
“SAMENESS” AND “DIFFERENCE”
IN NARRATOLOGY

NOVEMBER 22, LOCATION: F130

A symposium arranged by Narration, Life and Meaning



“Escaping Criticism” (1874) by Pere Borrell del Caso; PD-Art fetched from Wikimedia Commons.



The symposium "*Sameness*" and "*Difference*" in Narratology (November 22, 2017) is arranged by the interdisciplinary research environment Narration, Life and Meaning [Berättande, Liv, Mening; BLM] at Örebro University. We would like to express our gratitude to the School of Humanities, Education and Social Sciences at Örebro University and the Swedish Academy, who have co-funded the symposium.

About Narration, Life and Meaning

Narration, Life and Meaning is a research environment at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Örebro University. The main aim of the interdisciplinary environment is to examine different aspects of narration and narrative, as instruments for the formation of meaningful interpretative patterns relating to lived experiences. The individual research projects concern different kinds of narratives: oral and written, factual and fictional, individual and collective. The materials are varied, and among the genres studied we find autobiographies or memoirs, biographies, collective narratives, and works of fiction.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 22

09.00–09.30: Registration and coffee in the hall of Forumhuset

09.30–09.50: Welcome by Per Klingberg and Tommy Sandberg, organizers and
Introduction by Greger Andersson, organizer and head of Narration, Life and Meaning

Note: The Welcome, Introduction, and panels take place in Room F130, located in Forumhuset.

Panel I Chair: Tommy Sandberg

09.50–10.10 Matti Hyvärinen, University of Tampere
Between narratologies and narrative studies?

10.10–10.30 Mari Hatavara, University of Tampere
The sameness and difference of 3rd person mind representation in and outside of fiction

10.30–10.50 Hanna Meretoja, University of Turku
Beyond sameness and difference: Narrative sense-making in life and literature

10.50–11.10 Discussion

11.10–11.30 Coffee break

Panel II Chair: Greger Andersson

11.30–11.50 Anniken Greve, UiT The Arctic University
Significant differences between different research acts: A meta-theoretical approach to narrative theory

11.50–12.10 Marina Grishakova, University of Tartu
On narrative uncertainty

12.10–12.30 Discussion

12.30–13.30 Lunch, Kraka Restaurant, located in Långhuset (invited guests only)

Panel III Chair: Lars-Åke Skalin

13.30–13.50 Henrik Skov Nielsen, Aarhus University
Fictionality and narrativity – sameness and difference

13.50–14.10 Simona Zetterberg Gjerlevsen, Aarhus University
Sameness and differences of realism and fictionality

14.10–14.30 Per Krogh Hansen and Marianne Wolff Lundholt, University of Southern Denmark
Sameness and difference in narratology within an organizational context

14.30–14.50 Discussion

14.50–15.10 Coffee break

- Panel IV** Chair: Johanna Stenersen
- 15.10–15.30 Tommy Sandberg, Örebro University
The critique of narratology's "sameness" approach to literary fiction: An overview
- 15.30–15.50 Greger Andersson, Örebro University
[To be announced]
- 15.50–16.10 Lars-Åke Skalin, Örebro University
Aesthetic theory confronting narratology on the question: "Sameness or difference?"
- 16.10–16.30 Discussion
- 16.30–17.00 Concluding discussion
- 18.00– Dinner at a place downtown (Invited guests only)

PANEL I: 09.50–11.10

1. Matti Hyvärinen

University of Tampere, Finland

Between narratologies and narrative studies?

Historically, everyday narratives were studied from the perspective of artistic or quasi-oral, conventional stories (Propp, Beginning, middle and end). The specificity of everyday narration has been properly thematised only during the last 20 years. In my own work, I have documented that the narrative turn in social sciences did not rely on the transportation of literary narratology as a theory into social research, but was largely based on the popularity of narrative as a new metaphor and on using stories as research material. Currently, very few social scientists, besides me, work with narratological concepts, or try to integrate them into the social studies of narrative. For this reason, and because of the difference between these programs, full integration between literary narratology and narrative studies seems highly unlikely. Yet, two complementary claims can be made about the interplay between the two. Firstly, I think that the exchange of central concepts between these projects is both possible and productive (voice, story/discourse, positioning, narrative environment). Secondly, "basic hermeneutic procedures" quite obviously are at work in understanding everyday and literary narratives. These procedures as such, of course, are not sufficient for proper understanding of any narratives. Narrative environments and situations function in particular ways, as do literary practices. I will discuss this layered understanding of narrative sense making by reading Ian McEwan's *Nutshell*. It presents a rather ordinary story about adultery and a consequent crime, yet unnaturally enough told by a foetus. The foetus explains his familiarity with cultural norms by telling that he had listened, with the mother, nightly broadcasts. This, for example, is a folk psychological explanation ("people can learn by listening to the radio"), even though totally impossible in the case of a foetus. At the end of the novel, the foetus takes his revenge on behalf of his father. His motives are, at the same time, both folk psychologically sound and understandable and impossibly unnatural and literary in the spirit of Hamlet. Basic hermeneutic procedures do not foreclose aesthetic or literary interpretations, they support and enrich them.

2. Mari Hatavara

University of Tampere, Finland

The sameness and difference of 3rd person mind representation in and outside fiction

In the pursuit to tease out similarities and differences across narratives of different genre and media this paper concentrates on the narrative discourse modes of mind representation in 3rd person narratives in fictional and nonfictional narratives. Based on the joint research on fictionality by Jarmila Mildorf and myself, I analyze the sameness in the *modes* of mind representation and the differences in the *interpretation* of those in fictional and non-fictional narrative environments. I compare examples of mind representation and mind attribution from 3rd person narrative fiction to nonfictional narratives of vicarious experience. Narrative modes analyzed include internal focalization, discursive blends like free indirect discourse and the use of mental verbs. Whereas in fiction the heterodiegetic narrator holds a privileged epistemological relation to the character and is even able to relate her unconscious mind, narratives of vicarious experience in everyday life raise the question on storytelling rights. Fictional narrative modes bring about a dual-voicedness in any narrative environment, that is, they double or may even triple the subjective points of view present in the narrative. Therefore, fictional narrative modes in mind representation potentially unsettles the unity of the message, and the reader or listener is faced with an interpretative task of trying to engage with the mind represented and the mind representing, the story and the discourse. The effects of the use of vicarious stories may differ greatly, depending on how questionable the storytelling rights of the teller become.

3. Hanna Meretoja

University of Turku, Finland

Beyond sameness and difference: Narrative sense-making in life and literature

In this paper, I argue that the dichotomous question of whether narratives in fiction and “real life” are the same or different is not the most productive approach because there are both crucial similarities and differences between them. I would like to argue that the dominant “similarity approaches”, developed in cognitive narratology, tend to rely on ahistorical and universalizing assumptions, whereas the “difference approaches” tend to rely on positivistic assumptions on factuality, raw/pure experience and the non-referentiality of fiction. I propose narrative hermeneutics as a way of moving beyond this dichotomy and beyond the dominant cognitive and positivistic frameworks. It approaches all narrative practices as culturally mediated interpretative practices, but it acknowledges the difference between fictional and non-fictional narrative practices and provides tools for analyzing both in ways that are sensitive to their differences. I argue that both literary and non-literary narratives are *culturally-mediated practices of sense-making* that involves the activities of *interpreting* and *presenting* someone’s experiences in a specific situation to someone from a certain *perspective* or perspectives as part of a *meaningful, connected account*, and which has a *dialogical* and a *productive, performative* dimension and is relevant for the understanding of *human possibilities*. A crucial difference between fictional and non-fictional narratives is that in the first case the issue of truth takes place on a *non-propositional level*, that is, on the level of the narrative as a whole.

PANEL II: 11.30–12.30

1. Anniken Greve

UiT The Arctic University, Norway

Significant differences between different research acts: A meta-theoretical approach to narrative theory

The paper will see the question of sameness and difference in narrative theory as an invitation to compare different narrative theories and their respective approaches to narrative as *research acts*. The model that will be employed, asks us to distinguish between the *telos* of the research act in question; the theoretical assumptions underpinning it, what material (narratives) it requires (perhaps also how the material enters into the research act), and the method(s) employed in carrying out the research act. The aim is to present a meta-theoretical tool that hopefully will improve our understanding of how different theoretical trends, schools and traditions within narrative theory differ from each other with respect to what research act they seek to carry out, what kinds of claims their research acts corroborate, and what kinds of differences between theoretical schools and tendencies within the field we should expect and even welcome. (There might also be differences the model teaches us to recognise as based on poor understanding of our own research act or on poor understanding of the research act of others.)

2. Marina Grishakova

University of Tartu, Estonia

On narrative uncertainty

In his engaging and thought-provoking book *The Mathematics of Meaning* (1997), Svend Østergaard observes: “Narratology requires that the object possesses an objectivity of the same kind as classical physics owned to, in which the objectivity consisted in the possibility of localizing the physical body (the space-time coordinates) and also of prescribing a dynamics that regulates the objects’ interaction (force,

impulse, and so forth). Literature, as opposed to narrative, is defined by the fact that objects without objectivity in the above sense slip in" (153). From this perspective, the study of narrative looks similar to classical physics, whereas literature (resp. poetics) guided by principles of relativity and uncertainty seems to be akin to post-classical physics. The uncertainty principle and the principle of "family resemblance" that translate any essentialist definition of literature into a set of loosely bound features are also referred to by Genette in his *Fiction and Diction*. It could be argued, however, that both (personal) real-life and fictional narratives describe things as perceived rather than "objective" things (see my "Notes on narrative..", *Sign Systems Studies* 44: 4) and, thereby, allow for various types of uncertainty. Illusion is inherent in both perception and narrative dynamics. The dynamics of expectation, suspense, and surprise involves a conflict between the top-down processing (a schematic expectation) and bottom-up perceptual input, a corrective "re-reading" and flipping back and forth between expectation and percept – the processes characteristic of perceptual illusions. On the one hand, literary uncertainty and "surprise" should be assessed against the background of "conditional" poetics (Genette) rather than as merely logically controversial or "non-realistic" (unnatural) devices. On the other, exploration of different types of uncertainty that "literature" and "narrative" allow for would be a promising way to account for their sameness and difference.

PANEL III: 13.30–14.50

1. Henrik Skov Nielsen

Aarhus University, Denmark

Fictionality and Narrativity – narrative and difference

In the paper I argue for the necessity of distinguishing between the terms "narrative", "fiction", and "fictionality". I argue that not all narratives are fictional and that many, but not all instances of fictionality are narrative. Additionally, I argue from a rhetorical standpoint that it is useful to distinguish between fiction and fictionality. This distinction between fiction and fictionality makes generic fictions a subset of the large class of discourses in which fictionality is employed to communicate about invented, imagined and non-actual states of affairs. I explore the differences and similarities between fictionality and narrativity as well as between fiction and fictionality. Promoting the Aarhus school way of thinking about fictionality, I am suggesting an approach that takes its point of departure in the function of fictionality in human communication and thus is interested in examining similarities and differences between its manifestations in what becomes visible as an amazing range of human interaction. We find fictionality employed in political speeches, in tv-series, in commercials and advertisements, on cereal boxes, in everyday communication, in documentary movies, scenarios, health campaigns and other campaigns, GIFS, porn, children songs, graffiti, philosophical examples, and religious parables to mention just a few from an open-ended list. This realization has implications for our understanding of fictionality as a communicational device in general as well as for literary fiction in particular.

2. Simona Zetterberg Gjerlevsen

Aarhus University, Denmark

Sameness and differences of realism and fictionality

In *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, Ruth Ronen defines literary realism as an artistic mode that reflects and reproduces "aspects of the real world" (2005, 486). Tied to the concept of realism are ideas of mimesis, imitation and verisimilitude that underline the relationship between the semiotic act of representation and "a real world". In the same volume, we learn from David Gorman, that fiction "must consist of 'intendedly untrue' statements because otherwise there would be no way to recognise it" (2005, 163). Even if this notion of fiction could be challenged, there is a general agreement that we are able to recognize fiction and often, it includes characters and plot elements that are untrue, that is, they diverge from "aspects of the real world". From this, realism and fiction seem to conflict because of their apparent

opposite relationships to “the real world”. Yet, realism is a literary convention of fiction. In this paper, I will come to argue that the “sameness” of the concepts thrive on a shared precondition – build into both concepts is an epistemological demand of how to understand “the real world”. I will explore how “the real world” as an unstable category accounts for differences as well as “sameness” of realism and fictionality.

3. Per Krogh Hansen and Marianne Wolff Lundholt

University of Southern Denmark, Denmark

Sameness and difference in narratology within an organizational context

The aim of this paper is to contribute to an increased understanding of sameness and difference in narratology based on an empirical study of narrative sensemaking in Danfoss China’s communication across genres such as strategic documents, corporate film, focus group interviews and town hall meetings. Through an investigation of core narratological concepts such as enunciation, plot, causality, temporality and events the study will display their applicability and shortcomings within the organizational context. The study will be concluded by a reflection of how other theoretical formats such as counter-narrative, positioning and framing theory may become valuable contributions within the field of narratology.

PANEL IV: 15.10–16.30

1. Tommy Sandberg

Örebro University, Sweden

The critique of narratology’s “sameness” approach to literary fiction: An overview

Narratology must be viewed as a successful theory. It has a central role in the study of fiction, such as novels and short stories, and its concepts and distinctions occupy a natural space in narrative researchers’ toolboxes. Still there are theoreticians who question it. In their view, narratology mistakenly approaches fiction as “the same as,” “similar to,” or “continuous with” non-fictional narratives. Instead of delineating fiction as an imitation or second hand version of non-fictional narrative, the critics emphasize the essential difference between what they perceive as two kinds of meaning-making. The aim of this paper is to give a clear understanding of the critique and show that it is more radical than previously thought, in some instances questioning the very philosophy of science behind narratology. In my paper I will describe Sylvie Patron’s scientific critique, Lars-Åke Skalin’s aesthetic-theoretic critique, Richard Walsh’s pragmatic critique, and the proponents of unnatural narratology’s more modest critique of the “realist bias” in narrative theory, with a special focus on Maria Mäkelä’s stronger version of it. I will also present these theoreticians’ alternative ways of theorizing fiction. If the general critique is correct, one may conclude that it could be well advised to approach fiction as a game of meaning-making distinguished from other such games, notwithstanding their apparent similarities. This includes a thoroughly consideration of the functionality of novels and short stories as well as readers’ intuitive perception of them.

2. Greger Andersson

Örebro University, Sweden

[To be announced]

3. Lars-Åke Skalin

Örebro University, Sweden

Aesthetic theory confronting narratology on the question: “Sameness or difference?”

Is it self-evident that a theory of narrative fiction, a poetics, must be regarded as an integrated part of a general narrative theory? To standard narratology this is so: narrative fiction can be shown sharing the basic constituting properties of what is defined as narrative; accordingly, it is part of that wide category. To an aesthetic/artistic theory, however, that conclusion is not self-evident; rather, a necessary condition for practical approaches is realizing differences. The aesthetic/artistic theory I advocate does not attempt to find a general definition of narrative that could include literary fiction, its core is in viewing the latter as connected to the fine arts. This is a view that goes back to the aesthetics of mimesis in Plato and Aristotle and their followers and has been alive in certain traditions of aesthetics since then. The representations of literary stories as artworks are supposed to have more in common with paintings, drama, dance, and even music than narrative reports of what happened. It is true that Aristotle emphasizes the mimesis of *praxeos*, “action”, in his *Poetics*, but not as *information* about events given to the audience for their *knowledge*, but as performing an intended *genre-constituting* function. Such representations make “tragedy” or “comedy”, that is, what is presented to be the objects offering *aesthetic experience* to an audience. With my contextualist method I try to point out features in the design of concrete literary text-examples, arguing that reflecting on how such designs function should constitute the basis of a poetics. The found features make us recognize that literary fiction as art and natural narratives are two different systems, or language-games-cum-forms-of-life (to use Wittgensteinian terms). To get the accurate comprehension of what they meet in literary artworks, readers take on an attitude answering to kinds of expectations very different from those governing their comprehension of natural narratives.
