

En arche
Re-reading the Beginning of Narrative Texts

The vocabulary of first things seems to be second to none. Just consider the following statement:

An inceptive, primordial, primeval introduction to the archetypical, original and inaugural opening of the initial, embryonic commencement of the earliest inchoate beginning ab ovo predetermined has been unprecedented from the start.

The statement as one of the possible preambles to our conference offers a number of avenues and directions to proceed. It leads, at the same time, to quite a few questions.

Is it somehow true that the way things start is significantly more than just a chance episode in any sequence of events? Is it true that the way things end is necessarily encoded in the way they begin? Can we say that, through various states and processes, the study of history is nothing but the reverse engineering of effect and cause back to a founding event? Has everything been predetermined? Or are there alternative possibilities of unfolding of any state of affairs? Is any situation, however primary, inherently ambiguous, teeming with different scenarios?

Is the apparent focus on beginning just a misleading feature of certain explanatory strategies, brought about by an undue, unfortunate and misplaced emphasis on some aspects of the interconnected nature of things?

Do the beginning of a narrative text and the beginning of the story narrated in the text shape each other? Are they of equal importance? If not, which will dominate the other? What does the arrangement of the episodes say about the story narrated? What counts as a true beginning if there is, in the narrative, not one central character but more than one protagonist?

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Submissions discussing the beginning of narrative texts from a narratological point of view are welcome. As an answer to this first circular you may indicate your intention to attend the conference, and start a discussion about the possible directions of the conference. This may or may not mean the submission of an abstract in this early phase of organization.

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The conference will take place January 29–30, 2019. Papers can be presented in English or Hungarian.

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