INTRODUCTION: LOSING THE PLOT – TANGLING WITH NARRATIVE COMPLEXITY

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What is narrative? The question lies at the heart of narrative approaches to research. The simplicity of the common response to this question, however, 'a story with a beginning, a middle and an end', with its implied coherence, veils significant tensions and ambiguities. This special edition brings together a range of papers from a recent conference that explored some of the uncertainty around the role of coherence in narrative and narrative research. The conference 'Losing the Plot – Tangling with Narrative Complexity,' held in Melbourne, in July, 2010 was inspired by a recent publication, *Beyond Narrative Coherence* (Hyvarinen, Hyden, Saarenheimo and Tamboukou, 2010). This present collection of papers is a response to these questions and ideas from an Australian perspective and it represents a range of disciplinary backgrounds including media and communication, creative writing and psychosocial studies.

Maria Tamboukou, Co-director of the Centre for Narrative Research at the University of East London, UK, and a contributing co-editor of *Beyond Narrative Coherence*, gave the keynote address to the Conference, as part of her Australian Humanities Research Council Visiting Fellowship to support the development of narrative research in Australia. An adaptation of her address introduces this special edition, and also provides an orientation to the following papers.

The final paper by Julie McLeod, from the Graduate School of Education at the University of Melbourne, reviews and critiques the book, *'Beyond Narrative Coherence'*. This offers further insight into issues and questions around coherence and narrative and another lens through which to read the contributing papers within this edition.
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