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BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

2nd European Biblio/Poetry
Therapy Conference 2025

UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ
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Contents

| | | |
|---|--------------------------|----|
| 1 | Keynotes..... | 6 |
| 2 | Oral presentations | 10 |
| 3 | Workshops | 52 |
| 4 | Art and shows..... | 66 |

FOREWORD

Warm welcome to the 2nd European Biblio/Poetry Therapy Conference at the University of Jyväskylä.

Biblio/poetry therapy offers a creative and compassionate response to the challenges of our time. It opens space for connection, reflection, and hope—reminding us of the healing power of words. We live in a time of uncertainty and change. As we face global, environmental, and technological shifts, it is both essential and inspiring to seek fresh perspectives together.

This conference brings together researchers and practitioners from across Europe and beyond to explore how biblio/poetry therapy can respond to today's challenges. Over three days, we will hear two lectures by keynote speakers and 45 presentations representing 18 countries. The programme also includes 15 fascinating workshops. Themes of the presentations and workshops range from nature writing and ecotherapy, the use of poetry therapy in educational and counselling contexts, multicultural approaches, to new possibilities opened by digital tools such as AI and virtual therapy platforms. The 2nd European Biblio/Poetry Therapy Conference provides a space for dialogue across disciplines—inviting us to imagine new ways of working, creating, and healing through words.

We look forward to meaningful conversation and shared discovery surrounded by the colours of autumn on our beautiful campus.

Karoliina Maanmieli,
The Conference Chair

The Organising Committee of the 2nd European Biblio/Poetry Therapy Conference

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1 KEYNOTES

Smiling Apollo – Giving voice and inspiring hope through biblio/poetry therapy by Dr. Judit Beres

Associate professor, Dr. Judit Beres (University of Pécs)

This keynote talk draws inspiration from an epic poem by Eino Leino, paying tribute to the spirit of the great Finnish national poet. The poem “Smiling Apollo” (“Hymyilevä Apollo”, 1898) by Leino serves as an ideal frame for discussing some key aspects of biblio/poetry therapy. In this poem, Leino praises the universal love of life and pure and noble feelings—faith, hope, love, and dreams—essential and eternal topics both for poetry and therapy, when interpreting human phenomena in the “here-and-now”.

Metaphorically speaking, Apollo’s smile refers to the healing power of poetry, particularly the hope it offers people during troubled times, which is the most important thing poetry therapy provides (Mazza, 2022). Hope fosters a positive outlook on the future, encouraging individuals to embrace new experiences and changes. It enables people not only to survive, but also to progress to a higher level of renewal. This can be achieved by strengthening psychological capital—hope, optimism, resilience, self-efficacy and a sense of control—and by promoting tolerance and cooperation. Biblio/poetry groups are particularly well-suited to this.

Experienced life situations may be challenging, but crucial everyday experiences can “awaken a person and jerk them out of everyday mode into ontological mode” (Yalom, 2008, p. 36). Pandemics, contemporary wars and the ecological crisis can be interpreted as such awakening experiences. These experiences catalyse personal growth by confronting individuals with life’s ultimate questions (e.g. authenticity, mortality, freedom, meaning and connectedness). Existential approach is also valid in biblio/poetry therapy, where we encourage clients to clarify their relationship with certain fundamental questions and values, and then to focus more on them.

According to Rollo May (2015), it is by no means certain that we truly understand the client's world; we may simply be projecting our own expectations onto it. However, the way in which the client uses language and metaphorical self-expression, and the way in which they find their own voice and become able to express their own truth, provides us with an insight into their world.

Campbell Purton (2004) emphasises that a client's ability to develop, change and heal with the help of a method depends on how effectively they can connect with their own inner emotional experiences. Literary texts and metaphorical self-expression help clients to capture the condensed essence, nature and intensity of their emotional experiences within their own framework of interpretation. This enables the client to connect more effectively with their own experiences and make them accessible to others, creating the possibility of deeper connections and encounters. The presentation will also demonstrate how this works in a group setting through specific examples.

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Narratives in biblio/poetry therapy: Exploring the self and the world in the shelter of stories

Adjunct professor, Dr. Päivi Kosonen (SELMA, University of Turku/Helsinki)

In my presentation I'll make an overview of the narrative approach in Finnish biblio/poetry therapy – a field I'm also in as a bibliotherapist and a humanist researcher. I reflect on general level the use of narrative theory and support my argument with theoretical and practical examples.

Even if not many of us would primarily define ourselves as practicing narrative therapy most of us take use of narrative understanding, narrative concepts and methods – when working on the basis of a person's life story, helping her/him put together a new, more adequate story or stories that will explain and organize major life events causing distress.

Interactive biblio/poetry therapy group can be a safe way to explore life crisis, especially when the group is facilitated by a trained bibliotherapist, and it is possible for participants to feel safe, and become safely triggered by the selected literary material and the stories shared in the group. Poetry is indeed often a convenient material to use in groups. Nevertheless, narrative literature has also certain advantages, especially as it conforms to people's tendency to perceive themselves temporally: being, living, suffering, hoping, changing in time. Narrative literature can also offer metaphoric shelter in the group – even when it is evocative in showing and telling the most painful aspects of human life. Sometimes, if the time and place are right (kronos), evocative narrative can also be a very effective way to face the painful issue.

We have come to that conclusion in our research project "Counter-Narratives of Cancer" where we have tested a bibliotherapeutic application of the narrative agency reading group model (NARG) we have been developing. In the groups for breast cancer patients we have read illness narratives, literature that deals with cancer and treatments, and describes not only positive emotions, hope and empowerment, but also anxiety, anger, hopelessness, fear and grief of dying. Narrative literature provides the participants with valuable interpretative tools to

deal with their own experiences, with their changing view of themselves and the world we live in. Our analysis of the research data suggests that the NARG model enhances cancer participants' narrative agency and offers them an alternative psychosocial support method (forthcoming: Kosonen et al. 2025).

Furthermore, for bibliotherapists, the NARG model offers an alternative shared reading method that is based on the narrative thinking, on the use of literary narratives and on the reflection of the cultural, collective nature of the narratives themselves. Meeting by meeting it teaches participants and facilitators to reflect what kind of cancer narratives are around us, how they affect us, and how and why we could narrate things differently. The dialogic reflection of stories is essentially reflection of ourselves being and acting in the world.

My presentation is based on the research work done in two research projects funded by Research Council of Finland: "Narrative, Reading, and Wellbeing" (2018–22, PI Hanna Meretoja) and "Counter-Narratives of Cancer. Shaping Narrative Agency" (2023–27, PI Meretoja). The Narrative Agency Reading Group (NARG) model is developed collectively by Hanna Meretoja, Eevastiina Kinnunen & Päivi Kosonen.

2 ORAL PRESENTATIONS

In alphabetical order by the presenter's last name

BRIDGES IN BIBLIOTHERAPY: NAVIGATING BETWEEN LANGUAGES AND CULTURES

Bar Zaken, Sarit (Kibbutzim College of Education, Technology and the Arts)

The lecture focuses on the ways in which bibliotherapists navigate working across different languages, cultures, and therapeutic discourses. Through in-depth interviews, it reveals how language choice — whether everyday, cultural, or therapeutic — serves as a meaningful tool for moving closer to or distancing from emotionally charged issues, and how the selection of literary texts is tailored to patients' needs and to the challenges of linguistic complexity. The findings point to the creation of a hybrid, integrative therapeutic identity that moves between different worlds and allows for unique therapeutic flexibility. The lecture offers important insights into the experiences of therapists working in multicultural environments and into the development of culturally sensitive therapeutic training.

Keywords: Language and identity, cross-cultural therapy, hybrid therapeutic identity

THE DIGITAL THIRD VOICE: INITIAL REFLECTIONS ON AI INTEGRATION IN BIBLIOTHERAPY

Bar Zaken, Sarit (Kibbutzim College of Education, Technology and the Arts)

This study examines the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in bibliotherapy, offering an initial perspective on its creative and therapeutic potential. Findings indicate that AI, as a therapeutic aid, fosters emotional and imaginative engagement. It facilitates therapeutic storytelling, supports supervision, and expands the reflective space for therapists and clients. The dynamic interaction with AI creates a "partner" in the writing process—one that offers mirroring, validation, and inspiration, enhancing creativity through collective knowledge.

Moreover, AI reshapes reading and writing processes, enriching the inner voice with additional perspectives. This evolving interplay fosters a continuous process of creative-therapeutic becoming, where human and digital elements interact to expand personal expression. While participants found AI stimulating and thought-provoking, they also experienced alienation and concern over the potential loss of individual creativity.

These findings highlight the need to reconsider therapeutic boundaries as AI integrates into bibliotherapy. Participants' ambivalence reflects challenges in defining AI's role — both compelling and unsettling — while questioning the place of the authentic human voice in creative and therapeutic work. The study suggests AI can support training and therapy by fostering emotional expression and new forms of self-articulation. The discussion integrates concepts such as the self-object, transformational object, Jungian constructs, and a new theoretical framework for the digital third voice.

Keywords: AI in bibliotherapy, digital therapeutic narrative, creative-therapeutic process

LOOKING AT VIRGINIA WOOLF'S "A SKETCH OF THE PAST" WITH AN EXPRESSIVE ARTS PHENOMENOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK: A BLUEPRINT FOR HEALING TRAUMA THROUGH AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL WRITING

Behrens, Hannah (Netherlands Expressive Arts Association)

The purpose of this essay is to explore the potential of self-healing through autobiographical writing, using Virginia Woolf's memoir, "A Sketch of the Past," as a source text, and to introduce Expressive Arts Therapy and Phenomenology as a model for how autobiographical writing can be used as a method for healing trauma.

Virginia Woolf originally wrote "A Sketch of the Past" over a period of months in 1939, intending to share it with her colleagues at the Bloomsbury Group Memoir Club. The essay reveals details of the author's writing process, focused on the phenomenon she names as "Moments of Being," describing the intensity of emotions and hyperawareness she felt at crucial moments of trauma and revelation.

Woolf's ability to articulate these key experiences during the course of her lifetime opens a fascinating study of the writer's experience and the vulnerability of the psyche, as well as the power of self-healing and self-revelation, in relation to narratives of family and personal trauma. The way Woolf tells her story reaches toward her readers as observational witnesses, and through this act of sharing, may drive other witnesses and those who have experienced trauma to come forward with their own experience; thus, 'A Sketch of the Past' can be seen as a blueprint for personal or communal healing.

The phenomenological framework of Expressive Arts Therapy provides an entry point for using literary models and creative writing methodologies to explore avenues for healing traumatic experiences through narrative therapy.

Keywords: memoir, Virginia Woolf, healing, writing

POWER OF FAMILIARITY AND UNKNOWN - HOW TO USE MOVIES FROM DIFFERENT CULTURAL BACKGROUND AND THE ADVANTAGES OF USING BELOVED FILMS, TV SERIES

Borbély, Zsuzsa (Hungarian Association for Biblio/Poetry Therapy)

The aim of this study is to explore the effect of using Hayao Miyazaki's animes in group sessions as stories from different cultural backgrounds. I found it liberating for participants to interpret these works freely, without the pressure of decoding hidden meanings or searching for symbolism in the visuals or storyline.

I have the opportunity to hold workshops and discussions immediately after movie screenings in the same room. While these are not traditional group bibliotherapy sessions, they provide insight into film therapy and serve as excellent conversation starters.

On the other end of the spectrum, I report on my work with familiar, beloved novels, movies, or TV adaptations, such as *Pride and Prejudice*, *Anne of Green Gables*, and *Gilmore Girls*. These beloved texts have been part of the participants' lives since childhood. Here, we engage with emotions that go far beyond the

meaning of any other form of art. These texts act as a "virtual madeleine cake" for group members, evoking memories from childhood, shared family moments, or stages of life that are rarely revisited. Participants can compare their past selves and thoughts with their current state of mind, examining how life expectations formed by these shows have evolved and how they have turned out. We can explore how the world has changed and how they have changed within it.

This study presents the experiences from my movie, TV series, and adaptation bibliotherapy practice during in-person sessions with a target group of healthy adult participants aged 18 and older.

Keywords: filmtherapy, Miyazaki animes, tv series

AMBULANCE SONGS - DON'T FORGET THE SONGS THAT SAVED YOUR LIFE: HOW A BIBLIO/POETRY THERAPY CASE SPONTANEOUSLY BECAME A PUBLISHING PHENOMENON AND A DIGITAL COMMUNITY

Buonaguidi, Luca (Università di Verona, Poetry Therapy Italia)

Ambulance Songs is a project launched in Italy in 2019. Started with an experience of biblio-poetry therapy experience led by Luca Buonaguidi and Salvatore Setola on themselves, this intimate story of songs significant to their own lives becomes a book different from traditional music criticism, drawing inspiration from the "erotics of art" proposed by Susan Sontag.

Published by the historic music publisher Arcana and judged "a moving book, a musical first-aid kit, and an invitation to catharsis through songs," it quickly becomes a publishing phenomenon among Italian music lovers thanks to word-of-mouth.

Simultaneously, the homonymous blog was born, where the authors invited readers to share the songs that had marked their own lives. After a year and hundreds of received stories, the project returns to bookstores with a second volume composed of a selection of these contributions.

During the pandemic, the invitation not to forget the saving life songs evolves into a biblio-poetry therapy group workshop, to rediscover what songs we are and to listen to the Other. This work was chosen by the National Institute for Educational Innovation and Research of the Ministry of Education, Poetry Therapy Italia, and other organizations for its benefits on emotional expression and biopsychophysical health.

Today, with two books, a blog, and numerous public appearances, Ambulance Songs represents a concrete example of how biblio-poetry therapy can transcend the individual dimension, evolving into a widely resonant publishing phenomenon and a training method recognized for the conscious use of songs in care and well-being contexts.

Keywords: biblio/poetry therapy, ambulance songs, blog, community, new creative settings

BRIDGING WORLDS: THE SYNERGY OF FILM AND LITERARY THERAPY FOR YOUTH WELL-BEING

Choreus, Harry (DreamMill Productions)

Background/Theoretical Framework: This presentation explores the potential of film as a therapeutic modality for youth mental health, drawing connections to established practices in bibliotherapy. It utilizes psychoanalyst D.W. Winnicott's concept of the restorative impact of creativity and film theorist Siegfried Kracauer's ideas on cinematic realism to understand the dynamic between filmmaker and viewer.

Aim of the Study/Project: My research aims to develop a theoretical foundation for a novel film engagement method for adolescents, leveraging the receptive experience of cinema as a tool for self-reflection and emotional processing, inspired by the narrative approach of bibliotherapy.

Methods: I analyze the stylistic choices (realism) of the Netflix series *Adolescence* in relation to viewer psychological experience through Winnicott's "transitional space." Additionally, I gather feedback from adolescent viewers

regarding their viewing experiences. A subsequent phase involves planning and potentially implementing a film project with young participants.

Results/Preliminary Findings: Initial analyses suggest that the realistic style of *Adolescence* can create a space for idiosyncratic interpretation and emotional connection in viewers, aligning with the goals of bibliotherapy. Feedback from young audiences illuminates their engagement with the series' realism and its potential resonance with their own experiences.

Discussion/Conclusion: This project seeks to foster cooperation between expressive arts therapies by demonstrating how the unique attributes of film can be integrated with the strengths of bibliotherapy to support adolescent mental well-being. Film engagement offers a novel, active, and visual avenue for processing narratives and emotions, complementing the reflective nature of literary approaches.

Keywords: film therapy, bibliotherapy, adolescents, mental health, realism

BIBLIOTHERAPY AND COGNITIVE LITERARY STUDIES IN THE LIGHT OF WOMEN'S TRAUMA TEXTS

Csakvari, Lilla (University of Szeged)

My presentation will present a cognitive poetics approach to trauma literature depicting abuse against women, through an understanding of the key aspects and cognitive and emotional modes of operation that, alongside the application of relevant knowledge, can be essential to the most successful trauma bibliotherapy processes of text selection, comprehension and analysis.

Women's trauma literature is difficult to read, especially because of its overly emotional or even overly realistic and crude linguistic register. The texts require new reading strategies from the reader, and the subject matter can also make it psychologically demanding to identify with the characters, since women's trauma literature usually evokes negative emotions in the reader, such as fear, shame, anger, disgust, which can be traumatic during the reading process. This is where cognitive literary studies can help us, by studying the mental conditions and operations by

which the reader creates a narrative representation when receiving a text. It can also bring us closer to understanding which textual features evoke the negative emotions associated with a given trauma in the reader.

By understanding the literary representation of women's trauma, the narrative processes and strategies that evoke negative emotions, and the impact of these processes on the reader, bibliotherapy can be an even more effective aid for women who have been victims of emotional and/or physical, even sexual, abuse. The methods of cognitive poetics can thus provide important support for bibliotherapists and for the bibliotherapy process itself.

Keywords: cognitive literary studies, contemporary women trauma literature, negative emotions, mental conditions and operations

MUSIC AS A POWERFUL FORM OF BIBLIO/POETRY THERAPY: THE CASE OF NIL KARAIBRAHIMGIL'S SONGS

Duman, Deniz (University of Jyväskylä)

Music has long been an integral part of human life. Research shows that people use music for emotional regulation, self-awareness, and social connectedness (Duman et al., 2022). Within biblio-/poetry therapy, music—especially through its lyrical content—has been recognized as a therapeutic medium that promotes emotional expression, reflection, and identity development (Tyson et al., 2002; Mazza, 1999). Building on this literature, the present work explores the therapeutic potential of Turkish singer-songwriter Nil Karaibrahimgil, whose songs often address themes central to therapy, including freedom, personal growth, relationships, and identity. Few studies have examined her impact, though her music appears to carry significant cultural and psychological implications. For example, Çakır (2019) emphasizes that her advertising songs articulate a distinct feminine voice, promoting female autonomy and empowerment.

Drawing on a review of her discography and personal accounts (e.g., youth blogs), this work proposes that Karaibrahimgil's music may serve four major

therapeutic functions for listeners: (1) Freedom & Empowerment, (2) Personal Growth & Identity Formation, (3) Emotion Regulation & Social Relationships, and (4) Entertainment. One illustrative example is her song “Gençliğime Sevgilerimle” (To My Youth With Love), in which she uses a third-person perspective to address her younger self with compassion—a structure that mirrors reparenting techniques in poetry therapy. Coupled with a simple, uplifting melody, this creates an emotionally safe context for self-dialogue, supporting mood regulation and narrative re-authoring, both recognized mechanisms in biblio-/poetry therapy. The presentation will include selected musical examples to illustrate these functions. Future research directions will be discussed, including exploring songwriters’ intentions, comparing listener experiences, and analysing musical features that contribute to therapeutic outcomes.

Keywords: music, emotional regulation, identity formation, empowerment

WEEK IN, WEEK OUT, FOR A VERY LONG TIME – POETRY THERAPY IN A PUBLIC LIBRARY

Field, Victoria (Canterbury Christ Church University)

This interactive talk will describe and evaluate an open-ended therapeutic writing group that has been running in the public library in Canterbury, Kent, England since January 2013. Wise Words for Wellbeing is a drop-in group, meeting every Friday apart from in the summer months, offering a session comprising a writing warm-up, close reading of a poem and written responses, and a closing activity. This 3-Act structure reflects Mazza’s (2017) Receptive-Expressive-Symbolic framework for biblio-poetry sessions and acts as a container for the 5 mechanisms of biblio-poetry therapy identified by Alfrey et al (2021). Many dozens of people from a wide demographic have participated in the sessions with attendance ranging from once only to coming regularly for many years, and there have been periodic evaluations of the benefits of attendance. This talk will raise and attempt to answer questions about ‘care’ vs ‘cure’, the pros and cons of an open-ended intervention, and the role

of community and context in this work. It will argue that libraries are uniquely placed to promote the common good and that poetry therapy fits well with that objective. Reflective prompts will be offered during the presentation.

Refs: Alfrey, A., Field, V., Xenophontes, I., & Holttum, S. (2021). Identifying the mechanisms of poetry therapy and associated effects on participants: A synthesised review of empirical literature. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 75, Article 101832. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aip.2021.101832>; Mazza, N. (2017) *Poetry therapy: Theory and practice* (2nd ed.), London: Routledge

Keywords: poetry therapy, bibliotherapy, public libraries, community, writing for wellbeing

"CHORODROMENA": IN THE FLOW OF NATURE, OF THE UNIVERSE, OF THE SELF. COMBINING POETRY AND SYMBOLIC DANCE MOVEMENTS FOR PEOPLE'S WELLBEING

Gkioni, Evangelia and Dritsas, Andreas (Omilos Eksipiretiton, The Server's Society)

Every movement has power as each word has power. Imagine how this power is multiplied to infinity when we are aware of our words and our movements, and we combine the two in a musical flow within the embrace and acceptance of the group. "Chorodromena" comes from the Greek words "choros" (dance) and "dromena"(actions). In essence, "Chorodromena" means "to act via dance". It is an integrative approach of wellbeing which combines listening to poetry and at the same time performing conscious symbolic movements in a continuous flow. As the participants listen to poetry, recite it and perform the movements of each Chorodromeno consciously and aware of their specific symbolism, they experience immediate results in their physical body, emotional balance and clarity of mind. These three are harmonized, leading to strength, openness, joy, breadth, greater awareness, acceptance of the self and union with the other members in the group. This presentation will share the experience of Chorodromena, demonstrating how body, soul and spirit are activated, resulting in the overall wellbeing, healing and revealing to the participants a whole new field of expressing their soul and true

innate potential. Chorodromena have been uniquely taught and practiced for more than 40 years in “Omilos Eksipiretiton” (The Servers’ Society) Greece, and have been presented at academic conferences, international seminars and cultural events. Mainly, though, they are part of a great work carried out by Omilos Eksipiretiton in the community, with groups offered free of charge, where people can experience all the above in practice.

Keywords: well-being, self-awareness, healing, group-work, dance

“GOD FORSAKE ANTHONY”: REVEALING THE HIDDEN WISDOM OF POETRY; WHERE POETRY AND LIFE MEET

Gkioni, Evangelia and Dritsas, Andreas (Omilos Eksipiretiton, The Server’s Society)

“When suddenly, at midnight, you hear//an invisible procession going by//with exquisite music, voices,//don’t mourn your luck that’s failing now...”.

In this presentation, we will be sharing a workshop on K.P Kavafis’ “God Forsake Anthony”, carried out by Omilos Eksipiretiton in various settings (colleges, literary associations, cultural events, open groups). We will demonstrate an innovative process of deepening into the poem, see it take on dimensions beyond the apparent, thus revealing the infinite within the limited. We will discuss the participants’ feedback on how the vibration caused by the poem and delving into it doesn’t just cause personal experiences or memories to emerge, but more importantly, it creates circular ripples that spread from the Individual to Humanity, to the Universe, resulting in an experience of inner freedom and a change of positioning in life.

"As one long prepared, and graced with courage,//as is right for you who were given this kind of city,//go firmly to the window// and listen with deep emotion, but not// with the whining, the pleas of a coward;/ /listen – your final delectation – to the voices,// to the exquisite music of that strange procession,// and say goodbye to her, to the Alexandria you are losing”.

In addition, themes like the loss of our “Alexandrias”, being on the threshold of change, cycles that need to be completed for us to proceed to broader ones,

acknowledging the inner potential we all have and evolving in a spiral flow within the exquisite ritual procession of Life, are discussed.

Keywords: well-being, self-awareness, healing, group-work, dance

BIBLIO/POETRY THERAPY IN COMBINATION WITH YOGA

Gyarmati, Veronika (University of Pécs)

This presentation introduces a unique combination of yoga and biblio/poetry therapy, based on the author's doctoral research. Yoga is not merely a form of movement, but a complex system of self-exploration that, beyond asanas, also encompasses breathing exercises, relaxation, and meditation tasks (Swami Rama, 1977). In this method, elements of biblio/poetry therapy alternate with yoga, so verbal therapeutic tools combined with bodily experiences can evoke a more complex effect.

The presentation addresses the kinds of experiences participants report, since asanas can deepen their connection to themselves, their work with literary texts, and their engagement with creative writing tasks. They help participants arrive in the here-and-now, directing their attention inward. As a result, group members find it easier to put their feelings into words.

Literary texts, writing tasks, and asanas are linked through cognitive metaphors (M. Bolognesi, 2023), for which the presentation provides a concrete example. In this way, group members have the opportunity to examine, through bodily experience, expressions commonly used in their own formulations (Fehér, 2024). For instance: "I grounded myself", "I'm soaring", "I lose my balance". In the sessions the work is based on contemporary literary texts, because these derive from the same reality as the participants' experiences, making it easier for group members to recognize themselves within them. Finally, the presentation touches on N. Mazza's RES-model (Mazza 2022), demonstrating how yoga-based biblio/poetry therapy can be described through Mazza's theoretical framework.

Keywords: biblio/poetry therapy, yoga, connection

BIBLIOTHERAPY PRACTICES IN LIBRARIES: SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IN TÜRKİYE

Güneş, Güssün (Marmara University)

Libraries today play a transformative role by not only providing access to information but also promoting social well-being and psychological support. Bibliotherapy, the use of literature for therapeutic purposes, has emerged as a vital tool in this transformation. In Türkiye, public libraries have increasingly integrated bibliotherapy into their services, addressing the emotional and psychological needs of diverse user groups. This paper explores how bibliotherapy is practiced in libraries in Türkiye, focusing on its application among disadvantaged and vulnerable populations, including older adults, refugees, and children. Based on a qualitative analysis of bibliotherapy programs in institutions such as Rami Library and various municipal libraries, the study highlights how poetry, storytelling, and reflective writing are used to enhance emotional resilience and community integration.

The paper also discusses the growing interest in bibliotherapy training among Turkish librarians, emphasizing the significance of equipping library professionals with the necessary skills to lead such sessions effectively. These programs have demonstrated a positive impact, fostering emotional awareness and providing participants with tools to process trauma and personal challenges. By showcasing best practices and analyzing the outcomes of existing programs, this paper argues for the institutionalization of bibliotherapy in public library systems. It underscores the necessity of structured librarian education in this field and advocates for the expansion of therapeutic library services across the country. Ultimately, the study positions libraries as key community spaces for healing, empathy, and social inclusion.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, virtual reality, mental health, self-guided, metatherapy

THE USE OF FICTION AND PHOTOGRAPHY IN THERAPY

Halkola, Ulla (Spectrovisio)

My presentation includes a description of the use of fiction and photography together in therapeutic work and counselling. I have examined the theme when I wrote a non-fiction book entitled *Photography in Literature*. In my reading of fiction, I had observed during many years the meanings that writers have placed in their stories at different times, whether they are fully fictional or autobiographical autofiction. In the book I have described the different roles and meanings of photography in fiction.

The framework of reference is the essay *Camera Lucida* by the French cultural and literary scholar Roland Barthes. Drawing on his influential photographic experiences, Roland Barthes created a theoretical account of the meaning of photographs. For me, the other background theorists have been, among others Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Georges Poulet, Rita Felski and Lisa Zunshine.

I use quotes from fiction related to photography both in counselling and in phototherapy. Through combinations of literary texts and photographs, the aim is to evoke emotions and memories. After basic orientation reflective work continues through writing, watching autobiographical photographs and photographing. The focus of the work is on client's own life situation, the past or the future as appropriate.

In my presentation, I will explain the background of my phenomenologically oriented approach by describing the basics of the work of phototherapy and illustrate with examples the combination of photographic and literary-therapeutic work. Drawing on the material in *Photography in Literature*, I describe how different periods of time appear from the perspective of therapeutic work.

Keywords: phototherapy, biblio therapy, phototherapy & biblio therapy

THE DEATH OF THE FATHER, OR, AUTOETHNOGRAPHY FOR LITERARY RESEARCHERS

Hallila, Mika (University of Jyväskylä)

In my paper, I will discuss the narratives and representations of fathers' suicides in two contemporary Finnish autofictional novels, *Pete* (2022) by Ville Verkkapuro and "I Cannot Stop Thinking about Death" (*En voi lakata ajattelemasta kuolemaa*, 2022) by Venla Pystynen. I will link both my reading experience and my personal and subjective lived experiences and biography to their analysis. My father committed suicide in 1977, when I was eight years old; in reading and analyzing the novels, I let this life-defining experience influence my reading process, my thoughts and feelings, and I recall how I experienced my father's death and how it affected me during my childhood, adolescence and later.

Through my example, I will introduce the autoethnographic method of literary research, where instead of interpreting the text and solving its enigmas, the reader encounters both the text and him/herself in the reading process. In autoethnography, investigative reflection focuses on the researcher's self and personal experience and, through this, on a socially relevant cultural phenomenon as the subject of research. By writing an autoethnographic diary during the reading process, the researcher generates research material that can be used to provide new and meaningful scholarly findings about, for example, emotions, feelings, affects, memory, reading of (auto)fiction, and socially relevant cultural and social phenomena that are themes and topics in literature such as suicide. In addition to examining personal experiences, reading and (representations of) cultural and social phenomena, the method offers ideas that are relevant for reflection on the therapeutic approach.

Keywords: autoethnography, autofiction, personal experience, biography, suicide

THE POETRY THERAPY GROUP PROCESS AND ITS DEVELOPMENT IN THE BREAST CANCER SURVIVORS WRITING GROUP

Holopainen, Johanna (University of Jyväskylä)

The aim of the study was to find out how with the help of therapeutic writing can explore breast cancer related experiences, and what meanings were given for participating in poetry therapy group and its process. The purpose of this presentation will describe how the poetry therapeutic process formed in breast cancer survivors' writing group.

Model of bibliotherapeutic process by McCarty Hynes and Hynes-Berry (1989) were used when illustrated how an interactive poetry therapy group process helped to create personal meanings. The RES-model developed by Mazza (2007) was utilized to elucidate the manner in which the meetings of the writing group facilitated the practice of reflective writing and meta-reflective actions. Furthermore, a trauma-informed approach was employed when illustrating the instructor's work in planning and guiding the group's meetings.

The data consisted of participants' writings produced during a total of 18 writing group meetings. In addition, the data set includes interview transcripts which were gathered using the semi-structure interview method. Writings were analyzed using interpretational phenomenological analysis method, while the interviews were analyzed using phenomenography.

Poetry therapy group process were formed as conclusion of the study. The implementation of writing exercises, reflective writing, and the sharing of experiences was found to be conducive to the establishment of a sense of community, the facilitation of peer support, and the process of creating meaning process from experiences related to breast cancer.

The group process that has been presented can be used when planning similar activities, and when developing rehabilitative actions for cancer survivors.

Keywords: poetry therapy process, breast cancer, therapeutic writing

PLAYFULNESS AND GAMING IN BIBLIO/POETRY THERAPY

Ihanus, Juhani (University of Helsinki)

The process of biblio/poetry therapy is viewed through the lens of play theories and gaming practices. Wittgenstein's concept of the "language game," referring to the user-sensitive rules of language, and Winnicott's transitional space and phenomena are applied to biblio/poetry therapy to elucidate the creative and transformative processes in the interplay between inner and outer realities. Roger Caillois' four categories of plays and games (agôn, alea, mimesis, ilinx) are related to the dialogical field of biblio/poetry therapy, where conflicts, chances, simulations, and risk-taking are intertwined and poetic playfulness can disrupt given categories. Poetic-empathic play involves knowledge and emotion, expression and silence, remembering and forgetting, presence and absence.

Today, the expanding frontiers of human experience can be approached through digital humanities, interweaving narrative worlds with platforms and game world enactments. Virtual reality and artificial intelligence have enabled temporal, spatial, cognitive, and emotional immersion that are particularly effective in the context of literary engagement. The incorporation of visual, sonic, cinematic, ritualistic, and performative elements in conjunction with situated reading and writing contributes to the enrichment of personal and interpersonal emergent experiences. Participants may assume different identities and roles, leading to the construction of experimental selves within evolving interactive situations and relationships.

These new practices help participants in biblio/poetry therapy modulate traditional storytelling while retaining the vital sense and affect, ambiguity, tension, and polyphony of poetic play. *Techne* is seen here in the service of the healing arts, as a play space that allows participants to expand their mutual imagination and perspectives of action.

Keywords: biblio/poetry therapy process, digital humanities, gaming, immersion, play

AI INSIGHTS, VR ACTION: METATHERAPY'S LIBRARY-SCALE MENTAL-HEALTH PLATFORM

Irmak Gaygusuz, Dilara (Adapte Psikoloji) and **Güneş, Güssün** (Marmara University)

Metatherapy is our self-developed, virtual reality mental health programme that blends immersive scenario-based learning with a conversational psychologist avatar to teach evidence-based cognitive, emotional and behavioural skills across nine psychological domains. Recent advances in artificial intelligence sentiment analysis, micro expression tracking and mood adaptive chatbots, together with validated VR exposure protocols, are reshaping clinical practice. AI screening detects emerging anxiety and mood shifts with high accuracy (Olawade et al., 2024). VR exposure therapy equals or surpasses in vivo methods for phobias, PTSD and depression (van Loenen et al., 2022; Kothgassner et al., 2019), while early VR CBT trials report outcomes comparable to pharmacotherapy for major depressive disorder (Lee et al., 2025).

Metatherapy is already in active use across 130 public libraries in Türkiye. Users engage with a virtual psychologist avatar through scenario-based modules designed to teach cognitive, emotional, and behavioral skills. By integrating evidence-based techniques into an accessible, user-friendly platform, aims to lower barriers to mental health support and promote self-guided learning.

A comprehensive literature search revealed no research on Metatherapy the VR based mental health programme examined here. This presentation will first map the programme's current and future content architecture and show a live demo. It will then outline Metatherapy's next two extensions—an AI-driven psychologist add-on that can detect mood shifts and tailor feedback in real time, and a poetry-therapy layer grounded in Mazza's receptive-expressive-symbolic model (Mazza & Hayton, 2013). In the poetry layer each scene opens with two lines of theme-matched verse, invites the user to speak a response couplet, and preserves the resulting tercet on a Digital Poem Wall inside the VR environment, deepening personalisation and creative engagement.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, virtual reality, mental health, self-guided, metatherapy

BIBLIOTHERAPY AT THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF LITHUANIA

Janavičienė, Daiva (Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania)

The aim of the presentation is to give an overview of the bibliotherapy activities carried out at the Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania (hereinafter, Library).

Background: The notion that personal developmental bibliotherapy can be applied in a variety of social institutions (including libraries) belongs to the bibliotherapy classics, such as Arleen McCarty Hynes and Mary Hynes-Berry's manual, Liz Brewster researches, new book Ward H. and Nicolas A. Allered Librarian's Guide to bibliotherapy (ALA publication). Bibliotherapy activities at Library are carried out by two members of the Board of the Lithuanian Bibliotherapy Association, Daiva Janavičienė and Rasa Derenčienė.

Preliminary findings: Bibliotherapy activities start at 2017 there are reading clubs with bibliotherapy elements in the Library. 2020-2021 has been implemented project Bibliotherapy in Libraries, was published book "Bibliotherapy Methodology" and practical training sessions were organized.

During COVID19, Janavičienė and Derenčienė initiated on-line presentations of bibliotherapy methods. Sixteen recordings are available on the library's website Lnb.lt.

In 2023 organized a Readers' Clubs Assembly, inviting theoreticians and practitioners to present existing clubs using bibliotherapy in their activities. In 2024 the first digital issue of "Bibliotherapy. The Reading Guidelines" was published. Research has been carried and consultations are taking place as well.

Discussion: Lithuanian researchers J. Girčienė and M. Domijonaitytė examined the state of bibliotherapy services in Lithuanian public libraries. They found that "most libraries provide at least one bibliotherapy service through the efforts of the library staff themselves." What is the situation in other countries?

Keywords: personal development bibliotherapy; Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania

AI IN BIBLIOTHERAPY: OPPORTUNITIES, CHALLENGES, AND ETHICAL PERSPECTIVES

Jussila, Taru (Independent)

Generative AI offers new opportunities for bibliotherapy by supporting creative expression, reflective writing, and therapeutic self-awareness. The presentation is based on experiences in guiding bibliotherapy groups and analyzing participant feedback.

AI can lower the threshold for writing and offer new perspectives to the therapist. At the same time, its use raises ethical concerns, such as maintaining authenticity, and privacy issues. AI should be seen as a support tool in bibliotherapy, not a replacement for it.

The presentation addresses the responsible use of AI in bibliotherapy and offers practical recommendations. It also explores potential pitfalls, such as over-reliance on AI-generated solutions and the risk of superficial reflection.

Balancing technology with therapeutic principles can enable AI to become a meaningful part of bibliotherapeutic work. Participants will gain:

- Clear guidelines on what to be particularly cautious about when utilizing AI
- Insights into how AI can support creative writing and reflection - but not replace genuine emotional processing
- An understanding of how to integrate technological innovation with the principles of bibliotherapy in a balanced way.

The presenter is an experienced expert in digital tools and AI. With her background as a journalist and writer, she bridges technology, storytelling and therapeutic writing. She holds a Master's degree in Political Science but she has trained as a clinical supervisor and brain-based coach over a decade ago. She has also studied mindfulness and positive psychology. Currently, she is studying bibliotherapy at the University of Jyväskylä. She works as an Executive Director at Technology Industries of Finland.

Keywords: bibliotherapy, AI, generative AI, ethics, expressive writing

NARRATIVE MEDICINE MEETS BIBLIO/POETRY THERAPY

Jytilä, Riitta (University of Turku) and **Ovaska, Anna** (University of Tampere)

The field of narrative medicine has developed over the past 30 years with the aim of using literature and shared reading to improve patient-centered healthcare (e.g., Charon 2006). Narrative medicine borrows the method of close reading familiar from literary studies and combines it with creative and reflective writing exercises as well as group discussions. These courses are primarily designed for medical students and physicians, but the methods of narrative medicine can also be applied in fields such as social work and education, where dialogical social encounters are central.

Narrative medicine shares many connections with biblio/poetry therapy, which also has wide-ranging applications in educational, pedagogical, and professional contexts. However, these approaches have rarely been discussed together (Brewster 2018). Supporting personal and professional development, self-understanding, and agency can be seen as central aims of both narrative medicine and biblio/poetry therapy.

In our presentation, we explore how these approaches can complement each other and serve as an inspiration for each other. We reflect on the pedagogical foundations and core practices of biblio/poetry therapy and narrative medicine. Moreover, we draw on our project Words for Care: Literature, Healthcare and Democracy (Kone Foundation), which combines narrative medicine and cultural language learning to create reading groups for healthcare professionals who are learning Finnish as a second language.

References: Brewster, Liz (2018). *Bibliotherapy, illness narratives, and narrative medicine*. In *Bibliotherapy*, edited by Sarah McNicol & Liz Brewster. Facet Publishing. Charon, Rita (2006). *Narrative Medicine*. Oxford University Press.

Keywords: pedagogy, narrative medicine, biblio/poetry therapy, reading group, literary studies, language

FROM COLLECTIVE MEMORY TO THERAPEUTIC TOOL: POETRY THERAPY WITH ANONYMOUS ANATOLIAN FOLK SONGS

Karagozoglu Asliyukse, Mehlika (Marmara University) and **Gozde Sen, Zeynep** (Rami Library)

Turkiye has a rich heritage of anonymous folk songs that have been passed down from mouth to mouth in Anatolia. These songs are quite effective in expressing pain, joy, hope and similar emotions with melodic harmony and poetic language. There are traces of deep emotions such as the pain felt after death, the artistic expression of love, and the transmission of the pain of losing a child in the songs. Songs that contain clues about daily life and transmit these to future generations also provide opportunities for the transmission of past events to future memories.

In poetry therapy studies where popular songs and various musical contents are used together with poems, the idea that anonymous Anatolian folk songs can also be used effectively has been implemented. Positive results were obtained from these applications carried out in the Rami Library, it was observed that the workshop participants left peacefully and relaxed, and it was determined that they requested similar workshops to be held.

This paper aims to analyze how anonymous folk songs are used in poetry therapy studies at the Rami Library and how these practices contribute to the psychosocial recovery of individuals. The paper will reveal the ability to evaluate cultural heritage in bibliotherapy. In addition, an original Turkish example of the systematic use of cultural content in the field of bibliotherapy will be shared. Within the scope of the paper, content from anonymous Anatolian folk songs will be listened to and application examples will be shown in audiovisual format.

Keywords: collective memory, folk song, Anatolia, poetry therapy, anonymous culture

POETRY THERAPY GROUP AS A SPACE FOR DIALOGICAL ENCOUNTERS

Kauppinen, Merja (University of Jyväskylä)

Poetry therapy as a group-form activity offers participants a space for reciprocal encounters through texts (Mazza, 2016). From a sociocultural perspective, poetry therapy consists of multi-faceted dialogues, which are built on empathized reading and creative writing (Chavis, 2011). The philosophers of extensive/deep encounter, Buber (1923/1999) and Rogers (1980), name some essential issues that define the encounters in the therapy context: individual's way of being, trust in the capacity of human being, authentic dialogue, and personal becoming in relationships.

The aim of the study is to conduct dialogical encounters in poetry therapy groups, how the dialogues are raised and got their meanings. The autoethnography method (Austin & Hickey, 2007) defines the approach of this study. The researcher-therapist's diaries (30 sheets) of six groups' sessions formed the data. The notes cover together the sessions of 12–20 hours per group from face-to-face, hybrid and online groups' meetings. The group members' final collective reflections were used as supplementary data. While experiences are relational in their nature (Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop, 2004; Korthagen 2004), the constant comparative study method (Glaser, 1992) was used in analyzing the meanings of encounters in diaries (Boeije 2002).

The results show, that three kinds of issues define the dialogical encounters, the group's social relationships and group dynamics, emotional atmosphere, and participant's aesthetic and textual (metaphorical) contact surface with texts (see Chavis, 2011). These elements seem to be in the core of action in poetry therapy groups, and therefore the targets of reflection, when the group therapy sessions are developed.

Keywords: autoethnography, dialogical encounter, group therapy

LITERATURE-BASED METHODS SUPPORTING AND PROMOTING WELFARE IN FINNISH BASIC EDUCATION

Kivijärvi-Lehvonen, Veera (University of Eastern Finland) and **Kauppinen, Merja** (University of Jyväskylä)

Reading and making stories together provide children with opportunities for social-emotional learning, such as recognizing the emotions of others and themselves and expressing them in various, constructive ways. According to Finnish Core Curriculum for Basic Education (2014), one of the transversal skills is “taking care of oneself and managing daily life”, which covers social-emotional themes. However, there is a lack of research on how teachers use combined empathize reading and creative text producing to support social-emotional learning. Therefore, this study explores teachers' experiences of using these methods to support students' social-emotional skills.

The theoretical basis of the study is the simultaneous learning of language and socio-emotional skills: strong language skills are associated with successful social functioning (Im-Bolter & Cohen, 2007). Poetry therapy methods have been applied in educational settings, and for example Moldagali et al. (2024) have shown the potential of them in the meta-analysis. There is also research on learning environments that support self-understanding and increase the well-being of the community (Kauppinen, 2024).

The data of the study consists of thematical interviews with teachers, which take place in the Spring and early Autumn 2025. Teachers are asked about their experiences on the literature-based creative methods they are making use in literacy instruction, and their perceptions of the benefits for the students' social emotional learning. The study provides new insights for pedagogical development of literacy instruction to support the learning of social-emotional skills of diverse learners.

Keywords: basic education, creative method, social-emotional learning

WORK LIFE STOP – TRAUMA-INFORMED BIBLIO/POETRY THERAPY AS SUPPORT FOR WORKPLACE WELLBEING

Kortesoja, Sari (University of Jyväskylä)

General uncertainty in the world is also reflected in workplaces. In Finland, up to 25% of employees are at risk of burnout (FIOH 2025). Therefore, there is a need for new means to enhance workplace wellbeing.

In my doctoral research, I guided a nine-person bibliotherapeutic group between September 2024 and April 2025, a total of 16 times. The participants were from the social welfare, health care and the education sector, some working on projects. By analyzing the texts and discussions generated in the group, I investigate whether biblio/poetry therapy helps to identify and manage work stressors – and thus helps an employee to react to stress symptoms in a timely and preventive manner. In my presentation, I will provide examples of exercises and the results I have found so far.

Bodily awareness and safety were important in the group, where trauma-informed approach proved effective. We addressed workplace safety by using psychiatrist Sandra Bloom's sanctuary model. Recognizing one's alertness aids in encounters and wellbeing. Many participants felt disconnected from their bodies, so we used short breathing exercises followed by writing to restore this connection – with promising results, as this excerpt from a participant's text shows. *"Today I am hyper-aroused. I slept poorly [...] I haven't been able to settle into anything but have been bustling from task to task. My eye twitches and my nervous system buzzes. At this moment, there is an opportunity to move into the window of tolerance. Sitting, silence, peace, pen, and notebook."*

Keywords: workplace wellbeing, burnout, safety, supervision, counselling

SPIRITUALITY IN BIBLIOTHERAPY

Kotrbová, Kvetoslava (Comenius University Bratislava), **Solárová, Zlatica** (The first clinic of acupuncture and natural medicine G. Solar, Ltd., Šamorín) and **Vaskova, Maja** (Seminars Maja® intensive interactive on-line selfdevelopmental seminars)

The paper analyses spirituality like integral part of literary texts and bibliotherapy. The contribution is written mainly from the point of view of Carl Gustav Jung's concept of collective unconsciousness and archetypes, Roberto Assagioli's psychosynthesis model of human psyche titled Egg Diagram with Higher I like a star on the top of this diagram and next similar concepts. It highlights how bibliotherapy and therapeutic education play an important role in the process of consciousness of spiritual essence of human being like important source of coping, living of joy, happiness and meaningful life. It provides specific examples of literary works in which spirituality of an individual personal nature is explicitly described and can be further developed through bibliotherapy or therapeutic education and describes examples from therapeutic practice. It is intended for experts and students of helping professions who are interested in spirituality as part of bibliotherapy, health support, health care or health promotion.

Keywords: bibliotherapy, spirituality, therapeutic education, health care, health promotion

EXPLORING THE CREATIVE USE OF POETRY IN PSYCHOSYNTHESIS THERAPY FROM DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES OF TIME

Lamb, Ann Marie (HeartWise)

The aim of my study is to determine whether the inclusion of poetry in Psychosynthesis therapy will offer the client fresh insights and self-awareness, enabling change.

My own life-long love of reading found a new 'raison d'être' when I discovered the match between Psychosynthesis and Poetry therapy. Poems, new

and old, kept on entering my sessions as therapist. To establish a guiding platform, I used the words of Roberto Assagioli, founder of Psychosynthesis: "...out of the past, in the present, for the future".

The core models of Psychosynthesis are: the Egg diagram, the Star of Functions, the Ideal Model and the Two-Dimensional Growth-Model.

In most psychotherapy, the process is driven by a bottom-up (out of the past) exploration of feelings, thoughts, memories and patterns, hitherto subconsciously integrated into the personality. This focused process eventually leads to new insights, self-awareness and will (in the present), enabling transformation and new ways to self-realization (for the future).

In poetry-/biblio-therapy, the process is top-down, inviting connection, insight and meaning. Thus, the poem becomes a catalyst for change.

My method has involved using a poem by Claes Andersson, "What became words" with meditation, visualisation, reading and writing.

In liberating the client from the life-long tyranny of the mind (thinking), we can move beyond the personality (feeling) to the transpersonal realm of immanence, finding a loving self, willing to fully embrace life (being).

Keywords: time, insight, self-awareness, will, transformation

AT THE INTERSECTION OF CREATIVE WRITING AND POETRY THERAPY – THE BIRTH OF SIX STORIES BY SIX WRITERS

Lamberg, Jaana (Sanoja Lintujoella Oy)

Six writers who participated in a creative writing course in 2023 ended up in making an anthology of short stories: Veden takaa – tarinoita Seilin saarelta (From behind the water-tales from the isle of Seili). Poetry therapy facilitator and author Heli Hulmi used methods of wandering and writing, and nature writing in her teaching, combined with poetry-therapeutic elements. Hulmi's various writing tasks guided us to build complete stories with a catchy beginning, concluding end, and some interesting events in between. When writing, we used our observations of the nature, historical facts, previous experiences and miscellaneous memories, as well

as pure imagination. The tales were born during the course and became surprisingly coherent whole in just a few days. However, after deciding to make an anthology, we continued writing and editing our stories a little.

The anthology has a poetry-therapeutic framework, including Hulmi's prologue giving insight e.g. to the methods used. Before the course, some of us writers were not at all familiar with poetry therapy. The focus of the course for us was on creative writing and storytelling.

How then do creative writing and poetry therapy intersect? In general, writing promotes well-being. Writers can create stories reflecting reality but just as well fictional stories of how things could have happened if all went well. The stories in our book discuss core issues in humanity: fine lines between sickness and health, coping strategies, relationships between fellow humans or humans and nature. The reader may also find common ground in our stories.

Keywords: creative writing, poetry therapy, anthology of short stories

POETRY THERAPY IN PATIENTS WITH ADVANCED CANCER - A MIXED METHODS FEASIBILITY STUDY

Lamminmäki, Annamarja (University of Eastern Finland and Kuopio University Hospital), **Vehviläinen, Anna-Riikka** (Kuopio University Hospital), **Pöyhiä, Reino** (University of Eastern Finland) and **Nyfors, Mervi** (University of Oulu)

Objectives: The aim of this study was to evaluate the feasibility of poetry therapy as a method of psychosocial support in patients with advanced cancer. **Methods:** We ran a pilot poetry therapy group with 7 participants with advanced cancer. There were eight online meetings with a qualified group facilitator. The intervention included carefully selected material, expressive writing exercises and group discussions, with a special emphasis on mindfulness, elements of nature and connectedness. HADS and dignity scores were retrieved from the participants before and after the intervention. The participants' experiences about the

intervention were collected with open ended questions and analysed using qualitative content analysis.

Results: The median of the self-evaluated usefulness for the program was 9 in a scale from 0 to 10 (range 1-10). Six out of 7 participants (and 6 out of those 6 who completed the program) considered that this kind of poetry therapy was a suitable method for psychosocial support for cancer patients. The scores for HADS anxiety scale decreased in 6/7 participants, with the mean decrease of 1.9 points ($p=0.09$). Dignity scores also improved in 6/7 participants ($p=0.018$). The content analysis of the patients' experiences yielded 5 main categories including processing emotions, structuring thoughts, connectedness and increase in anxiety. Conclusion: Poetry therapy is an acceptable and feasible method of psychosocial support in patients with advanced cancer. Still further evaluations should be made with larger number of patients and with qualitative element to examine the feasibility of poetry therapy.

Keywords: poetry therapy, cancer, mixed methods

TOWARDS A FRAMEWORK FOR COMMUNAL BIBLIOTHERAPY IN DEMENTIA CARE

Lucha Fariña, Patricia (Leiden University)

Ageing is a universal and inevitable experience that requires ongoing research to address the complex health needs that accompany it. As life expectancy increases, the incidence of age-related conditions such as dementia is rising. Researchers and practitioners are exploring 'active ageing' approaches to enhance quality of life, emphasising the importance of social engagement, physical activity, and cognitive stimulation in older age. This paper explores bibliotherapy as an innovative non-pharmaceutical approach to improve mental health and well-being among older individuals living with dementia.

Despite previous research showing promising effects of bibliotherapy, its inconsistent terminology makes it challenging to assess best practices for

implementation. This study addresses this gap by suggesting a comprehensive framework for communal bibliotherapy, drawing from semi-structured interviews with at least seven stakeholders, including caregivers, therapists, and facilitators from the Netherlands, Romania, Portugal, and Germany. Its interdisciplinary and transnational approach aims to contribute to a shared vocabulary and good practices for implementation in different cultural contexts.

This study discusses practical implications for dementia care, highlighting bibliotherapy's therapeutic value and promoting a holistic, person-centred approach. Preliminary findings suggest its potential to offer emotional catharsis and memory recall in dementia patients. Additionally, the study emphasises bibliotherapy's value as a supportive tool for caregivers, and identifies key elements of good practices, such as adaptability and personalised design. Altogether, by contributing to the conceptualisation of bibliotherapy and the growing evidence on its therapeutic benefits, this study advocates for literary practices as a tool to enhance well-being particularly for people living with dementia.

Keywords: bibliotherapy, dementia care, therapeutic reading, framework

A POEM IS A MOTHER: MESSAGE, TRANSLATION, AND THE UNCONSCIOUS IN POETRY THERAPY

Maanmieli, Jose (Alethes.net)

Poetry therapy and psychoanalysis share a productive relationship, yet their connection has not been fully explored through the lens of Jean Laplanche's revision of psychoanalysis. Laplanche's work offers an integrative perspective that seeks to achieve coherence between science and the humanities, making it particularly relevant to understanding why poetry therapy works. This presentation introduces Laplanche's general theory of seduction to an interdisciplinary audience, demonstrating how his concept of enigmatic messages and unconscious translation provides a more precise explanation for poetry's therapeutic effects. Rather than viewing poetry as mere self-expression or catharsis, Laplanche's model suggests that poetry operates like the foundational, enigmatic messages a child receives from

caregivers, messages that shape the unconscious rather than offer fixed meanings. This perspective also sheds light on the role of the maternal in poetry therapy: poetry's resistance to rigid interpretation trumps the paternal function and its demand for clear, logical structures. In this way, poetry therapy may be understood as a return to the formative process of unconscious translation. By presenting Laplanche's work in an accessible way, this talk aims to engage a diverse audience, offering a framework that bridges psychoanalysis, literature, and therapy while addressing the deeper mechanisms that make writing a powerful site of transformation.

Keywords: laplanche, enigmatic message, childhood, psychoanalysis

APPLIED BIBLIOTHERAPY IN TRAINING AND EDUCATION

Monge, Irene (BiPo - Associazione Italiana Biblio/Poesiaterapia)

The Lussu Library of Cagliari organized, with my collaboration like the facilitator and teacher, a training course on bibliotherapy applied to training and education and on bibliotherapy in pedagogical-didactic practice. The training course is part of a larger project, called "Curare la mente", funded by the Ministry of Culture. The recipients are librarians, cultural workers, educators, people who already have experience in the field of books and libraries. The specific objectives are promotion and enhancement of the pedagogical and didactic function of books; socio-educational function of books in lifelong learning; didactic strategies for the use of bibliotherapy, also in the encounter with digital; bibliotherapy as an integrated process in the educational and orientation relationship. In order to implement the most appropriate design to achieve cognitive-behavioral change, I start with an approach to the topic that is always dynamic, creative and open, to encourage participation (through practical and experiential exercises).

Keywords: pedagogical-didactic practice - training - education

TRAUMA-INFORMED SOMATIC POETRY THERAPY AND YOGA AS SUPPORT FOR STRENGTHENING FEMININITY AMONG FEMALE INMATES

Nyfors, Mervi (University of Oulu), **Heinonen, Mia** and **Flinkkilä, Anne**

The study examines how yoga and poetry/bibliotherapeutic methods can support the femininity of female inmates in an open prison environment. The method combines physical exercise (yoga) and emotional writing (bibliotherapy), referred to as somatic poetry/bibliotherapy. The aim is to enhance participants' self-esteem, self-awareness, participation, and functional capacity, considering their possible trauma backgrounds. The study group consists of 6–10 female inmates who meet eight times during 2025.

The research is based on action research, collecting and analyzing discussions and texts produced in the group. Each meeting addresses different themes, such as safety, emotions, compassion, and future aspirations. Bibliotherapy belongs to expressive therapies, and its goals include developing self-expression and self-understanding. Studies have shown that emotional writing is an effective way to process emotionally distressing experiences (Glass et al., 2019; Pennebaker, 2013, p. 3; Smyth et al., 2008). Yoga has been found to be effective in treating post-traumatic stress disorder (e.g., Mitchell et al., 2014; Cramer et al., 2018; Rhodes et al., 2016; van der Kolk et al., 2014) and anxiety (e.g., Li et al., 2012; Kirkwood et al., 2005; Javnbakht et al., 2009), and it can reduce stress and mood disorders among female inmates (Danielly and Silverthorne, 2017; Harner et al., 2010; Sathiyavathi et al., 2024). The combination of movement and writing has been found to improve mental and physical well-being (Krantz & Pennebaker, 1995, p. 2).

Keywords: somatic poetry therapy, yoga, prison poetry therapy, femininity

BIBLIOTHERAPY WITH FOLK CULTURE: THERAPEUTIC USE OF THE BOOK OF DEDE KORKUT (ANCESTOR KORKUT) STORIES IN TURKISH CULTURE

Ozgur, Mizan (Istanbul University) and **Ciftci, Seyma** (Rami Library)

Dede Korkut, a semi-legendary sage who knew the traditions and customs in Turkish society very well and told them through stories, is the poet who tells the stories in the Book of Granddad Korkut, the oldest Turkish epic. Texts of the Dede Korkut, which were included in the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage Lists of Türkiye, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan in 2018, still contain content that will facilitate spiritual healing today. These traditional wisdom texts, which continue to be transmitted orally in Türkiye, are utilized in bibliotherapy sessions at the Rami Library, offering psychological and emotional support to participants. The stories reveal wise perspectives that offer guidance for contemporary social life. For example, the truth always comes out, bad-hearted people always lose and sooner or later good-hearted people always win, good deeds are reciprocated. Even if bad events occur in the story, the fact that the events always end with good increases the healing power of the work. In the stories, the importance and sanctity of the family is emphasized. Women have an active and decision-making role in social life. Children are raised with the goal of becoming heroes by doing good deeds. The stories end with a prayer to the listeners, giving them "kut", meaning "good luck". The prayer metaphors concluding the Dede Korkut narratives contribute to a calming and contemplative atmosphere, reinforcing the stories' spiritual dimensions. In this paper, which also offers a model that can inspire therapists working with similar folk narratives in other countries, examples from the Dede Korkut stories will also be presented.

Keywords: emerging adulthood, narrative identity, group setting, creative writing, fairytale therapy

POSSIBILITIES FOR DEVELOPING EMPATHY THROUGH THE METHOD OF BIBLIOTHERAPY ACCORDING TO PSYCHONARRATOLOGICAL AND BIBLIOTHERAPEUTIC RESEARCH FOCUSING ON READER RESPONSES, THE EXPERIENTIAL AND SELF-REFLECTIVE PROCESSING OF LITERARY

Pávlícz, Adrienn (University of Pécs)

According to psychonarratological and bibliotherapeutic research focusing on reader responses, the experiential and self-reflective processing of literary texts, as well as therapeutic writing, can enhance an individual's self-awareness alongside the development of their empathy and mentalization abilities. Empathy is an emotional state in which a person is able to share in the emotions and feelings of another individual. (Kovács, 2020.) In this process, the emotions and tensions of the other person are evoked within one's own personality, and one immerses oneself in the other, projecting oneself into their experience.

Mentalization is the ability to form an understanding of what is happening in another person's mind – that is, the mental states and emotional motivations underlying their behavior. This ability is essential for successful social interactions. (Herold, 2004.)

In closed bibliotherapy groups consisting of high school and university students, I examine how the development of empathy can be verified using a measurement method based on literary texts. This presentation introduces the measurement method and its evaluation.

I hypothesize that participation in bibliotherapy group sessions leads to an increase in the participants' empathy and mentalization abilities. Building on previous research, I use questions designed to assess the recognition and expression of emotions during the processing of short stories. The foundations for my own measurement method are based on the work of Ilona Csörsz and the doctoral dissertation of Judit Diána Fekete.

The bibliotherapy group provides a safe environment where measurements are taken before and after the group process, using short stories.

Keywords: empathy, mentalization, psychonarratological, high school, university students

LOUD, LOUDER, LOUDEST: THE EXPERIENCE OF FEMALE DOMESTIC ABUSE SURVIVORS, WHO HAVE ENGAGED WITH POETRY THERAPY, READING THEIR WRITTEN WORK AT A SPOKEN WORD EVENT

Perry, Mel (Lapidus International)

This presentation is based upon a research case study, using phenomenological approaches with semi-structured interviews. The study explores the experiences of women survivors of domestic abuse who volunteered as research participants to read at a spoken word poetry event. While spoken word is burgeoning in entertainment and activism, there was a gap in UK literature about its potential as a tool in Creative Writing for Therapeutic Purposes (CWTP) and Poetry Therapy. This research was motivated by my experience and sensed therapeutic impact of reading my poetry at spoken word events. I was curious as to how spoken word might be offered and supported for vulnerable women with whom I had been working as a writing practitioner. The findings were not wholly conclusive; some women experienced that they reframed painful features of domestic abuse into feeling included, proud, accomplished, visible and heard. Some women experienced aspects of re-trauma. All felt confident and empowered to learn from the experience. Pursuant with the limitations of case study methodology and the small numbers involved in this project the findings are not generalisable. It is possible, however, to replicate the methodology and methods of this project in CWTP practice and research with other participants and audiences. I offer a resource for writing practitioners who might wish to include a spoken word poetry event in their work. I conducted the research in 2019 and now take this opportunity to reflect on more recent research and, since publication in *The LIRIC Journal*, on my chosen methodology.

Keywords: poetry therapy, spoken word, domestic abuse

GRIMM TEAM GROUP TREATMENT MODEL

Ruhala, Minna (Wellbeing services of Pirkanmaa / Tays)

Grimm Team Fairytales and writing, a creative group rehabilitation approach in treating young psychiatric outpatients at the Tampere university hospital.

Literature therapy is based on the foundational understanding that certain reading materials can expand a person's self-understanding and understanding of others. Our work is based on using Grimm fairytales as a core of group rehabilitation. Grimm Team is a part of our treatment options for 13-17 years old suffering from anxiety, depression, selective mutism, eating disorders and behavioral challenges. Fairytales provide a myriad of spectrum to explore past, present and future challenges, offering gentle possibilities to treat one's mind through imagination, connecting and recognizing feelings with the specific stories.

Grimm Team offers peer support and is facilitated by psychiatric and literature experts. Every participant is monitored through questionnaires at the beginning of the team and at the end. Grimm Team lasts for 7,5 hours divided in 5 group treatment sessions, 5 outpatients per team. All participants are interviewed beforehand and caretakers are informed about Grimm Team.

Grimm team is a component of the individual care plan made for each outpatient. Each treatment sessions starts with a Grimm fairytale and serves as an icebreaker, participants write about their feelings and ideas about the fairytale.

Session 1 placing participants current mood in prechosen pictures

Session 2 My super force, writing exercise

Session 3 me and my caretaker, writing a letter (not sent)

Session 4 comic strip

Session 5 happiness and joy -building a toolbox

Keywords: Grimm Team

"SUDDENLY I REACH A HAPPY STATE OF BEING" – MY EXPERIENCES WITH IMPLEMENTING THE SPIRIT WALK NATURE WRITING METHOD DEVELOPED BY TINA WELLING.

Ruha-Nurkkala, Elisa (Juuriverso Oy)

In my autoethnographic master's thesis, I actively implemented the Spirit Walk nature writing method developed by Tina Welling for over two months. Welling was inspired to develop the method by time spent in nature, writing, and Penney Peirce's book *The Intuitive Way*.

The well-being effects of both writing and being in nature have been studied extensively and have been found to be influential. The Spirit Walk method combines both of these methods in an interesting and effective way.

By writing down the bodily sensory observations that arise in nature, which is a part of implementing the method, I started a powerful process of releasing trauma from my body, which was psychologically difficult, but fruitful, and I began to feel better mentally. The emotions and experiences stored in my body began to be released and become visible.

My research revealed that combining the physical experience of nature and the therapeutic writing of those experiences could be even more beneficial to well-being than simply being in nature, mentally reflecting on things, or therapeutic writing.

In my presentation, I will talk about the method and its implementation, as well as my experiences and results.

Keywords: nature, therapeutic, writing, senses

PARALLEL READINGS, NECESSARY ENCOUNTERS BASED ON KJELL WESTÖ'S DÄR VI EN GÅNG GÅTT (WHERE WE WALKED ONCE)

Sóron, Ildikó (Hungarian Association for Biblio/Poetry Therapy)

The aim of my presentation is to report on a bibliotherapeutic analysis conducted on Westö's novel. I invited two participants in Hungary to read the novel, with

myself as the third reader; our work was based on the Hungarian translation published in 2014. My objectives were twofold: first, to explore the therapeutic potential of the main characters; and second, to demonstrate that the decades-spanning historical period portrayed in the novel parallels the twentieth-century developmental histories of other European nations, specifically Hungary.

Several methods were employed during the analysis: the novel was first processed individually, followed by targeted questions carried out in writing and through online consultations to facilitate in-depth discussions of personal experiences related to the characters. Life-history interviews were conducted with the participants (including a self-interview), primarily focusing on historical parallels across national borders. These interviews also contributed additional information that enriched the personal interpretations. The project was supplemented with active bibliotherapy tasks, centered around questions linked to the main characters.

In the presentation, I emphasize personal responses to the characters, as I argue that the figures in the novel possess archetypal traits. Through their actions, thoughts, and the complex emotional worlds depicted, they not only reflect aspects of ourselves but also present alternative paths. Therefore, our choices and judgments regarding the characters are, ultimately, projections and deep manifestations of our own inner worlds.

Keywords: Character analysis, cross-cultural interpretation

THE RESPONSIBLE LEADER. LEADERSHIP LESSONS THROUGH LITERATURE

Suranyi-Cseko, Krisztina (University of Oxford, Humanities Division)

The aim of the study is to present an overview of practices in leadership education where literary works (plays, novels and poems) are integrated into the leadership programmes. In these cases, literary works are used as basis for discussions, reflections and learning about leadership situations, and also as a means for (self)-development as a leader. Literature-based leadership and management courses

have been running at international business schools (eg. Harvard, Stanford, Oxford) and also by some executive training providers for more than 40 years. Some of the course leaders are Robert Coles (Harvard), James G. March (Stanford), Joseph Badaracco (Harvard), Scotty McLennan (Harvard, Stanford), Sue Dopson, Emma Smith (Oxford), Sankaran Manikutty (India), Richard Olivier (Mythodrama). McLennan (2001, 1) for example highlights that in his course, “on the one hand literature is used as the basis for examining the character of business people and other professionals, while on the other hand literature provides illumination of the cultural contexts of values and beliefs within which commercial activities take place in a global economy.”

My research question is what role literature/arts/humanities could play in the education of leaders? The study is primarily a literature review – presenting a missing piece in the biblio/poetry literature – reviewing and summarizing leadership courses, course descriptions and books about integrating literature into business education and business leaders’ development programmes. Further to summarizing the reviewed literature and practices, the study also presents an interdisciplinary framework for the use of literature and arts in leadership education.

Keywords: leadership, education, literature-based, development, interdisciplinary

THE GREAT POETIC REBALANCING ACT: POETRY, PRYCHE AND JUNG'S THEORY OF THE TENSION OF OPPOSITIES

Sayers, Jon (The Bibliotherapy Academy)

The modern world appears increasingly polarised, with deep divisions across political, cultural, and social lines. Yet, resolution may lie in exploring the inner conflicts and oppositions we each carry within ourselves. Carl Jung noted, “Great energy comes only from a correspondingly great tension of opposites,” suggesting that if we can hold this psychic tension, a reconciling “third thing” may emerge – uniting the conscious and unconscious and fostering personal growth. In a letter to Olga Frobe-Kapteyn, Jung described this process, or “opus,” as unfolding in three

stages: insight, endurance, and action. Psychology is crucial for insight, but moral strength drives endurance and action.

This presentation examines poetry as a powerful vessel for opposites—with its blend of conscious and unconscious material, symbolic language, and resistance to easy resolution. Through curated poems and exercises corresponding to each stage of the process, we will explore how Biblio/Poetry Therapy can help us identify inner conflicts, tolerate opposing thoughts and emotions, and find the moral strength to act.

Central to this work is Jung's concept of individuation: each individual's unique journey toward wholeness through integrating the opposing parts of the self. By encouraging us to consciously engage with our personal shadow and differentiate it from the collective shadow, Biblio/Poetry Therapy enables us take small but meaningful steps toward resolving conflict in the outer world. This poetic and psychological exploration offers a creative path for individual and societal healing.

Keywords: Laplanche, enigmatic message, childhood, psychoanalysis

AUTOETHNOGRAPHY AS A METHOD FOR THE CULTURAL AND LITERARY THERAPEUTIC INTERPRETATION OF TURKISH LITERATURE. AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF ORHAN PAMUK'S NOVEL ISTANBUL

Szuper, Ildikó (University of Pécs)

The aim of this presentation is to explore how autoethnography as a research method can be applied to the cultural and biblio/poetry therapeutic interpretation of Turkish literature. Through personal reading experiences, the research will explore how certain literary works impact on identity formation, self-reflection and deepening cultural understanding.

Autoethnography is a reflective method of qualitative research that combines autobiographical writing with ethnographic observation. Turkish literature is a particularly fertile field for this approach, as its rich historical and cultural layers allow for a parallel examination of personal and collective identity.

The researcher documents and analyses her own experience as a Christian reader in the West through the works of Orhan Pamuk. Memories, emotional reactions and cultural parallels to the texts read will be recorded and interpreted, with a particular focus on cultural permeability and the role of healing narratives.

Preliminary results show that autoethnography not only facilitates a deeper cultural understanding of literary texts, but as a form of therapeutic writing contributes to self-awareness processes and emotional processing as well. This can be helped by creative writing exercises: memory writing, object meditation, time travel. Dwayne Custer (2022) dealt with his father's death in a therapeutic writing session, Jannie Pretorius (2024) with her depression, Lucy Windridge-Floris (2023) with her husband Islamophobia.

The method may be particularly useful in promoting intercultural dialogue and enriching the practice of bibliotherapy. Autoethnography offers the possibility to process subjective experiences in a scientific way, thus contributing to strengthening the links between literary studies and psychology.

Keywords: autoethnography, therapeutic writing, Orhan Pamuk, Turkish literature, multiculturalism

WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM THE GAP: BRIDGING POETRY, PSYCHOTHERAPY, AND POETOLOGICAL EPISTEMOLOGY

Trebes, Tamara (Sigmund Freud University)

In an era where psychotherapy is increasingly defined by quantification and evidence-based paradigms, biblio/poetry therapy offers a vital counter-movement—returning psychotherapy to its humanistic, meaning-centered roots. This perspective reframes healing not as a measurable outcome, but as a poetological process emerging through language, imagination, resonance, narrative, and aesthetic sensibility. At the heart of this shift lies an often overlooked yet productive element: the gap.

The concept of the gap manifests across multiple layers: in poetry, where meanings are implied, unspeakable, or suspended; in psychotherapy, where experience exceeds language; and in psychotherapy research, where even qualitative inquiry cannot fully capture the depth of human subjectivity. Poetologics engages with this gap—not to close it, but to work with it. Drawing on hermeneutic and narrative traditions, it highlights metaphor, imagery, and poetic structure as mediators between experience and expression, inviting a deeper engagement with the complexity of human experience.

Rather than seeking closure or fixed meaning, the suggested approach recognizes psychotherapy as a poetic practice—an open-ended process of shaping lived experience through language. It also opens new epistemological avenues for psychotherapy research, acknowledging the aesthetic, metaphorical, and processual nature of experience. This perspective invites ambiguity and proposes a form of knowledge that is dialogical, situated, and attuned to absence.

The proposed framework challenges the dominance of empirical-quantitative models and revives the historical connection between healing and storytelling, reaffirming psychotherapy as both an art and a science.

Keywords: poetry therapy, poetological epistemology, psychotherapy and language

THE FOURTH VOICE: THE TEXT ACCOMPANYING THE BIBLIOTHERAPY HOUR ON WHATSAPP

Vaknin, Orly (Kibbutzim College)

As almost every patient has a smartphone and a WhatsApp app, the classic convention regarding minimal contact between therapists and patients is increasingly being violated. This situation challenges the therapist and requires a recalibration of analytic and symbolic thought about communication with patients. Most patients use WhatsApp for practical purposes, to set up an appointment, to postpone or cancel an appointment, to request a recommendation, and so on, but

some patients use WhatsApp as a therapeutic tool. WhatsApp correspondence allows the patient to imbue the therapy not only with a record of a relationship world, but also with textual referents to his inner and interpersonal world stored in the app, such as informative and fictional literature including poetry, imagery and videos.

In this lecture, I will map out the characteristics of text messages in therapeutic space and share four therapeutic vignettes that provide a bibliotherapy perspective on written and read text messages. Text messages will be referred to as "the fourth voice" in bibliotherapy, because they are added to the central trinity: therapist, patient, and text. Fourth voices are creations of the patient, of the therapist, and the correspondence can even be read as joint creations. The correspondence may enrich the therapeutic process, but on the other hand, it also contains distracting texts, which interfere with the process, which is essentially an inward-looking one, and which requires professional and considered judgment.

Keywords: WhatsApp, emoji, reading and writing, therapist–patient relations

3 WORKSHOPS

In alphabetical order by the presenter's last name

THE KINTSUGI QUATRAINS®. TO TRANSMUTE WOUNDS INTO GOLD

Bulfaro, Dome (Mille Gru)

kintsugi: from gold “kin” and rejoining “tsugi”

How to transmute suffering and pain into the most beautiful fragrant lily? Into the tastiest of fruits to be bitten? How to transform the lowest and most tangled point of our lives into the highest, freest and brightest?

Kintsugi quatrains® help people put their lives back together when they fall apart, when trust is broken for a person, or for a value or institution you used to believe in, when you have an internal conflict and don't accept a part of yourself or when you have a fight with someone dear, when you lose a loved one, when something inside you is dying and you don't know how to protect yourself. Or more simply, kintsugi quatrains® help regain lost harmony, pacify and embrace you when you are angry, sad, frustrated, depressed. There are different types of “Kintsugi quartain®” - a form of writing devised in 2017 by Dome Bulfaro to achieve therapeutic, not aesthetic, purposes - that can be used for individual, couple and collective practices. Kintsugi® forms of writing are also beginning to be known and applied abroad. In Italy, in fact, it has proven most effective in helping children, preadolescents and adolescents in metaphorically turning forms of bullying, insecurities, anxieties, self-harm into gold... Its application has also been found to be strategic in activating restorative justice processes. It is used with adults to transform the small and large wounds that life confronts us with. It is used with the elderly to best accommodate the physical and mental deterioration of one's body, up to the encounter with death.

The workshop will be organized into the following stages:

- Theoretical introduction to Kintsugi Writing®
- Reading by the facilitator of a stimulus story and poem
- Writing of a short story following the modeling of "kintsugi writing®"
- Writing of a "Kintsugi" poetic quatrain
- Sharing the texts among the group

The purpose is to transmute small daily troubles into well-being by directly experiencing "kintsugi" modeling.

The workshop proposed here allows one to experience for oneself the goodness of several kintsugi quatrains® so simple and affordable, not addressed last year in Budapest. At the same time it shows, through the conduction, how a biblio/poetry facilitator can work with the various types of kintsugi quatrains®. Finally, he shows how kintsugi writing® can become a *modus vivendi* to make an ever-softer music in the river of one's daily life.

Keywords: kintsugi, biblio/poetry therapy, well-being, new technique

NARRATIVE POSSIBILITIES OF EXPERIMENTAL TEXTS IN BIBLIOTHERAPY

Casale, Mariana (the University of Manchester)

This workshop will consider the use of texts usually considered 'difficult' to articulate and bear witness to narratives of suffering; and to, in turn, support the re-authoring of alternative stories.

We will read a small selection of short prose pieces by Samuel Beckett to explore the possibilities they open to:

- begin non-retraumatising conversations about suffering and trauma and
- embark on a journey of re-authoring of alternative stories

Aims:

- To learn techniques for facilitating the reading of experimental literary texts by focusing on fragmentariness, meaninglessness and silence;

- To learn ways of propitiating empowered experiences of meaninglessness to safely explore stories of suffering and trauma that may otherwise feel difficult to articulate.
- To practice 'double-listening' to 'find exceptions' (White & Epston) in problem narratives.
- To embark on journeys of re-authoring by using the texts to co-create narratives of hope.
- To incorporate a somatic approach to reading and to access narratives of trauma.

Techniques:

- brief presentation
- whole-group bibliotherapy session
- Small-group work

This workshop is conceived within a Narrative Therapy framework (Michael White and David Epston). Wider reference will be made to psychoanalytical perspectives of literature, trauma, testimony and witnessing such as Feldman and Laub's.

Keywords: experimental fiction, testimony, Beckett, re-authoring, trauma

COMMUNITY BIBLIOTHERAPY - MOTIVATING OTHERS BY AN AUSTRALIAN EXPERIENCE

Clarke, Lowen (independent) and **Masterman-Smith, Adrian** (NIODA Melbourne)

In this 90-minute experiential workshop, participants have an opportunity to draw into a sharper focus the unique strengths and passions that mobilise their activism. The workshop adopts a focus on identity that employs a 'together as one' collaborative approach to acknowledging both individual and group storylines and narratives. Past cultural memories, present cultural lived experience, and future cultural aspirations are engaged as a narrative strategy together with a range of bilaterally stimulating creative expression techniques to inform a grounded, data-driven story that enhances internal integration and is rich in lived experience.

The workshop opens with tantalising glimpses of how two innovative Australian bibliotherapeutic projects, conducted in a small regional community with socio-economic and cultural challenges, contributed to individual and community dignity and self-worth. The Story Seats and Books project illustrates the diversity of bibliotherapeutic practice. In a 'Story Seats' project, we brought together storytelling that uncovered the trauma and dissociation attendant on family violence. We responded by creating a series of books with healing stories, including a rainbow community version. These were distributed free in large numbers in the town. Each book contained affirmations in an innovative reading format, 'Empowerment Script', which actualises EMDR.

Participants will use a range of accessible tools from creative arts therapy, action research, and socio-analytic practice to enhance their creative practice. 'Creative Narrative Inquiry' and Empowerment Script are also used to distil a personal summary and affirmation.

The workshop concludes with a group reflection on the opportunities, to introduce bibliotherapeutic practice to community projects.

Keywords: community bibliotherapy project

FACES OF MOTHERHOOD – BRIDGE BETWEEN THE PAST AND THE FUTURE

Cseh-Lipták, Bettina and Bálint Hungarian, Lilla (Association for Biblio/Poetry Therapy)

"Mother's love is bliss, is peace, it need not be acquired, it need not be deserved. If it is there, it is like a blessing; if it is not there it is as if all the beauty had gone out of life" wrote Erich Fromm, the German-American psychoanalyst and humanistic philosopher in *The Art of Loving*. But... are all the mothers capable of maternal love? Are we all taught how to love our children in a positive, effective and nurturing way? How can we cope with intergenerational experiences of motherhood? How can we deal with maternal eco distress?

Our very first experience is to meet our mother. It can determine the whole life in a positive or a negative way, especially if later on we become a mother as well. In our point of view, it is always beneficial to examine the connection with our (female) ancestors as we carry on their genes and their blood and sometimes unconsciously their maternal patterns too. As a general problem, nowadays it is absolutely crucial to face environmental issues and to alleviate maternal eco-distress as well.

In this 90-min workshop with the help of a contemporary poem, we will talk about the legacy of maternal patterns: about the woman in the mirror and about all the mothers behind her. With the help of creative/ expressive writing the participants will deepen their understanding of this unique connection. Besides this, the Mother Nature® cards will help us to experience nature and maternity as a whole.

Keywords: mother wound, intergenerational legacy, maternal eco-anxiety

REFLECTIVE MOVEMENT AND POETRY

Dimitriou, Foteini and Prokopi, Vicky (independent)

We begin by grounding in the present moment, tuning into bodily sensations and emotions through sensory prompts. These reflections become poetic seeds for character creation, playful yet deeply personal personas shaped by habitual gestures, postures, and feelings. Drawing from somatic practices (inspired by Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen and Linda Hartley), participants explore authentic movement rooted in internal sensation, not external form.

Through guided improvisation, we animate these characters, exploring how they move through the world. Augusto Boal's Image Theatre and Deborah Hay's presence-focused improvisation provide frameworks for this embodied inquiry. The process culminates in reading *Autobiography in Five Short Chapters* by Portia Nelson. The poem's final line — "I walk down another street" — serves as a poetic gateway to

transformation. Participants then write and embody this evolved self, imagining a new way of being.

The workshop concludes with individual presentations and a collective sharing circle. Informed by Paul Ricoeur's theory of narrative identity, this experience affirms that we are shaped by the stories we tell, and move, about ourselves. It is an invitation to play, witness, and honor the poetry that lives in our bodies.

Keywords: somatic practice, transformational embodiment, reflective writing

EVERY STORY TELLS A PICTURE – (RE)IMAGINING WOMEN'S LIVES THROUGH VIGNETTE WRITING

Henck, Maryann (Leuphana University Lüneburg)

"In every page there are undrawn women, each waiting in her own particular silence." Using this quote from Doireann Ní Ghríofa's memoir, *A Ghost in the Throat*, as a point of departure, we will explore the borders between fact and fiction by (re)imagining an "undrawn" slice of life from a significant woman in our lives – be it our mother, grandmother, or a female role model. To compose the story behind the person, we will delve into the genre of vignettes – a form of prose rich in imagery and thus conducive to creating evocative character portraits.

For this workshop, I selected Sandra Cisneros' seminal work, *The House on Mango Street*, which – in a series of vignettes – recounts the coming-of-age story of its Latina narrator and provides snapshots of her fellow Latinas. Cisneros has mentioned that she became a writer to tell the story of her mother and the women in her family whose stories were erased.

After a brief introduction to Cisneros' vignettes, we will engage in a close reading of "A Smart Cookie" and discuss how stylistic devices and word choice imbue the text with emotion. I will provide guidelines for composing vignettes before we venture into the 3-step writing exercise: applying Cisneros' concept of the "button box" for collecting ideas, images, conversations, and memories;

composing at least the opening sentences of the vignette; sharing our stories and insights. The ultimate objective is to give a voice to those “undrawn” women whose lives have been erased.

Keywords: women’s stories, giving a voice to the silenced, vignette writing

FLESH OF THE POEM: WRITING FROM THE BODY

Ionita, Carmen F. (independent practitioner) and **David, Adrian** (independent practitioner)

Emily Dickinson is often quoted saying, “If I feel as if the top of my head were taken off, I know it’s poetry.” Other times, poems make our knees grow weak or land like a punch in the stomach. There is a shared wisdom that poetry is not just a cognitive experience but a visceral one — something felt as much as thought.

In this psychotherapoetry workshop, we offer a series of movement and writing exercises that invite participants to connect with their bodies and the spaces they inhabit. The movement practices engage touch and proprioception to help remember the familiar and explore the unexpected.

Using poems as vehicles for embodied cognition, we’ll explore how language lands in the body — and how language can emerge from it. Drawing from the work of Enrique Vargas on the Theatre of the Senses, this workshop invites a deepening of attention to the body as both witness and storyteller.

This session is designed for poetry therapy practitioners seeking to expand their practice through embodied writing. Participants will leave with simple yet potent exercises to integrate into their own work. The session will weave guided movement, shared readings, and generative writing prompts in an invitational space.

Keywords: body, movement, psychotherapoetry

THE STORIES WE CARRY EVERYWHERE: OUR DIGITAL COMPANION AS A SOURCE FOR INSPIRATION AND DISCOVERY

Ivnitsky, Evan (Bibliotherapy Academy)

Modern life, whether we like it or not, is deeply intertwined with the smartphone we carry everywhere. Who among us hasn't felt a sense of loss or confusion when our phone isn't within reach, or worse, goes missing?

How many of us feel reliant on our phone to remember everything and manage our lives? How often do we feel that our memories and experiences are stored entirely within the device we hold in our hands?

In this workshop, instead of tucking our smartphones away, we'll use them as tools for meaningful reflection. Through a variety of writing prompts, we'll explore how the device can reveal deeper insights into our lives and relationships. Participants will be encouraged to utilize their phone's camera, gallery, and even social media applications as part of the process.

The presentation will include examples of Bibliotherapeutic Interventions developed and implemented in clinical practice, offering practical insights into how these methods can facilitate self-discovery in others. The session aims to cultivate a space for creativity, introspection, and meaningful connection—leveraging a device often seen as a distraction to instead serve as a tool for personal growth.

Keywords: writing therapy, innovative, workshop

LISTEN TO YOUR BODY, CLEAR YOUR MIND - WORKPLACE WELLBEING INCREASES THROUGH WRITING

Lavonen, Terhi (Ajatusvoimala Aikatra) and **Kortesoja, Sari** (University of Jyväskylä)

The world is in turmoil around us, and the feeling of insecurity is reflected in individuals and their work environments. There seems to be no time or space for taking pause, calming down, and grounding oneself. How are different levels and

needs of safety considered in workplaces? How can individuals strengthen their inner peace and sense of safety? How can employees feel a bit better at work?

In the workshop, we will reflect on and explore our own wellbeing at work through the elements of a safe work community by psychiatrist Sandra Bloom: How do moral, psychological, social, and physical safety manifest in your work? Participants will experience how bibliotherapeutic methods can help them listen to themselves, their bodies, and their needs. The workshop will provide tips on how to better recognize and thus manage work stressors.

Come to the workshop as you are. Give yourself a moment for your own thoughts. Write for yourself, nothing written needs to be shared with others. The workshop will be conducted in English, but you can write in the language that feels most natural to you. The workshop is fully confidential. Pens and paper will be provided if needed.

The workshop will be led by creative writing and bibliotherapy instructor, doctoral researcher Sari Kortesoja, and supervisor STORY and bibliotherapy instructor Terhi Lavonen. The exercises combine Terhi's years of experience in supervision with Sari's fresh observations from her doctoral research on a bibliotherapeutic work wellbeing group. There can be 12 participants in the workshop.

Keywords: workplace wellbeing, burnout, safety, supervision, counselling

AI AS A BRIDGE: EMOTION-CENTERED BIBLIOTHERAPY FOR EVERY CHILD

Mas, Céline and Peraza Delgado, Omar (Love for Livres)

This workshop explores how generative AI can enrich bibliotherapy sessions designed to foster emotional awareness and expression in children and young people, particularly those in child welfare settings.

Our method is informed by cognitive science and emotional psychology, and developed in partnership with a medical doctor specialized in chronic pain (Dr.

Céline Gréco), neuroscientists, and AI experts. It leverages the power of literature and AI to support emotional development, creativity, and cognitive engagement.

Participants will first be introduced to the project's context and objectives. We will then present the methodology and the exercises implemented in over 40 sessions. Finally, attendees will try out one or two of these activities in real time using their smartphones.

The workshop centers on three creative practices using AI:

1. Generating poetry or haikus on emotional themes
2. Rewriting or challenging classical texts through a personal lens
3. Designing literary avatars to explore identity and emotions.

All activities are supported by cognitive and emotional learning principles. This approach bridges traditional bibliotherapy with digital innovation, increasing engagement among young participants—especially digital natives. It also helps remove barriers to reading for neurodivergent or cognitively diverse children, making bibliotherapy more inclusive, accessible, and appealing. By combining emotion, literature, and technology, this method offers new pathways to healing and connection.

The session will be led by Céline Mas, cofounder of Love for Livres, writer, cognitive science trainer, and human rights advocate.

Keywords: AI, emotions, cognitive sciences, inclusion, youth

"THE GUEST HOUSE WITHIN: RUMI'S WISDOM FOR EMOTIONAL HEALING"

McKian, Somayeh (independent) and **Azimi (Ashtiani), Hadi** (Shahid Beheshti University)

Molānā Jalāl ad-Dīn Muḥammad Rūmī known as Rūmī in the fifth book of his *Maṭnawīye Ma'nawī* (Spiritual Couplets; معنوی مثنوی) likens the human body to a guest house, welcoming new thoughts and events each day as guests. He makes a Biblical reference, urging that the human guest house should open its doors to all, whether

they bring joy or sorrow, sweetness or bitterness. Drawing on Abraham's guest house (Muzaif of Ibrahim Khalil), where believers and disbelievers were welcomed equally, Rumi emphasizes the importance of embracing both happiness and sadness with patience and contentment, without complaint, as a path to spiritual exaltation.

Addressing the theme and motifs of Rumi's long poem entitled "The Guest House" recently translated into English couplet by Hadi Azimi (Ashtiani), this workshop aims to integrate Rumi's poem with evidence-based psychological frameworks—including Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), and Narrative Therapy—to facilitate emotional processing and psychological flexibility through bibliotherapy and poetry therapy.

Participants will experience and learn how classic poetry can serve as a scientifically valid method for fostering emotional resilience, mindfulness, self-compassion, and meaning-making.

Keywords: Rumi, guest house poem, emotional healing, counseling

CHALLENGING CULTURAL MYTHS, REWRITING PARENTING NARRATIVES

Partanen, Petra (University of Jyväskylä) and **Typpö, Annamari** (Sananhaltija)

This workshop invites participants into a reflective and creative process of examining and rewriting the often invisible cultural myths that shape parenting. Drawing from biblio/poetry therapy and narrative practices, we will explore how internalised narratives impact parents' sense of identity, agency, and wellbeing. By surfacing and transforming these myths through poetic and narrative expression, participants will be encouraged to claim space for more honest, humane, and personally resonant parenting stories.

Research in bibliotherapy and cultural wellbeing has shown that narrative practices can enhance agency, reduce feelings of isolation, and support psychological integration. The workshop aligns with broader efforts in the field of arts in health and bibliotherapy to use storytelling as a means of social critique, identity formation, and healing.

We invite participants to bring in a parenting myth from their own cultural context – prepared in advance – and to reflect on the impact of that belief. Through poetic deconstruction and the use of structured prompts, participants are guided to rewrite the myth. Balancing playfulness and depth, the activities draw on techniques from poetry therapy, expressive writing, and narrative identity theory.

The rationale for this workshop is rooted in the need to create alternative narrative spaces for parents who are often held to impossible standards. By engaging creatively with cultural myths, we not only foster individual insight but also contribute to a broader cultural shift in how parenting is understood and supported. The workshop functions as an act of narrative resistance: an invitation to rewrite the script.

Keywords: parenting, cultural myths, narrative resistance

APPROPOETRY: A BIBLIO/POETRY THERAPY OF BORROWED WORDS

Selin, Eva (Läsfirman)

Appropoetry is a fusion of appropriation and poetry. It emphasizes the careful borrowing of poetic lines and the respectful act of giving back. The process serves a biblio/poetry therapy purpose. But also, a literary purpose as it deepens the connection between the reader and the poem.

As a participant, you will be presented with fragments of text, with the poet's name concealed behind silver tape. The workshop encourages you to view the verses not as parts of untouchable works of art, but as open, accessible starting points or triggers. The fragments can be followed, altered, or partly erased, depending on your preference. The excerpts provide a framework for engagement, one that you can reshape and interpret, adjusting each word to reflect your truth as it unfolds in the moment. The anonymity of the poet allows you to go in freely without the influence of the author's identity shaping your approach.

Once the tape is removed, the lines are symbolically re-burdened. You will receive the full poems, with the cut-out pieces restored to their original context. The

poems carry a unique resonance, as parts of them have briefly integrated into your life. Appopoetry pushes the boundaries of transforming feelings, thoughts, and memories into writing, creating a dynamic that initially widens and then narrows the distance between the reader and the poet.

Keywords: appropriation, poetry, verse lines, writing, biblio/poetry therapy

THE POEM IS YOUR CO-FACILITATOR

Tegner, Ingrid (International Federation of Biblio/Poetry Therapy)

In this interactive workshop, participants will experience a poetry therapy peer group and discuss the techniques used in the session. Participants will be able to write, reflect, and discuss journaling activities. This workshop will focus on the choice of poetry in relation to the stage of the group. What are the criteria for choosing a poem for the beginning of a series? What poems work best when the group is coming to an end? How do you foster group cohesion? Why does the stage of the group matter when choosing a poem? These questions will be addressed, and participants will have a greater understanding how to evaluate a poetry for a group.

Keywords: poetry therapy group

WRITING WITH THE PLANTS – NATURE WRITING & SENSED DIALOGUE

Torro, Fanny (freelance biblio/poetry therapy facilitator, Master of Arts)

Biblio/poetry therapy might be an essential method towards deeper nature relationship (Ihanus 2022). The ecological self and profound respect of nature can be developed, potentially leading to reassessment of the concept of human beings as equal and non-separable part of nature (Næss 1989). From ecopsychological point of view, the health of human and nature are interdependent (Kahn & Hasbach 2012). The biophilia hypothesis determines nature connection as our biological need (Albrecht 2019): our well-being as individuals, communities and cultures is based on this deep, diverse and experienced nature connection (Salonen 2010).

The agenda of the workshop is to invite the participants into dialogue with their chosen plant and finally into small group dialogue – not only by writing but also by creating emotional attunement and a personal, shared and sensed language with the plant. The aim is to reach for experiencing the plant as an equal, wise and unique entity, thou, with whom sharing the therapeutic potential of dialogue (Buber 1993). The workshop takes place partly outside (weather considered) and will include techniques such as grounding meditation, nature and dialogue writing, small group dialogue and community writing.

The current state of global and many local communities is asking for dialogue: between humans as well as with other species and environments. To sustain the life, also ours, on Earth, we urgently need to understand all living entities as equals. Attuning oneself into dialogue with a plant might accelerate both personal and communal positive change.

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Kahn, P. H., & Hasbach, P. H. toim. *Ecopsychology: Science, totems, and the technological species*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press 2012.

Næss, A. *Ecology, community, and lifestyle. Outline of an ecosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1989 [1973].

Salonen, K. *Mielen luonto. Eko- ja ympäristöpsykologian näkökulma*. Helsinki: Green Spot Media Farm 2010.

Keywords: nature writing, dialogue, community writing, ecopsychology

4 ART AND SHOWS

Ruamjai (choir)

Ruamjai is a mixed choir of about forty experienced young singers who thrill and touch with their music. The choir is led by Jaime Belmonte. Among the audience, Ruamjai is particularly known for live performance and interpretive virtuosity, as well as testing the boundaries of traditional choral music. The choir's repertoire includes festive and entertaining music to be performed by the entire choir or with a smaller ensemble. We also hold workshops for groups, schools and workplaces.

Emma Gold (Bachelor of Fine Arts) "Solitude, covid19 and other barricades" (2020)

The video deals with the absurd solitude in the Covid-19 lockdown. When I started in the university, we went straight to distance teaching. I didn't know my co-students, the university as an environment was strange, the methods of studying and ways of thinking were unknown to me, all learning was happening alone from my couch with the same laptop that I was staring from morning to night. All the faces were strange, distant characters on the screen and I felt that I cannot get a hold on anything. As the internet connection was breaking up during the lectures, it felt like a thread of life, the flickering of the last straw. Loneliness was pervasive in all aspects of life. I filmed the scenes during the lockdown in the halls, lobbies and staircases echoing the emptiness of the main building of the University of Jyväskylä. My practice is *butōh*, which is an old artistic expression method from Japan. The soundscape is from an artist/musician Jere Kilpinen (Junkyard Shaman), who lives and works in Korea.

AP KIVINEN is a performing poet and a musician from Jyväskylä, Finland. His poetry could be described as down to earth, beat-like verse, which gives voice to the common people on the streets of a Nordic town. He has published four collections of poems in Finnish, the latest one, *Sudenkorennon siivellä* is dedicated for all ages. As the national Poetry Slam Champion, he presented Finland at Grand Poetry Slam in Paris 2016. At the conference he will perform a short set of his poems and a couple of his songs in English.

NIKLAS SALMI is a poet and translator based in Jyväskylä, Finland. He is the author of four poetry collections, and his work – in Finnish and English – has also been published in various anthologies and magazines worldwide. He often writes about childhood, more-than-human entanglements and the interplay between light and shadow.