History, Theory, Practice: A Protocol for Interdisciplinarity in Cognitive Literary Studies

One way that cognitive literary studies may answer its interdisciplinary requirement is by borrowing new theories and methodologies from cognitive science and applying them to the raw data of literature. An alternative approach, less frequently adopted but perhaps richer in interdisciplinary potential, involves exactly the opposite procedure: using the historical data of literary studies to evaluate and, where necessary, challenge and refine theory and practice in cognitive science.

Dr Mark Bruhn will illustrate this alternative approach: specifically by leveraging the historical data of romantic-era poetics to propose a critical adjustment to contemporary cognitive-scientific metaphor and “blending” theories, an adjustment which should in turn have important practical implications for clinical and educational interventions targeted at metaphor-processing difficulties (in this case, in individuals with autism spectrum disorder). This specific proposal will thus exemplify a general protocol for interdisciplinarity in cognitive literary studies, according to which the rich data set of literary history informs and improves cognitive theory, thereby helping to shape laboratory, clinical, and educational practice.