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École doctorale VariaForMea 2019

Nouvelles approches linguistiques de la littérature et de la fiction

Mercredi 22 Mai

16h15-18h, Uni Mail, MR070

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Relevance theory and literary interpretation

In this talk I will reflect on what relevance theory, as a theory of communication and cognition, might contribute to literary studies, and on how it stands to benefit from a careful consideration of the process of literary interpretation and the concerns of literary critics. The aspect of relevance theory that has seemed most appealing to literary scholars has been its analysis of figurative utterances – metaphor, irony, allegory – and their role in the creation of stylistic and poetic effects. In the first part of my talk, I will briefly illustrate this approach and consider how it might apply to a number of literary examples. The aspect of relevance theory that has seemed most challenging to literary scholars has been its treatment of 'non-propositional' phenomena – images, emotions, and sensori-motor processes. In the second part of my paper, I will consider how this challenge might be met