

SRN2021 Research Seminar Series Online

KEYNOTE ADDRESS: The Portability of Character

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ABSTRACT

Characters are born as part of the stories in which they appear – the intimate tie between story and character has been central to our understanding of storytelling from Aristotle onwards. But particular characters may not be destined to live out their existences solely within the narratives in which they were first forged. Characters turn out to be remarkably agile entities, capable of moving from work to work, story to story, and – not least – between the actual world and the fictional worlds conjured by fictioneers. In turn, we effortlessly track the movement of characters between the real world and imagined worlds, exporting and importing beliefs and values as we do so.

In this keynote, I explore the remarkable mobility of characters across works and worlds – the portability of character – through examples drawn from Flannery O'Connor, Irving Welsh, John Hodge, and Nanni Moretti.