

# **Narrative as body. Embodied simulation and its relationship with fiction.**

**Vittorio Gallese**

## **ABSTRACT**

When navigating the parallel world of fictional narrative, we basically rely on the same brain-body resources shaped by our relation to mundane reality, since both realms are characterized by similar social practices and performative acts. Cognitive narratology reveals that readers make sense of complex narratives by relying on very few textual or discourse cues. These cues, which fiction creatively reconfigures, are the expression of social habits and social practices that readers recognize because they literally constitute the fabric of readers' lives. Fiction, however, broadens and enhances our capacity for emotional attachment, even to transgressive characters whom we would be reluctant to approach or bond with in real life. Fiction mobilizes our capacities for empathic co-feeling with others, a co-feeling that registers within our own bodies by means of embodied simulation. Our engagement with fictional characters is cognitively – and bodily – premediated by our life engagement, which provides the basic framing to navigate the world of fiction. On the other hand, fiction premediates life experience, as our engagement and identification with fictional characters and situations provide clues and perspectives that can affect how we cope with life's challenges.