

Narrative Time and Typographical Space: Towards a Typographical Narratology

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Abstract: Narratologists have long raised the question of how narrative theories could be applied to other disciplines that involve stories and storytelling. Focusing on recently revitalized concepts of space, sequence, and story, this article attempts to illustrate narrative constructions in various fields of arts and humanities and examine them particularly in typographical works. Through the concept of narrativity, this article highlights the prevalent uses of narrative in typography and scrutinizes the ways in which a sense of storyness is forming and emerging in some typographical works. Particularly emphasized are the importance of and interplay between the formal and cultural attributes of narrative that transform the spatial world of visual images to the temporal world of stories. Narrative is arguably the most familiar, interesting, and effective medium of communication regardless of age, race, and culture, and can be critically rethought to apply to typography and design.

Keywords: *Narrativity, Narrativization, Narratology, Typography, Space, Sequence, Plot*

1. Introduction

As a convenient point of departure for examining narrative, let us first bring up a familiar fable, “The Goose that Laid the Golden Eggs”:

A man and his Wife had the good fortune to possess a Goose which laid a Golden Egg everyday. Lucky though they were, they soon began to think they were not getting rich fast enough, and, imagining the bird must be made of gold inside, they decided to kill it in order to secure the whole store of precious metal at once. But when they cut it open they found it was just like other goose. Thus, they neither got rich all at once, as they hoped, nor enjoyed any longer the daily addition to their wealth.

Fables are an interesting—and in fact peculiar—narrative genre because they get across the point of telling without actually telling it. After reading the fable, even a little child gets the message or the moral: Greed for more only results in less. Stories are multi-faceted in their use. We tell stories (history) to convey historical facts and significance; we share others' secretive and scandalous stories (gossip) with a close friend to create an emotional tie and build a sense of trust between the two. Sometimes, we tell stories (urban folktales) to control and curb children's behavior, for instance, a folktale that insinuates how a good and right-behaving kid gets paid off at Christmas Eve by Santa Claus. Other times, we tell stories (bedtime stories) to lull children to sleep. Relatively recently, the new edition of *Diagnostic and Statistic Manual of Mental Disorder* (DSM-IV-TR)—a textbook and reference book for medical students and practicing doctors in psychiatry riddled with medical lingo and technical shibboleth—included stories (case stories) as a supplement to facilitate the transition from hard medical concepts to easy and reliable stories.

On everyday bases, we encounter numerous narratives in the forms of news reports, gossips, movies, popular songs, internet games, cartoons, soap operas, TV commercials, and print advertisements. We use narratives to inform, to entertain, to educate, to express, and even to form an identity at individual, communal, corporate and national levels. We prefer narrative or storied message because it is interesting to hear, easy to follow, and engaging enough to leave a lasting impression on the audience. For these reasons, historians, educators, preachers, and politicians often resort to narrative, and storify—or make into stories—information, moral, ideology, emotion, and even themselves. Narrative, one may argue, is the most common, familiar, and efficient medium for almost all types of human communication. As John Niles aptly characterizes human species as “Homo Narrans,” or storytelling animals, stories and storytelling are the intrinsic nature that defines human beings and the essential part of our daily activities¹.

The origin of more professional storytelling activities may be traced back as early as in its ancient orality practiced by bards, travelers, and merchants, but the systematic study of narrative or narratology as a separate field of inquiry and practice began in France in the nineteen sixties with the works of Tzvetan Todorov, Claude Bremond, Algirdas Julien Greimas, and other structuralists, and developed through the works of Gerard Genette, Mieke Bal, Gerard Prince, and Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan. Though originally structuralist and literary in its spirit, the study of narrative has branched into a large number of disciplines through nineteen nineties: psychology (Jerome Bruner), rhetoric (Walter Fisher), cinematography (Seymour Chatman), cognitive science (Manfred John), anthropology (Erving Goffman, Richard Bauman), bio-ethics (Hilde L. Nelson), history (Hayden White, Phillippe Carrard), legal studies (David Papke, Richard Posner), biblical studies (Meir Sternberg), and game theories (Marie-Laure Ryan), to name a few. Since the germinal enterprise for the systemization of stories and storytelling, narratology has negotiated and integrated

¹ Niles, John. *Homo Narrans: the Poetics and Anthropology of Oral Literature*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. (1999). P3.

diverse disciplinary theories and practices, and according to Roy Sommer, is now assigned “next to hermeneutics and semiotics” as “a transnational and transdisciplinary critical metalanguage”².

Several decades after Roland Barthes’ ambitious claim that narrative is “international, transhistorical, [and] transcultural,” its universal practice is followed by narrative theories with a large corpus of research and criticism from various disciplines. The renewed interest in narrative is reflected by an upsurge of recent publication not only in literary studies but also in many academic fields of the arts and humanities, with a recent collaborative outcome of interdisciplinary and intercontinental endeavor being *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*. To the estimation of Martin Kreiswirth, narrative has left an indelible impression across the disciplines “in a whole range of recent philosophic, theoretical, and cross-disciplinary contexts” and offers a new space for a rediscussion of disciplinary issue³. For Roy Sommer, the narratological enterprise is now “a collaborative, interdisciplinary and transnational research project which is one of the most exciting recent developments in English Studies throughout Europe”⁴.

While the impact of narratology has been widely pronounced and discussed in the most professions that deal with human communication and interaction, typography, an all-compassing and the most fundamental area of visual design, has tended to overlook this revitalized interest in storytelling from a theoretical perspective. We qualify our statement by limiting it to the theoretical aspect because the profession of design has long been associated with narrative practice more than we readily acknowledge. Even in a simplest typographical practice, we often succeed in embedding a storyline or plot. In fact, we have been narratologists of a kind without explicitly announcing it with the terms used in narratology. This article purports to illustrate the applicability of the narrative concepts to typography by exploring and examining sequence, one of the most crucial elements of narrative, and further to call for discussions and theorizations of narrativized typography.

2. Body

A recent episode must suffice to indicate how narrativizing or story-making activity is ubiquitous but unnoticed in our daily lives. While waiting for class in front of a liberal arts building in a university, the author of this article came to observe a mass of students mobilizing out of the building when one class session ended. Amid the flood of students, I spotted a student who made an abrupt halt. It was a sudden jolt enough for me to recognize the figure distinctively among the streaming body of students in one direction. The student rummaged inside her bag, and apparently being disturbed, hurried back to the building. While registering and processing this simple nonverbal phenomenon, I was already making sense of the situation in the form of narrative: stepping out of the building right after class, she noticed that she might have left

² Sommer, Roy. ‘Beyond (Classical) Narratology: New Approaches to Narrative Theory’, *European Journal of English Studies* (2004). p4.

³ Kreiswirth, Martin. ‘Trusting the Tale: The Narrativist Turn in the Human Sciences’, *New Literary History*(1992). pp.637-640.

⁴ Sommer, Roy ‘Beyond (Classical) Narratology: New Approaches to Narrative Theory’, *European Journal of English Studies*. (2004). p1 1.

her textbook or a belonging in the classroom, and checked her bag. Confirming that what she was looking for was not inside the bag, she returned hastily to the classroom to secure the misplaced property—a narrative at a minimal level with conflict and resolution.

My spontaneous understanding of the event may or may not be referentially true. She might have wanted to go to a restroom in the building, and possibly she merely acted the way she did without any specific purpose. Nevertheless, the episode illustrates how often and deeply we are engaged in a narrativizing process without noticing it. Whereas Niles remarked that “oral narrative, or what we call storytelling in everyday speech, is as much around us as the air we breathe, although we often take its casual forms so much for granted that we are scarcely aware of them,” his observation equally holds good for cognitive narrativization as instantiated with the episode⁵. By sequencing a set of continuing actions in a meaningful or casual way, we perceive a nonverbal phenomenon as narrative. In the process of mental perception and cognition, sequence, or more commonly known as plot in literary studies, plays a crucial role in making sense of the world and is a central concept that explains narrative constitution.

Plot may be roughly defined as the temporal sequence of actions as Paul Ricoeur regards it as “the intelligible whole that governs a succession of events”⁶. Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan also describes plot as “[t]emporal succession, the ‘and then’ principle,” and “the principle of causality—‘that’s why’ or ‘therefore’”⁷. As “succession” and “causality” implicate, plot has to do with time sequence. To be well-plotted, a work of art should not be merely sequenced chronologically but related and interwoven together in a meaning-making way. “[A]ctions” instead of “motions” and “events” instead of “happenings” predicate the presence of human motivation and an interpreting perspective in narrative construction.

This literary concept of temporal sequencing can be readily applied to visual media. Pertinent here for illustration is Mieke Bal’s interpretation of the Mahaballipuram bas-relief, a magnificent ancient edifice carved at a monolithic stone in the seventh century in India (Fig.1). The part of the bas-relief to which Bal refers is “Arjuna’s Penance” where a human, a cat, and a group of mice are juxtaposed together. While the viewers are provided with the static space of the three different species, they do not remain passive. They actively engage their imagination in the space, relate the characters in a meaningful way, and transform the space world into a story world. Bal narrativizes the space world as follows: “First, Arjuna [the wise man] assumes the yoga position. Then, the cat imitates him. After that, the mice start laughing”⁸. The constitutive parts of the space are not only perceived but actively made sense of by the viewers. That is, the viewers motivate and mobilize the bas-relief to form a theatrical space of animating characters that interact with one another: first, the wise man holds the meditating yoga posture. From a distance on the other side at the bottom does a cat admire and imitate the wise man’s yoga position. At the lowest ground level, a group of

⁵ Niles, John. *Homo Narrans: the Poetics and Anthropology of Oral Literature*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. (1999). P1.

⁶ Ricoeur, Paul. Narrative Time. In W.J.T. Mitchell (Ed.), *On Narrative* (pp. 165-186). Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press. (1981). P167.

⁷ Rimmon-Kenan, Shlomith. *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics*. London: Routledge. (1989). P17

⁸ Bal, Mieke. *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. (1994). P.103

mice surround the cat and laugh at her. Easily recognizable is the visual difference between Arjuna's conspicuous austerity and the cat's self-illusive vanity. Arjuna is practicing penance, along with fasting and meditating, as is indicated by his sunken belly and his shrunken body to a skeleton; in contrast, the cat's belly is fat and around, meaning that the cat is simply shaming. Going through the space world in the above sequenced way, the viewers come to laugh. "We laugh," Bal explains, "because we can identify with the mice [and] realize with them that a mediating cat is a contradiction; cats hunt, and only wise men meditate"⁹. By experiencing the a-temporal space sequentially, we temporalize the space and by so doing, ironize the cat from the perspective of the mice.

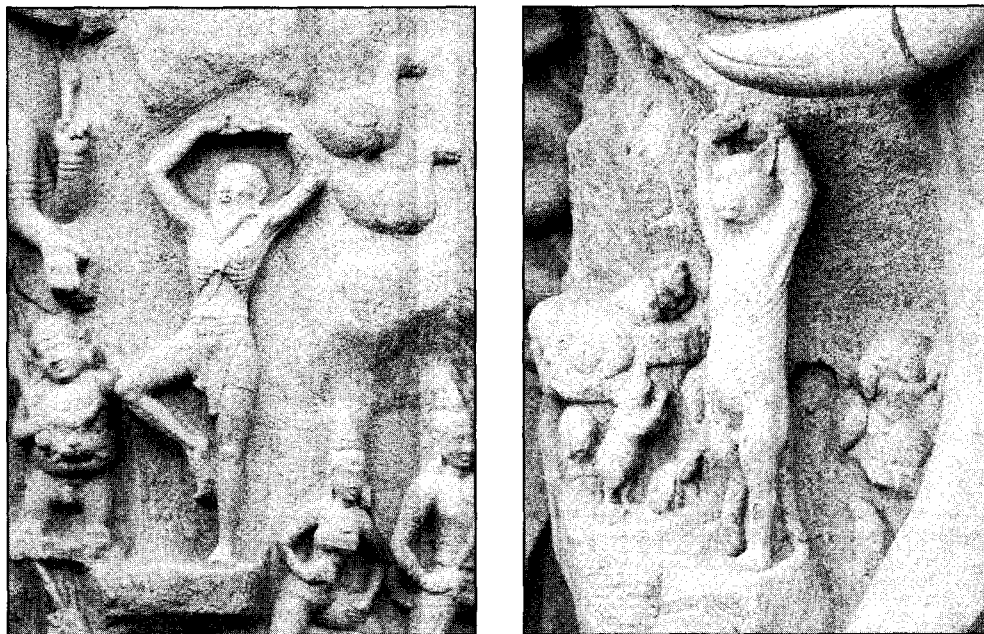


Fig.1 "Arjuna's Penance"

Temporality is not in the space world but is added to it by the viewers. In other words, temporality is inherent in our mentality. Once temporality is introduced, the space comes to have narrativehood or storyness. This temporal lag or gap procures the sense of dramatic irony, by delaying the understanding of the cat that she is ridiculed by a group of mice. The cat does not see what we and the mice see: the cat cannot meditate like a wise man but only hunts mice. What the cat does not understand, we share with the mice. There is an epistemological discrepancy between what the cat knows and what we as viewers know—the knowledge gap that produces the dramatic irony. We need to follow the sequence as long as we want to experience the lesson the relief intends to deliver, and we should not read it the other way around: from a group of mice laughing to the cat, and then to the man; following this sequence, we barely find any meaningful narrative.

Before proceeding further with visual applications, let us pause here and introduce the concept of narrativity or the degree of being a narrative. To be a proper narrative, a sequenced passage should exhibit

⁹ Bal, Mieke. *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. (1994). P.102

human causality. In other words, narrative entails human motivation to some degree. Though there may not be any absolute boundary between being a story and being non-story, narrative retains something more than merely a sequence. What follows is David Herman's recipe passage: "Remove pizza from box and inner wrapper...Bake for 16-18 minutes or until center cheese is melted and edges are golden brown"¹⁰. This recipe passage is chronologically sequenced, but is not estimated to be narrative proper because it distinctively lacks the "that's why" dimension of human motivation and causality. Another instance is "Susan is a narratologist. All narratologists are structuralists. Therefore Susan is a structuralist." While the syllogism is logically sequenced, it fails to be a narrative because it is not invested with human motivation and causality. The oft-quoted passage of E.M. Forster aptly explains the concept of narrativity:

We have defined story as a narrative events arranged in time-sequence. A plot is also a narrative of events, the emphasis falling on causality. 'The king died and then the queen died' is a story. 'The king died and then the queen died of grief' is a plot.¹¹

What Forster points out with the two examples which he respectively classifies as "story" and "plot" is the degree of being a narrative: "The king died and then the queen died of grief" is more explicitly plotted distinctively with the use of "of grief" (a highly motivated term) than "the king died and then the queen died." Furthering his argument, one may argue that "The king died. The queen died" is also minimally a narrative though its narrativity or the degree of being a story is relatively too low. Tightening this poorly knitted passage by adding "and then" and then "by grief," we can enhance the narrativity of the passage. To go further to the extreme, "John has just arrived at the airport" can be a low-degree narrative, for there is a sense of completion of an action through time (John has not arrived for a while). As Prince elaborates, "even such uninteresting texts as 'The man opened the door,' 'The goldfish died,' and 'The glass fell on the floor' are taken as narratives" for some schools of narratology, because the examples show the change of the status of the objects through time passage.¹² The three sentences logically contain the status before the change: The door should be first closed to open it; the goldfish once lived; and the glass was intact before the incident. This concept of narrativity does tell us much about the nature of a story. It is not a matter of being narrative and non-narrative, but there are only degrees of narrativity from high to low, and sometimes down to zero. In Herman's words, "Situations and events can be more or less tellable, and the ways in which they are told can be more or less readily processed in narrative terms"¹³.

The same gradation logic may apply to a visual medium. One drawing may evoke high narrativity while another displays low narrativity. A one-strip cartoon tends to be less narrative than a four-strip cartoon, whereas the four-strip cartoon is more likely to be less narrative than a full comic book. Among the same one-strip pictures, the degree of being a story may vary. The following advertising poster of *3-Iron* (2004) exploits narrative economy, and achieves high narrativity in a single space (Fig.2).

¹⁰ Herman, David. 'Scripts, Sequences, and Stories: Elements of a Postclassical Narratology', *PMLA* 112(5): (1997).p.1046.

¹¹ Forster, E.M. *Aspects of the Novel*. Harmondsworth: Penguin. (1963). P.93

¹² Forster, E.M. *Aspects of the Novel*. Harmondsworth: Penguin. (1963). P.58

¹³ Herman, David. 'Scripts, Sequences, and Stories: Elements of a Postclassical Narratology', *PMLA* 112(5): (1997). p.1052.



Fig.2 Three-Iron



Fig.3 Kwangsik's Brother KwangTae

The poster displays two men and one woman. The spatial arrangement implies that the woman and the man next to her are acknowledged as partners or lovers. But then, the viewers notice that the woman also has a secretive relationship with the second man at the back of the first man. To make a meaningful and engaging human drama of love, trust, and betrayal, the two relationships need to be temporally sequenced to render the effect of dramatic irony: the man in the middle, or the first man, does not know what the woman, the second man, and the viewers know. It is cognitively absurd to sequence the space, starting with the woman and the second man embracing each other, and then connecting to the first man being squeezed into their relationship. The opposite sequencing makes a totally different story, and here with this poster, it does not make sense. By victimizing the first man or delaying his understanding of the situation, the poster harks back to the timeless and endlessly reiterated theme of love, trust, and betrayal.

What is visually striking and narratively conflictual is that the woman embraces the first man and over his shoulder, reaches the second man secretly and kisses him, signifying a deeper but forbidden relationship. This secretive and latter relationship is foregrounded and pronounced while the first man's relationship with the woman is backgrounded and ironized. Whereas the poster of *3-Iron* is highly narrativized, that of *Kwangsik's Brother Kwangtae* (2005) is, in contrast, static and a-temporal. The two pairs of couples are apparently contrasted and, through the appearances and postures, we can assume two different trajectories of love and relationship. The message of the poster is driven by the highly contrasted characterizations of the two couples: one is more active, playful, and liberal, and the other more passive, sincere, and conservative. While meaningful in its own way, the poster of *Kwangsik's Brother Kwangtae* is less

narrativized than the poster of *3-Iron*. Narratologically speaking, the first poster exploits the action scheme while the second one resorts to the actor characterization. In Helmut Bonheim’s terminology, the poster of *3-Iron* is more of a “narrative” while that of Kwangsik’s *Brother Kwangtae* is more of a “description”¹⁴.

As is aforementioned, the narrativiation of typography is hardly something new, if unmarked theoretically in narratological terms. For instance, Robert Massin often narrativized his artwork, adding mobility and interaction to the space world as epitomized in the prints of “La Cantatrice Chauve” (“The Bald Soprano”).

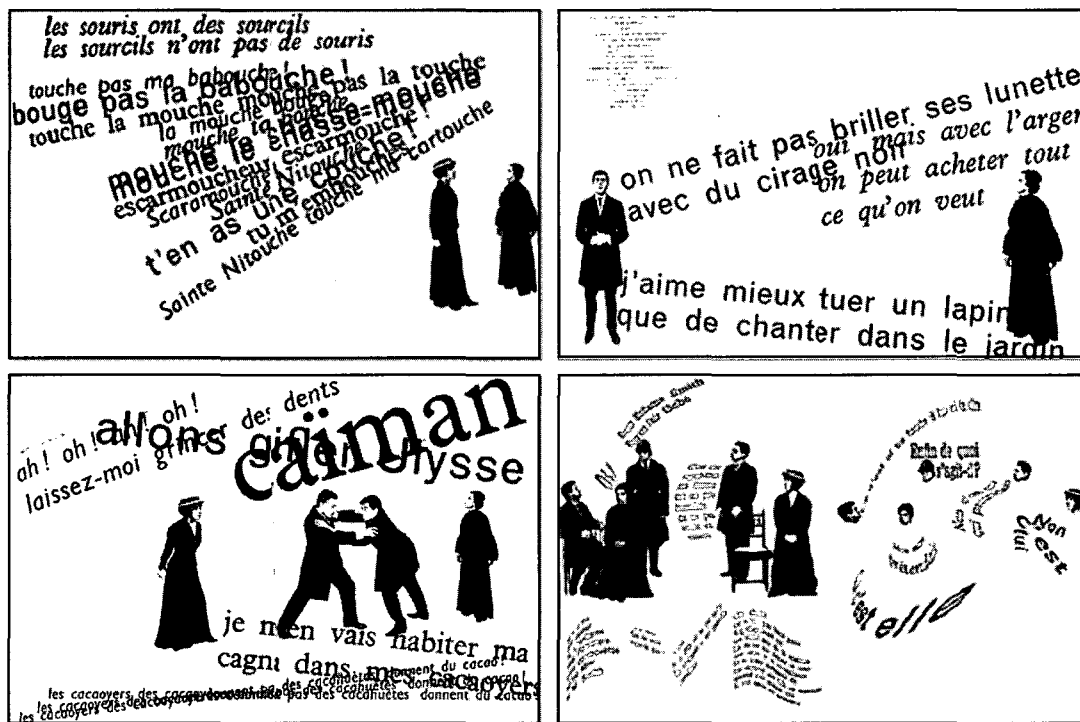


Fig.4 La cantatrice chauve, Robert Massin, 1964

Time passage is not only inscribed in the words of characters, but also in the assumed interactions between them. Altogether the printed space offers a combination of dialogue exchanges, character interactions, and scene constructions, and it comes before us as the-almost-already-narrativized. Equally valid and significant, however, is the observation that the viewers sequentialize the printed space and mobilize the printed space into the world of meanings, taking up the status of a co-author in completing the meaning of the viewed. More pertinent for the discussion of viewers’ active participation is moving typography. A good instance is the advertising website of Leo Burnett. Leo Burnett set up a space for the viewers to easily navigate and “browse around.” Time sequence is deliberately visualized with the traces of a line drawn by a pencil-form cursor. The website is mapped out as a big city that has stages, parks, shopping malls, and towns. By clicking on a point of interest, the viewers can remobilize the whole map in three-dimension from their perspective. The space world is penetrated by the time sequence and re-conceptualized as where the viewers navigate and move around the city.

¹⁴ Bonheim, Helmut. *The Narrative Modes: Techniques of the Short Story*. D.S. Brewer: Totowa, NJ. (1982). pp.7-8.

All the visual media examined so far exploit the inborn human predilection to narrativize or em-plot the world we experience. The narrativizing mechanism is already inscribed in our mentality and culture as Elinor Ochs rightly opines, “The capacity to create and decipher plots is a quintessential faculty of the human species”¹⁵. For the examination of the application of narrative to visual media, we briefly demonstrated the plot structures with the Mahaballipuram bas-relief, *3-Iron*, *Kwangsik’s Brother Kwangtae*, “La Cantatrice Chauve,” and Leo Burnett. Though the artworks above do not presume to be definitive and representative, they certainly suggest that typography has a lot to be narratologically reinterpreted and reassessed. While we concentrated on the plot structures that evoke dramatic irony, the interpretive transaction of a visual medium may vary in degree and differ in direction depending on ways in which it is visually constructed and cognitively sequenced. To use the terms of Gerard Prince’s plot typology, a visual medium can be plotted to be “euphoric” with fortunate progression, “dysphoric” with fatal progression, “external” with explicitly materialized happenings, or “internal” with implicitly realized inner feelings.¹⁶ While Prince’s plot typology is devised for literary studies, it can be fruitfully applied further to typography.

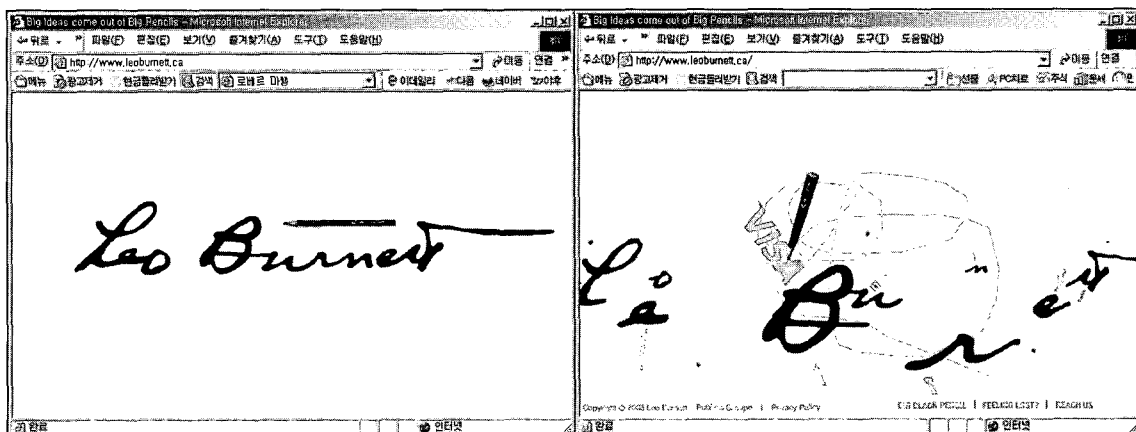


Fig.5 <http://www.leoburnett.ca>, Leo Burnett, 2005

To recap and define what we have discussed in theoretical terms, we now turn to two constitutive factors of narrative and narrativization—the formal and the cultural. First, let us explain the formality of narrative with Herman’s model. Herman illustrates the importance of formal distinction of narrative with an interesting experiment.

- (1) A splubba fibblo. Sim a ginky beebie the yuck, i the splubba orpia.
- (2) A splubba walked in. A ginky beebied the yuck, and the splubba was orped.
- (3) A splubba walked in. A ginky pulled the lever, and the splubba was

¹⁵ Ochs, Elinor. Narrative. In Teun A. van Dijk (Ed.), *Discourse as Structure and Process* (185-207). London: Sage Publications. (1997). p.193.

¹⁶ Prince, Gerald. *Dictionary of Narratology*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press. (2003). P.73

instantaneously inebriated.

(1) does not strike us as a narrative at all. The readers do not recognize any storyness in the passage. It is downright meaningless. (2) does not make sense to us either. However, we should note that, this time, there occurs a crucial change. With the formal/syntactic markers such as the definite and indefinite articles (“a” and “the”), the suffixes (“-ed”), and the coordinating conjunction (“and”), we find a sense of storyness looming, if vaguely. While (2) fails to be a recognizable narrative, it nevertheless retains low narrativity. First, with the indefinite article “a,” we can decide that “splubba” is a common noun, maybe a species of animal. With the suffix “-ed” (“beebed”), we understand that a ginky, the other character, performs the action called “beebing.” The definite article “the” (“the yuck”) tells us the relationship between “beebed” and “yuck”: A ginky does the action of “beebing” to, or with, “the yuck.” Then, the second sentence (“A ginky beebed the yuck”) and the third sentence (“the splubba was orped”) are temporally sequenced with the use of the conjunction “and.” Finally, the passivized verb phrase (“was orped”) indicates that the splubba is now the object of the action called “orping.” We do not know the meaning of “orping,” but clearly the splubba is victimized by the act of the ginky’s “orping.” Interestingly, without knowing the meaning of words presented, we still sense the story-forming process. With this experiment, we can conclude that form is essential in displaying narrativity.

Secondly—and more importantly—for a set of sequenced actions to function as narrative, the minds of the readers/viewers have to be activated. That is, it is our em-plotting act that makes “the parts form a coherent narrative” and “evokes” a sense of drama¹⁷. As the meaning and significance of a visual art are realized and completed in the eyes of beholders, narrative also operates not only by its spatial, structural, and formal distinction but also by the minds of the readers. Semiotically speaking, the formal signifiers (a visual artwork or a literary work) exploit the cultural signifieds. In other words, our perception of plot is both formal and cultural. Now, back to “Arjuna’s Penance,” though we experience the space of the relief in a holistic way, we in fact grab the meaning of it by sequencing and arranging the parts of the relief in a way that makes sense to us. Our viewing selects, combines, organizes, constructs, and develops the visual elements into a meaningful whole. Not only the viewers bring temporality to play in this simple relief, but also actively construct the relationships among the parts (Arjuna, the cat, and the mice). That is, by sequencing the parts of the relief in the culturally endorsed way, we come to see what the mice see and what the cat does not see—the point Bal explains with the term, “focalization”¹⁸. Our viewing constructs the meaning of the relief by engaging focalization or perspectivization. In viewing this ancient bas-relief, the viewers are involved with a particular perspective to a specific direction. They become a co-author, activating cultural narrative schemata.

Novelists, designers, politicians, and movie producers facilitate and activate our innate desire to plot the world and the tendency to (mis-) understand the world in terms of a story. We may come up with a right story or a distorted story. Narrativization relies, and often thrives, on this vulnerable folk psychology as

¹⁷ Bal, Mieke. *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. (1994). P.102.

¹⁸ Bal, Mieke. *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. (1994). P.102.

typology often makes use of optical illusion. Roland Barthes assimilated narrative understanding to “confusion” and “fallacy” on the part of the readers as he elaborates: “Everything suggests, indeed, that the mainspring of narrative is precisely the confusion of consecution and consequence, what comes *after* being read in narrative as what is *caused by*”¹⁹. Then, he concludes that “narrative would be a systematic application of the logical fallacy denounced by Scholasticism in the formula *post hoc, ergo propter hoc.*”

Gerald Prince argues that with the passage, “It started to rain, and Mary became nostalgic,” the readers tend to attribute Mary’s nostalgia to the present rain²⁰. It is not explicitly stated in the passage, but inscribed as a possibility in our cultural narrative schemata. Though an inanimate set of visual objects, the viewers are initiated through plotting to the space world of imagined others, and they permeate their view point into the world. They do not merely read meanings out of the artwork, but also read their experience and knowledge into it. Em-plotting act draws on the cultural repertoire of folk psychology, and the viewers, activating this repertoire, make sense of the relationship among characters, within the space world, and across the visual works of past experience, ultimately mirroring their own storied knowledge. The story or narrative structure in a visual artwork is more suggested and cued implicitly than realized and materialized visually. In the imaginary space world, we people heroes, friends, villains, victims, and betrayers, and finally experience their relations through time passage, shaping the world full of meaning and significance.

Em-plotting typography means adding a narrative or story dimension. “Viewing at” becomes “living through,” temporally penetrating and sequencing the parts of the space. However, time is not merely imposed on space, but the spatial arrangement also mobilizes and activates the time factor to function. Time and space are interdependent and dialogic in creating meaning of the space world, and form a mutually enriching relation. While plot in the traditional sense refers to the literary device of sequencing actions, it is also deeply embedded in our cultural templates and generically programmed in our mentality. As the Indians in the seventh century perceived the irony functioning in “Arjuna’s Penance,” we the moderns in the twenty first century perceive it as well. Through em-plotting we come to terms with the unknown, and make sense of the unfamiliar. As Bruner thus champions narrative as one of the two modes of thought that lead to knowledge (besides logico-scientific mode), narrative is a sine qua non of human mentality, understanding, and everyday activities.²¹

3. Conclusions

Despite the departmentalized nature of knowledge, the popularity of narrative across the disciplines may be attributed to stories’ simplicity, universality, and foremost of all its capacity to entertain the audience. As a medium of communication, narrative surpasses other forms of communication in effect

¹⁹ Barthes, Roland. *Image-Music-Text*. New York: Hill and Wang. (1994). P.94

²⁰ Prince, Gerald. *Dictionary of Narratology*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press. (2003). P.78

²¹ Bruner, Jerome. *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press (1986). PP.12-13.

regardless of age, ethnicity, and culture. Narrative is an efficient and powerful tool for human species because our experience of the world is already narrativized. That is, our experience often stores knowledge in terms of a story, whether verbal or non-verbal.

Only recently have scholars from various disciplines acknowledged the fundamentality of narrative understanding in human communication and interaction. Narrative application to visual arts can be further extended to focalization, characterization, identity formation, audience analyses, scene construction, parody inter- and hyper-textuality, and interactivity. Particularly, typography has a lot to benefit from narrative studies, and in fact, may initiate recently claimed subfields of “Visual Narratology” and “Intermedial Narratology,” which have already been long overdue.

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