

Life and narrative: the risks and responsibilities of storying experience

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Abstrak

Drawing upon innovative theoretical and empirical scholarship presented at Narrative Matters 2012: Life and Narrative (The American University of Paris, May 29-June 1, 2012), this volume seeks to make a significant contribution to our understanding of the dynamic interplay of life and narrative by creatively addressing it from multiple angles. It features cross-disciplinary work by cutting-edge scholars in the social sciences and the humanities, including Jens Brockmeier, Jerome Bruner, Mark Freeman, Alexandra Georgakopoulou, James Phelan, and Brian Richardson. Four main intellectual contributions distinguish this volume. First, the contributors clearly detail the conceptual and empirical frameworks for describing the mutual construction of narrative and life. Second, the volume illustrates the tension between the need for narratives to hold and represent factual experiences and the power of narrative to conjure coherent worlds of imagination. Third, the volume explores the tension between the power of social and cultural forces to influence, or even impose, pre-configured interpretations on experience and the ingenuity of persons to create their own interpretations of experience. Finally, the problem of life and narrative is conceived as a cross-disciplinary problem. Cross-disciplinary study is crucial for thinking through basic problems in the social sciences and the humanities. There is still little dialogue among the disciplinary groups studying narrative, but these are conversations without boundaries, and limiting the scope leaves out critical perspectives that can advance knowledge of narrative, literature, and human beings. This volume aims to introduce a wide range of narrative scholars to the broader questions that narrative studies entails.