

Narratology and Deconstruction

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Recent post-structuralist theories of narrative tend to view narrative structure as a facile, artificial or misleading construct ("the illusion of sequence," as a famous symposium put it)—the work of Derrida, Hayden White or Frank Kermode could be mentioned in this connection. White claims that "it is because real events do not offer themselves as stories that their narrativization is so difficult."

But narrativity builds our very sense of reality, the world we live in, the ways we make sense of it. My contention is that real events already offer themselves as stories--that deconstruction of narrativity cannot be restricted to critical, literary or historical representations. It must either revise its claims or extend them to the area of Gestalt psychology. Sequentiality is not illusory—rather, it builds reality, it is reality being transformed, negotiated, and therefore built.

Only, the plots of reality are very traditional stories, whose significance is heavily determined and difficult to negotiate. Deconstructivist critics easily lose sight of this inbuilt narrativity. Its ideological nature, nevertheless, should not be underestimated, and the notion that it is a "natural" kind of narrativity should itself be deconstructed.

Also, the "misleading" nature of narrative should be more closely examined, as compared with other available forms of representation. I doubt that narrative is to blame here more than any other discursive strategy. For instance, we may think of symbolic structures, images... These also create "artificial" sense and intelligibility in the same way as narrative, and have often been the object of deconstructive criticism.

As to the discipline of narratology, it should benefit of the insights of

deconstruction as regards the tentative nature of theoretical constructs; it should accept that its nature is ultimately that of *bricolage*, and that it is subordinated to specific ideological projects—narratology should cease to posit the fixed and objective existence of its categories and analytical concepts. But a facile deconstructive dismissal of narratology should be avoided. Narratology cannot help being "logocentric" or "reductive" from the moment it accepts, for instance, the notion of the philogenetic relationship between literary understanding and the development of literary forms for the sake of establishing a connection with literary history.

In sum, narratology can benefit from some deconstructive moves, but it should not surrender to deconstruction without a fight.

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