

## Introduction

The 15<sup>th</sup> ISFNR Congress on *Narratives across Time and Space* held in Athens, June 21-27, 2009 was organized by the Hellenic Folklore Research Centre of the Academy of Athens jointly with ISFNR. It was the second time that Athens hosted an ISFNR Congress<sup>1</sup>, the first one dating back to 1964. During these fifty years much has changed, as it is natural. Athens was then a deeply traumatised city coming out from two bloody wars (World War II and a civil war) and trying to find its footing. Nevertheless, it managed to host a conference with all the “rules” of Greek hospitality. In 2009 we welcomed the delegates with better terms on the occasion of the inauguration of the Acropolis Museum, which, we hope, one day will welcome back the treasures that, in a period of foreign domination, were taken out of it. At the same time, there are things that resist change. The space of the University of Athens, which hosted the Conference in 2009, was the same as in 1964, as well as the Old Parliament and the performance of traditional Greek dances from the Lyceum of Greek Women!

Thus the Hellenic Folklore Research Centre (HFRC) seems to have honoured the academically productive past of the 50-year old ISFNR. I am delighted at the dynamic state of the present and I look forward to the future of narratological research, free academic discourse and the globalization of universal human values that are today more necessary than ever, to bring about a worldwide sense of peace and brotherhood among peoples. In a time of international crisis, the 2009 Athens Congress attempted to keep to their utmost fulfilment the values that ‘the Greek Zeus of Hospitality’ has bequeathed us.

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1. For more information on the conference, see *ISFNR Newsletter*, no 5 (May 2010) [[www.isfnr.org/index2.html](http://www.isfnr.org/index2.html)], 3-18 and Donald Haase, “Narratives across Space and Time: Transmissions and Adaptations 15<sup>th</sup> Congress of the International Society of Folk Narrative Research (ISFNR), Athens. 21-26 June 2009”, *Fabula*, 50 (2009) Heft ¾, pp. 312-315 [[www.isfnr.org/index2.html](http://www.isfnr.org/index2.html)].

By the time the 15<sup>th</sup> Conference of ISFNR was held in Athens, fifty years had passed since Kurt Ranke collaborated with various notable scholars and students of folk narratives to found the ISFNR, the 'Society', as he himself called it in abbreviated form. During this period, at a total of fourteen congresses and five interim conferences, held in various countries throughout the world, and at various meetings various important individuals, who have adorned the study of narrative, have offered important insights on the subject. These are very well-known individuals in the field of folk narrative, but I will not mention them by name, for fear of accidentally omitting some of them. I will, however, make mention of the late professor Georgios Megas, president of the Hellenic Folklore Society. This body will this year celebrate its hundredth anniversary and has enjoyed an unbroken fervent activity, through the medium of its journal, *Laographia*. In 1964, Megas organised the second 'truly great Congress of the Society in Athens', as Vilmos Voigt expressed it in his excellent prologue to the Proceedings of the conference that took place in 1989 in Budapest. The Proceedings of the 1964 Conference were published in Volume 22 (1965) of *Laographia*, a digitized version of which was distributed to all 2009 congress participants. With the kind permission of the Governing Committee of the Hellenic Folklore Society, the Hellenic Folklore Research Centre decided that the digitization of the volume would be particularly useful for later scholars.

During the summer of 2005, Dr Marilena Papachristophorou informed me from Tartu, in Estonia, where she was representing the HFRC at the 14<sup>th</sup> ISFNR Congress, of the possibility of hosting the 15<sup>th</sup> ISFNR Congress in Athens. I replied in the affirmative, having great confidence in the power of the young generation of Greek researchers, for most of the members of the Organizing Committee are young. This was an opportunity for the Congress to take place once more in Athens, the city that gave birth to myth and word and their combination, at an ISFNR anniversary, since it was here that its constitution was ratified.

Generations come and go. For half a century the ISFNR, in conjunction with the journal *Fabula*, the *Enzyklopaedie des Märchens* and various other publications, has hosted extremely important events on narratology. The ISFNR holds a leading place in folklore narrative research both in Europe and America and in the Far, Near and Middle East, India and the Caucasus.

The path of narratological research has largely followed the corresponding progress of studies in folklore, ethnology and anthropology, that is, a path involving structuralism, deconstruction, feminism and post-modernism, employing the corresponding modernist vocabulary.

During the course of these fifty years, the ISFNR has been a place open to new theories, currents and scholarly methods. It did not create theories, which was absolutely expectable.

During the first period, starting from 1959, the research of the first generation, that of the founding fathers, informed by the study of form, typology and structure, held sway. At the Budapest conference, in 1989, the baton was passed on to a new generation, among which was Lauri Honko, an excellent scholar who had long been head of the Nordic Institute of Folklore and editor in-chief of the series *FFC*. Another representative of this generation was the ever energetic Vilmos Voigt.

In 2005 it became apparent that the baton had now passed onto the latest generation, familiar with the Internet and the new media. Among others, I may mention Wolfgang Mieder, Terry Gunnell, Timothy Tangherlini, Ülo Valk and Ulrich Marzolph, followed by other dynamic young scholars. This speedy succession shows a dynamism and interest, despite the fact that the humanities are facing the greatest crisis in the history of culture. Indeed, I may say that folklore and ethnological studies and their corresponding research institutions are facing a great crisis, whilst the object of their study has begun to change in the wider context of globalisation. This has occurred, because throughout the history of culture, until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there were many and important breakthroughs, although the results were only gradually absorbed into various cultures, depending on the ability of traditional societies to absorb new features at the level of structures, institutions and technology. The explosive changes wrought by technology during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, particularly in the areas of communication and the transmission of knowledge, found mechanisms of traditional societies unprepared and unable to receive and absorb new knowledge and its consequences for the daily life of the masses. The result was that values and principles that had sustained for millenia and had guided the steps of mankind until recently retreated and were razed. The mass of information that concerns human activity and defines human behaviour at an individual and collective level was difficult to cope with and frequently could not be handled. Besides, the identification of traditional culture with conservatism was the main reason why traditional culture was devalued. The same seems to have happened in most countries throughout the world. As for us who are here, however, I assume that we are sure of its value and importance for the history of peoples.

This reality has led international organizations, such as UNESCO, by deeply appreciating the great importance of the protection of the peoples' cultural heritage, to recognise as cultural goods the oral and in-

tangible cultural heritage<sup>2</sup> (e.g. The Nofaku Theater of Japan, the Jemaa el-Fna Square in Marrakesh, storytellers and snake charmers of Morocco, the parade of the faithful of San Giacomo di Compostela, etc.). New international conventions, declarations, laws and debates have helped to establish a new framework for the protection of the intangible cultural heritage of humanity. The people must maintain control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions, as well as the manifestations of their science, technologies and cultures, including human and other genetic resources, namely the seeds, medicines, knowledge of fauna and flora properties, together with the oral traditions, literature, original designs, sports and traditional games, and visual and performing arts.

It is with this thought in mind regarding the value of tradition that in the past fifteen years we made use of the tools that current technology offers in the area of information technology to create a collaborative network at national, but, above all, at international level. The aim was to support the values that constitute the backbone of the traditional culture of our people. Thus, we have digitized almost all of our archive, some million pieces of evidence, and have created an infrastructure for continuing with this digital recording in the future. Through our portal the HFRC is linked to similar bodies, that is, research foundations, secondary schools and cultural and ethno-regional associations in Greece and abroad that are interested in maintaining and making use of the cultural heritage of their peoples as a natural and firm foundation for the globalization of universal human values. The HFRC promotes the same line of thought in practice through its projects and museums, and by holding conferences and exhibitions.

It is as part of this that the HFRC has signed an initial collaborative agreement with the *Museum of the Peoples of Europe and the Mediterranean* in Marseilles. The plan is a large museum with material on themes common to many people. Thus, it was delighted to take up the task of organizing the 15<sup>th</sup> ISFNR Congress on the theme of *Narratives in Time and Space: Transmission and Adaptations*.

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2. U.N. Educ., Sci., & Cultural Org. [UNESCO], The States Parties to the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003), <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?pg=00024> (last updated Feb. 23, 2009). Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, Oct. 20, 2005, U.N. Doc. CLT-2005/CONVENTION DIVERSITE-CULT REV., available at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001429/142919e.pdf> [hereinafter 2005 UNESCO Convention].

For this congress, which bears such a broad and impressive title, I would like to say that it really was a world-wide event. The participants came literally from the four corners of the globe. Every continent – Europe, America, Asia, Africa and Oceania – was represented.

The communications covered the theme of narratives over all time and space, whilst the congress subtopics and the two symposia reflected on the subjects of current narrative research in all its aspects.

The addresses at the plenary sessions touched upon many matters. They made particular mention of the spread of popular narratives throughout the world, of their transmission, of their historical continuity in various forms of narrative (such as anecdotes), of research developments and strategies and matters of interpretation at the level of local examples.

As for the various subtopics, the first, regarding the *History and Future of Folk Narrative Research*, consisted of 38 communications that dealt with a number of subjects. These included historical and theoretical matters connected with narratological research, the transmission of narratives in relation to the birth of the discipline of folklore, the subject of printed folktales, the mapping of narratives, the copyright of narratives, proverbs, the local development of narratological research in various countries and historical and comparative studies of narratives. The papers also touch upon general matters, such as the place of folk narrative in contemporary folklore research and the question of whether ISFNR meetings have led to the creation of new theories over the last half century. The second subtopic, entitled *Mythologies, Ecology and Environmental Representations*, gave form to the historical and contemporary paths of enquiry that inform narratological research today and that are notable for their sensitization and concern for the environment. This subtopic had 35 speakers. The third subtopic, entitled *Migrant and Diaspora Communities: Adaptation and Memory*, stressed the sociological and anthropological dimensions of folklore. Like the following subtopic, it offered a platform for cross-disciplinary collaboration for folklorists, anthropologists, historians and sociologists. At the same time, the third subtopic concentrated on a subject that is particularly important today and is characterized by transnationalism and global transformations, such as migration and the diaspora of men and cultures. The fourth subtopic, *Social Strategies and Collective Identities*, with 36 speakers, stressed, beyond the theoretical dimension, the applied aspect of narratological research. The fifth subtopic, *Storytelling and Storytellers*, included even more speakers, about 70 altogether. This shows that narrative and narrator and anything connected with this remains at the heart of the inter-

ests of the ISFNR members. The sixth subtopic, entitled *Folk Narrative in the Modern Media*, was occupied with contemporary developments followed by folk narratological research. Part of its academic inquiry was the investigation of narratives, as contemporary media allows one to study them, with the Internet as the leading factor. This subtopic included 29 papers. One subgroup of communications consisted of those relating to *Folk Narratives and Art Representations*. This contained 11 interesting communications, which dealt with the relation of narrative with music and performance, and adopted an interdisciplinary approach.

The congress also hosted two independent symposia: a) the second symposium of the Committee on *Charms, Charmers and Charming* and b) the symposium on *Belief Tales*, which contained 33 communications on various subjects. The latter included narratives and popular beliefs from various parts of the world on ghosts, saints, demons, Jesus Christ, and 'the other' in cross-cultural opposition, on dreams of the dead, on mythical topographies regarding death, on witches, lycanthropes, demonic beings, modern religious movements, such as the New Age, on historical facts, religious legends, contemporary legends and miracles. The symposium on *Charms and Charming* contained 16 papers on various subjects. These included books of charms from various parts of the world, magic in daily life, charms and divine personalities, multimedia videolibraries of charms, composition and linguistic expression in charms, ancient charms, ritual interdictions on the transmission of charms and the relationship between ritual and text in exorcism.

As is apparent from the subjects discussed at the congress, tradition in narrative discourse is far from being a dead subject, consigned to the archives. In fact, it is a constantly renewed piece of cultural heritage. It is defined by place and time, but it also lies beyond them, a feature that makes it an object of world-wide cultural heritage and a point of communication and dialogue among the peoples of the world.

The preparation of such a large congress began to absorb the HFRC immediately after the completion of the preceding ISFNR Congress at Tartu in Estonia, from which we took up the torch. Apart from thanks owed to the personnel of the Centre, who have given much of their time and efforts to ensure the success of the congress, thanks are also due to various other bodies and persons.

First, I would like to thank His Excellency the President of the Hellenic Republic, Karolos Papoulias, who placed the Congress under the auspices of his Presidency.

Thanks are also due to the President of the ISFNR, Ülo Valk and the members of the ISFNR for their confidence in us, which they displayed

by entrusting the conduct of the 15<sup>th</sup> Congress to the HFRC, and for the impeccably cooperative spirit that they have shown throughout the period of preparation. Thanks are also due to the members of the Senate of the Academy of Athens and particularly to the then President, professor Panos Ligomenidis and the Secretary General, the late N. Matsaniotis, who agreed to hosting so large a conference and who furnished available space and money to the members of the overseeing Committee of the HFRC and particularly to the President of the Committee, the late C. Drakatos, and to Nestor of the academy and former minister of education, professor K. Despotopoulos, who gave an opening address to the Congress.

I may extend our thanks to the following: the Ministries of Education and Culture for their moral and financial support, the 'Kostas and Heleni Ourani Foundation' (under the aegis of the Academy of Athens) for its generous financial support, the Senate of the University of Athens for its kindness in granting us the use of its formal hall for the opening ceremony and reception of Congress participants, the Hellenic American Union for its kind granting of its spaces for Congress sessions and for restaurant facilities, the Historical and Ethnological Society of Greece for the use of its hall for Congress sessions, and its exhibition area for our exhibitions, the Parnassos Literary Society for the granting of its ceremonial hall for plenary sessions and concerts, the Hellenic Folklore Society and in particular its President, professor Michalis Meraklis, for material on the history of the Society and for granting us permission to reproduce the IV<sup>th</sup> ISFNR Congress Proceedings in digital form, Mr Nicos Papageorgiou for the masques and musical instruments from his private collection displayed at the Congress exhibition, the *Lykeion ton Ellinidon* (Lyceum of Greek Women) for its concert of music and dance, the Museum of Greek Children's Art for its exhibition on fairytales, Dr Nicos Xanthoulis and the musical group *Chrysea Forminx*, the Dance Section of the Athens University Students' Cultural Group, storyteller Congress colleagues Robyn Gwyndaf, Stelios Pelasgos and Yoel Perez, for contributing in various ways to the cultural events of the Congress, the great artist and internationally-known tenor, Marios Frangoulis, who kindly offered to take part in the opening of our Conference with three narrative songs by Manos Hadjidakis, the Museum of the Greek Nobel Collection for the professional photographing of the opening ceremony and for the decoration of the hall, the student and teacher volunteers for their help with the smooth running of the Congress, the Greek Association of Industries and Processors of Olive Oil (SEVITEL) and the companies Apivita, Gaia and Ermis for their souvenir gifts made from their pioneering products kindly offered to Congress participants.

Thanks are also due to the members of the academic and organizing Committees and to various Committee members, to the society *Erasmus* for the endless time they devoted to the organization of the programme, of the events and exhibitions as part of the Congress. I would particularly like to thank those who assumed the greatest weight of organization. First, Dr Marilena Papachristophorou, who had during the last four years undertaken the responsibility of coordinating all the preparations necessary for the organization of the Congress. Many thanks go to Dr Evangelos Karamanes, who handled superbly the difficult matter of finance while also contributing to organization during the last stage of preparations. I also thank Dr Vassiliki Chryssanthopoulou, who assumed the task of editing the Book of Abstracts in English, and the researchers of the HFRC Georgios Vozikas and Paris Potiropoulos for supervising the final layouts and printing of the Book of Abstracts and of the Programme. My thanks go to HFRC members, Louisa Karapidaki and Aphroditi Samara, who oversaw the exhibitions for the Congress in collaboration with Dr Maria Androulaki, Dr John Plemmenos, Cleopatra Fatourou, Georgios Kouzas and Elo-Hanna Seljamaa of behalf of ISFNR. I thank Dr Zoi Margari and Ms Zoi Anagnostopoulou for their coordination of the artistic events, Ms Anthoula Bakoli and Mr Socrates Loupas for secretarial support. Finally, I thank all my colleagues at the HFRC for their spirit of cooperation, their participation in the Congress, their papers and above all their patience throughout the Congress.

Being in the pleasant situation to present the three volumes of the Proceedings, first of all I would like to thank warmly all the participants in the 15<sup>th</sup> ISFNR Congress on *Narratives across Time and Space* for contributing to its success.

It was our wish to publish the entire corpus of papers presented at the Congress, so in the fall of 2009 we invited, by e-mail and via the HFRC portal, all participants, even if their papers had already been published or were to be published elsewhere. Detailed guidelines for the authors were uploaded in the same portal by the editors of the publication. As the papers were arriving in the HFRC to the attention of Mr Sokratis Loupas, who worked in a very systematic way by contacting the authors and assuming the publishing preparation for almost a year in 2010, Greece began to lapse into one of the darkest financial periods of its history. In the following months and years we sensed the full impact of the economic crisis, as a mainly public funded Research Centre. Budgets were revised and adapted to the current situation, personnel following suit. The Editorial Committee – formed by Dr Aikaterini Polymerou-Kamilaki and the HFRC's researchers Drs. Evangelos Kara-



manes and John Plemmenos (Marilena Papachristophorou had already, by the fall 2009, left the HFRC for the University of Ioannina), assisted by the HFRC secretary, Ms Anthoula Bakoli, who took up the communication task, and Ms Georgia Tsichritzis who reviewed the English texts (in common with J. Plemmenos) – did everything possible in order to publish the Proceedings. In June 2013 we were in a position to embark upon publication. The Academy of Athens assumed in total the cost of the edition and the Argyropoulos printing company was contracted for printing the three large volumes. Dr Karamanes (acting director of the HFRC since January 2014) took up the necessary administrative procedures and had the supervision of the publication during all this period. I thank them from the bottom of my heart for accomplishing this task under difficult circumstances in order that the Proceedings find their place in the HFRC's series of publications, under number 31.

By the time the forthcoming publication was announced on the HFRC portal, some additional papers arrived to our Secretary. It was nevertheless decided that we published all the received texts: in total, the three volumes contain 129 texts occupying the space of 2184 pages! The authors of the papers follow an alphabetical order and not the one they had in the panel, subtopic or symposium of the original Program of the Conference. In the first volume we included the Conference full program so that the reader has an entire picture of the event. The Editorial Committee decided also to include in the publication the summaries of all the papers presented in the conference, even if they are not published in the Proceedings, because the summaries give some idea of the topics and basic axes around which the papers and subsequent discussion revolved during the conference. We are profoundly grateful to the Senate of the Academy of Athens and the Secretary General, Vassileios Petrakos, for their continuous support to this ambitious publishing project.