

Guest Lecture in the Research Programme for Literary Studies

April 21, 2017, 10:00-12:00

“Minds and Meaning in Fiction: An Evolutionary Perspective”

Professor Joseph Carroll, UMSL

Abstract

In both reality and fiction, meaning consists of experiences in individual minds: sensations, emotions, perceptions, and thoughts. Writing and reading fiction involve three sets of minds, those of authors, readers, and characters. Meaning in the minds of authors and readers emerges in relation to the experiences of fictional characters. Characters engage in motivated actions. To understand minds and meaning in fiction, researchers need analytic categories for human motives. A comprehensive model of human motives can be constructed by integrating ideas from evolutionary biology, anthropology, and psychology. Motives combine in different ways to help create different cultures and different individual identities, which influence experience in individual minds. The mental experiences produced in authors and readers by fictional narratives have adaptive psychological functions.

About Professor Carroll:

Joseph Carroll is Curators' Distinguished Professor in the English department at the University of Missouri, St. Louis. Since the early 1990s, he has been working to integrate evolutionary research and literary study. He has developed an evolutionary theory of literature, produced interpretive essays on literary works ranging from plays of Shakespeare to modern novels, written essays in intellectual history, and conducted empirical research on protagonists and antagonists in Victorian fiction.

The lecture takes place in bldg. 1453, room 131.
Everybody is welcome.

For further details, please contact Mathias Clasen: mc@cc.au.dk.

