

Frontiers of Narrative Studies

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Call for Papers

“Narrative and Narcissism: Conceptual Frameworks, Cultural Contexts, and Interdisciplinary Interfaces”

Deadline for Submission: September 30, 2016

A key concept found within Greek mythology, narcissism (Greek: Νάρκισσος, Narkissos) has travelled over the years from one discipline to another. Originally a concept established and developed within a large body of Greek narratives, the concept of narcissism later travelled to the sciences and came to be associated with psychopathology and the names of Sigmund Freud, C. G. Jung, Heinz Kohut, Otto F. Kernberg, and other psychoanalysts. In the wake of the neurological turn, the psychology of narcissism is again high on the research agendas not only of psychoanalysts but also historians, political scientists, and business scholars who have drawn on the term in their examinations of connections between people, culture, and behaviors regarding, for instance, leadership styles and CEO narcissism (A. Chatterjee). Literary and cultural critics have capitalized on the term as well, exploring both authorial narcissism understood as a source of creativity and textual narcissism as a tool for examining and theorizing metafictional texts (L. Hutcheon).

Despite far-reaching transformations in ways of living fostered by social, cultural, political, and technological change, not much sustained effort has been made in narrative studies to explore the role of literature and other media in articulating psychological insights into narcissism. In seeking to capture the literary and cultural implications of contemporary narcissisms, a number of scholars have embarked upon this avenue of research, which is mirrored in monographs such as Linda Hutcheon’s *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox* (1980) and Christopher Lasch’s *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations* (1979).

Unlike already existing research on the concept of narcissism, “Narrative and Narcissism: Conceptual Frameworks, Cultural Contexts, and Interdisciplinary Interfaces”, a special issue of *Frontiers of Narrative Studies* guest-edited by Dr. Nora Berning (Justus Liebig University Gießen, Germany), attempts to move beyond the analysis of narcissism through the lens of a single discipline, medium, or culture. Rather, it seeks to bring together thematically related essays that focus on interdisciplinary conceptualizations of narcissism in a wide range of media including literary writing, oral narratives, film, television, journalism, graphic narratives, music, dance, etc. as well as representations of the phenomenon of narcissism in literary and non-literary narratives such as novels, short stories, political speeches, business reports, interviews, and press releases.

Exploring the interdisciplinary interfaces of narrative and narcissism from a variety of different angles and with the help of various conceptual frameworks, the contributions to this

issue will shed light on new developments and approaches in the domains of both narrative and narcissism and the processes of translating knowledge from one realm into the other. More specifically, the issue aims at adapting, reframing, and theorizing the concept of narrative in conjunction with the psychological as well as socio-historical typologies of various kinds of narcissisms so that the concept and typologies can be fruitfully used as “an interpretive framework for understanding a wide range of cultural phenomena” (J. F. Battan). The second aim of this issue is to show how changing cultural contexts (including, for instance, technological advancements, the emergence of new media, the privatization of modern life, the rise of individualism, and the lack of empathy both on individual and collective levels with regard to the broader living environment, or *Umwelt*) have nurtured a culture of narcissism that is characterized by an inward, or self-reflexive, turn. This turn has led to new critical approaches and methods for unmasking novelistic tendencies of self-obsession and self-love.

Hutcheon, for instance, distinguishes in her comprehensive analysis of metafiction between overt diegetic and linguistic types of literary narcissism and their covert counterparts, both diegetic and linguistic. Similar distinctions can be made with regard to the visual arts or pop cultural and musical responses to narcissism, which are based on related, yet also unique, narrative construction principles and framing strategies (W. Wolf). Against this background, the third aim of this issue is to explore the possibilities that narratives of all sorts offer as media for coming to terms with narcissistic strains in Western and non-Western cultures and with the ‘narcissistic narratives’ these cultures have brought forth. Lastly, this issue addresses the question of which functions narratives fulfill as media of cultural self-reflection and critique of emerging forms of narcissism in the process of modernization, with a particular focus on contemporary narratives.

In sum, by reframing, developing, and theorizing the interdisciplinary interfaces between narrative and narcissism, this issue seeks to enlarge the conceptual and interpretive repertoire of narrative studies and to furnish it with new descriptive and analytical resources.

Please submit papers of 6,000-8,000 words by September 30, 2016. Submissions should be sent to Dr. Nora Berning at Nora.Berning@gcsc.uni-giessen.de, include an abstract of about 200 words, a short biography of the author, a list of keywords, and the main body of the essay. *Frontiers of Narrative Studies* is a peer-reviewed academic journal published by De Gruyter Mouton. For the style of the journal, please consult the attached style sheet.