

## Call for Papers

*DIEGESIS* 14.1, summer 2025

Date of publication: June 2025

Topic: "Narrating Violence"

Deadline for the submission of abstracts: March 31, 2024

Deadline for the submission of articles: December 31, 2024

About the TOPIC:

The current exhibition at the Sigmund Freud Museum in Vienna, "Telling Violence. A Comic Exhibition" names an obvious approach to the narrative communication of violence: "In comics, bodies are always presented in their vulnerability – they are used to *embody* feelings, pain and aggression. With their diverse processes and aesthetic possibilities for depicting experiences of violence, comics are also suitable for revealing the repressed, the unspeakable and the tabooed – they can serve to address traumas and open up new perspectives on them." (Freud-Museum 2023; italics in original) Physical violence and its psychological counterpart, between the boundaries of which cannot always be clearly drawn, form the core of epic narratives and tragically dramatisable myths. At the same time, these forms of violence figure prominently in testimonies of real-life violence. Accordingly, it has long been the subject of literary studies and narrative research orientated towards the concepts of transgression and trauma (cf. Petö 2021, Jirku 2022, Lorenz et al. 2022).

The thematic issue of *DIEGESIS* attempts to expand a discussion, which is still orientated largely towards psychophysical acts of violence, to include aspects of “structural” violence (Galtung), “symbolic” violence (Bourdieu) and “slow” violence (Nixon). At the end of the 1960s, the Norwegian peace researcher Johan Galtung coined the concept of “structural violence”, which, unlike classical violence, is not aimed at the direct destruction of the other body, but has indirect consequences: social inequality, in particular poverty, oppression and alienation, reduce quality of life and life expectancy. How this violence, which is institutionalised in social structures, is linked to direct acts of violence is being researched in sociology; there is a clear connection, for example, where the lack of legal protection for minorities promotes the violation of their rights. The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu goes even further than Galtung with his concept of “symbolic violence.” According to Bourdieu, the structures of social inequality are themselves based on cultural self-evident truths that are class-specific, and in which the upper class presents its values as uniquely and incontestably legitimate and desirable. The disadvantaged sections of society cannot question the existing structures because the cultural system supports them. It is symbolically violent to demand of everyone that they wear themselves out in the pursuit of the values of the dominant class, which are only easily attainable for this class’s members. While Bourdieu, together with a colleague, described this concept in 1970 primarily in terms of the education system, he has since also looked at the relationship between the sexes, which is characterised by male supremacy (1998). Most recent discussions revolve around the notion of “slow violence.” The South African and US American literary and cultural scholar Rob Nixon developed this concept in order to draw attention to a temporal dimension of violence that neither Galtung nor Bourdieu takes into account. Social injustice often unfolds its potential for violence in an insidious development through which, for example, the ecological burdens on the disadvantaged communities slowly increase or gradually mount up.

What all three forms of violence have in common is that, unlike psychophysical acts of violence, they cannot always be situated as transgression at the level of the *histoire*. The difficulty of their narrative verbalisation is not related to taboos and

traumas, but to other factors: they are often not linked to volitional actions, and therefore not highly narrative; they often appear with the claim of existing as self-evident, which renders them practically invisible; and they contradict the traditional schemes of the most important narrative genres (epic, novella and novel), which in some respects distract from structural, symbolic or slow forms of violence with particularly tellable events.

How narrative research can programmatically address this other violence is a theoretical challenge that is at the core of this special issue of *DIEGESIS*. One possible answer lies in the differentiation between a pragmatic function of narrative and the presence of this violence within the narrated world: "Extratextually, one can [...] ask about the discursive function of the literary text to collectively make hidden violence visible again. Applied to the text itself, [this means] examining the relations of the gaze and the (in)visibility of violence within the narrated world." (Augustin 2020, 50) However, the means of fictional and factual narrative can be in tension with massively circulating social narratives that obscure or legitimise symbolic, structural and slow violence (O'Lear 2016). Interdisciplinary narrative research can reconstruct such narratives and counter-narratives and, in dialogue with the natural and social sciences and medicine, analyse the narrative foundations of structural, symbolic and slow violence as well as possible counter-narratives and forms of narrative resistance. Descriptive and normative narratives of climate change (Gjerstad / Fløttum 2022; Laird 2022), for example, are a separate and currently particularly productive field of research in the environmental humanities.

*DIEGESIS* is looking for contributions that critically analyse the possible contribution of one (or more) of the three concepts of violence to narrative research or examine the possibility of narrating structural, symbolic or slow violence.

We invite abstracts of approximately 350-400 words by March 31, 2024 at the latest. Please send your abstract, along with a brief CV, to the editorial team of *DIEGESIS*: [diegesis@uni-wuppertal.de](mailto:diegesis@uni-wuppertal.de). The editorial team will decide on the acceptability of proposals by May 31, 2024. Contributions have to be submitted by December 31, 2024. The issue will be published in June 2025.

In addition, we always welcome REVIEWS of new works (i.e. works published in the last three to four years) in the field of narratology; we specifically welcome cross-disciplinary contributions in addition to contributions from those working in the fields of language and literature. Recommendations for reviews can be sent to the aforementioned e-mail address at any time; in your e-mail, you should name the book(s) you would like to review and provide a brief overview of your academic career.

Furthermore, we would also like to invite suggestions for CONFERENCE REPORTS on any events in the field of narrative research. If you want to send us proposals for such reports please include brief information on the topic, venue, date, and organizers of the event as well as a short outline of your academic career.

#### About *DIEGESIS*:

*DIEGESIS* is the first interdisciplinary journal dedicated to narrative research that provides free online access to full-text articles and reviews (<http://www.diegesis.uni-wuppertal.de/>). The high standard of work published in *DIEGESIS* is ensured by a combination of competitive calls for papers and a peer review process.

*DIEGESIS* is published at the University of Wuppertal and in cooperation with the local Centre for Narrative Research (CNR) ([www.zef.uni-wuppertal.de](http://www.zef.uni-wuppertal.de)) by Matei Chihaiia (Romance Studies), Sandra Heinen (English Literature and Media Studies), Matías Martínez (German Literature), Katharina Rennhak (English Literature), Michael Scheffel (Comparative Literature), and Roy Sommer (English Literature).

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