

Birgit Neumann, Ansgar Nünning, Bo Pettersson (eds.)  
with Simon Cooke, René Dietrich, Merja Polvinen and Alexandre Segão Costa

## Narrative and Identity

Theoretical Approaches and Critical Analyses

# GCSC

## Giessen Contributions to the Study of Culture

1

Edited by

Horst Carl, Wolfgang Hallet, Ansgar Nünning, Martin Zierold



International Graduate Centre  
for the Study of Culture

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Ed. by Birgit Neumann, Ansgar Nünning and Bo Pettersson  
with Simon Cooke, René Dietrich, Merja Polvinen  
and Alexandre Segão Costa.-

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## PREFACE

Cooperation can start in so many ways, especially if grace of some kind is involved.

Say you send a colleague you have never met a paper in which you make use of and critically comment on a paper of his. Now that could be the end of your communication. But if that colleague is Professor Ansgar Nünning at Justus Liebig University in Giessen it is not – in fact, it *was* not. Ansgar simply sent me an email graciously thanking me for my comments. He also said he had noted that I was head of a graduate school of literary studies and, well, so was he, so was I interested in collaborating.

This is how the cooperation between The Giessen International Graduate Centre for the Study of Culture and The Finnish Graduate School of Literary Studies got started in 2005. Meeting in Helsinki in the spring of 2006, Ansgar and I decided to think about a seminar theme that might best cover our and our graduate students' various research interests. We settled on "Narrative and Identities" and had our first joint seminar in Giessen in early November 2006.

Since the seminar was deemed a success by one and all, we thought that a selection of its papers should be published. Dr. habil. Birgit Neumann and Ansgar Nünning edited the German papers and I the Finnish ones, with much appreciated editorial help from Simon Cooke, René Dietrich and Alexandre Segão Costa in Giessen and Merja Polvinen in Helsinki. Our hope is that the theoretical papers will contribute to the growing interdisciplinary research on the relations between narrative and identity and that the breadth of critical praxis exemplified – ranging from Virginia Woolf to popular evolutionary biology, from science fiction to postmodern fiction – will amply show the scope and importance of such relations in fiction and beyond.

By now well aware of the serendipity and grace that at times accompany academic relations, I would like to quote Humphrey Bogart in *Casablanca*: "I think this could be the beginning of a beautiful friendship".

Helsinki in December 2007

Bo Pettersson





## PREFACE

Usually one preface is more than enough but since this volume is the result of a particularly fruitful international joint venture, two prefaces may, for once, be in order. Basically, I can only echo Bo Pettersson's appraisal of this, the first but certainly not the last, co-operation between the Finnish Graduate School of Literary Studies and the International Graduate Centre for the Study of Culture. We have long admired the inspiring work carried out at the Finnish Graduate School, thus when Bo sent me an article of his which made clear our shared concerns in narrative studies, it was immediately apparent that there was great potential for more long-term institutional collaboration. In a meeting in Helsinki, the direction such a collaboration could take became clear: "Narrative and Identity" seemed the perfect theme to bring the schools, and its graduate students, together. I am delighted to say that these plans resulted in a highly stimulating and inspiring conference, as this volume amply testifies.

What is more, this event came at a crucial time for Giessen and its doctoral students. The conference from which this volume ensued was held less than one month after the International Graduate Centre for the Study of Culture was awarded funding by the German Research Foundation under the new 'Excellence Initiative'. We are particularly pleased to say that the conference on "Narrative and Identity" was the very first event organised within the aegis of the then newly formed GCSC, and we could not have asked for a more successful, and enjoyable, inaugural conference. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the German Research Foundation for making this, as well as many other inspiring co-operations possible. Furthermore, I would like to thank the International PhD Programme (IPP) 'Literary and Cultural Studies' for their great co-operation and support in this as well as in many other projects.

My gratitude is also due to the many doctoral students, whose suggestions and criticism have enriched the conference and the present volume. In particular, I would like to thank Simon Cooke, René Dietrich and Alexandre Segão Costa in Giessen and Merja Polvinen in Helsinki for the much appreciated editorial help. Many thanks to Wiebke Beushausen for checking the bibliographies. And last but not least I wish to thank all the contributors to this volume for their conscientious revisions and for the excellent co-operation.

Giessen in December 2007

Ansgar Nünning