



# Making a Narrative of Repetition: Diachronicity and the Second-Person Address in YouTube's Routine Videos

Veera Valta

To cite this article: Veera Valta (13 Mar 2024): Making a Narrative of Repetition: Diachronicity and the Second-Person Address in YouTube's Routine Videos, Life Writing, DOI: [10.1080/14484528.2024.2324997](https://doi.org/10.1080/14484528.2024.2324997)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14484528.2024.2324997>



© 2024 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 13 Mar 2024.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 101



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

## Making a Narrative of Repetition: Diachronicity and the Second-Person Address in YouTube's Routine Videos

Veera Valta 

Department of History, Philosophy and Literary Studies, Tampere University, Finland

### ABSTRACT

This article seeks to explain the tellability of routine videos on YouTube. It examines two videos by two motivational videobloggers, Kalyn Nicholson and Aileen Xu, whose channels include several videos based on the blogger's daily routine. The article suggests that contrary to generally accepted narrative-theoretical views, telling about a routine can create narrative dynamics without explicitly expressing singularity or uncanonicity. The article demonstrates how videobloggers make their mundane routine tellable under the pressure of the platform's commercial affordances and the directive of tellability by underlining the diachronic dimension of their actions. The article develops further philosopher Nils-Frederic Wagner's [2021. "Habits and Narrative Agency." *Topoi* 40 (3): 677–686] idea about the connection between identity-shaping habits and narrative agency by introducing it to narrative studies. This article uses a method that combines a philosophical approach and narratological text analysis. It argues that tellability lies in the diachronic dimension of routines instead of synchronic telling, and that the iterative narrative and second-person address in co-operation with YouTube's quantitative metrics indicate the masterplot of self-made YouTube success.

### KEYWORDS

Tellability; routine; YouTube; second-person address

### Introduction

A great number of contemporary self-help books<sup>1</sup> rely on routine and highlight how certain habitual actions can change life for the better, making it happier, healthier, and wealthier. Routine is present all over the Internet—in blogs and on news websites and social media platforms. In this article, I turn my attention to YouTube, which has become a popular platform for monetised motivational content and a home for so-called *routine videos*, which have proliferated since the 2010s. Motivational content emblemises a broader culture of self-help that puts an emphasis on individual psychology and the psychologisation of everyday life. In this modern form of life writing, everyday habits such as drinking water or taking vitamin pills are not tellable per se, but in these videos, they are framed as actions that become part of a larger narrative of well-being and

**CONTACT** Veera Valta  veera.valta@tuni.fi

© 2024 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group  
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

personal success. In this article, I demonstrate how videobloggers make their mundane habits tellable by underlining the diachronic performance of their daily actions. I borrow philosopher Nils-Frederic Wagner's (2021) idea about the connection between *identity-shaping habits* and *narrative agency*. I bring his idea to narrative studies with a method that combines his philosophical approach and narratological text analysis in order to explain the tellability of routine videos. Although my research is only concerned with the linguistic expression of repetition, I try to provide sufficient context of the visual narration as well.

*Tellability*, a term originally theorised by sociolinguist William Labov ([1972] 1976, 370–371), refers to the point of a story, its worthiness of telling in a certain conversational situation. The eventual narratological problem of considering a routine as tellable is not only its dullness but also its processual nature that does not point to any specific event or action (see, e.g. Herman 2009, 9). Routine is performed synchronically in the present, but it occurs equally in the long term, diachronically. An experienced or a desired change in the state of affairs occurs through repetition, not all at once. In terms of grammar, the habitual present refers also to the past and future, which inevitably leads to the notion that it does not express singularity. This article approaches the issue from a different perspective and claims that the assumed diachronicity actually makes it possible to interpret habitual sequences as narrative acts.

I refer to acts because the story in my target videos is more implicit and constructed by the reader from various clues and references than a coherent self-standing story. As linguist and social media researcher Ruth Page (2022, 122) has pointed out, it is important to make a distinction between narratives on the explicit level of textual properties and *master narratives*, which are mainly 'socio-cognitive construct[s] that can be interrogated as ways of thinking or cultural patterns'. A further distinction must be made as to whether we are in fact talking about master narratives or *masterplots*. Master narratives are commonly referred to as something like dominant ideologies, discourses, or frames that do not materialise as verbalised narrative accounts (Mäkelä 2020, 390), whereas masterplots are, according to H. Porter Abbott (2008, 46–47), 'skeletal and adaptable, and they can recur in narrative after narrative' such as the Cinderella masterplot that has successfully travelled through centuries and cultural contexts. Masterplots are narrative 'blueprints' that give shape to the narrative as a material object, and therefore they also constitute a better target for narratological research than abstract master narratives. The article seeks to reveal the genuine narrative by drawing attention to the structural details of the narration. In what follows, the emphasis will be on two issues—singularity, or how non-singular, repetitive habitual actions succeed in triggering narrative dynamics, and how otherwise non-reportable trivial or mundane habits are made tellable in the context of YouTube's motivational videos.

YouTube and other social media platforms offer new forums for self-help, but the didactic genre, in which routine videos belong, has a long tradition. We can find an eminently close historical equivalent to routine videos on YouTube in conduct literature, a form of life writing in which the author advises her readers based on her own experience and from a position of authority (Wiebe 2001, 227–228). The genre was established in Europe during the mid- to late Middle Ages, and it resurfaced later in the nineteenth century in North America. Conduct books intended for young women in the nineteenth century, such as Sarah Ellis' *The Daughters of England* (1842) and Eliza Ware

Farrar's *The Young Lady's Friend* (1836), explored similar subjects as contemporary routine videos, such as hygienic routines and time management. Conduct books and routine videos also resemble each other in that in both genres, the individual texts are not noteworthy in themselves, but they participate 'in the creation, maintenance, and control of the middle class' (Wiebe 2001, 227).

The difference between conduct books and audiovisual routines on YouTube arises from platform-related affordances, first and foremost from the affordances of virality and earning potential. In the context of social media, affordances refer to the accessibility and features of the platforms that guide users in how to use the platform and how to interact with others (Poletti and Rak 2014, 5). As Mingyi Hou (2019, 538) notices, by looking at the directives in the 'creator hub' function of YouTube, it becomes clear that YouTube positions itself as a platform where it is possible to achieve fame and incomes by creating own business. The platform gives directions to 'create and share great videos', 'connect with fans' and 'build business and get help to grow' (538). For profit-seeking users the affordances of virality become vital, because monetisation depends on achieved visibility.<sup>2</sup>

As all active users are, at least unconsciously, familiar with the platforms' directives, affordances naturally also guide how to interpret published content as a viewer. Social media platforms favour prototypical stories, the key element of which is the human experience in a narrated story world (Mäkelä et al. 2021, 142). The mediated experience cannot be too peculiar, however, as virality favours well-known story models (142) and demands affective consensus among the public (149). Thus, social media encourages content creators to seek safe ways to express themselves without fear of immediate negative reactions (149; see also Page 2012, 72).

For the reasons mentioned above, I see affordances of earning and virality mostly as constraints for personal narrative expression. The earning affordance steers narration in a direction that fits commercial values (Duffy and Hund 2019, 4995). This guides creators towards exclusively lightweight and positive video content and therefore crowds out content creators who present more versatile material and have either no commercial interest or no ability to fulfil the expectations of brands. Particulars and disruptions in the story world become indefinite and illusory when the urge to tell something personal meets the demands of commercialism. In this collision of narrative and platform affordances, the personal narrative is mediated in the form of instruction, which makes the content even more risk-free as the videoblogger repeats worn-out platitudes justified by her own life experience (see De Fina and Georgakopoulou 2012, 98). In this manner, routine videos partly follow the pattern of argumentative narrative, where the individual experience functions as a justification for claimed arguments (98). Since evidence-based reasoning is difficult to falsify (98), it also keeps videobloggers sailing in smooth waters.

Even though YouTube constrains the use of narrative, it offers the master narrative of self-made YouTube success. YouTube (like the Internet overall) is associated with egalitarianism and presents itself as a platform where everyone can become a host and the star of one's own broadcast. In contrast to traditional media, it is easier to rise to prominence, even though YouTube celebrity still happens mostly according to the laws of traditional media (Burgess and Green 2009, 22–24; see also Baker and Chris 2020, 89–92). The story encoded on YouTube includes the assumption that users start as amateurs without the proper knowledge and equipment for video making. In terms of platform statistics,

everyone is equal when starting a new channel—all start with zero views and subscribers. This implicit narrative of self-made YouTube success is encoded in the character of every content creator who has achieved a notable number of subscribers. In this way, the qualities and affordances of the platform provide significant support for the narrative of self-made success.

Routine gives us an experience of security and a sense of permanence (Giddens 1992, 39, 167). Narratology, however, has been traditionally applied to literary fiction, which often represents a world full of disruption and change (Tammi 2010, 71). It is thus justified to ask if routine fits in with the ideals of ‘tellability’, which by definition is connected to unexpected events and change (Bruner 1991, 11; Herman 2002, 89–90; Labov ([1972] 1976; Schmid 2003, 26). Jerome Bruner (1991, 11), for instance, understands narrative as the dynamics between *canonicity* and *breach*; while canonicity represents the ordinary, familiar, and conventional, the breach is something that disturbs or breaks the normal course of life. Certainly, social media has changed our perceptions of what is worth telling, but it does not mean that the question of tellability has become completely obsolete. The omnipresent possibility of sharing something about oneself may rather cause a cyclic ‘tellability crisis’ (see Georgakopoulou, Stefan, and Stage 2022), which makes us invent new ways of sharing our lives as tellable stories.

### Routine videos and second-person narration

My examples of routine videos are taken from the routine playlists of two popular video-bloggers, Kalyn Nicholson and Aileen Xu. Kalyn Nicholson is a Canadian YouTuber who publishes routine and self-care videos, but also ‘my day’ videos in which she films her daily life. Her routine playlist consists of 63 videos that are exclusively about her habits. As of March 2023, her channel has 1.38 million subscribers and the video in question has 231,000 views. Kalyn is also active on Instagram with 204,000 subscribers, and she hosts ‘an uplifting podcast’ called *Kalyn’s Coffee Talk*.

My first video example, ‘Spring Morning Routine’ (2019) is about Kalyn’s morning routine: drinking coffee, tidying her apartment, reading, exercising, showering, and applying make-up. At the beginning of the video, Kalyn is sitting on a bed speaking to the camera and describing her forthcoming routine by saying it is both wellness- and goal-infused, and she equates the spring cleaning of her apartment with the spring cleaning of her mind ‘to make sure that [she is] just optimally supporting [herself] on an everyday basis’ (00:08–00:29). The video consists of small chapters where the camera follows Kalyn’s actions from the third-person point of view and chapters where Kalyn is speaking straight into the camera. Direct address creates the illusion of face-to-face interaction between Kalyn and her audience and contributes to the development of a relationship known as parasocial. ‘Parasocial relationship’, first introduced in the context of radio and television, refers to the audience’s experience of a close relationship with media persons as if they were in real life knowing them (Horton and Richard Wohl 1956, 215). When Kalyn acts like a trusted friend, the viewer is likely to perceive both her advice and product recommendations reliable. It has already been demonstrated elsewhere that parasocial relationships have a positive impact on influencer marketing (Labrecque 2014), but undoubtedly, it also makes the viewer more receptive to the blogger’s advice.

By *motivational*, I refer to the intention to provide advice, instruct, or otherwise affect the audience's perception of a responsible and successful individual. Similar material has been characterised as the content of *lifestyle gurus*, a term used by sociologists Baker and Chris (2020) to refer to social media influencers who share advice on health, wealth, nutrition, well-being, and relationships without appropriate professionalism.

Unlike written self-help manuals, motivational content on YouTube and other social media platforms is not always directly indicated as instructive at the level of discourse. Narrative is the dominant mode in Kalyn's video, even though the paratextual cues, especially the channel description,<sup>3</sup> refer to the content's motivational function. She tells about her own routines but at times positions herself as an epistemic authority with occasional references to the audience. According to Monika Fludernik (2000, 273), mixing together different macro-genres is the rule rather than the exception, since most texts, especially fictive ones, consist of different discourse modes. Fludernik identifies five macro-genres—narrative, argumentation, instruction, conversation, and reflection—which describe the function of the text and which all have their own manifestations in different genres. Instruction, which is often marked with the second-person reference on the sentence level of discourse (282), is characteristically used in routine videos.

One of the most representative attributes of my target videos and motivational content overall is that they combine—from a rhetorical perspective sometimes inconsistently—narrative and instruction. This is particularly evident in the alternation of first- and second-person pronouns. In narratology, second-person narration signified with 'you' has been considered ambiguous, since there is no grammatical indicator that would define precisely who is being addressed (Fludernik 1993, 1994, 2011; Reitan 2011). This blurs the boundary between narrative and discourse and thus shifts the attention from the narrator's role to the experience itself (Fludernik 1994, 457).

The most detailed categorisation of both literary and non-literary uses of the second-person pronoun is probably by Fludernik (1993). For my purposes, especially her division of the three distinct categories of the possible reference points of 'you' is useful, namely: (1) the generalised *you*, (2) *you* as a reference to the speaker or narrator, and (3) the combination of the previous two (221–222). In oral communication, the use of the second person is not as ambiguous as in written text, since the context usually defines who the 'you' is, and the generalised use of 'you' is extremely typical (Mildorf 2012, 81). However, it is pertinent to note that routine videos as audiovisual works are not comparable to written narrative, but neither are they natural communication. Routine videos are somewhere between oral and literary communication; consequently narratologists' theories of second-person narration are at least partly applicable, as the following analysis will hopefully demonstrate.

One example of ambiguous alternation between first- and second-person pronouns is found in Kalyn's video in a scene where she is speaking about making her bed. In her video, she mostly speaks without referring to the audience, but she might unexpectedly address the viewer, which blurs the boundary between narrative and instructive modes:

I don't know if I mentioned this but making my bed it's like another thing that I think I've talked about this in other morning routines, but again one keeps me from getting back into

bed and *I feel like when you make your bed you instantly feel like you're ready to be productive for the day because everything just like looks done and clean.* (6:51–7:08; italics added)

Kalyn starts by speaking about her habit of making her bed. This is followed by the sudden shift in the narrator's position from *I* to *you*, which disturbs the viewer's ability to connect the second-person reference with its referent. Personal storytelling turns to you narration, which could be interpreted both as arguing for the universality of the narrated experience (generalised *you*) and as instructive discourse. While these two functions of you discourse coexist, Kalyn is able to tell about her very personal experience as being shareable. She tells her audience what it feels like to make one's bed, as though the first-person experience becomes one with the experience of the viewer (see Fludernik 1993, 227).

Unlike Kalyn's video, my second video example, '10 Simple Daily Habits to Change Your Life' by Aileen Xu, is openly instructional on the discursive level. On her channel, named *Lavendaire* (2019), she publishes motivational content about personal growth. These include both routine videos and videos on a vast number of subjects, from productivity and mental health to spiritual awakening and cryptocurrency investments. In her channel description, she writes that she 'share[s] knowledge and inspiration about creating your dream life'.<sup>4</sup> While both Kalyn's and Aileen's content could be counted as instructional narration, they differ in the manner they seek authority. When their narration falls somewhere between instruction and narrative, the question of authority is not only about authenticity of their lives but also their position as instructors. Both bloggers have begun as complete unknowns and thus do not have the pre-established position of authority outside YouTube, although they are not marginalised or excluded by background either (see Smith and Watson 2010, 33–34). When there is always a risk that autobiographical content of 'nobodies' will not generate interest in others (Korthals Altes 2014, 194), Kalyn and Aileen must earn and maintain their authority through their videos. Aileen seems to seek more directly the position of epistemic authority, whereas Kalyn acts mostly as a peer who is also struggling with life. The camera narration highlights this impression, as Kalyn frequently breaks the fourth wall by speaking to the camera, while Aileen does not do this once. Kalyn's speaking style contributes to the emotional identification of the viewer and supports the development of a parasocial relationship. Aileen's video, instead, has a voice-over, which increases the distance between Aileen and her audience and thus strengthens her position as an epistemic authority. A scene where Aileen teaches the viewer how to meditate demonstrates this positioning at the level of verbal narration:

Everybody has time to meditate. The key to being consistent is to not overwhelm yourself with a high requirement. Make it really easy for you to meditate. Tell yourself to meditate for two minutes every day and then work up from there. Not only are you taking time to ground yourself and detach yourself from your worries, deep breathing while meditating gives your body a chance to rest and rejuvenate. When you breathe, make sure you're deep breathing into your diaphragm, not just your chest. (10 Simple Daily Habits to Change Your Life, 0:48–1:16)

Here, the instructional mode dominates the surface level of discourse, and with these imperatives—'make it really easy', 'tell yourself to meditate', 'make sure you'—Aileen positions herself as a motivational speaker or guru and also implies with this positioning



that she has lived by those instructions and already reached her goals. At the same time, the second-person reference used involves the viewer in this story by calling for self-reflection. This makes the video a tool for the viewer to empathise with Aileen's narrative and thus imagine her own hypothetical self-change in the future. In Fludernik's (1993, 221–222) categorisation, 'you' thus refers simultaneously to Aileen and her audience. This double reference does not occur only because of Aileen's self-positioning as an authority; the used voice-over also adds strangeness to the narrative situation when Aileen appears to be at the same time the external narrator and the character who follows the instructions of the voice-over. From the viewer's point of view, 'you' refers to the audience and to Aileen both as a narrator and as a character. The visual narration and non-diegetic voice-over create two different address functions that eventually merge together.

The double function of narrative makes routine videos an exceptional form of life writing. With references to the audience, there are two stories in the making—the narrator's and the viewer's. On the explicit level, however, my target videos are barely narratives—according to general narratological definitions, narrative calls for a disruption or some sort of tension in the story world. In study of Instagram stories, Ruth Page (2022, 122) applies Bamberg's and Georgakopoulou's three-level model (2008, 385) where the levels of reported events, narrative interaction, and sociocultural master narratives are separated for analytical purposes. The question of whether we are considering textual properties or master narratives is pivotal for my analysis, as at first glance routine videos seem to exclude an explicit narrative. There are undoubtedly several master narratives in the sense of dominant discourses that can be identified in routine videos. Allusions to master narratives of self-made success and upward mobility are somewhat obvious as my target videos maintain the idea of unlimited individual agency in one's own life. Success is seen as the result of small everyday choices, individual efforts, and never-ending self-improvement. Nevertheless, I cannot construct a *narrative* out of this interpretation, not even a sequence-based script (cf. Hyvärinen 2020).

By drawing attention to the explicit level of the verbal narration of routine videos characterised by iterative and second-person narration, it is possible to reconstruct a narrative and even find a tellable masterplot, although the videos themselves do not include explicit disruption or change. Scrutinising these textual characteristics helps both to understand the tellability of the videos and locate those points in which the narrative is activated. My examination of second-person address can be located both at the levels of narrative interaction and reported events. Although I consider only the ways in which videobloggers position themselves in relation to the audience excluding the examination of the actual interaction via, for example, comments, the 'you address' participates at least in strengthening the pseudo-interaction and parasocial relationship. The analysis of iterative narration instead concerns the reported events in two time dimensions—in the synchronic, which comprises not only the moment of telling but also the individual occurrence of routine, and in the diachronic, which covers continuance, permanence, and repetition.

### **Iterative narration and diachronicity**

In the context of commercialised social media, telling about routines can be seen as self-writing at its best, as routines connect synchronic and diachronic aspects of identity,



providing a stronger sense of consistency. According to Allan S. Taylor (2022, 137), one of the reasons why there seems to be demand to present oneself as consistent on social media is the merging of self-branding and self-actualisation. As Taylor notes, brands do not usually change, and if they do change, that change is often slow and calculated (137).

Consumable brands try to stay away from brouhaha, misunderstandings, and other unexpected matters. Consistency of this scale, however, is not easy for persons to achieve. We cannot thus completely equate personal and consumable brands, even though a high degree of permanence is also required for self-branding and operation with commercial partners (Khamis, Ang, and Welling 2016, 193; also Taylor 2022, 137). While narratives depend on disruptions, brands are achievable only with a sufficient amount of permanence. Reporting routines provides such permanence by emphasising relatively immutable features of narrative identity. However, to reach the level of popularity where the opinions and recommendations of the content provider matter, interaction with the audience also requires both consistency and regularity. The relationship with the audience must be intimate and trustworthy enough to successfully promote the products and services of commercial partners (Abidin 2018, 33).

In narrative studies, routine is often linked to *iterative narration*, which designates an action that has happened several times, but has been told only once (Genette 1980, 116–117). Iterative sequences are often used to describe ordinary, repetitive life so as to frame more important narrative events, or as Fisher (1973) states in ‘Failure of Habit’: ‘The poetry of aestheticism begins with those experiences where habit fails.’ Literary scholar Gérard Genette (1980, 117) has even argued that iterative sections function merely like descriptions, which do not convey time in narration and thus are not counted as narration at all. The narratological issue here is the question of *frequency*. Routine does not occur on one specific temporal dimension that could be counted as an event, but paradoxically, it could refer to all tenses. The singular ‘I made my bed this morning’ is narratively different from the iterative ‘I make my bed every morning’, even though the latter includes the idea of the former. Narrating about one’s identity, however, differs quite a lot from the ideals of literature. While identity is intrinsically linked to continuity, it is also flexible and ever-changing. By emphasising the iterative, routine videos shift the focus from life disruptions to everyday life and the person itself (cf. Lyytikäinen 2012, 82)—to her character and narrative identity.

This basic assumption on the time of the narrative has probably made scholars brush aside the narrative potential of habitual actions. Catherine Riessman’s (1990, 76, 84) surprisingly little-used concept of habitual narration is an exception. In her studies on divorce talk, she noticed that narratives do not always have one distinct point of action; rather, they describe how things passed off in general (84). However, the habitual—in the sense of Riessman’s study—does not refer to anything conventional like YouTube’s routine videos. On the contrary, the tellability lies in the uncanonicity of continuous unconventional circumstances and the narrator’s experience of living through them. In terms of narratology, Riessman’s example of habitual narration fills the condition of uncanonicity, but not temporal singularity.

As Nils-Frederic Wagner (2021, 677) argues, the two-dimensional nature of habits makes persons eligible to being shaped by them. This feature is related to the mechanism in which routinely performed actions become more or less automated. The automatisa-tion process affects the person’s physiology, which in turn offers a basis for the habits’

contribution to one's self-characterisation and unified outlook on life (684). If one makes one's bed *this morning*, it is not important for one's identity, but if one makes one's bed *every morning*, it not only tells something about one's character but may also have a genuine narrative. Habit acquisition and the diachronic performance of habits are analogous to the structure of personhood, and 'habits can thus be seen as a bridge between synchronic and diachronic timescales of a person's life' (Wagner and Northoff 2014, 1).

As a narratologist, I have little interest in the physiological mechanisms of habit acquisition, and Wagner's theory thus functions mainly as inspiration for my article (especially from a philosophical viewpoint). However, the possible link between habit and narrative agency is narratologically fascinating because definitions of narrative have extensively relied on singularity and unexpected events. For my textual analysis, the interesting part of Wagner's article is his classification of six features of habits. According to Wagner (2021, 283), habits: (i) contribute to self-characterisation, (ii) influence a unified perspective of life, (iii) express what one cares about, (iv) indicate commitment, (v) are reason-receptive, and (vi) change one's embodiment.

Unlike Wagner, I tend to use the concept of routine instead of habit, even though these two concepts are often used interchangeably in self-help discourse. I understand habit in the same way as psychology (and thus self-help) does—as an action that has become automatic through repetition (OED). Routine instead consists of more complex actions than a mere habit, even if the intention is to make the action as effortless as possible. Routine needs more conscious effort, and thus it cannot be an immediate reaction to an environmental trigger like a habit can in some cases. According to the video titles, Kalyn's video is about routine and Aileen's about habits, but they both include habits and routine(s). Taking vitamin pills or making coffee could be automatic actions, but it is hard to imagine someone reading or exercising almost without even noticing it. In my material, a routine is a device for acquiring the mechanical mode of performing activities that are seen to support success. Especially in Kalyn's video, a routine is seen as an instrument to achieve a productive lifestyle, where even trivial activities are to be mechanised for the sake of efficiency. It could be described as technology of the self, by which the individual turns her focus on to herself with the intention of modifying her body, mind, or way of being (Foucault 1988, 18). Therefore, I see routine as more about what someone *does* than what someone *is*, even though these aspects overlap each other (see O'Toole 2013, 3).

I will demonstrate how Wagner's features appear in my target texts by scrutinising a reading routine, mentioned by both Kalyn and Aileen. Kalyn's reading is tied to a certain time of the day (the morning) and her routine is performed daily according to a certain scheme. Kalyn begins the following scene with the adverb *normally* and continues in the present tense:

so *normally* I like to do my reading in the morning just because I feel like before I am even able to open up my to-do lists I can just like actually focus on the books and not think about the things I have to do that day I try and go as long as I physically can without opening my to-do list for the day because I feel like as soon as I do that that's when I'm like tapped into work. (Spring Morning Routine, 5:59–6:18; italics added)

The present tense here signifies repetition and foregrounds the frequency of the performed routine. The present tense has been described as ambiguous since it does not

grammatically refer to any specific point in time; it could refer to habitual actions or to the time of telling (Cohn 1978, 190). Adverbs such as ‘normally’, ‘often’, and ‘daily’ are all indicators of iterative narration and they occur frequently in both Kalyn’s and Aileen’s videos. Even though the present tense is intentionally habitual, Kalyn’s occasional style of speaking straight to the audience along with the video format also foregrounds the time of telling. Thus, the ‘habitual present tense’ and ‘instant present tense’ (190) occur in the video simultaneously.

Self-characterisation through routine appears both explicitly and implicitly in Kalyn’s video. Reading before anything else in the morning helps Kalyn to focus on reading, which indicates that she is a person *who reads* and it *is an important routine for her*, even though she does not indicate the explicit instrumental reasons for reading. It seems that she just likes reading, but she also may assume that her audience is aware of the popularised beliefs about the benefits of reading. However, the manner that Kalyn is speaking about reading reveals her attitude towards reading as something that ‘must be done in the morning’:

but in general *I don’t open my laptop* like literally until my workout and everything *is done* because it’s just like a focus thing for me but I *like to get my reading done in the morning* because I feel like that’s what my brain is just like able to absorb the information and it’s also like a really kind of like positive way for me *to lead into my meditation* because *then* I unroll my mat I meditate I see where my brains at for the day I kind of like plant my seeds for the day *then I move into* stretching *then I go into* my workout and usually by that time family will wake up also. (Spring Morning Routine, 6:23-6:51; italics added)

Thus, equally important is what Kalyn *is not doing* while she is reading. She is a person who can organise her everyday life into sections and tackle distractions by focusing on one thing at a time. According to Wagner’s theory, these two short snatches of Kalyn’s narration indicate three of the six features of an identity-shaping habit: (i) she is a person who reads, (ii) she cares about reading, (iii) which she indicates by making time and space for reading in her routine. Kalyn’s narration occurs mainly in the first person and only occasionally makes a second-person reference to the audience. She is not openly instructional and does not put an effort into convincing audiences about her reading routine. However, Kalyn’s self-characterisation appears implicitly at the level of discourse. The sequential uses of the ‘then’ adverb reveals that Kalyn follows a settled script in the morning. This is a voluntary expression about what she cares about, what kind of a person she is, and finally, to what degree she is committed to following her organised and productive lifestyle. Even though we can read Kalyn’s routine in this single video as the expression of narrative identity, the frequency of certain habits in her other 62 videos in her routine playlist functions additionally as proof of her diligence, efficiency, and virtuousness.

Now I demonstrate how the video narrated in the second person differs from the previous example. The transcription is from Aileen’s video, and we stay in the realm of reading:

The next daily habit that will change your life is reading. I mentioned how I like to read while doing the ‘legs up the wall’ pose, so I knock out two birds with one stone. Reading daily, even a small amount will *add up to a wealth of knowledge* that will enhance your life in many ways. It *will expand your mind, teach you new knowledge, and make you a more interesting person*. The key here is to pick a *doable amount for your daily goal*.

Maybe it's ten pages a day or five minutes a day. The point is not to try to read a lot in a day. *It's to be consistent. Do a little a day and let that small action compound over time. Be patient and you'll notice the growth.* (10 Simple Daily Habits to Change Your Life, 6:59–7:36; italics added)

Aileen argues already in the title of the video that reading is a habit that 'will change your life'. She addresses the viewer, but in the following sentence turns to first-person narration while telling about her own reading routine. She continues with the advice to read 'daily'. Here we see the first reference to the diachronic dimension of a life-changing reading routine. She concludes this suggestion with the expected results of daily reading, which are an 'expanded mind, new knowledge, and more interesting personality'. Aileen's narration highlights the feature of reason-receptiveness (v) unlike Kalyn's video. While Kalyn is not trying to convince her audience to follow her example, Aileen's video is openly instructional, and she must explain how or why certain habits will change one's life. The end of the excerpt provides advice on how to stick to the habit—proceed with small steps and read only a little at first. She puts a strong emphasis on continuity with expressions such as 'consistent', 'over time', and 'the growth' that all refer to the diachronic performance of her own routines. This suggests Wagner's sixth (vi) feature of habit—the change in embodiment, which refers to changes in the body and especially in this case the brain's ability to modify and adapt in response to experiences.

As the previous analysis above shows, by applying Wagner's categorisation, we can interpret mediated habitual actions to get hints about one's narrative agency, even though that interpretation would differ from the narrator's inner sense of her narrative identity. There is no reason to assume that Aileen and Kalyn were narrating their 'real selves'. What authenticity means in a social media context is a widely discussed topic (e.g. Georgakopoulou 2022; Kuhn 2015; Taylor 2022). What they are narrating are themselves as commercialised personal brands that do not tolerate many disruptions. By reporting routines they thus manage to avoid the ambivalence inherent in narratives, while they are still activating a change narrative that is interesting enough for the audience. Kalyn and Aileen do not only sell the products of their commercial partners<sup>5</sup> but also their present state as the potential future of their viewers (Baker and Chris 2020, 6). This is how life writing, the affordances of the platform, and commercialism are intertwined.

### Singularity and uncanonicity of routine videos

In terms of narratology, there are two evident stumbling blocks when considering routine as tellable in my video examples. While both video examples can be considered narratives about *change*, the first stumbling block is the question of singularity, which relates to the *frequency* discussed above. The question arises from the two-dimensional nature of routine, which leads to the impossibility of specifying a particular event that has actually changed something because the habitual change is happening over a longer period. Wolf Schmid (2003, 23–24), for example, claims that change needs to be factual or real (in relation to the story world) and finished to count as an event. It cannot be incipient, attempted, or about an ongoing process. For him, these are the two defining conditions for an event, and following his argumentation, routine

videos cannot be counted as narratives, though he mentions non-iterativity as one of the secondary conditions for so-called eventfulness. If the conditions of factuality and completion are met, the secondary conditions only affect the qualitative characteristics of the story (28–29).

Kalyn and Aileen not only tell about their routines, but also simultaneously perform them in their videos. Viewers can thus actually follow how one occurrence of making coffee, meditating, or exercising is performed and therefore completed in the video. Those individual actions seen in the video could be counted as singular events. What we do not see in the material form but is implied is the actual subject of the video—repetition and the point of change. The reason is partly related to the medium used; visual narration cannot express iterativity, unlike verbal narration (McFarlane 1996, 80). Furthermore, the human mind seeks out structure, and even when change is not indicated directly, we can read it between the lines (Chatman 1978, 45–46). The videoblogger's current status can be thus interpreted as the endpoint of a narrative due to the narrator positioning herself as an authority. In this way, the levels of narrative interaction and reported events merge and complete each other. The implicit turning point can be located either as the decision to start a new routine or as the point at which the routine truly becomes mechanised.

The second stumbling block is the question of uncanonicity. So far, I have mostly considered the temporal features of routine in relation to narrative but ignored the canonicity aspect of routine videos. When we are evaluating whether something could be counted as tellable or not, we must consider both conditions. As I earlier demonstrated by referring to Riessman's habitual narration, singularity is not a determinate condition of tellability. Uncanonicity, instead, is a determinate condition. A narrative that does not include an uncanonical event is often considered *a script*, which refers to the expected course of events. Scripts are thus culturally understood models of how certain situations should normally proceed and as such lack the unexpected event (Bruner 1991, 11; Herman 2002, 89–90; Hyvärinen 2016). The original conceptualisation of narrative as a dynamic between canonicity and breach was made by Bruner (1991), but many scholars have stated similar arguments with slightly different terminologies (e.g. Herman 2002, 89–90; Schmid 2003).

More recent approaches that have been adapted for the analysis of social media narratives emphasise the contextual nature of tellability (e.g. Georgakopoulou 2022; Page 2012, 2022). As Georgakopoulou (2022, 266) argues that so-called small stories that we share in our everyday interaction and also on the Internet are often atypical compared to traditionally defined narratives, and could be about mundane, ongoing, hypothetical, or future events. She asserts that stories of social media are more often about commonplace events instead of life disruptions (Georgakopoulou 2017, 314). Sometimes influencers get married, buy a house, or get pregnant (Page 2022, 123), but most of the time nothing extraordinary happens. Of course, already in the work of Labov, tellability was seen as a qualitative feature of a story, which can be evaluated on a scale of low and high tellability. In the era of social media, shared stories online are not always tellable offline, while conversely some highly tellable stories might be too risky to share online (Page 2012, 72). Influencers avoid showing themselves in a negative light not only to keep commercial operators satisfied but also to protect themselves from the criticism or even hate of the audience (Duffy and Hund 2019, 4996).

The social media context differs from the conversational situation of Labov ([1972] 1976) in the fact that online storytelling often lacks the event of narrating, and the narrative situation extends to cover an indefinite period and multiple narrative acts across different social media platforms, establishing an ongoing present-tense narrative situation (Georgakopoulou 2017, 314; Page 2022, 122–123). Additionally, the evaluation of tellability is not dependent only on the event of narrating or the narrated content but also the audience. As Labov (2011, 547) describes: ‘death and the danger of death are highly reportable in almost every situation’ and ‘the fact that people ate a banana for lunch might be reportable only in the most relaxed family setting’. When routine videos are definitely about eating bananas, a relevant question, albeit outside the scope of this article, is whether the audience should be understood as a large group of strangers or a large group of friends. The eventual parasocial relationship creates an ambiguous narrative context, in which the influencer and her audience are strangers to each other, but viewer feels close connection to her (Horton and Richard Wohl 1956). Sharing the most banal routines may in turn contribute to creating illusion of intimacy (Abidin 2018, 33) and this illusion allows the influencer to maintain a reasonable level of relative tellability, even if absolute tellability remains rather low.

Technological features and participatory affordances enable the experience of continuous connectedness and reciprocal communication (Hou 2019, 549). Platforms stimulate the habitual use of their services by offering rewards that encourage their users to revisit regularly. New content, comments, likes on the comments and replies to the comments are notified on the smartphone always in reach (Anderson and Wendy 2020, 89). Influencers also use interaction methods to encourage their audience to participate (Abidin 2015, 9). At the end of her video, Aileen for example, asks to leave a comment about which habits resonate the most in her viewers and which habit the viewers intend to start (9:23–9:27). Due to the revenue logic of the platform, it is the interest of both Aileen and YouTube to keep viewers engaged on the channel (Ferchaud et al. 2018, 89). The content of certain influencer is indeed often followed diachronically over the long period (Page 2022, 123). As telling about routines effectively reveals the influencer’s characteristics, values and ambitions, it helps the audience to become familiar with her. This makes telling about routines particularly suitable for social media platforms because the user engagement is essential for them.

For the reasons discussed above, the concept of tellability is not perfectly suitable for evaluating the worthiness of telling in social media if we adhere to the old criteria developed before these platforms. In the same sense that social media has changed our perceptions of authenticity, it has also changed our perceptions about what is enough to be counted as a ‘breach’. Two problems—the problem of non-singularity and the problem of canonicity—can be addressed based on my analysis of iterative and second-person narration.

As demonstrated earlier, Kalyn and Aileen highlight the diachronic nature of their routine, and with this method, they frame them as meaningful. They are who they are because of their routine, or at least this is what they want to indicate. Thus, what if tellability lies in the diachronic dimension of a story, not in the synchronic one? Perhaps it does not even matter *what the routines are*, so long as diachronicity is achieved. This diachronicity underlines such virtues as perseverance, consistency, and effectivity. Performing the same script day after day without zoning out is exceptional, even though making one’s bed or cleaning are not. Scripts consist of canonical events by definition, but this



canonicity does not need to extend to the diachronic dimension. I do understand that making a distinction between synchronic canonicity and diachronic uncanonicity might be problematic from a narratological point of view, since diachronicity is invisible at the level of discourse. Even though we can analyse iterative sentences in texts, diachronicity is always partly hypothetical and ambiguous.

In addition to diachronicity, the second-person address ‘you’ becomes a key issue in understanding tellability, especially in Aileen’s video. The ‘you address’ does not only position Aileen as an epistemic authority; it also helps the viewer to complete the narrative so that it can be interpreted as a story. The position of authority communicates to the viewer that she is at the same point in her life that Aileen was before, and by adopting the old routines, she will become what Aileen is now (see Baker and Chris 2020, 6). This approach, however, brings up the question what ‘before’ and ‘now’ are, and the narrative appears to be again rather implicit. Aileen’s (as well as Kalyn’s) previous videos are still available on her channel, but only by watching those, it is impossible to identify the changes in her life that have been achieved through presented habits. Aileen, who was not in the habit of taking vitamins or reading would not appear to the viewer different from the Aileen of today. Her habitus has remained the same from her very first video ‘How to Stop Caring About What Others Think of You’ (30.4.2014). She already positioned herself as a self-help guru even though she was not popular at that time and lacked the authority she has today. Kalyn, likewise, has filmed dozens of routine videos, which are not greatly different from each other. This fact would actually support the view that nothing has really changed in her life. Kalyn’s character is thus in line with the self-help ‘narrative’ of never-ending self-development (see Illouz 2007, 48; Rimke 2000, 67–68).

As the answer to what is ‘the change’ that Aileen is referring to in her title is not found on filmed video content on her channel, I propose one more operator in this narrative process that finally completes the routine videos in a narratively meaningful way: YouTube as a platform and its quantitative and commercial affordances.

### **Routine as an answer to the ‘tellability crisis’**

Georgakopoulou, Stefan, and Carsten (2020, 21; see also Georgakopoulou, Stefan, and Stage 2022, 154) draw attention to three kinds of metrics in social media: content metrics, interface metrics, and algorithmic metrics. Interface metrics cover all the visible properties made for measuring and tracking user activity (21). In the case of YouTube, these metrics include, for example, subscribers, views, and likes. The function of these metrics, since they are all visible not only to the channel owner, but also to other users, is not only to measure but also to indicate the success of the channel and the individual videos. Users do not need to interpret these numbers since the tracking is unambiguous. Every like, view, and subscriber adds to the quantifiable value of the content (Baker and Chris 2020, 81; Georgakopoulou, Stefan, and Stage 2022, 151).

The answer to the question of what Aileen and Kalyn were *before* and what they are *now* is coded in the interface metrics of YouTube. The story told by the numbers from zero to hundreds of thousands of subscribers indicates a masterplot of self-made YouTube success. Quantifiable success is reflected in commercial success due to the revenue logic of the platform. The number of subscribers and views announces how



many potential customers the content can reach, and in general, the higher the visibility, the better is the earning potential. Taylor (2022, 26) has even claimed that social media is a neoliberal attempt to maintain the rag-to-riches myth, which has elsewhere suffered from implausibility. While quantitative facts are explicit and unambiguous, YouTube provides a fertile context for maintaining the notion of equal individual opportunities.

In Aileen's and Kalyn's videos, quantified storytelling occurs also at the level of content. According to Georgakopoulou, Stefan, and Stage (2022), counting and tracking can be a method to make otherwise untellable events worth telling. In their analysis of cancer narratives, they noted that treatments were made tellable by tracking them numerically. In each story, the narrator emphasised how many treatments were still left. After these treatments and recovery, the narrator suffered from a 'tellability crisis' that arose from the inability to narrate about the illness (156). The reasons to start producing public content on social media surely varies greatly, but especially those interested in YouTube's commercial affordances might suffer from this crisis from the very beginning. In the case of Kalyn and Aileen, the 'tellability crisis' seems to be the starting position for their narration. What can a healthy and well-to-do influencer tell about herself without risking commercial profits?

Kalyn and Aileen use their narrative agency to frame habits as tellable by the glorification and complexification of everyday life. There might be nothing tellable about a reading hobby if it is not goal-oriented, instrumental, or life-changing. Making the routine tellable requires an emphasis on those diachronic features I discussed earlier, but also the diachronicity of the routine can be reinforced with the use of numerical expressions. Aileen's video starts with the number ten, which might be psychologically significant to accentuate that it takes only ten habits to achieve a life change. Numerical expressions continue in some of her habits—cleaning 10 min a day (1:40–2:13) and keeping the 'legs up the wall' pose for 10–15 min (while reading) (6:43–6:45). In particular, drinking water is treated in Aileen's video rather quantitatively:

One way to drink more water is to keep a water bottle near you at all times so you get in the habit of sipping water throughout the day. There are also water tracking apps that you can use to make sure you're drinking enough water. And I'll link below a water calculator so you can calculate how much water you should drink because it just depends on a few different factors. Some people swear by drinking warm water with lemon in the morning to ease the digestive system. So I would say give that a try. I always like to drink room temperature water and order water with no ice when I'm out because it's easier on the body than drinking ice cold water. (10 Simple Daily Habits to Change Your Life, 3:39–4:45)

It is hard to imagine any habit being more common than drinking water. Drinking water is a necessity, but here it is proposed as something to be tracked and calculated. Even the temperature of the water matters. Narrativising drinking water as something that changes one's life—and thus, making it tellable—must tell something about the tellability crisis. Wagner (2021, 683) reminds us that *not all habits* are identity-shaping. What makes self-help discourse interesting in relation to narrative agency is that any kind of habit could be framed as meaningful and identity-shaping. This is also something for which self-help is often criticised (e.g. Rimke 2000). It offers simple solutions to complex problems, and obviously it is very natural to find those small solutions extremely alluring. Drinking water only keeps people alive; it does not make anyone more successful. Reading books might have some benefits, but it is misleading to correlate reading

with success. The complexification of everyday actions, especially the most banal ones that would not otherwise require special attention might turn to cruel optimism if it involves the promise of a better life. In this way, the personal pursuit of desired unrealistic conditions becomes a barrier to more achievable success (Berlant 2011). As wonderful as it would be to believe in the impact of small daily actions, there is probably more than mundane routine behind socio-economic success.

## Conclusion

In this article, I have evaluated the tellability of two routine videos. The collision of self-help discourse, platform-related affordances, and the innate desire to tell stories means that the narrative form cannot be fully exploited. In this cross-pressure, telling about a routine is a safe choice for maintaining narrative identity and one's self-brand.

On the basis of my analysis, the narrative appears to be the product of several pieces, which individually provide a little ground for understanding the tellability of the videos. By noting the narrative acts on all three levels of reported events, narrative interaction, and master narratives, it becomes possible to get a grip on the implicit narrative and reconstruct the rather concrete manifestation of the masterplot of YouTube's success. Here the second-person narration turns out to play a key role since it activates both the videoblogger's author position and the viewer's self-reflective approach. The author's position and viewer's perspective thus complement the gaps required by the narrative while the viewer interprets herself as a previous version of the videoblogger and imagines her future as being similar to the videoblogger's present as a successful individual. The second-person address 'you' encourages the viewer to take steps towards a new routine, which activates her narrative imagination and thus narrative agency.

Telling about a routine reveals what Kalyn and Aileen appreciate and what they are willing to commit to in order to achieve their goals by maintaining their narrative identity. Their transformation from zero-follower YouTubers to successful content creators is thus alluded to be the result of maintaining certain routines diachronically. These narratives are intertwined with YouTube's interface metrics, which both confirm the success story and make it explicit by demonstrating the progression from zero subscribers to their current statistics.

For further research, it might be valuable to examine the interaction between the influencer and the audience by exploring the comment boxes of the routine videos. In this way, it would be possible to examine the depth of the eventual parasocial relationship and its impact on evaluating tellability. Such analysis would require a new kind of data collection, which has not been possible in the scope of this article. Despite the fact that my article considers only routine videos, and then only two examples, my findings on instructional narration and the contribution of YouTube's affordances to the creation of the masterplot of success might be valid for other types of motivational and lifestyle videos as well. However, more research is needed.

## Notes

1. E.g. *Atomic Habits* by James Clear (2018), *The Power of Habits* by Charles Duhigg (2012), and *5 AM Club Own Your Morning, Elevate Your Life* by Robin Sharma (2018).
2. See more about commercialism of YouTube: Claudia Gerhards (2019).

3. Channel description of Kalyn: <https://www.youtube.com/@KalynNicholson/about> (24.3.2023).
4. <https://www.youtube.com/@lavendaire/about> (12.12.2022).
5. At the beginning of her video, Kalyn promotes Function of Beauty, which is a haircare brand. Aileen promotes a vitamin brand called Ritual and her promotion is included one of her routines—taking vitamin pills. Both influencers offer a discount code for their viewers.

## Acknowledgements

An early version of this paper was presented to my colleagues at a research seminar in literary studies at Tampere University. I thank my colleagues for their comments and inspiring discussion. Special thanks to my supervisors Dr Maria Mäkelä and Prof. Sari Kivistö for their valuable advice and guidance.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

## Funding

This work was supported by the Finnish Cultural Foundation [grant number 15212340]; Häme Regional fund.

## Notes on contributor

*Veera Valta* is a PhD candidate in comparative literature at Tampere University, Finland. Her research explores the narrative role of routine in social media and develops interpretive tools for social media texts that combine instructional discourse and narrative. She is also interested in the history of self-help and how contemporary self-help is manifested in the media and social media.

## ORCID

Veera Valta  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-4650-9721>

## References

### Material

- Lavendaire 2019. “10 Simple Daily Habits to Change Your Life.” Accessed February 18, 2023. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=brV7k1ZgexE&t=414s>.
- Nicholson, Kalyn. 2019. “Spring Morning Routine.” Accessed January 18, 2023. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FZN9t1jOjvc&t=315s>.

### Other

- Clear, James. 2018. *Atomic Habits: An Easy & Proven Way to Build Good Habits & Break Bad Ones*. New York: Penguin Random House.

- Duhigg, Charles. 2012. *The Power of Habit: Why We Do What We Do in Life and Business*. New York: Random House.
- Ellis, Sarah Stickney. 1842. *The Daughters of England. Position in Society, Character, and Responsibilities*. London: Fisher, Son, & Co.
- Farrar, Eliza Ware. 1836. *The Young Lady's Friend*. Boston, MA: American Stationers' Company.
- Sharma, Robin. 2018. *The 5AM Club: Own Your Morning. Elevate Your Life*. New York: HarperCollins.

## Research

- Abbott, H. Porter. 2008. *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Abidin, Crystal. 2015. "Communicative <3 Intimacies: Influencers and Perceived Interconnectedness." *Ada New Media*. Advanced online publication. <https://scholarsbank.uoregon.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1794/26365/ada08-commu-abi-2015.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.
- Abidin, Crystal. 2018. *Internet Celebrity: Understanding Fame Online*. Bingley: Emerald Publishing.
- Anderson, A. Ian, and Wood Wendy. 2020. "Habits and the Electronic Herd: The Psychology Behind Social Media's Successes and Failures." *Consumer Psychology Review* 4 (1): 83–99. <https://doi.org/10.1002/arc.1063>
- Baker, A. Stephanie, and Rojek Chris. 2020. *Lifestyle Gurus*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bamberg, Michael, and Alexandra Georgakopoulou. 2008. "Small Stories as a New Perspective in Narrative and Identity Analysis." *Text & Talk* 28 (3): 377–396.
- Berlant, Lauren. 2011. *Cruel Optimism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Bruner, Jerome. 1991. "Narrative Construction of Reality." *Critical Inquiry* 18 (1): 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1086/448619>
- Burgess, Jean, and Joshua Green. 2009. *YouTube: Online Video and Participatory Culture*. Malden: Polity Press.
- Chatman, Seymour. 1978. *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Cohn, Dorrit. 1978. *Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- De Fina, A., and A. Georgakopoulou. 2012. *Analyzing the Narrative: Discourse and Sociolinguistic Perspectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Duffy, Brook Erin, and Emily Hund. 2019. "Gendered Visibility on Social Media: Navigating Instagram's Authenticity Bind." *International Journal of Communication* 13:4983–5002.
- Ferchaud, Arienne, Jenna Grzeslo, Stephanie Orme, and Jared LaGroue. 2018. "Parasocial Attributes and YouTube Personalities: Exploring Content Trends across the Most Subscribed YouTube Channels." *Computers in Human Behavior* 80 (2018): 88–96. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2017.10.041>
- Fisher, Philip. 1973. "Failure of Habit" in *Uses of Literature, Harvard English Studies* 4, edited by Monroe Engel, 3–18. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Fludernik, Monika. 1993. "Second Person Fiction: Narrative 'You' As Addressee and/or Protagonist." *AAA: Arbeiten aus Anglistik und Amerikanistik* 18 (2): 217–247.
- Fludernik, Monika. 1994. "Second-Person Narrative as a Test Case for Narratology." *Style* 28 (3): 445–479.
- Fludernik, Monika. 2000. "Genres, Text Types, or Discourse Modes? Narrative Modalities and Generic Categorization." *Style* 34 (1): 274–292.
- Fludernik, Monika. 2011. "The Category of 'Person' in Fiction: You and We Narrative—Multiplicity and Indeterminacy of Reference." In *Current Trends in Narratology*, edited by Greta Olson, 101–141. Berlin: De Gruyter.

- Foucault, Michel. 1988. "Technologies of the Self." In *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, edited by Martin H. Luther, Huck Gutman, and Patrick H. Hutton, 16–49. Amherst: The University of Massachusetts.
- Gerhards, Claudia. 2019. "Product Placement on YouTube: An Explorative Study on YouTube Creators' Experiences with Advertisers." *Convergence* 25 (3): 516–533.
- Genette, Gérard. 1980. *Narrative Discourse ('Discours du récit', Figures III, 1972)*. Translated by Jane E. Lewin. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Georgakopoulou, Alex, Iversen Stefan, and Carsten Stage. 2022. "Quantified Storytelling: How to Tellable and the Countable Intermingle on Digital Platforms." In *The Routledge Companion to Narrative Theory*, edited by Paul Dawson and Maria Mäkelä, 149–163. New York: Routledge.
- Georgakopoulou, Alex, Iversen Stefan, and Stage Carsten. 2020. *Quantified Storytelling: A Narrative Analysis of Metrics on Social Media*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Georgakopoulou, Alexandra. 2017. "Sharing the Moment as Small Stories: The Interplay between Practices & Affordances in the Social Media-Curation of Lives." *Narrative Inquiry* 27 (2): 311–333. <https://doi.org/10.1075/ni.27.2.06geo>
- Georgakopoulou, Alexandra. 2022. "Co-opting Small Stories on Social Media: A Narrative Analysis of the Directive of Authenticity." *Poetics Today* 43 (2): 265–286. <https://doi.org/10.1215/03335372-9642609>
- Giddens, Anthony. 1992. *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Herman, David. 2002. *Story Logic: Problems and Possibilities of Narrative*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska.
- Herman, David. 2009. *Basic Elements of Narrative*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Horton, Donald, and R. Richard Wohl. 1956. "Mass Communication and Para-Social Interaction: Observations on Intimacy at a Distance." *Psychiatry* 19 (3): 215–229. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00332747.1956.11023049>
- Hou, Mingyi. 2019. "Social Media Celebrity and the Institutionalization of YouTube." *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies* 25 (3): 534–553. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354856517750368>
- Hyvärinen, Matti. 2016. "Expectations and Experientiality: Jerome Bruner's 'Canonicity and Breach.'" *Storyworlds: A Journal of Narrative Studies* 8 (2): 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.5250/storyworlds.8.2.0001>
- Hyvärinen, Matti. 2020. "Toward a Theory of Counter-Narratives. Narrative Contestation, Cultural Canonicity and Tellability." In *Routledge Handbook of Counter-Narratives*, edited by Klarissa Lueg and Marianne Wolff Lundholt, 17–29. London: Routledge.
- Illouz, Eva. 2007. *Cold Intimacies: The Making of Emotional Capitalism*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Khamis, Susie, Lawrence Ang, and Reymond Welling. 2016. "Self-branding, 'Micro-Celebrity' and the Rise of Social Media Influencers." *Celebrity Studies* 8 (2): 191–208. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19392397.2016.1218292>
- Korthals Altes, Liesbeth. 2014. *Ethos and Narrative Interpretation: The Negotiation of Values in Fiction*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Kuhn, Markus. 2015. "(Un)Reliability in Fictional and Factual Audiovisual Narratives on YouTube. Unreliable Narrator and Trustworthiness." In *Intermedial and Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, edited by Vera Nünning, 245–273. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Labov, William. [1972] 1976. *Language in the Inner City: Studies in the Black English Vernacular*. Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Labov, William. 2011. "Narratives of Personal Experience." In *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the Language Sciences*, edited by Patrick Colm Hogan, 546–548. New York: Cambridge.
- Labrecque, Lauren. 2014. "Fostering Consumer-Brand Relationships in Social Media Environments: The Role of Parasocial Interaction." *Journal of Interactive Marketing* 28 (2):134–148.
- Lyytikäinen, Pirjo. 2012. "Iterative Narration and Other Forms of Resistance to Peripetias in Modernist Writing." In *Turning Points: Concepts and Narratives of Change in Literature and Other Media*, edited by Ansgar Nünning and Kai Marcel Sicks, 73–84. Berlin: De Gruyter.

- Mäkelä, Maria, Samuli Björninen, Laura Karttunen, Matias Nurminen, Juha Raipola, and Tytti Rantanen. 2021. "Dangers of Narrative: A Critical Approach to Narratives of Personal Experience in Contemporary Story Economy." *Narrative* 29 (2): 139–159. <https://doi.org/10.1353/nar.2021.0009>
- Mäkelä, Maria. 2020. "Through the Cracks in the Safety Net: Narratives of Personal Experience Countering the Welfare System in Social Media and Human Interest Journalism". In *Routledge Handbook of Counter-Narratives*, edited by Klarissa Lueg and Marianne Wolff Lundholt, 389–401. London: Routledge.
- McFarlane, Brian. 1996. *Novel to Film: An Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Mildorf, Jarmila. 2012. "Second-Person Narration in Literary and Conversational Storytelling." *Storyworlds: A Journal of Narrative Studies* 4:75–97. <https://doi.org/10.5250/storyworlds.4.2012.0075>
- O'Toole, Sean. 2013. *Habit in the English Novel, 1850–1900: Lived Environments, Practices of the Self*. New York: Palgrave.
- Page, Ruth E. 2012. *Stories and Social Media: Identities and Interaction*. New York: Taylor & Francis Group.
- Page, Ruth E. 2022. "Co-Tellership in Social Media Storytelling." In *The Routledge Companion to Narrative Theory*, edited by Paul Dawson and Maria Mäkelä, 120–133. Milton: Taylor & Francis.
- Poletti, Anna, and Julie Rak. 2014. "Introduction: Digital Dialogues." In *Identity Technologies: Constructing the Self Online*, edited by Anna Poletti and Julie Rak, 3–22. Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Reitan, Rolf. 2011. "Theorizing Second-Person Narratives: A Backwater Project?" In *Strange Voices in Narrative Fiction*, edited by Per Krogh Hansen, Stefan Iversen, Henrik Skov Nielsen, and Rolf Reitan, 147–174. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Riessman, Catherine Kohler. 1990. *Divorce Talk: Women and Men Make Sense of Personal Relationships*. New Brunswick & London: Rutgers University Press.
- Rimke, Heidi Marie. 2000. "Governing Citizens through Self-Help Literature." *Cultural Studies* 14 (1): 61–78. <https://doi.org/10.1080/095023800334986>
- Schmid, Wolf. 2003. "Narrativity and Eventfulness." In *What Is Narratology? Questions and Answers Regarding the Status of a Theory*, edited by T. Kindt and H.-H. Müller, 17–43. Berlin: de Gruyter.
- Smith, Sidonie, and Julia Watson. 2010. *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives, Second Edition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Tammi, Pekka. 2010. "Kertomusta vastaan ja ei vastaan." In *Luonnolliset ja luonnottomat kertomukset: Jälkiklassisen narratologian suuntia*, edited by Mari Hatavara, Markku Lehtimäki, and Pekka Tammi. 65–88. Helsinki: Gaudeamus.
- Taylor, Allan S. 2022. *Authenticity as Performativity on Social Media*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Wagner, Nils-Frederic, and Georg Northoff. 2014. "Habits: Bridging the Gap between Personhood and Personal Identity." *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience* 8:1–12.
- Wagner, Nils-Frederic. 2021. "Habits and Narrative Agency." *Topoi* 40 (3): 677–686. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11245-020-09695-1>
- Wiebe, Caroline Elizabeth. 2001. "Conduct Books." In *Encyclopedia of Life Writing: Autobiographical and Biographical Forms*, edited by Margaretta Jolly, 227–228. London: Fitzroy Dearborn.