

# UK Narrative Studies Symposium

University of York, 15<sup>th</sup> -16<sup>th</sup> March 2019

**Location: Berrick Saul Building, room BS/008 (ground floor, to the left)**

## **15<sup>th</sup> March:**

14.30 Introduction

14.40 Marco Bernini (Durham)

15.00 Matthew Freeman (Bath Spa)

15.20 Sarah Hudspith (Leeds)

15.40 Richard Walsh (York)

*16.00 Tea/coffee*

16.20 Erika Fulop (Lancaster)

16.40 Margarita Vaysman (St Andrews)

17.00 Tory Young (Anglia Ruskin)

17.20 Discussion: narrative studies in the UK

*18.00 Finish*

*[19.00 Restaurant meal in town]*

## **16<sup>th</sup> March:**

10.00 Jan-Noel Thon (Nottingham)

10.20 Adesola Akinleye (Middlesex)

10.40 Mark Currie (Queen Mary)

*11.00 Tea/coffee*

11.20 Liz Bahs (Surrey)

11.40 Carolina Fernandez-Quintanilla (Lancaster)

12.00 Miranda Anderson (Edinburgh)

12.20 Discussion: next steps?

*13.00 Finish*

## **Apologies for absence**

The following would have liked to attend, and send their apologies. They have each sent a brief bio blurb in lieu of a presentation.

## **Alice Bell (Sheffield Hallam University)**

I work within the broad areas of transmedial and cognitive narratology and often combine narratology with stylistics/literary linguistics. My research focusses in particular on born digital fiction, fiction that is written for and read from a computer including hypertext fiction, narratively-

driven videogames, app-fiction for mobile devices, augmented reality fiction, and Virtual Reality fiction. I am particularly interested in the reader's interactive role in digital fiction and also the way that digital technology can play with the boundary between reality and fiction.

In previous work, I have developed theories and methodologies so that they are applicable to digital fiction. This has included work within possible worlds theory and unnatural narratology as well as research on metalepsis, second-person narrative, and fictionality.

In recent work, I have moved into empirical research, developing both 'experimental' and 'naturalistic' reader response methodologies and testing and developing existing theory. This includes studies on immersion, ontological ambiguity, second-person narrative, and hyperlinks. This work has been carried out with Astrid Ensslin and Lyle Skains as part of the AHRC-funded Reading Digital Fiction project ([www.readingdigitalfiction.com](http://www.readingdigitalfiction.com)) and combines narrative theory, cognitive poetics, and empirical methods.

I have also recently become interested in the concept of "post postmodern" narrative and am editing a special issue of the *European Journal of English Studies* (with Jan Alber) which considers the way that contemporary narratives play with the distinction between reality and fiction which both draw up and depart from postmodern self-reflexivity.

Future work includes the co-authoring of a monograph (with Astrid Ensslin), entitled *Reading Digital Fiction: Language, Narrative, and Cognition*, and the development of a research project into Virtual Reality fiction. The latter project will include empirical research on immersion and the relationship between the reader/user and avatar in VR storyworlds.

### **Liz Evans (University of Nottingham)**

My research primarily explores the relationship between technology and experiences of narrative. My work spans interests in audience and industry studies, with a particular focus on transmedia narratives and innovative forms of storytelling. My first book, *Transmedia Television*, explored the attitudes, opinions and values of audiences towards the development of the internet and mobile phone as extensions and alternatives to the television set. It was the first piece of empirical audience research into the dramatic technological developments that the television industry began to experience in the mid-2000s. I have also published on a range of topics including audience attitudes towards streaming services, transmedia branding and game economics, transmedia narratives and literacy, production dynamics of alternate reality games.

My current book, *Understanding Engagement in Transmedia Culture* (due to be published by Routledge in 2020) asks audiences and practitioners to define what they mean by 'engagement' with screen content. The book will offer a new model for interrogating audience screen experiences and examine how practitioners' perceptions of those experiences overlap or differ from audiences themselves. My next project, *Dead Devices: Interrogating Failure in Media Technology History*, will explore domestic media devices that 'failed'. It will consider what 'failure' means within each device's historical context and how industrial, technological and social factors intersect within that failure. The first device that the project will examine is the mutoscope/kinora, devised in the late 19th century as an alternative to the cinematic project and available in both a public and domestic format. The 'compatibility' between technological affordances and storytelling practices will be a key part of this project.

### **Alex Georgakopoulou (King's College London)**

In earlier work, I developed small stories research as a social interactional, practice-based paradigm for the analysis of everyday-life stories and identities. In recent work, I have been extending, testing out empirically, enriching methodologically and further systematizing small stories research, as a paradigm well-suited to addressing the challenges posed by social media communication to the conventional idiom of narrative studies (incl. biographical and life-writing studies). This work has been carried out within the Project 'Life-Writing of the Moment: The Sharing and Updating Self on Social Media', part of the ERC-funded Advanced Grant 'Ego-Media' ([www.ego-media.org](http://www.ego-media.org)). In particular, I have been exploring the dialectic between media affordances, algorithms and specific communicative forms and practices of small stories by means of which users respond to the apps' directive of sharing both personal lives and socio-political events as breaking news and in-the-moment. This has led me to scrutinizing the discourses and ideologies underpinning the apps' own views, definitions and rhetoric when designing stories as distinct features. I am currently exploring this story-design ('curation' of stories) in relation to Stories as a feature launched in 2014 on Snapchat and in 2016 on Instagram. To this end, I have compiled a specialized corpus consisting of apps' blogs and online media about Stories as a feature. I am also tracking and analysing life-streaming and self-presentation in the Stories of key-influencers on Instagram. To do so, I am bringing together corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis with online multimodal conversation analysis, digital ethnography, and a genealogical approach to media platforms. My analysis has certain key-mismatches between the rhetoric of design and 'curation' employed by apps about stories and the actual affordances on offer for them. I argue that these mismatches are revealing of a commoditization of stories and a re-designation of key-ingredients, in particular time, memories and audience engagement. In addition, my work is shedding light on how stories and subjectivity are re-configured and re-imagined through the prism of metricization (quantification) and the network of socio-material (human and non-human) actors that shape storytelling communication on social media. I am currently co-authoring with the EgoMedia Project team a digital, interactive publication for Stanford University Press and with Stefan Iversen and Carsten Stage a book on '*Quantified stories: A narrative analysis of metrics & algorithms on social media*' (Palgrave).

### **Alison Gibbons (Sheffield Hallam University)**

Alison is a Reader of Contemporary Stylistics, author of *Multimodality, Cognition, and Experimental Literature* (Routledge, 2012) and co-editor of *Mark Z. Danielewski* (MUP, 2011), *Routledge Companion to Experimental Literature* (Routledge, 2012), *Metamodernism: Historicity, Affect, and Depth after Postmodernism* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), and *Pronouns in Literature: Positions and Perspectives in Language* (Palgrave, 2018). Alison's work pursues a cognitive stylistic and cognitive narratological approach, often including empirical response data. At present, her research focuses on three (interrelated) narrative genres: Arab Spring fiction, contemporary autofiction, and metamodernist fiction. She is interested in topics such as: the author concept, fictionality and ontology, and the ethics of reading.

### **Adam Lively (Middlesex University)**

My interests within narrative theory include narrative and systems theory, and I have also published an article (in *Poetics Today*) on the importance of the concept of Joint Attention for fiction. This year I have a chapter on fiction and photography coming out in *The History of Distributed Cognition* (Edinburgh University Press). The last couple of years I have been concentrating on my own fiction-

writing, but I am about to embark on a collaboration with a colleague of mine at Middlesex, Dr Tansy Spinks, on sound in literature.

### **Bronwen Thomas (Bournemouth University)**

My background as a researcher is in literary stylistics and narrative theory, particularly fictional dialogue in the contemporary novel. However, I have been researching narratives in digital environments for a number of years, and my current research focuses specifically on social media. In particular, I am interested in the expression of ‘vernacular creativity’ we can find on these platforms, and the kinds of co-creation that the cultures of sharing and connectivity can help to foster. I am also interested in the impact that sharing personal ‘small stories’ on these platforms can have in terms of raising awareness of social issues, and the complexities associated with the notion of voice in these contexts. In addition to examining emerging forms of narrative in digital contexts, my recent research has focused on the impact of digital technologies on readers and reading. In my most recent project ([www.readingonscreen.co.uk](http://www.readingonscreen.co.uk)), we worked with readers to produce digital stories based on their experiences of reading in the digital age, and their reflections on their reading lives. I am hoping to be able to continue to develop these creative and participatory approaches with different sets of digital readers, especially internationally. In addition, I anticipate that my research will increasingly seek out interdisciplinary methods and approaches to narrative, in particular connecting with the disciplines of media and cultural studies, fan studies, literary sociology and book history. At Bournemouth University I am the Director of the Centre for the Study of Journalism, Culture and Community (<https://research.bournemouth.ac.uk/centre/journalism-culture-and-community/>) which encompasses the Narrative Research Group which I set up in 2008. NRG hosts a regular cross-disciplinary seminar series and we have also held symposia on Non-human Narratives, Location-Based Storytelling and Real Life Narratives.

### **Paul Wake (Manchester Metropolitan University)**

Paul is a Reader in English Literature and a co-director of the Manchester Game Studies Network. He is currently researching narrative and games (analogue and digital) and is working on mapping and space. He is currently in the early stages of a project that applies work from game studies to literary texts (*Playful Reading*). His most recent work has been on print gamebooks and poker. He is author of *Conrad's Marlow: Narrative and Death in "Youth," Heart of Darkness, Lord Jim and Chance* (2007) and co-editor of *The Routledge Companion to Critical and Cultural Theory* (2013). He is one of the general editors of The Irwell Edition of the Works of Anthony Burgess (Manchester University Press) and editor of Burgess's SF novel *Puma* (2018). His essays have appeared in *Archival Science*, *The Conradian*, *JNT: Journal of Narrative Theory*, *The Lion and the Unicorn*, *Narrative*, *Rethinking History*, and *Textual Practice*.