



International workshop on narrative engagement 1: The multidisciplinary foundations of storyworld possible selves

Research Foundation – Flanders (FWO) funded workshop.

November 11th and 12th 2021

Hosted online by the Universidad de Alcalá (Madrid)

Organized by Luc Herman, Anneke Sools, and María-Ángeles Martínez.

Local organizing team: María-Ángeles Martínez, Abeer Hakami, and María-Teresa Santé.

Introduction

Storyworld possible selves, or SPSs for short, are the mental representations of the self which engaged narrative experiencers – readers, cinema-goers, TV audiences, videogame players – project into their situational model of the fictional world, or storyworld. These abstract constructs are formally conceived as blends resulting from the conceptual integration of two input spaces. One is the mental representation, or character construct, that these readers, players, or audience members build for the fictional entity that provides perspective on the storyworld, be it a narrator or a focalizing character. The other is the mental representation that these narrative experiencers entertain about themselves, or self-concept. Once set up, SPS blends become part of dynamic integrated networks with constantly shifting interconnections across component mental spaces, which allow the formal analysis and better understanding of a large number of phenomena related to narrative engagement in a variety of disciplines. Among them are the idiosyncratic fresh emotions (Miall and Kuiken 2002; Kuiken et al 2004), and feelings of self-transformation (Burke 2012), resonance (Seilman and Larsen 1989), and self-relevance (Kuzmikova and Balint 2019) observed by narrative psychologists and reader response researchers; the experiences of transportation (Gerrig 1993) and of undergoing an expansion of the self (Slater et al. 2014) noted by communication scholars; the role of embodied cognition (Johnson 2017); the overwhelming presence in narrative discourse of linguistic expressions related to inclusive, hybrid mental reference (Herman 2002; Martínez 2014; 2018); and the collectively and culturally pervasive reader responses in which narratologists and literary critics are interested (Herman and Vervaeck 2017; Phelan 2017).

This analytical and explanatory power derives from the interdisciplinary foundations of storyworld possible selves, which crucially include a) blending theory in cognitive

studies (Fauconnier and Turner 2002; Turner 2007, 2014), b) self-schema theory in social psychology (Markus 1977; Markus and Nurius 1986; Dunkel and Kerpelman 2006); and c) the cognitive linguistics concepts of intersubjective cognitive coordination (Verhagen 2005, 2007) and construal (Langacker 2008). SPS theory is presently the object of research of two funded research projects: the Belgium-based Research Foundation – Flanders (FWO) project “‘This is who I could be’: Storyworld possible selves and fictionality,” coordinated by Luc Herman (University of Antwerp), which provides funding for this International Workshop, and the Spain-based government-funded project NARRALINCOG (Narrative, linguistics, and cognition: Interdisciplinary studies on storyworld possible selves, narrative intersubjectivity, and engagement), coordinated by María-Ángeles Martínez (University of Alcalá).

This two-day workshop includes five two-hour sessions of a theoretical and practical nature in which experts in several of the theoretical frameworks on which the theory of storyworld possible selves draws will present and discuss insights related to narrative engagement within their fields of expertise. The workshop is intended for members of staff and MA and PhD students with an interest in narrative at large, and, more specifically, in issues connected to narrative engagement, cognitive narratology, cognitive linguistics, narrative psychology, communication studies, and reader response research. Registration is free, but attendees must register in advance using this link:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfOI0usQqOqcmAGCjvABf8VrU9_I0F4pY0_Gk81OPOg24msg/viewform?usp=sf_link

Certificates of attendance will be sent to registered attendees.

Day 1, Thursday, November 11th

9.30-10.00: **Welcome session** (Luc Herman, Anneke Sools, María-Ángeles Martínez)

10:00-12:00: **Claus Lamm**: “The Social Neuroscience of Empathy – from Shared Affect to Self-Other Distinction.”

15:00-17:00: **Arie Verhagen**: “Blending theories of conversation, iconicity, and narrative perspective: Complex intersubjective coordination emerges from elementary human cognitive and communicative abilities.”

17:30-19:30: **Mark Turner**: “Cognitive Processes for the Fluid Construction of Selves.”

Day 2, Friday, November 12th

10:00-12:00: **Jan Alber**: “‘Experiments with Identities: Storyworld Possible Selves and Boundary Expansions.’”

15:00-17:00: **Marco Caracciolo**: “Narrative Selves and Worlds in Flux: An Enactivist Perspective.”

17:15-18.00: Discussion/Closing session

Bionotes

Claus Lamm is Professor of Biological Psychology, with a specialization in Social, Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience. He is Head of the Social, Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience Unit (SCAN-Unit) at the Faculty of Psychology of the University of Vienna. His scientific interests focus on the neural underpinnings of empathy and prosocial behavior, and his recent investigations include combining neuroimaging with psychopharmacology and psychoneuroendocrinology, as well as comparative approaches to test empathy and its precursors in ravens and dogs.

Website: <https://scan-psy.univie.ac.at/about-us/claus-lamm>

Arie Verhagen is Professor Emeritus of Language, Culture, and Cognition at Leiden University, with previous positions at the Free University in Amsterdam, the University of Utrecht, Leiden University, and the University of Antwerp. From 1996 till 2004, he served as editor-in-chief of the journal *Cognitive Linguistics*. With his 2005 monograph *Constructions of Intersubjectivity. Discourse, Syntax, and Cognition* (Oxford University Press), he contributed to the so-called 'social turn' in cognitive linguistics. His research focuses especially on the connection between grammar, discourse, and the highly developed human ability to understand other minds, as a basis for cooperation.

Website: <https://www.rieverhagen.nl>

Mark Turner is Professor of Cognitive Science at Case Western Reserve University, and Doctor Honoris Causa, Université de Haute-Alsace. Before joining the faculty at Case, he was Distinguished Professor at the University of Maryland and Associate Director of the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford. He is Founding Director of the Cognitive Science Network; Co-Director of the Red Hen Lab; and winner of the Anneliese Maier Research Prize from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, and of the Prix du Rayonnement from the French Academy. He has authored and co-authored seminal research on conceptual blending and human creativity, including (with Gilles Fauconnier) *The Way We Think. Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities*.

Website: <http://markturner.org>

<https://markturner.org/publications.html>

Jan Alber is Professor of English Literature and Cognitive Studies at RWTH Aachen University (Germany) and Past President of the International Society for the Study of Narrative (ISSN). He received fellowships and research grants from the British Academy, the Exploratory Research Space (ERS) at RWTH Aachen University, the German Research Foundation (DFG), and the Humboldt Foundation. From 2014 to 2016, Alber worked as a Marie-Curie Fellow at the Aarhus Institute of Advanced Studies (AIAS) in Denmark.

Website: <https://www.anglistik.rwth-aachen.de/cms/Anglistik/Anglistik-Amerikanistik/Kognitive-Literaturwissenschaft/~lvfy/Jan-Alber/>

Marco Caracciolo is an Associate Professor of English and Literary Theory at Ghent University in Belgium, where he leads the ERC Starting Grant project "Narrating the Mesh." Marco's work explores the phenomenology of narrative, or the structure of the

experiences afforded by literary fiction and other narrative media. He is the author of six books, including most recently *Narrating the Mesh: Form and Story in the Anthropocene* (University of Virginia Press, 2021) and *With Bodies: Narrative Theory and Embodied Cognition* (co-authored with Karin Kukkonen; Ohio State University Press, 2021).

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