

Submission to Ar@k 2026

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Abstract: «Poetic microdoses» - exploring the potential of poetry to increase attention and improve mental health

In recent years, several studies have shown evidence that poetry may contribute to improved mental health and quality of life. However, there is currently an increasing attention deficit and a decline in reading. So how can we make people engage with poetry? In this poetry performance lecture I will present my current artistic project called «Microdosing poetry». In this poetry performance lecture I will demonstrate how a supply of small daily doses of poetry may bypass defences against reading and slowly increase attention and engagement. The hypothesis is that people enjoy poetry if it is presented in an accessible and interesting way. Drawing on neuropsychological research on the processing of poetic language I have created micro-poems. Utilising the classic techniques of haiku and parallelism, these short poems in a few lines use alliteration, imagism and metaphor to create wonder, desautomation and synesthetic experiences. These experiences may provide generalised resistance resources against depression and anxiety. In the lecture I will combine the performing of these poems with discussing the results of an empirical experiment involving real readers and how these poems have impacted them.

Keywords: poetry, attention, mental health

Disciplinary field: Applied Literary Studies, artistic research on poetry and mental health

Format of presentation: 20 minute Poetry Performance Lecture

Biographical information

Thor Magnus Tangerås is Associate Professor of Applied Literary Studies at the School of Arts, Design and Media where he teaches rhetoric, creative writing and research methods. He has a PhD in Library and Information Science from OsloMet University in 2018. Among his latest publications is the monograph *Literature and Transformation: A Narrative Study of Life-Changing Reading Experiences*. Anthem Press, London (2020). Tangerås' research interests include: Transformative Reading Experiences, Shared Reading, Narrative Methods in Qualitative Research, Poetic Writing. He has published three books of poetry.