sadness that we announce the death of our dear friend and colleague Peter Verdonk. He passed away peacefully on November 5, 2021 after having suffered a stroke at home a week earlier. He is survived by his partner, Joke Bijleveld, who many of us will know from PALA conferences, and by his children and grandchildren. Peter's funeral took place in his home town of Amsterdam on November 15, 2021 and was attend by PALA members, Joanna Gavins, Patricia Canning and Michael Burke. The covid-19 lockdown restrictions hampered

many from being able to travel. For this reason, an online memorial was held on January 25, 2022. At this service, an official obituary for Peter was delivered. Additionally, many of his favourite poems were read aloud and many cherished memories were shared by some of his dearest and oldest PALA friends and colleagues.

Peter was one of the founders of PALA in the 1970s/1980s. A full Professor of Stylistics in the English Department of the University of Amsterdam, he served on the board of PALA for two terms as its Secretary in the 1990s. Together with his partner, Joke, he attended many PALA annual conferences, over four decades, and he was a keynote speaker on several occasions. He wrote wonderfully erudite stylistic analyses on many great modern English poets including Owen, Auden, Heaney and, of course, his beloved Larkin. He was also the author and editor of many influential stylistics books including *Stylistics* (2002, Oxford University Press); *Twentieth-Century Poetry: From Text to Context* (1993, Routledge); *Twentieth-Century Prose: From Text to Context* (1995, Routledge, with J.J. Weber) and *Exploring the Language of Drama: From Text to Context* (1998, Routledge, with M. Short and J. Culpeper). When he retired from his university post in 2001, a *Festschrift* of collected articles was written for him by his PALA colleagues, entitled *Contextualized Stylistics* (Rodopi/Brill) edited by Tony Bex, Peter Stockwell and Michael Burke).

*'The trees are coming into leaf
Like something almost being said;'*

Philip Larkin

Peter loved to talk to people at the PALA conferences and to share his knowledge and wisdom with younger colleagues. We all no doubt have several treasured memories of his calm, empathetic and thoughtful intelligence. Let us hang on to those memories as we look to the future.

Peter will be formally remembered throughout 2022. For example, an official eulogy for Peter will appear in the May edition of the PALA journal, *Language and Literature*, written by Michael Burke, who also delivered the eulogy at Peter's funeral in Amsterdam in November 2021. Furthermore, in the course of 2022-23, Joanna Gavins and Michael Burke will edit a volume of articles that will seek to build on Peter's intellectual and scholarly stylistic legacy.

Michael Burke

A tale of PALA of yore - The Goldsmiths Conference

by a mystery PALA member

I'm at my first academic conference. Yesterday the opening plenary lecturer - let's call him Ray Horace* - addressed the students in the room. He warned us to get out while we still could. Stylistics, according to Horace, is for deadbeats. In fairness, he didn't actually use the word "deadbeat," but he did liken the current state of the discipline to that of a child drowning in a black morass. So I think "deadbeat" was implied. The whole audience inhaled in a show of unified (if politely semi-silent) outrage. A professor prominent in the field stood up remarked that Horace didn't know what he was talking about. Horace responded by storming out of the lecture theatre through a door conveniently located right behind him. As the rest of the audience exchanged flabbergasted glances, I sat there watching the door, expecting it to re-open and for Horace to amble back in the room, smiling and winking, and to give a deep bow to let us know it was all a big farce. But the door stayed shut. Horace didn't reappear, not then, not ever. This mildly scandalous commencement was apparently not a planned feature of the conference program.

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Speaking of entertainment, I should note that since the opening plenary things have remained consistently outside my expectations for an academic conference. Take right now, for example. Right now I'm at the conference banquet, where I'm watching Paul - my prospective PhD supervisor - participate

in a skit which requires him to be dressed up amateurishly as an alien life form. His costume consists of a set of antennae fashioned from drinking straws and Styrofoam cups. The other MA students and I don't know anyone else apart from Paul and Mitchell, so we clump together at their table. Also at this table are Paul's wife Jill, and a number of other people we otherwise wouldn't have the nerve to sit next to - people who have written actual *books*. For us it's as if we've just listened to the latest Coldplay cd and then sat down with the band for dinner. We're all a bit nervous and in awe and generally keeping silent in case we say something like "I loved your last book," which is pretty lame when you consider that the book in question may have had a title like *Personal Pronouns in Present-Day English*.

I am surprised to find that the conversation around the dinner table has nothing to do with the content of the day's papers or indeed with any other aspect of the conference. This is not what I had expected. I honestly thought that whenever academics came together they discussed

serious academic matters. Would we overhear something on the latest research into multi-modal texts, perhaps? Was anyone shocked at the recent emergence of integrationalist approaches into the Stylistics repertoire? How would these great minds cope with the idea that their discipline might need to become more empirical? Instead, the people at my table spend most of the evening openly gossiping about their colleagues, complaining about the food, and plotting ways to get more free booze brought to our table. The subject of stylistics does not even come up.

After dinner is finished, people get up and start to mingle, and I find myself alone at the table with Ron Carter. Ron makes me nervous. So nervous that I'm already second-guessing my choice to refer to him using his first name in that last sentence, even though as I write this he has had nothing to do with my formal education for almost ten years. He's just so darned - *esteemed*. And now I'm alone with him, all the responsibility for conversation rests on my fragile shoulders. Luckily Ron provides an opener by asking me how I've enjoyed the conference so far. I try to express how exhilarating it has been meeting so many of the people behind the ideas I've been engaging with, but this comes out as "Yes. Good. Thanks." What this answer doesn't express is how much it kills me to think that this might be both my last academic conference. At this point there was still a possibility that I would not be able to begin the PhD in October and that I would instead have to return home where I would get a job at the local library teaching the elderly how to two-finger type. I would become a bitter old woman with a chip on her shoulder but an excellent knowledge of the semantics of English modal verbs.

But just as I am considering this Ron tells me he has good news. The School of English has found the funds to provide me with a full scholarship for the tuition portion of my PhD. In fact, Ron has personally found this funding somewhere in a mysterious pot of money that was sitting around waiting to be used, presumably for something else, and has made the case for using this pot for me. I want to hug Ron but instead I burst into tears. I offer Ron my slobbery and incoherent thanks and excuse myself because I see that some colleagues of his have come over and are waiting to ask him something (i.e. rescue him). My greatest wish in life has just been granted. I feel like Kate Winslett in *Titanic*. I picture Ron standing behind me on the prow of the ship, holding my outstretched arms aloft and calling "I'm the king of the world!" which to me he sort of is, at least right now.

After dinner there is a disco. When the music starts, I take to the floor with Anna and Smaragda, and we dance into the night, three young academics with their whole careers ahead of them. At some point word gets out that a certain distinguished full professor is passed out drunk in the bathroom. A crush of people gather at the entrance to the men's room. Someone tells the DJ to stop the music. The lights come up. The disco is over. It's only 11.30. I head upstairs to my

room still replaying the conversation with Ron in my head, and dreaming about how one day I too will be as esteemed as the drunken full professor who just left the conference venue by ambulance.

* all names have been changed apart from Ron Carter's.

Books to Review

If you would like to review any of the books above, please contact Hazel Price, our (new!) Reviews Editor, at h.l.price@salford.ac.uk Books are complimentary but at present publishers will only issue e-book versions.

Anesa P and Fragonara A (2021) *Discourse Processes between Reason and Emotion*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Buckledee S (2020) *Tabloiding the Truth*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Boase-Beier J (2019) *Translation and Style*, 2nd Edition. London and New York: Routledge.

Busse B (2020) *Speech, Writing and Thought Presentation in the 19th Century Narrative Fiction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Castiglione D (2019) *Difficulty in Poetry*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Chapman S (2020) *The Pragmatics of Revision: George Moore's Acts of Rewriting*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Chapman S and Clark B (2019) *Pragmatics in Literature*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Charteris -Black J (2019) *Metaphors of Brexit: No Cherries on the Cake?* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Coffey-Glover L (2019) *Constructions of Masculinity in Women's Magazines*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Evans M, Jeffries L and O'Driscoll J (Eds) (2019) *The Routledge Handbook of Language in Conflict*. London and New York: Routledge.

Elder C (2019) *Context, Cognition and Conditionals*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Fludernik M (2020) *Narrative Factuality*. Berlin: De Gruyter

Freeman M (2020) *The Poem as Icon: A Study in Aesthetic Cognition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gavins J (2020) *Poetry in the Mind: The Cognition of Contemporary Poetic Style*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Giovanelli M, Harrison C and Nuttall L (Eds) (2020) *New Directions in Cognitive Grammar and Style*. London and New York: Bloomsbury.

Gómez-Jiménez EM and Toolan M (Eds) (2020) *The Discursive Construction of Economic Inequality: CADS Approaches to the British Media*. London and New York: Bloomsbury.

Hamilton HE (2019) *Language, Dementia and Meaning Making*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Hart C (Ed) (2019) *Cognitive Linguistic Approaches to Text and Discourse: From Poetics to Politics*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Hélie C, Brault-Dreux E and Loriaux E (Eds) (2019) *No Dialect Please, You're a Poet*. London and New York: Routledge.

Hoover DL (2021) *Modes of Composition and the Durability of Style in Literature*. London and New York: Routledge.

Lambrou M (2019) *Disnarration and the Unmentioned in Fact and Fiction*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Lambrou M (Ed) (2020) *Narrative Retellings: Stylistic Approaches*. London and New York: Bloomsbury.

Lwin SM (2019) *A Multimodal Perspective on Applied Storytelling Performances*. London and New York: Routledge.

Macrae A (2019) *Discourse Deixis in Metafiction: The Language of Metanarration, Metalepsis and Disnarration*. London and New York: Routledge.

Mason J and Giovanelli M (2021) *Studying Fiction: A Guide for Teachers and Researchers*. London and New York: Routledge.

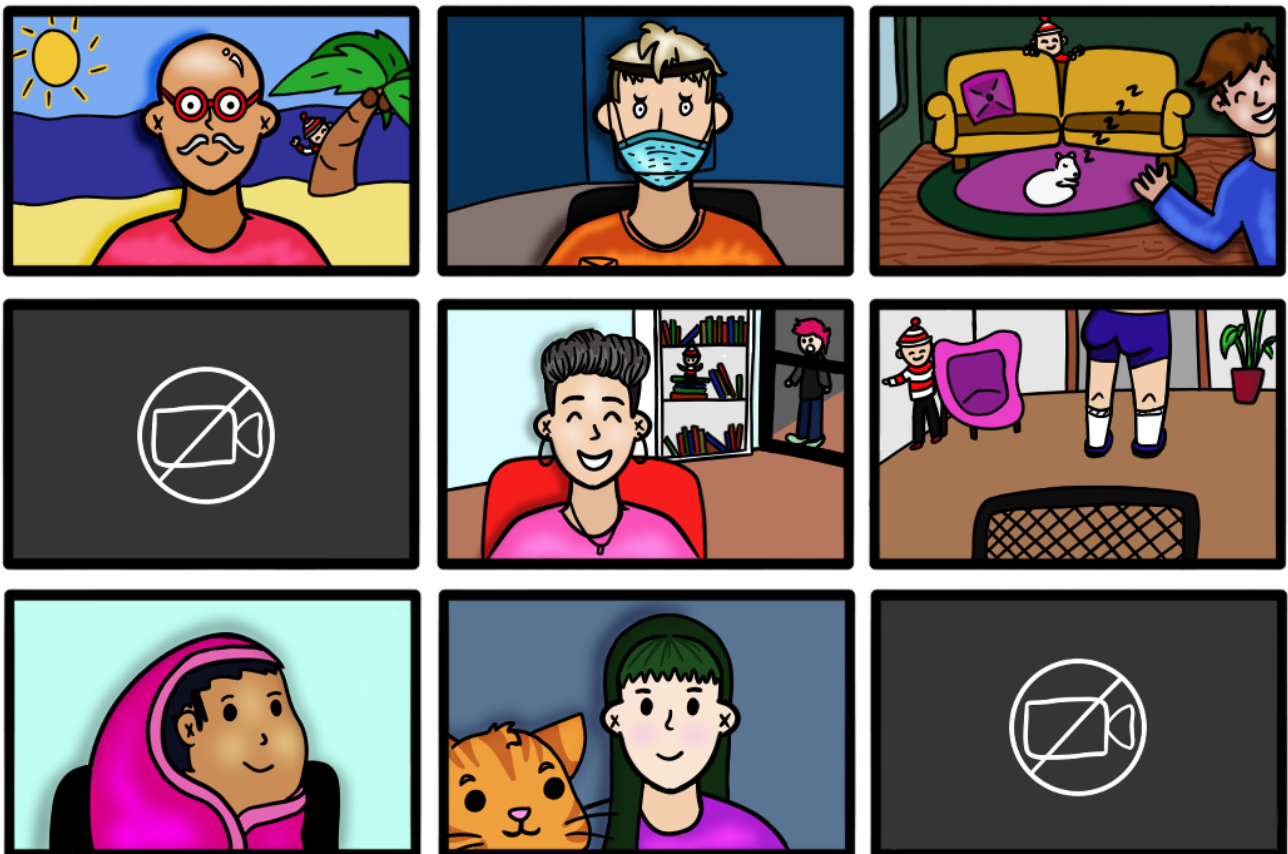
Mastropiero L (2019) *Corpus Stylistics in Heart of Darkness and its Italian Translations*. London and New York: Bloomsbury

Murphy J (2019) *The Discursive Construction of Blame*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Neurohr B and Stewart-Shaw L** (Eds) (2019) *Experiencing Fictional Worlds*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Novakova I and Siepmann D** (2020) *Phraseology and Style in Subgenres of the Novel*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Piazza R** (2020) *The Discursive Construction of Identity and Space Among Mobile People*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Pillièrè L** (2021) *Intralingual Translation of British Novels: A Multimodal Stylistic Perspective*. London and New York: Bloomsbury.
- Richardson P, Mueller CM and Pihlaja S** (2021) *Cognitive Linguistics and Religious Language*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Ringrow R and Pihlaja S** (Eds) (2020) *Contemporary Media Stylistics*. London and New York: Bloomsbury.
- Rudanko J** (2021) *Fallacies and Free Speech*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Scott K, Clark B and Cartson R** (Eds) (2019) *Relevance, Pragmatics and Interpretation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Simpson P** (Ed) (2019) *Style, Rhetoric and Creativity in Language: In Memory of Walter (Bill) Nash (1926-2015)*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Simpson P, Mayr A and Statham S** (2019) *Language and Power: a resource book for students*, 2nd edition. London and New York: Routledge.
- Sorlin S** (Ed) (2020) *Stylistic Manipulation of the Reader in Contemporary Fiction*. London and New York: Bloomsbury.
- Stock R** (2020) *Celebrity Translation in British Theatre: Relevance and Reception, Voice and Visibility*. London and New York: Bloomsbury.
- Thomas A** (2019) *Piers Plowman and the Reinvention of Church Law in the Late Middle Ages*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Toolan M** (2019) *The Language of Inequality in the News: A Discourse Analytical Approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Virdis DF, Zurrù E and Lahey E** (Eds) (2021) *Language in Place: Stylistic Perspectives on Landscape, Place and Environment*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

PALAver

And now, the piece you've all been waiting for and the reward for finishing the newsletter! Yes, it's PALAver, our mystery illustrator, who this edition has captured the proceedings of PALA's first digital conference. You've heard of 'Where's Wally'... well, here is 'Where's Willie'! Careful. Next time, it could be you.



For PARLANCE contributions, email the editor, Patricia Canning (Utrecht University) p.canning@uu.nl

Til next time!