

Narrative Matters



Editors' Introduction

William L. Randall and A. Elizabeth McKim

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[See table of contents](#)

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NARRATIVE WORKS
Issues, Investigations, & Interventions

Editors' Introduction

William L. Randall & A. Elizabeth McKim

Centre for Interdisciplinary Research on Narrative
St. Thomas University

An inaugural issue is, by definition, a special issue. In the case of this inaugural issue, it includes, first of all, the full texts of panel presentations on “Future Challenges for Narrative Research” made in November 2010 at the tenth anniversary celebration of the Centre for Narrative Research (CNR), based at the University of East London, UK. Among the panelists and respondents were Molly Andrews, Corinne Squire, and Maria Tamboukou (Co-Directors of CNR), Cigdem Esin (the CNR Research Fellow), and narrative scholars Jens Brockmeier, Michael Erben, Mark Freeman, Alexandra Georgakopoulou, Margareta Hydén, Matti Hyvärinen, Margareta Jolly, Mike Rustin, and Olivia Sagan. It’s an honour for us to incorporate these presentations into this inaugural issue. Besides identifying some of the challenges faced by narrativists amid the climate change evident nowadays in a growing number of universities—i.e., the insistence on empirical-quantitative approaches to research—including these pieces profiles the interdisciplinary reach of narrative scholarship and, with it, the rich international relationships such scholarship has been fostering.

Since its establishment, CNR has played a central role in the UK-European scene in expanding awareness of narrative theory, research, and inquiry on a wide range of issues. With the aid of *Narrative Works*, our hope in The Centre for Interdisciplinary Research on Narrative (CIRN) is to play a parallel role within the global narrative community, especially where the links between theory and practice are concerned. *Narrative Works* joins a small but important circle of periodicals—including *Narrative Inquiry*, *Storyworlds*, and *Curriculum Inquiry*—that are serving the ever-expanding field of narrative studies. Its distinct contribution, though, is its commitment to exploring the theory-practice connection, a commitment reflected in its title and sub-title and in the exciting range of scholars and disciplines represented on its Editorial Board.

A small indication of this range is represented in the rest of the essays that are included in our inaugural issue. We are delighted to include an invited paper by a pioneer in narrative psychology, Ruthellen Josselson. Along with

Amia Lieblich, Josselson was editor of *The Narrative Study of Lives*, a groundbreaking series published by Sage between 1993 and 1999. Josselson wrestles with a recurring issue faced by many narrative researchers, namely “the dilemmas . . . created by the gaps between the authority of *experience* . . . and the authority of *expertise*”—the question, that is, of “who . . . ‘owns’ the narrative” in narrative research. Her paper is a revised version of the keynote speech she gave at the fifth (biennial) *Narrative Matters* conference in May 2010 in Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada, which is home to St. Thomas University (STU) and CIRN. Other speakers at the 2010 event were Jean Clandinin and Kenneth and Mary Gergen—like Josselson, well-known names in the narrative world.

Ellen Rose writes of her experience with intercultural communication in Bhutan, and argues that such communication “should entail not merely the business-like, efficient exchange of information with different others but the crucial development of a feeling of connection and an appreciation for diverse ways of being in the world.” This development can be “enabled,” she proposes, by “the human impulse to make sense of the world through narrative.”

Carmen Shields, Nancy Novak, Brenda Marshall, and John Guiney Yallop explore, in presenting their own stories, their choice to undertake self-study narrative inquiry through graduate studies in Education, and “the impact this choice has had on personal and professional directions in ways we could not have imagined when graduate studies were initially embarked upon.”

Corinne McKamey presents two “exemplary narrative case studies to illustrate the multiple ways caring functioned for students in their urban high school context,” and argues that that “we should widen our conception of educational care to be inclusive of the complex and overlapping ways that students engage in processes of caring for and caring about.”

From time to time, *Narrative Works* will include a section we call “Outside the Box,” in which we present an article that goes beyond orthodox thought, methods, or media. In this issue, we’re happy to include the text and video of an invited lecture by German scholar Stephan Marks, given at the launch of CIRN in October 2008. Marks analyzes the findings of his History and Memory project, which uncovered the hidden and hostile stories still underlying German culture more than half a century after World War II, and the shame those stories reveal. Marks proposes that narrative can be instrumental in achieving peace and reconciliation.

A final feature of this inaugural issue is the “Announcements” section, which includes a brief piece on the arrival in Canada of narrativist Clive Baldwin. Baldwin has recently come to STU from the University of Bradford, UK, as the first-ever Canada Research Chair in Narrative Studies, a five-year appointment funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC)—the same body that enabled us to found CIRN in the first place and therefore to launch *Narrative Works*. We wanted to give Clive this

opportunity to introduce himself to the narrative community and to outline the intriguing programme of research on which he's set to embark.

Next fall, look in the second issue of *Narrative Works* (and on the CIRN website: <http://w3.stu.ca/stu/sites/cirn/index.aspx>) for the Call for Papers for *Narrative Matters 2012*. With assistance from CIRN, *Narrative Matters* is being organized by Brian Schiff, Chair of the Department of Psychology at the American University of Paris, and a member of *Narrative Work's* Editorial Board. Given the location in Paris (previous conferences were all held in Canada), we're excited about the widened circle of delegates that are expected to attend. We're also excited by the theme Brian is proposing for the conference, "Life and Narrative." If one theme runs through this issue of *Narrative Works*, not to mention the issues that will follow, it is that "life" and "narrative" are intimately entwined. Compared to more conventional modes of inquiry, narrative approaches, we believe, can better reflect human life in all its complexity and subjectivity, thereby achieving a more soul-ful integration of insights from the social sciences with those from the humanities, the arts, and a broad range of professional practice.

William L. Randall, EdD, Director of CIRN and Co-editor of *Narrative Works*, is Professor of Gerontology at St. Thomas University, where he teaches courses on aging and health, counselling older adults, older adults as learners, and narrative gerontology. Educated at Harvard, Princeton Seminary, and the University of Toronto, he first became interested in narrative during his studies in theology, then later in education. Bill has authored or co-authored various publications on narrative approaches to understanding aging. Co-organizer of the first *Narrative Matters* conferences, in 2002 and 2004, and often asked to speak on narrative gerontology, his research interests include narrative care with older adults, narrative foreclosure in later life, and the narrative complexity of autobiographical memory. His most recent books include *Reading Our Lives: The Poetics of Growing Old* (co-authored with Elizabeth McKim; Oxford, 2008), and *Storying Later Life: Issues, Investigations, and Interventions in Narrative Gerontology* (co-edited with Gary Kenyon and Ernst Bohlmeijer; Oxford, 2011).

A. Elizabeth McKim, PhD, Associate Director of CIRN and Co-editor of *Narrative Works*, is Professor of English at St. Thomas University, where she teaches courses on the Romantic period, Jane Austen, literature and medicine, and literature and aging. Educated at the University of New Brunswick, Concordia University, and York University, Beth's early interest in narratology has broadened into an interest in the psychological and neurological aspects of narrative, and her recent publications have reflected this interdisciplinary direction. She has explored identity issues in the poetry of Elizabeth Bishop, the headache narratives of Jane Cave Winscom (a 19th century British poet), and has collaborated with Bill Randall on a variety of presentations, publications, and workshops on the poetics of aging, most recently *Reading Our Lives: The Poetics of Growing Old* (Oxford, 2008).