Session 5. February 2. Is a text something "out there" in the world beyond your skin? What is the role of your senses? Given the brain's role in creating what we take to be reality, how can we talk about texts at all? A second group of questions: What is the "willing suspension of disbelief"? How does it work? Why does it work?

Reading:

   a. Like many others, confuses value of, e.g., poetry with the nature of poetry.
   b. Concentrate on p. 306. 2 kinds of poetry: STC's = supernatural; Ww's = ordinary life.
   c. 306a9. "Exciting the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of nature," i.e., as opposed to literal truth. "The power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colors of imagination." We will talk about this under "form." Many books have been written trying to figure out what STC meant by "imagination."
   d. Definition of "willing suspension" (306b6-7). Classic. "Transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth." "Willing suspension of disbelief for the moment which constitutes poetic faith."
   What does "willing" mean here?

II. Gerrig, Experiencing Narrative Worlds, ch. 6. "Narrative Information and Real-World Judgments." 45pp. He asks a series of fascinating questions and tries to answer them by means of psychological experiments. Are they non-ecological? E.g. the Ross experiment (232) does not distinguish between fiction and a lie.
   a. Introspection is not enough! Kinds of evidence: experiments. Psychologists dismiss free associations. But there are limits to experimentation.
   i. Notice, though, how much depends on inference, e.g., that believing something will affect recognition time for a related word. An extra 78 milliseconds tell you whether person believes this or that.
   ii. Suppose you feel that your inference is 85% sound. But your chain of argument depends on four such inferences: .85 X .85 X .85 X .85 = .52 or just about 50/50. The dirty secrets of psychology departments.
b. He is anti-toggle. OK. But how about knowing ahead of time whether you are reading fiction or non-fiction? Can you tell from a text alone if it is fiction or non-fiction? And if you can, do you approach the two differently? How do you know immediately you're looking at a poem? A cartoon? And do you set your mind differently? Do you approach a political cartoon differently from, say, Garfield?

c. G says we are 1) transported (= our terms, "rapt," "absorbed") and 2) performing. We "perform" the story without participating. Litcrit talk about "identification."

d. His conclusion, 227.4: special effort is required to prevent fictional information from affecting real-world beliefs. "willing construction of disbelief" vs. Coleridge. His basic argument: we believe it all during the literary experience, then, by a conscious effort, we disbelieve some after the experience. Note! that he is talking about belief after you have finished the book, movie, poem. What do you take away?

What does he say about the experience? And what is his basis for it? What does he say about belief during the experience?

III. Work with class responses. See separate online posting.

How to read these science papers . . . 1) abstract. 2) conclusion/discussion. 3) the guts.

a. Patients suffer from inability to generate coherent representations of alternate or counterfactual realities. Prefrontal cortex - frontal lobes - executive function.

b. Where is dorsolateral prefrontal cortex? The 5 functions of frontal lobe: MAYBE HANDOUT.

c. 5 circuits IN prefrontal cortex : 1) motor system including Supplementary Motor Area (SMA); 2) oculomotor circuit, including Frontal Eye Fields (FEF); 3) 3 circuits originating in a) dorsolateral prefrontal cortex, b) lateral orbital cortex, c) medial frontal/anterior cingulate cortex. Each of these circuits involves a frontal lobe area, projections to striatal regions, continue to globus pallidum, return to thalamus, and back to frontal region of origin. Lesions in 3a --> loss in verbal & nonverbal fluency, problem-solving, set shifting, learning, retrieval. Lesions in 3b --> disinhibition and irritability. Lesions in 3c --> apathy and decreased initiative. Makes some sense to speak of frontal system in the large and "executive function" in the large.

Riestra: in the frontal lobe, 5 systems. 1) motor system; 2) oculomotor system; 3) orbitofrontal, roughly personality (cp. Schore; processes social cues); 4) anterior cingulate, grossly motivational; 5) lateral frontal, =cognitive, executive. 3 here corresp to 3b above; 4 here corresp 3c above; 5 here corresp 3a above.

d. Feedforward (necessary for action) --> Imagining counterfactuals. In feedback (also necessary for action), the standard may be counterfactual. Feedforward & -backward means imagine! You imagine when you write. When you read?
e Reading as involuntary.  The Stroop test (Google it! <http://www.snre.umich.edu/eplab/demos/st0/stroopdesc.html>).  You are not going to act.  Is that so?  No counterfactuals?  But literary fiction, movie, play gives you a constant stream of counterfactuals.  Inconsistent messages?  But you are not doing the imagining.  You are "passive."

f. Dorsolateral prefrontal cortex "generates and evaluates internal models of action."  Teenagers. Why, then, is awareness of the sensory world and of internal and external events impaired by damage in this region??  These are not prefrontal cortex functions.  Or are they?  10X the connections back from frontal lobes to thalamus as thalamus to frontal lobes.  We perceive what is necessary for us to move.  But in the arts situation, we are not going to move.  This is the paradox.

6.  February 9.  We will continue discussion of the willing suspension of disbelief.  Why do we feel real emotions at unreal, i.e., fictional, situations?  What are emotions, anyway?  How do we feel them?  When do we feel them and why?  Why do we feel them in response to fictions?  What are our brains doing when we are "rapt," "absorbed" in a literary experience?  Talk about the hour exam.

Reading:
Holland, YMoM, ch. 4.  "How Do We Become "Absorbed"?"  Online.  25pp.
Holland, YMoM, ch. 5.  "Why Don't We Doubt?"  Online.  16pp.

Writing:

Do non-gradable exercise #3.  Instructions are online.