

Construction and Deconstruction of Narration: Roland Barthes, Paul de man, Shakespeare and the Gospel

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Abstract: Narration aims at constructing significance. Roland Barthes discusses the constructive mechanism of narration based on the possibility of constructing significance, but hasn't realized the fundamental crack in this structure. Paul de Man exposes the incompatibility of languages and significance in essence, and the imposition and violence of significance and performativity enforced on language and narration respectively, and points out the impossibility of constructing significance. However, he and Barthes were stuck in the unipolarity and generalization of theoretical discourse. We can find the dual functions of construction and deconstruction of narration can be found in some non theoretical writing, such as Shakespeare's works and the gospel, which indicates other positive elements of languages, especially reading.

Key Words: narration' construction; deconstruction; theoretical discourse

1. The Constructive Function of Narration

Roland Barthes remarked at the end of *An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative* that, "In any case, even without stretching the phylogenetic theory, it may be significant that man's offspring should have 'invented', at the same time (around the age of three), both the sentence and Oedipus narrative."¹ Three-year-old children not only begin to develop Oedipus complex, but create sentences and narration, which implies the similarity between the two that they are both out of unconsciousness and belong to our instinct. what kind of instinct it is? It is the instinct of constructing significance by narration. The reason why we call it instinct is that it seems that humans are proceeding towards the end in terms of de-

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velopmental history. In order to realize this construction, humans keep growing up with increasing ability to narrate. Infants babbling to speak is to make preparation for narration; the studying in teen years is to broaden horizon, accumulate corpus and practice technique of narration; adults plan their life depend on prospect design incorporating ego, family and society and so on, which balances multi-dimension of reason, ethics and belief; and combines all the paths of narration with the protagonist flickering in it; senior citizens summarize their experiences by looking back on their lives, saying like “This is life” with metaphoric discourses; They tend to review their life and say: “I’m a ...” or “In our time, we were...”, when people finally get old and talkative with honor but no dream, summarizing and telling around what they know and have “experienced”; at the end of life, namely the completion of narration, people tend to chitchat full of repetition (people would respond, “You’ve told the same story for so many times!”) with formed script but sometimes with slight adjustments.

People write down their own life-stories. which can also be rewritten down by others. “Life with clear goal” implies the realization of plots with distinct themes, while “muddleheaded life” stands for no themes or designs. The former leads to a meaningful life, while the latter a meaningless life. It turns out that the essence of life lies in constructing significance. There is no doubt that narration has a constructive power realized by giving significance to what is being constructed.

Roland Barthes gives detailed explanation of the function of the constructive power, which he referred to as “limp” in *An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative* as the interaction between narrative plots and significance. There is a classification of narrative units. Narration needs to be advanced transversely, which belongs to the distributive unit, while another united unit needed in narration functions as the symbol of significance of up one level. Significance is longitudinal connotation or metaphor which includes at least two upper organizations of “action” and “narration” in narrative works. “Action” is related to personal character(actor), while is narrated to narration narrator and theme. Symbol, as basic unit, must refer to the upper actors or even the overall narrative strategy of upper narration. For example, in *Anna Karenina*, Volynskiy donated 200 rubles to the victim who was killed in a train accident in railway station, which implies the symbols of Volynskiy’s character--wealthiness, generosity and catering to Anna's pleasure. is also a symbol of the novel’s narrative strategy and an explanatory component of story. Distributive plots and thematic symbols should be combined to complete narration. A insipid story without suspense cannot be accepted, neither can meaningless one, because being meaningless lacks significance, the essence of narration. Besides, the “limp” can be fully exposed in terms of the function of narrative structure. All ele-

ments need to gather around significance in the progress of plots, namely unfolding plots and implying at the same time. The fluctuate progressing both transversely and longitudinally is referred to as “limp”. The most significant end of narration is not “theme”, but “logic”, as Roland Barthes remarked, which is a necessary logical phenomenon in terms of the perspective and significance of plot development.

Roland Barthes held that narration could construct significance by such “limp”. As a creative construction, narration is not the repetition and reproduction of existing things, thus being able to inspire people’s enthusiasm related to language: “the passion that may consume us upon reading a novel is not that of a ‘vision’ (in fact, strictly speaking, we ‘see’ nothing). It is the passion to discover meaning, it is a striving towards a higher order of relation, which also carries its emotion, its hopes, its threats, its triumphs, that goes in a narrative is, from the referential (real) point of view, strictly nothing. What does ‘happen’ is language per se, the adventure of language, whose advent never ceases to be celebrated.”²

The above situation is supported by two relevant presumptions. First, constructing significance is possible. Second, such possibility is established on the basis of structural reliability. Therefore, it is the key for ensuring constructing significance to explore the supportive structure behind narration. *An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative*, the possibility of constructing significance can be reliant on the conception of the “integrity” of structure: “a sequence is essentially a whole within which nothing is repeated”³, and integrity is the prefiguration of structural reliability, which means that sequence or any tiny structural element polymerize towards the direction that guides and restricts them. There is no crack, or, if any, non-classical and recoverable crack within it. Roland Barthes totally deserted the integrity idea in the “post-structuralism” phase and turned to the “writability” of texts. He found that every node of texts had various possibilities that could finish all kinds of writing of transferred meaning. For example, a plot may not develop in line with the existing path of the novel, but could turn to different directions with various possibilities. Roland Barthes has done some practice: *A Lover’s Discourse* lacking in discourse integrity is enriched in Voice or Noise, and its context is complemented; *S/Z* is a decoding operation through a transfer, which explores various possibilities of some key nodes of narration in Balzac’s novel *Sarrasin* and exposes the way text weaves between the so called “five encoding” raised by Roland Barthes, thus achieving the purpose of decoding. Different from structuralism, “what he cares now is not the display of a structure, but the production of a structuration”⁴. That is to say, the exposure of various symbolic systems (image, advertisement, car, fashionable dress and narration) is no longer the goal of implication mode, and instead, some crucial nodes need to be found, and present the final pro-

cess of coding out of various possible choice of the nodes. “Writability” has broken through the integrity of structure and left room for uncertainty. Generally speaking, Roland Barthes only made a theoretical demonstration, and his practice didn’t reach the scope of his theory. For example, let construction encounter hesitation and deconstruct itself. Just like what we see in *S/Z*, due to the presupposition of “five types of code”, the “production” of such structure is more like the development of a product manual, a graphic or operating instruction to the “five types of code” and the presupposed theory of their relations.

Despite the fact that narration can be considered human nature, it is not a priori that narration is bound to construct significance because narrative structure is not reliable, or that its reliability is no more than a hypothesis. The basic unit of narration can be divided into two categories, distribution and combination in terms of Roland Barthes’s narrative structure, which is likely to be caught in a tight corner in its function. Volynskiy’s donation is both a combined unit (a symbol of his character) and a distributive one (it’s one of the elements in sequence of what happened in the railway station). Roland Barthes noticed the situation where a unit belongs to both categories, but he explained it as an exceptional case. Is the unit of dual identities capable of ensuring the function of structure towards constructing significance? Does combined unit and distributive unit have the basis of same direction? As a matter of fact, donation is bound to influence its distribution and moving direction if considered to be the symbol of upper level, and vice versa. Donation has its own reasonable direction as a sequence, which would not necessarily move toward Volynskiy’s character. The disagreement between sequence and symbol needs to be dissolved by a lot of efforts, with the best result of being seemingly solved. Volynskiy kept the sequence from developing, thus making it an episode wandering outside the main sequence of the novel, which is also a way to erase structural crack. However, the destruction can be obvious if their centrifugal force takes place in the main sequence of the narrative text. For example, the distinct modernity of the theme of *Romance of the Western Chamber* by Wang Shifu has won itself a lot of credit, but the function mode of the theme has caused harm to the reasonability of plots. The action sequence of protagonists has always been attempted to combine the theme so that Zhang Sheng was willing to and even promised to conduct the plan he couldn’t possibly fulfill—becoming the Number one Scholar. The structural crack of the work didn’t show up until the scene of “bidding a friend farewell”, but the following plots manifested that they were influenced by upper level of significant unit. Zhang Sheng managed to become the Number One Scholar in order to show that where there is a will, there is a way and that the power of love can be unparalleled when he encountered Cui Yingying and fell in love with her on

his way to take exam in Beijing and, which actually left him no time to concentrate on reviewing lessons. Besides, Zhang Sheng had to marry Cui Yingying after he came top in the national exam so as to realize the theme of “all lovers are blessed to be couples”, which also avoided various possibilities that Zhang Sheng was likely to be taken in as a son-in-law by noble families or that he fell in love with other maids and abandoned Cui Yingying. However, the consecution of sequence was ignored. Everything was forced into the subject regardless of or even harm the connectability of sequence itself. The fifth chapter of *Romance of the Western Chamber* thus became a wretched sequel due to its theme and plots, which reflects the internal split of narrative structure: the logic of plots and that of significance are not inherently unified, and the combined highlight logic of narrative works as Roland Barthes imagined does not exist. Therefore, narrative framework is actually filled with structural cracks, or the plot is destructive to its meaning, thus leaving room for awkward silence in many narrations--writers and interpreters can do nothing to make up for the crack but keep silent as significance has torn apart plots. If *Romance of the Western Chamber* would have been finished in the fourth chapter, it could turn out to be so. However, it is due to the fact that some silent cracks can be interpreted into various unified significance that some narrations are “successful”.

2. Destructive Forces in Meaning Construction

Paul de Man referred the situation where plots were incorporated into theme as the violence of significance. He held that language and significance which didn't coexist had no inherent interaction and that significance was an intruder to language. It is not difficult to understand his idea. For example, disagreement is bound to appear if one tries to conform to both grammar and significance it expresses since grammar (belonging to language) is not formed according to the rules of significance. The significance of language brought about by reading can be attributed to the intensive operation and understanding of language. It is even violence imposed on language by significance. Plots of narrative works conform to adjoining rule, which does transcendently match with correspondent rules. Soldiers lean forward as a result of applied force, which conforms to mechanical rules, but it can be poetically interpreted as boldness and justice. de Man published a collected papers named *Aesthetic Ideology* which exposed the violence against language on the part of ideology in the name of aestheticism. In one word, the relation between language and significance is deconstructive rather than

constructive.

To be specific, De Man pointed out at least two deconstructive forces in constructing significance.

First, he pointed out the relation between narrative sentences and performative ones. According to the speech act theory of J.L Austin, sentences (including narrative sentences) are not only narrative (the typical sentence pattern is narration past tense), but also performative, thus narrative sentences and performative ones constitute a binary opposition. Narration can be understood as a restatement of things that have happened; performativity means doing things by sentences, such as issuing an order, persuasion and justification. There is no intersection between the two, according to De Man. A story itself contains no moral implication, which needs to be constructed by performativity, while a story is constructed by narration. And the difference between performativity and narration is just like Kant's difference between cognitive and moral reason. Kant built a bridge by means of aesthetic judgment, which seemed to be unreliable to de Man and showed violence of forced interpretation. The deconstructive relation between performativity and narration can be exposed in de Man's analysis of Rousseau's work. Rousseau's confession of his behavior in *Confessions* is analyzed in Chapter 12 of *Allegories of Reading*. The narration went that Rousseau was caught red-handed for stealing a ribbon in his employer's home when he was young, however, he claimed that a housemaid stole it for him. As a result, the housemaid was fired and lived with the shame for the rest of her life. Rousseau said he lived in great pain for his misbehavior, but implied that "the situation of that day" could justify what he did. Actually, Rousseau had feelings for the housemaid. "I was thinking about her at that time, so I said it was she who did it without hesitation." This excuse was unbelievable and thus, unsuccessful. Paul de Man pointed out that it was due to the incompatibility of performative sentences and narrative ones. Confession is a moral compensation in the name of truth, and the lies would be exposed once one tells the truth, as a result of which, one would be punished. However, Rousseau didn't follow the pattern, and tried to defend himself for what had happened, which was actually a performative phenomenon; besides, he turned the performative sentences of justification to narrative ones, and the reason to fact. His statements of "I was thinking about her" and "I have feelings for her" that were subjective for self-defense were uttered as the cognitive "actual situation". Thus, readers who would have been able to believe or not are now become aware or unaware of the "actual situation". Rousseau himself believed his statement and accepted it as a fact. However, the practice of matching narration and performativity in a wishful and rude manner runs counter to his desire. But in fact, the suspicious defense failed to weaken the natural consequence

and gravity of narrative sequence. Moreover, the two elements of the “actual situation” (framing the housemaid because he was thinking about her) are not logically connected. Most crucially, a confession that needed to be defended was not a sincere one, thus deconstructing confession. Despite of the fact that Rousseau swore in *Confessions* that it was all that he wanted to say and that he wouldn't talk about it any more, he depicted and defended for himself again in the sequel of his biography *The Dream of a Solitary Stroller*, which Rousseau referred to as the confession of the first confession. But it was worse. Rousseau asked people not to interfere his defense due to the cognitive function (narration) of utterance in order to dispel their suspicion of his first confession. He explained that lies that were not harmful to oneself and others were not lies in the real sense, but fiction; truth was not necessary if it was useless. Therefore, if framing the housemaid was harmful fiction, it was because that people made referential interpretation of the statement and failed to realize its non-implication (non-cognition). Rousseau seemed to point out that the fact that he confessed he was framing the housemaid was not a fact, but fiction. Thus, he created a new lie to defense himself. Rousseau's confession became a plea, and a plea became a continuation of a lie. The deconstructive relation between narration and performativity negated his defense and confession.

Second, De Man pointed out the placement of language. We need to pay attention to how language functions and soon find out that the placement of various language factors (words and punctuation) if there is no corresponding relation between it and the natural world. For example, they have to conform to grammar, and coordinate with significance, which means that we need to select from the different orders and permutation and combination. Different placement brings out different implications, which seems to be positive to constructing significance. Nevertheless, it will bring about more deconstructive effects. Paul de Man read *The Triumph of Life*, the last work of Shelley in detail in *Romantic Rhetoric* and exposed the significance deconstruction brought about by language placement. De Man pointed out three linguistic level contradict to each other: referentiality, significance and orientation of language. Linguistic referentiality refers to what it depicts and their relationship, which have their own order; linguistic significance refers to textual implication; linguistic orientation refers to various form demands of texts, which presupposes forms of some specific words, such as rhymes in poems. All of the three levels need to be realized by certain elements placement, but cannot be combined. Significance and referentiality are irrelevant and usually contradict to each other. It tends to be a situation that a symbol on significant level cannot gain continuity and rationality on referential level, which eventually dispels significance itself. However, the placement of linguistic orientation have exerted influences on reference and

significance respectively which are difficult to eliminate. Take Shelley's *The Triumph of Life* as an example. Shelley depicted light in order to praise light (significance), which can not only illuminate, but also see like Narcissus's eyes. However, how light and sight are related in terms of referentiality remains a mystery to us; what's more, light is depicted as a threading power which threads the world into a texture. But once the word "thread" is used, it should be coordinated with Narcissus's eyes and other depicted elements, or significance would disappear. On the other hand, "light" cannot be eliminated from the poem, or the whole significant construction would be eliminated. Thus, the word "light" remains. Therefore, de Man pointed out that, "And still, this light is allowed to exist in *The Triumph of Life* only under the most tenuous of conditions." Besides, the choice of the word "thread" is subject to the rhythm of the poem. "Thread", "tread", "seed" and "deed" in the poem constitute a rhythm figure, whose placement is mandatory. These words are required to realize their perspective referentiality and significance while realizing the rhythm figure. Compared with significance, these words placed in corresponding positions constitute a more obvious fact that serves as the premise of significance. De Man pointed out that, the significance of the poem is generated related to its mandatory rhymes, such as "billow" "willow" and "pillow", "thread" and "tread", as well as "seed" and "deed". Motions or incidents that seem to be full of special significance are actually generated with signified, random and superficial property. However, rhythm leads to the destruction of thought in that the words it forces to place in a poem gives rise to the deconstructive conflict within referential motion. de Man concluded that, "The positing power of language is both entirely arbitrary, in having a strength that cannot be reduced to necessity, and entirely inexorable in that there is no alternative to it. It stands beyond the polarities of chance and determination and can therefore not be part of a temporal sequence of events."⁶

It needs to be pointed out here that the deconstruction of linguistic placement is not a property specific to poems in spite of de Man's analysis of Shelly's poem. The three involved linguistic levels and their mutual relations are shared by all narrative works, where the conflict between referentiality and significance stands out.

3. The Impossible construction for Meaning Construction

In general, the theory of Roland Barthes theory affirmed the positive energy of narration in the construction of meaning, while Paul de Man clearly emphasized the

impossibility of constructing meaning, including narration, whose argument was more correct and stuck to the point. Let's go back to the Roland Barthes' meaningful hypothesis at the beginning of this article. People begin to show their narrative instinct at the age of three, and we also try to unfold it at all stages of life, which shows that narration is one of the most important things people do in their lives. Undoubtedly, narration and even verbal activities are meant to construct significance, otherwise it is difficult to explain why people want to do it all their lives. However, narration and even significance construction will encounter disturbing forces of deconstruction, thus failing to fulfill construction. But people will not give up construction of the manifestation of significance and constant and temporal coordination and matching the power of conflict, which also explains why people need to do it all their lives. De Man's theory is not only the deconstruction of narrative significance, but the negation of the all possibilities that significance can be constructed through language. However, his deconstruction itself is constructive, and this is the impossible construction of significance construction.

It is ironic that a theory dedicated to deconstruction in terms of De Man's own idea. When he came to the idea of internal deconstruction including rhetorical reading, he fell into the blindness of constructing something he regarded as impossible. Paul de Man noticed it from another angle in *The Resistance to Theory*, "Nothing can overcome the resistance to theory since theory is itself this resistance." "Literary theory can be said to come into being when the approach to literary texts is no longer based on non-linguistic, that is to say historical and aesthetic." ⁸ In other words, it is the activity of interpreting texts in terms of linguistic theory. The purpose of emphasizing this point is consistent with that of linguistic turn, which aims at achieving anti-metaphysics through the deconstruction of the theoretical base of metaphysics - the theory of reflection (historical and aesthetic considerations clearly belong to the theoretical model of reflection). To this end, Paul de Man suggested adopting a rhetorical reading method focusing on the relationships between grammar, logic and semantics, which can be shown by rhetoric, (or rhetoric of tropes) an interface that shows such complex relationships. Rhetorical reading is both pure language reading and real reading, which is not controlled by metaphysics or ideology, namely "theory" from the perspective of De Man. However, De Man immediately found that there would inevitably be a generalized intent when people were reading in this way because the process deliberately avoided something or moved in certain direction to avoid something that would lead to metaphysics. In this way, every theoretical activity produces some general rules, namely, universal conclusions, which are avoided by purely rhetorical reading.

The actual operation of rhetorical reading produces a power to resist the mere

rhetoric of reading itself, and the function of theory yields a resistance to theory. This ironic phenomenon reveals not the problem of language functioning, but the inherent flaw of the theory: it contains some one-way dimension which is exposed by language functioning, which is the same as in the works of Roland Barthes and Paul de Man. Barthes tried to convey in *An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative* and other writings that construction of significance is possible, and I find out how it works, where there is no information about the deconstruction of language functioning as a balance mechanism. De Man intended to point out that structuralism was still a metaphysical theory, and that its alleged construction of significance was impossible, and I have discovered the linguistic foundation of this impossibility. De Man's analysis of works of Rousseau and Shelley are typical of rhetorical reading, and the degree of detailed text reading is no less than any new criticism analysis. Even the very small aspect of their discourse structure, as long as possible and necessary, has experienced metonymized, or made a rhetorical reading of it. Nevertheless, we can still see the theme hidden behind these fine texts, or, in his own words, the "totality", which has been guiding metonymy writing as a foreground.

On the other hand, although De Man acknowledged the impossibility and reflexivity of pure rhetoric reading, he could do nothing to stop the irony and even made a taunt to the phenomenon itself. "Yet literary theory is not in danger of going under; it cannot help but flourish, and the more it is resisted, the more it flourishes, since the language it speaks is the language of self-resistance. What remains impossible to decide is whether this flourishing is a triumph or a fall." "That is to say, we cannot get out of this situation as long as the theory exists. One side of theory must be emphasized in order to conclude and prove one's correctness, which turns the double operation of discourse into a one-way function. Theory discourse itself calls for such discovery and innovation, which is the logic that it cannot overcome. Theorists need to prove that first, their discoveries are based on the theory of tradition; second, their discoveries are entirely new. Therefore, this one-way certainty cannot be overcome if we do not get rid of the discourse mode of theory.

The one-way affirmative, totality, or topicalization is the driving force of rhetorical reading towards its own deconstruction and also the major trap of theoretical discourse. These problems not only exist in philosophical and scientific papers, but also in narrative literature writing, such as the previously mentioned *Romance of the Western Chamber*. As a result of thematic processing, the conflict of various discourse forces are forcibly twisted, thus exposing a greater crack. Not all narrative writings are like this, however. On the other hand, theory is certainly not the right place for rhetoric, reading, or writing. The narration from the theoretical

point of view cannot converge the power of deconstruction and that of construction into a positive energy of narrative discourse, which is, however, necessary to get rid of the theoretical paradox.

4. How to Play the Constructive Functions of Deconstruction Elements

How can a discourse without restriction of totality be possible? What kind of discourse or narration can adequately expose deconstruction factors while dealing with construction problems, be able to realize its constructive nature while dealing with the phenomenon of deconstruction, and let the deconstruction of factors also play a constructive role beyond Paul de Man's negative construction?

As I write this question, I've been thinking about the famous line of Shakespeare in *Macbeth*, "Life is like telling some fantastic tales full of sound and fury, and does not have any meaning." which directly contradicts Roland Barthes' hypothesis because he set narration as human instinct, and guaranteed the possibility of constructing narrative significance. However, here "life is meaningless". This line shows Paul de Man and Jacques Derrida's position that significance is imposed. A little different from them is that it is added to "life" rather than "language"; but considering "life" here is the object of narration, it tells us the impossibility of narrative construction. There is only sound and fury in narration or language apart from the imposition of significance. The former (sound) is both a narrative noise and a sound in linguistic sense (half of the signifier), which seems to imply that Shakespeare held the position of deconstruction, but there are two factors that make Shakespeare's line avoid the tendency of totality. First, this is not something emphasized in all of Shakespeare's works. We can find many words that affirm the meaning of life in his works, such as "love doesn't make any sense" can't exist in the context of the affirmation of love in *Romeo and Juliet*. Second, that is the line of Macbeth in *Macbeth*. According to polyphony theory, we can only interpret that sentence as a possible combination of all the words. This position does not belong to a writer or subject, and Shakespeare also is not bound up with that remark. The author must hold a position in a text or all texts under his name, which is not the standard of drama writing. So, we do not need to worry about unity of position in this non-theoretical writing. Shakespeare took every kind of discourse position (or the logic of role) into such full play that even the negativity of cynical Falstaff and Agou who plotted revenge was strongly positive. What the story shows in referential level made general moral speechless, in which case, Shakespeare weak-

ened the strength of the line, so it was difficult to see his position. It seems that Shakespeare's narration has always had a way of accepting a variety of deconstructive forces, even the passive silence, which brings about the possibility that rhetoric can be repeatedly shelved and restarted.

In the Gospel of *the Bible* (which is a reasoning but not a theory), we can come up with a better example. Here are three examples:

And he said also unto his disciples, there was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. and he called him, and said unto him, how is it that i hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward. then the steward said within himself, what shall i do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: i cannot dig; to beg i am ashamed. i am resolved what to do, that, when i am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. so he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, how much owest thou unto my lord? and he said, an hundred measures of oil. and he said unto him, take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. then said he to another, and how much owest thou? and he said, an hundred measures of wheat. and he said unto him, take thy bill, and write fourscore. and the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. and i say unto you, make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations. he that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. if therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? and if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own? no servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. ye cannot serve god and mammon (*Luke 16:1-13*).¹⁰

What the steward did in the story is similar to that of Feng Xuan, but Feng emptied public debt for Lord Mengchang, not himself. Here are two contradictory reasons, one related to money (Mammon), another to heaven and God (eternal dwellings). It is clever for the steward to win his own way; but this act was disloyal at the same time, thus being described as "shrewd". The word used to describe him seems to be negative; moreover, the steward's move, from the rhetorical level, contains the meaning of "dispersion of wealth", which is in line with Jesus's view that the son of light should have a proper attitude towards money, resulting in a huge crack between reference and significance; Rousseau and Shelley fell in a structural breakdown in similar circumstances. *Gospel of Luke* adopts obviously an unusual line of speech here: using master's money to show his generosity is crafty, while

“eternal dwellings”, which are more important than property, need to be confirmed. The text does not mean to make a straight reference, but make it explicit in two seemingly contradictory directions. What the steward did is both admirable and reprehensible. In the end, however, we will find that this deconstruction becomes part of the construction of significance. The wisdom of the steward (son of the present) can be a positive lesson for the son of light in a sense, but his infidelity proves that he cannot be trusted, which fundamentally blocks the possibility of his actions, even in the face of self-interest. Moreover, Jesus’s last remark seemed to indicate despite the fact that the steward “dispersed the money”, he still served Mammon in terms of his means and purpose in terms of his means (using his master's money) and purpose (accepting the hospitality of the recipients in the future, which is equivalent to recovering the wealth by himself).

In another example, the Gospels even give the same sentence two opposite meanings simultaneously. *John* tells about the resurrection of Lazarus by Jesus in Chapter 11, which was a shock to Pharisees and the upper ranks of the Jews who then discussed the plan to eliminate Jesus. Some Jewish leaders also worried about the legitimacy of the plan due to Jesus’s popularity at the time, but Caiaphas, the high priest, came up with a reason:

And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not (*John* 11:49-50).¹¹

Caiaphas proposed reason to comfort those who feel uneasy about killing Jesus: “Our nation is about to fall into a great catastrophe because of Jesus’s arrival. Even if Jesus is innocent, it is a good thing to let him die to relieve the disaster of the whole nation.” The deconstruction of this sentence lies in the fact that Caiaphas’s excuse for the persecution of Jesus’s life is precisely the reason revealed in *the Bible* for Jesus’s dedication and birth. According to the Gospels, Jesus came to this world as God’s only son, and his mission was to dedicate his body as a sacrifice to God to redeem the life of all men. The relations between the placement of each element in the sentence all unconsciously express the implication of god, the opposite of man, just like a piece of music plays another meaning. We cannot help but considering that the arbitrariness of placement holds a meaningful double affirmation in certain circumstances. A node split power can be turned into two different level interface. Deconstruction and construction are interdependent like mirrors and mirror images.

Shakespeare used silence to accommodate the possibility of preserving its con-

struction in the face of two mutual discord deconstruction, but the Gospels not only accommodate them, but directly involve them in the construction of significance. Does it show differences in language control (or reading comprehension)?

The third examples comes from *Matthew*. As a major topic of this part, “heaven” is a word and a concept, the talk of which is easy to fall into a pattern of conclusion and mode definition. But in *Matthew*, Jesus used six little narrative stories (Jesus calls it “parables”) to tell what heaven is about. The choice of narrative style weakens the power of language performative, such as lesson, command and exhortation, and increases the portion of affair narration, and let the narration take the lead, which is on purpose. Jesus didn’t seem to worry at all that the narration would have made the construction of the story out of control. Instead, he saw what he wanted to from the unfolding of the story itself. Every little story begins with such a strange sentence, “The kingdom of heaven is like...”; the ellipsis represents a long or short story. which serves as the predicative structure of “is like”. Jesus fiercely criticized old-fashioned and malicious Pharisees, who used command sentences to teach people, and judgment and other simple sentences to explain the truth. They also looked forward with a similar sentence in response to their criticism when meeting Jesus. They thought *the Bible* was a code of conduct, the so-called commandment. Therefore, they held that Jesus who didn’t understand *the Bible* as they did was a rebel. They criticized Jesus about questions like how to marry a widow or how to punish a whore whether it is proper to work on Sabbath, which can be answered with a simple sentence. “The kingdom of heaven” is just a concept which can be clarified by using judgment sentence. But Jesus said, the kingdom of heaven was like all the information that this story or even all of these stories told about. Take 13:24-30 as an example:

Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, the kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. but when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. so the servants of the householder came and said unto him, sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? he said unto them, an enemy hath done this. the servants said unto him, wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? but he said, nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest i will say to the reapers, gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.¹²

“Kingdom of heaven” is not a noun, but a process of growth, where wheat (the son of the kingdom) and weed (evil son) grow together until maturity. Master (God) wouldn’t allow the servant to pull out the weeds during the growth of wheat for

fear of hurting young wheat. What's more, he hoped wheat could survive and struggled for sun and nutrition. The kingdom of heaven also contains the final judgment: waiting for the maturity of wheat and fully displaying its fine character before putting it away in a barn, and waiting for the maturity of weed and demonstrating its inferiority before setting it on fire.

The kingdom of heaven is not a well-established state but a battle incorporating various factors, even the imagination of discipline and adventure, which cannot be fully expressed in a story, not to mention a word or phrase. In fact, six stories (parables) used by Jesus cannot fully cover. It is the negation of a simple sentence or a conceptual definition when each story unfolds its complex implications for each of these details and their metonymy are indispensable to the formation of the meaning of the kingdom of heaven.

Preaching by stories (parables) is a great feature of the Gospels. Jesus's choice was not simply due to the stylistic advantages of the story, but more importantly, as he expressed:

And the disciples came, and said unto him, why speakest thou unto them in parables? he answered and said unto them, because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. for whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. therefore speak i to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. and in them is fulfilled the prophecy of esaias, which saith, by hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: ¹³

Here, stories would have different effects on "you" and "them". The simple form of story was more suitable for "you", the lower class people. However, why did stories become more difficult to understand for "them", senior intellectuals of pharisees and teachers? Apart from the fact that the preference for concepts and definitions undermines their sensitivity to a narration with a considerable length, Confidence is the main factor. "You" here were disciples of Jesus, and "they" were the ones who didn't believe in Jesus. "You" had faith in the story and its narrator, which reinforced the comprehensibility of the story, while "they" were skeptical about it, which added to the difficulty of understanding. Skeptics were not unwise; they were unwilling to believe, thus losing the "secrets of the kingdom of heaven".

Thus, as Paul de Man has assumed, there is no prior convergence or coexistence between language (story) and significance, and significance is added (or "imposed", according to de Man). We can't find the one to one relationship between

the two, so understanding can only be made through the formation of text and its realization of significance. However, prediction of significance reliability can make a great difference to the effect of addition. De Man has been committed to revealing the significance and structure of various times. For example, he pointed out that romantic discourse had a profound influence on modern literature, which has defined our vision of problems. The consequences of this disclosure are: Stability of significance dominating academic and general discourse, which are temporal, and therefore are not eternal, can be digested. The impossibility of construction is actually a question of the reliability of significance. We can learn from Jesus's non-theoretical discourse (parables or story) that willingness can become the decisive thrust of significance construction. You can construct significance in the interpretation if you believe that story and its narrator. It is suspected of superstition to totally accept without suspect and reflection from a scientific standpoint.

On the other hand, despite the fact that doubt of the reliability of significance makes us alert about all discourse and narration, we still keep constructing significance persistently, which echoes to the introduction of the paper that humans tirelessly look for significance in their lifetime. Silenus's logic that it's best for humans not to come to the world, or at least, to die the instant they are born is thorough, but unrealistic. Deconstructionist Derrida wrote *Memoires for Paul de Man* as he thought that de Man left (constructed) something that was polysemy. If human world is full of sound and fury, the irony of activities of constructing significance, wouldn't we consider how such instinct is stubbornly attached to human life? Is there any card that we fail to see through?

Notes

- 1 *A Barthes Reader*. Edited by Susan Sontag, London: Jonathan Cape Ltd, 1982, p. 295.
- 2 《西方文艺理论名著选编(下)》“xifang wenyi lilun mingzhu xuanbian (xia)” [*Selected Works of Western Literary Theory*], Edited by WubLifuand Hu Jingzhi, Beijing: Peking UP, 1987, p. 504.
- 3 *A Barthes Reader*. Edited by Susan Sontag, London: Jonathan Cape Ltd, 1982.
- 4 Barthes, Roland. *S/Z*. Translated by Richard Miller. New York: Blackwell Publishing Ltd/Hill and Wang, 1990, p. 20.
- 5 de Man, Paul. *The Rhetoric of Romanticism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1984, p. 111.

6 Ibid, p. 116.

7 Paul de Man, "The Resistance to Theory", *Deconstruction Diagram*, p. 114.

8 Paul de Man, "The Resistance to Theory", *Deconstruction Diagram*, p. 98.

9 Ibid, p. 114.

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