



Narrative, Linguistics, and Cognition: Interdisciplinary approaches to narrative and storyworld possible selves

NARRALINCOG 2023 International Seminar

Funded by the Ministry of Science and Innovation of Spain (MICINN)
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University of Alcalá (Madrid)

INTRODUCTION

The “narrative turn” in the social sciences has highlighted the need for specific methods that allow the systematic study of narrative experiencing from interdisciplinary perspectives. NARRALINCOG is an international research project funded by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation (MICINN, Grant number: PID2020-114255RB-I00), whose aim is to strengthen the theoretical and methodological foundations of Storyworld Possible Selves Theory (Martínez 2014, 2018; Martínez and Herman 2020), and of the framework that it provides for the study of narrative engagement. The present seminar is also co-funded by the Flanders Research Foundation (FWO), through the research project entitled “This is who I could be’: Storyworld possible selves and fictionality,” led by Professor Luc Herman, and based at the University of Antwerp (Grant number: GO13520N).

Storyworld possible selves (SPSs) are defined as ‘imagings of the self in storyworlds’ (Martinez 2014: 119) and are formally conceived as blends resulting from the conceptual integration of two input spaces: the mental representation developed by readers for the focalizing character or narrator, and the mental representation that readers entertain about themselves, or self-concept. SPS theory has been acknowledged in the fields of cognitive literary linguistics and stylistics (Mucha 2016; Harrison 2017; Kardela and Kędra-Kardela 2019; López-Narváez 2021; Stradling 2022), narrative studies (Bruns 2016; Stagherlin 2016; Wake 2016; Herman and Vervaeck 2019; Schneider 2021), narrative engagement and absorption (Oatley 2016; Jakobs and Lüdtke 2017; Quinlan and Mar 2020), digital games research (Dudek 2021), empirical reader research (Björnkén-Nyberg 2018; Kuijpers 2022), and education (Tovey 2022), among others. However, further areas of research are numerous, and include: (a) more profound studies on the nature of narrators and characters as fictional minds, as their character constructs provide structure to one of the inputs in an SPS blend; (b) extensive empirical research on larger numbers of real readers, addressing emotional responses in connection to the projection of relevant storyworld possible selves, since readers’ self-concept networks provide structure to the other input in an SPS blend; (c) the identification of further linguistic mechanisms intervening in the objectification and

subjectification of SPS blends in narrative construal operations; (d) the further exploration of non-verbal SPS anchoring mechanisms in multimodal narratives such as TV series, graphic novels, or videogames; and (e) the application of the theory of storyworld possible selves to the study of engagement, persuasion, and manipulation in non-fictional narratives such as the narratives of economics or advertising, or in illness and trauma narratives.

In this seminar we wish to present the ongoing work of NARRALINCOG's interdisciplinary team, currently looking into narratives from the aforementioned perspectives. The seminar also aims to bring together research using storyworld possible selves theory in approaches to narrative from as many areas of application as possible—narrative theory, literary criticism, linguistics, stylistics, and empirical reader response research, to name just a few—with a focus on all types of narratives: fictional, non-fictional, verbal, digital, transgeneric, or multimodal. The seminar is intended for members of staff and MA/MSc and PhD students with an interest in narrative at large, and, more specifically, in issues connected to narrative engagement, cognitive narratology, cognitive linguistics, cognitive stylistics, narrative psychology, communication studies, and empirical reader response research. Additionally, we also wish to encourage the participation of undergraduate students interested in the cognitive and linguistic study of narrative and literature.

SEMINAR STRUCTURE

The seminar will be articulated into the following:

- Panel 1: Presentation of NARRALINCOG's research.
- Panel 2: Presentation of storyworld possible selves (SPS) research.
- Plenary speakers: Karin Kukkonen, Raymond Mar, and Ralf Schneider.
- A hands-on SPS workshop (literary, linguistic, empirical approaches).

The final programme will be made available by the end of February 2023.

PLENARY SPEAKERS' BIONOTES (in alphabetical order)

Karin Kukkonen (University of Oslo, Norway)

Karin Kukkonen is Professor in Comparative Literature at the University of Oslo (Norway). She works on the novel and its history from the angle of cognitive narratology and cognitive poetics. Her publications include *Probability Designs: Literature and Predictive Processing* (OUP, 2020), *How the Novel Found its Feet: 4E Cognition and Eighteenth-Century Fiction* (OUP, 2019) and *A Prehistory of Cognitive Poetics: Neoclassicism and the Novel* (OUP, 2017). Currently, Kukkonen prepares a monograph on the role of chance and contingency in literary, creative writing. She is a member of the Academy of Europe and leader of the Literature, Cognition and Emotions (LCE) initiative at the University of Oslo.

Title of the Talk: "**Contingent Selves in Creative Writing.**"

Raymond Mar (University of York, Canada)

Dr. Mar received his Ph.D. from the University of Toronto and is currently a full professor of psychology at York University. His lab investigates how imagined experiences affect how we think, feel, and behave in the real-world, with a particular focus on how stories engage our imagination. The various tools of neuroscience, personality psychology, social cognition, and cognitive psychology are all employed to investigate these topics. He received the Tom Trabasso Young Investigator award, the Friedrich Wilhelm Bessel Research Award from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation in Germany, and held a Fulbright Canada Research Chair at the University of Southern California.

Website link: <http://www.yorku.ca/mar/>

Title of the Talk: "**Empirical Research on Engaging with Stories.**"

Ralf Schneider (Aachen University, Germany)

Ralf Schneider is Professor and Chair of English Literature at RWTH Aachen University (Germany). He has worked in British literary and cultural studies, and contributed to cognitive narratology since the early 2000s, with a special focus on the reception of literary characters. In 2019 he co-founded the Aachen Center for Cognitive and Empirical Literary Studies (ACCELS). He is co-editor, with Alice Bell and Richard Gerrig, of the new *Routledge Focus on Dialogues in Cognitive Literary Studies* book series and, with Jan Alber, of the *Routledge Companion to Literature and Cognitive Studies* (in preparation).

Website link: <https://www.acceles.rwth-aachen.de/cms/~cidrb/ACCELS/?lidx=1>

Title of the Talk: “Constellations and Networks: Response to Literary Characters Beyond Empathy, Identification, and Perspective-Taking – A New Approach.”

CALL FOR PAPERS

We welcome presentation proposals (20 minutes + 10 minutes comments/questions) from researchers working on **storyworld possible selves** within all connected areas of interest: narrative theory, literary criticism, linguistics, stylistics, communication studies, pedagogy, and empirical reader response research, to name just a few. The focus can be on any type of narrative genre (fictional, non-fictional, verbal, transgeneric, multimodal).

Proposal length: 400 words, excluding references.

Deadline for proposal submission: January 31st, 2023.

Extended deadline: February 15th, 2023.

REGISTRATION

Registration is free, but both participants and attendees must register through this link:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1k24pDzkL5OF8rLkjpZmNR8dIKffB-uc9aD818xC6vgM/edit?pli=1>

Registration for attendance without a presentation will be open until May 5, 2023.

PUBLICATION

Selected papers will be included in an edited volumen in a high quality publishing house.

ABOUT ALCALÁ

The University of Alcalá is located in Alcalá de Henares, a small city 20 km. from Madrid international airport, and 35 km. from central Madrid, with frequent railway connections. Alcalá de Henares is Miguel de Cervantes' birthplace, declared World Heritage City by the UNESCO. The seminar will be held in one of the university's humanities buildings, located in the city centre.

CONTACT

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REFERENCES

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