

Report on the 2<sup>nd</sup> ENN Conference, March 10-11, 2011

Working with Stories:

Narrative as a Meeting Place for Theory, Analysis and Practice

This conference, held at the University of Southern Denmark in Kolding, was in fact the ENN's first major conference, as the 1<sup>st</sup> ENN Conference, held in Hamburg in January 2009, was devoted largely to founding the Network. Organized by Per Krogh Hansen with assistance from his staff (Bettina Ibsen, Katrine Worsøe Kristensen and Pernille Dahl Kragh) and with financial support from The Danish Council for Independent Research, the conference, preceded by a Pre-Conference Doctoral Course on March 9 (see separate report), included six keynote lectures, more than forty papers delivered during parallel sessions and sixteen papers given by the participants in the Doctoral Course (for the complete program, click [here](#)). In addition, the conference was attended by numerous persons, both faculty members and students from several universities, who did not give papers but whose interest and curiosity contributed to the many rich exchanges during the various sessions as well as on the more social occasions during the two days.

The conference offered a unique opportunity to have an overview of narratologically oriented research within Europe: the participants came from some twenty European countries, but papers were also given by researchers from outside Europe including the US, India, Japan, Israel, Turkey and Jordan. Thanks to this geographical and national diversity, the perception of the various topics presented by the speakers, not to mention a broad variety of corpuses seldom encountered in scholarly meetings of this nature, opened up new vistas on narratological issues that are sometimes overlooked when they are debated in a national context. The questions dealt with clearly reflect current developments in narrative theory, while the approaches, often complementary or mutually enlightening, promise to call for further discussion and new research programs.

A survey of the papers presented shows a continued growth of interest in narrative in media other than the written media and in narration in non-literary forms, on the one hand, and in trans- and interdisciplinary fertilization of narratological concepts and methodologies, on the other. No fewer than four of the parallel sessions were devoted to narration in film, television, video, photography, multimedia and computer games. Other sessions or individual papers dealt with narrative in legal contexts and in learning environments and medicine as well as with the use of narrative in business and management. A number of presentations on

the forms and degrees of narrativity in music and the performing arts, including dance, provided further evidence of the shifting boundaries of narrative features within the aesthetic domain to cast a new light on non-verbal art forms, further marking the rise of transmedial narratology. Although the types of narrative taken into account by the contributors to the conference is expanding, literary narrative continued to occupy an important place, not only with papers on ancient and non-Western narratives, but also on familiar issues such as metafiction, anti-narrative strategies, narrative identity and character analysis and narrative space as well as on feminist narratology and rhetorical narratology. However, in the wake of numerous developments in narrative theory over the past two decades, and particularly as a result of the considerable efforts that have gone into trans- and interdisciplinary approaches to narrative, these subjects were taken up within the framework of new paradigms. Finally, a number of sessions and individual papers were organized around unnatural narratology, whose interest in non-conventional and anti-mimetic storyworlds, minds and narrative acts serves as one of the focal points of current theoretical debate and controversy.

It is interesting that although cognitive aspects of narrative were evident in many of the contributions, few papers were specifically on cognitive narratology. Certainly work in this area is ongoing and much remains to be done, but one might wonder whether for some researchers, at least, the relevant findings of the cognitive sciences have now been more or less assimilated into mainstream narratology. Another tendency that emerged from the conference is that few if any of the papers took up such questions as the universals of narrative, foundational principles, general narrative models, etc., but, still within a theoretical framework, seemed to concentrate on the functioning and effects of specific types of narrative or even of individual narratives in different environments and in the various media.

A selection of papers from the conference with focus on either media/cinema or on unnatural narratology is to be published under the editorship of Per Krogh Hansen and Jan Alber in the *Narratologia* series at de Gruyter. Another selection will appear on the *Amsterdam International Electronic Journal for Cultural Narratology*. Proceedings in general will be made available on the ENN homepage before summer.

One of the most rewarding aspects of the conference is that, true to its name, the ENN has indeed embarked on weaving new networks of inquiry and exchanges for narratologists in the European context. Future conferences of the ENN will offer more opportunities to continue in this direction.

The ENN Steering Committee

