

Screenwriting & Political Narrative

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Introduction

The most important things in life are often the most invisible to observation. This is the situation with the grand stories or narratives of our times. Unlike the many stories we hear each day, the grand narratives remain in the background like a type of ubiquitous medium pervading all corners of life. Of all the grand narratives in culture, political narratives offer the grandest – yet – least visible of narratives. A good political narrative can create a winning ballot issue or political cause. It can also put a new political party into power and elect a president.

Political narratives develop in a number of ways from various sources. There is little science or method in their creation. Sometimes their development is haphazard while other times they are cobbled together from disparate common themes and events of culture.

We argue that the creation of political narratives will be much more systematic in the future and utilize Internet data. This will create powerful political narratives. This is something to be concerned about as these narratives will provide new tools of persuasion and control for politicians. Yet powerful political narratives will also benefit a populace who benefit from them by connecting the scattered events of everyday life into a larger story and giving more meaning to life. In effect, there is always the hope that personal narratives might be part of the larger narrative.

Narratives are really stories and it is reasonable to suspect a systematic creation of them should utilize the screenplay form, our most powerful structure of storytelling. In effect, we argue for the development of a type of hybrid screenplay that allows the application of the screenplay form from the entertainment industry to politics. Here, we are not talking about political screenplays but rather political narratives using the screenplay form

Political narratives are not phenomena that can be rejected. While one might reject a certain political narrative, it is impossible to live in modern society without the presence of these narratives. Political narratives are constant features of modern life. We hear the word “narrative” more and more these days in all news media but know little about their birth and life cycles. It seems best to try and understand them more.

The following attempts to make initial inroads into that relatively foreign land of political narrative. It is a small inroad but a necessary one. We list some current research of applying the screenplay form to business. Using some of this methodology, we feel the application of the screenplay form to politics is close at hand. The attempt here is to create more of a smorgasbord of ideas and speculations where some things can be put on the reader’s “plate” and others passed over.

Someday, politicians might be more like author’s – or screenwriters – of powerful narrative stories. Someday, we might look back and wonder how politics ever existed with just arguments and ideologies outside of stories.

1.Stories

There is growing evidence from areas like cognitive and neuroscience that stories have more persuasive influence than rational arguments of advertising, sales and politics. This is not some new finding but rather an idea at the center of much modern marketing thought and story creation. It has become a key element of modern business strategy.

The cognitive psychologist Jerome Bruner suggests we are 22 times more likely to remember a fact when it has been wrapped in a story. The reason is that stories are memorable and help us grab the gist of an idea quickly. They trigger our emotions. Perhaps more than any other person, it is the theories of Bruner that have suggested the importance of stories in the construction of reality. His key book in this area was his 1985 book *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds*.

In his article “The Science of Stories: How Stories Impact Our Brains” in *Quantified Communications*, Noah Zandan observes that when we hear good stories, two changes occur in our brains: one is neurological and the other is chemical. At the neurological level, he notes that when we hear straight facts, two areas of our brains light up: language processing and language comprehension. But, when we listen to stories, neural activity increases fivefold because we’re using our motor cortexes and our emotion and visual image processing centers, we’re imagining sensations, and we’re processing emotional reactions. What this means is that more of our brains are at work, so we’re more focused on the story and more likely to retain it later.

At the chemical level, when we hear stories, our brains release oxytocin, the bonding hormone that causes us to really care about the people involved. This is why we sometimes treat our favorite fictional characters as real people, why sharing personal stories is the fastest way to bond with strangers, and why storytelling is a politician’s best weapon. Not only are we hearing about somebody’s experience, but we’re living it right along with them. The more of their experience we share, the more oxytocin is released, and the more likely we are to internalize that story and think about it later.

Using Screenplay Structure to Tell Stories

A relatively new idea is the use of the screenwriting method to tell these stories. Over the years, methods of storytelling have changed to reflect the technology of their time. The most advanced form of storytelling today is screenwriting. Its methods and techniques are used to write the greatest stories of our time from literature to films. While there are a number of “schools” of screenwriting, all screenwriting is concerned with the flow (and change) of images, emotions and actions through story narratives.

The evidence of the new interest of applying screenwriting methods to business is the book *StoryNomics* by Hollywood’s leading screenwriting guru Robert McKee. Apart from the book,

McKee also conducts “storynomics” seminars. Another leading book in application of screenwriting methods to business is *Building A StoryBrand* by Don Miller. Unlike McKee, Miller is not a screenwriter but a businessman. McKee approaches the subject from the perspective of a screenwriter while Miller approaches it from the perspective of a businessman. Both books represent two of the best-sellers in the new “cottage industry” of the application of screenwriting’s storytelling methods to business. They are certainly not the only ones as more books crowd this business niche every day.

* * *

Behind this new story trend is an interesting change in the application of stories from a shared personal experience to product brand-building. The story form is being appropriated into the creation of business narratives. This is an important change. Throughout history, stories have been used to communicate experiences rather than create brands. Today, they are increasingly being used to create business stories related to branding.

The application of screenplay storytelling techniques to the entertainment industry of course was the original use of screenplays. Their expanded application to the general business community evidences a new trend. With their growing application from entertainment to business it seems likely they might soon find an application to the government industry. In effect, the application of screenplay techniques to politics seems a natural evolution than some hybrid offshoot.

Here, we need to distinguish between political screenplays in the entertainment industry and screenplays used to create political narratives. Certainly, politics in screenplays play a powerful role in shaping popular opinion. Yet, the true (and perhaps ultimate?) power for screenplays is not in the creation of political films but rather in the construction of political narratives. Political films are products of Hollywood. Political narratives are products of Washington DC.

Screenplays & Political Narrative

The application of screenplays to government (the public sector) initially falls into a few major areas. One, is the application of screenplays to *political parties*. A second is the application of screenplays to *political candidates and campaigns*. A third is the application of screenplays to *political causes and social protests*. A fourth application is to ballot issues. A final application is the use of screenplays in *national and global politics*.

When stories create the context of culture rather than the content, they become a medium rather than messages in this medium. This is when they will reach their true potential. Whether they will do this or not is still yet to be seen. Whether they should do this or not is also worthy of extended debate.

The following provides the outline of an application of screenwriting methods to create and influence political narrative.

2. Story Immersion and Business Narrative

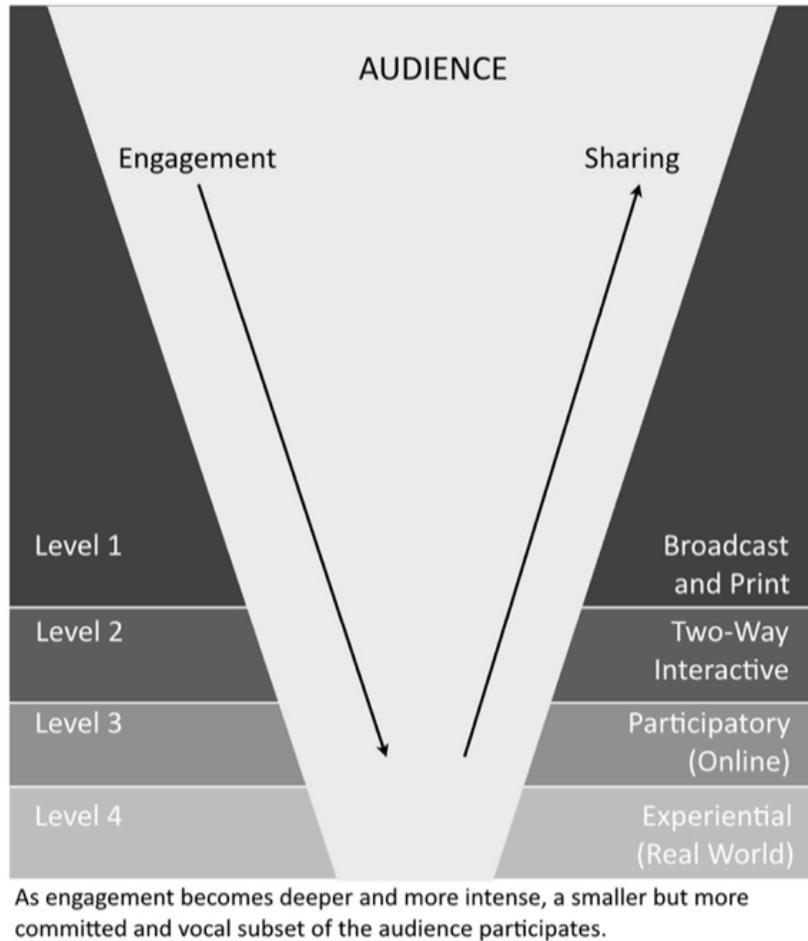
The persuasion methods of sales and advertising has traditionally been based on rational argument. However, new studies are showing that today stories are more effective at persuasion than rational argument. One of the leading academic institutions leading research in this area is the Columbia University School of the Arts' Digital Storytelling Lab. As noted on the website of the lab, "Research in neuroscience and cognitive psychology has shown that stories are typically more effective at changing people's minds than rational argument. This means that people — leaders in particular — need to view the world in narrative terms, not as a thesis to be argued or a pitch to be made but as a story to be told. Because stories provide a structure for reality and a key to understanding, because they play to the emotions and rely upon empathy, story thinking is a powerful tool."

One of the key tools used in the Columbia Storytelling Lab is what they term the Strategic Storytelling Model, showing four levels of engagement. As noted on the site, "Together, these four levels form a self-reinforcing network that deepens the connection of existing fans and brings new ones in. This strategy, and the model that describes it, can be applied not just to entertainment properties but to all sorts of communications, including marketing and journalism."

The leader of the Storytelling Lab is Professor Frank Rose and he observes that our new digital world requires understanding immersive experience. As noted on the site, "The digital world blurs everything we once kept separate — author and audience, marketing and content, even fiction and reality — while encouraging people to jump headlong into experiences of every sort." In effect, there is a growing desire of customers to tune out intrusive advertising messages and tune into the immersive experience of stories. In effect, our digital world persuades by immersion in experiences rather than advertising messages of old. Stories offer this immersive experience leading to persuasion.

* * *

The Strategic Storytelling Model created by Rose shows levels of engagement or immersion. Customers with deeper levels of immersion (such as Levels 3 and 4) tend to share experiences more than customers with more shallow levels of immersion such as Levels 1 and 2).



**The Strategic Storytelling Model: Four Levels of Engagement
(Columbia Storytelling Lab)**

Stories offer immersion experience of the experimental real world or participatory online experiences. The Columbia model shows greater immersion creates a greater story that is more likely to be shared by the person experiencing the immersive experience.

3. StoryNomics: Story-Driven Marketing in the Post-Advertising World

“Executive genius is a kind of literary genius.”

Robert McKee

“An ongoing business, by its very nature, is a flow of events through time. Events are also the core components of story. A business, therefore, is a living story – where meaning and emotion are constantly in play.”

Robert McKee

It is significant that the world’s most famous screenwriting guru Robert McKee argues for the implementation of stories based on screenplays into modern business. McKee and co-author Thomas Gerace’s arguments and techniques are discussed in the book *StoryNomics* (2018) as well as seminars based around the book.

As McKee and his co-author Thomas Gerace observe, “There has been a fundamental shift in how brands connect with their customers. In the past, they would find stories people loved and then interrupt them with ads. But, today consumers are ignoring, skipping, blocking or avoiding those ads at unprecedented rates. The net effect is that marketers are finding it harder and harder to reach customers. Leading CMOs recognize that storytelling is the future of marketing. They realize that to succeed in an increasingly ad-free world, marketers have to put story at the center of their strategies. Yet, there is still a misunderstanding about what story is and how to use it effectively.”

The book essentially applied McKee’s method of plot development to marketing. The McKee method originally appeared in McKee’s famous *Story* (1997). The McKee approach notes that plot begins when an inciting incident throws the protagonist’s life out of balance. To restore this balance, the Hero protagonist undertakes a quest for a desired object. A screenplay and the resulting movie depict this quest, carried on in the face of obstacles of increasing difficulty to obtain the desired object. The story ends with the fulfillment of the quest. The book *StoryNomics* was written to show business executives the use of this plot structure in business as well as helping them apply storytelling structure to their businesses. The authors use much of the book to argue why stories are important in business. As he notes in the quote above, businesses are in fact living stories.

The authors see three key uses of stories in business. One use is to **bond employers** and employees by creating empathy and inspiring teamwork and an enhanced flow of information. A second use is to **persuade (sell) customers** by creating a positive brand awareness and creates new markets. The third use is to allow **business leaders to envision** by shaping knowledge and feeling into story form. McKee views new business leaders as implementors of story strategy in a

similar way a great author guides the reader through a novel. In our modern, digital era, executive genius is a kind of literary genius.

McKee offers a number of applications of his method to businesses (see link in references) One interesting story he tells is about The Boldt Company that builds mammoth construction projects: power plants, hospitals, educational and industrial complexes. As he notes, “Before Boldt can build, it must win bids. In the past, Boldt’s bid team, working in the time-honored way, pitted its numbers against its competitor’s numbers resulting in a win rate of 10%. However, with some face-to-face coaching about storytelling, the bid team soon mastered the craft of turning data into drama creating a story-driven bid, entitled ‘Boldt Builds.’ This new pitch stars Boldt on a heroic quest for engineering excellence, fail-proof scheduling, transparent costings, sustainability, and worker safety. The Boldt quest climaxes with an on-time, on-budget, owner-ready facility that’s lawsuit-free and aesthetically inspiring. Thanks to Boldt’s new bid-with-a-story strategy, the company’s win rate jumped from 10% to 50%. In this year’s ranking of America’s top 100 construction companies, Boldt vaulted forward more than 20 places.”

4. Screenplays & Narratives

While *StoryNomics* is an important book, it is also somewhat of a confusing one. This arises in part from the mixture of the views of two authors rather than one as well as McKee's harvesting old screenwriting theories for new markets.

The book *Building A Story Brand* by Don Miller provides one of the most straight-forward methods for the application of screenwriting structure to building a story brand. As Miller notes in a subhead to the title, "Clarify Your Message So Customers Will Listen." Miller has created a process whereby brands can easily be related to screenwriting elements.

One of the key messages of this excellent short book is that the Hero of a business narrative is not the Brand but rather the Customer. The focus on the Customer as Hero rather than Brand as Hero is a major shift in the application of screenwriting methods to business and its products. Not only does the Miller's book stand out from the rest in that red-hot book trend today of beating the drum for a marketing strategy based around a particular story. The old goal of creating a business strategy by early management consulting firms is being replaced by the creation of a story strategy for a business.

The real strategy today for many businesses is to relate their story to customers. In the interaction between corporations and consumers, the consumer and not the corporation is the Hero from Miller's perspective. It is an important change that separates the book from *StoryNomics* where the company or brand is the Hero. For example, consider the story that McKee relates about The Boldt Company where the company (not the customer) is the Hero. As McKee says relating this story, the new pitch the company developed around story "stars Boldt on a heroic quest for engineering excellence."

The elements of Miller's system are related through one long sentence applying screenwriting theory to the customer of a business. The customer is the Hero of the story that the business tells. This is different from the old perspective that the brand is the Hero. Yet allowing that the customer is the Hero, this pulls the customer into a new relationship with the brand not experienced before. Immediately, the customer of the brand is not someone looking from afar at some brand but (via fantasy) the participant in the creation of some story. A participant in a story rather than an observer of a story. This is the suggestion of the Miller system for putting screenwriting into business.

In the book, Miller offers a number of illustrations of screenplays applied to a business and its customers. His steps follow closely the key steps in the Hero/Heroine's journey in screenplays agreed upon by most screenwriters. One could say that the entire book is based around one long sentence allowing anyone to create a screenplay. The sentence is:

“A character has a problem and meets a guide who gives them a plan and calls them to action that helps them avoid failure and ends in a success.”

The above seven highlighted areas in the overly-long sentence compose the chapters in Millers’ book and the seven steps in what one might call the “Millerian” system. The seven steps form chapters in the Miller book

- 1.A character (customer)
- 2.Has a problem
- 3.Meets a guide (the brand)
- 4.Who provides a plan
- 5.That calls them to action
- 6.Helps avoid failure
- 7.Ends in success

While there is still debate about the particular steps in screenplay plot, these seven steps contain common elements found in almost all screenwriting structures. In effect, it offers a good combination of screenwriting methods like Save the Cat, Campbell’s Hero’s Journey, John Truby, the USC Sequence Method and the traditional three-act structure.

* * *

Behind the seven instructive chapters of the book, there is the message in the book that storytelling is the new form of marketing. In effect, it is telling business that storytelling is much more important than traditional advertising confined to particular times and spaces. The movement towards storytelling in selling products is not an unusual movement. Rather, it is an expected one in the modern world of two-way interactive communication of the Internet rather than one-way, centrally controlled, broadcast communication (mass production, consumption, media) of old. Messages called advertisements and commercials directed at consumers in various spaces and times, appearing on the media consumed daily, this was the first way of advertising: to be bold and loud.

The new advertising, though, is soft, subtle and quiet. Its power is not from story content forced upon one but rather experience that envelopes like a great fog over the land. The experience of allowing customers participant in modern brands as Heroes. This is the message that Miller proposes in his method. Besides the book, there is a huge number of seminars related to the Miller method.

5. The Storyteller Aquarius

The change in marketing from advertisement to story might be a product of the digital age as authors above argue. However, the change could be part of something even greater reflected in the change of astrological signs and the movement from the Age of Pisces to the Age of Aquarius. In one of his last books, Carl Jung discussed the grand symbolism of this astrological change. He thought it was significant symbolically that the Age of Pisces (Symbolized by the fish symbol) was being replaced by the Age of Aquarius (Symbolized by the water carrier symbol). He saw it has the change in a worldview centered in the fish to one centered on one who carries water and fish that live in water.

One of the things that Jung sees in this grand change in signs is a change from a focus by something inside a context and to the perception of the context itself. Media guru Marshall McLuhan might say that the shift is one from focus on messages to the realization that messages are contained in mediums. As McLuhan once observed, “The medium is the message.”

Stories create the Aquarius water carrier in culture to match the grand movement of the signs in the heavens. Stories envelope customers in an environment, like water envelopes fish perhaps. The truth is that ultra-smart consumers like Millennials and other younger generations do not but the old tradition methods of advertising. In this method of marketing, they are similar to the Pisces fish in water. In this situation, they are part of someone else’s story. But in the modern application of screenplays to sell products, the products are no longer the Heroes or Heroines they have been in the past. Rather, now it is the customer of the product who is the Hero.

This great change is reflected in the change in the grand astrology movement from the Age of Pisces to Aquarius. Those who create stories are Aquarians. They carry the context of the world with them, the narratives that makes up context. The change in the great astrological signs suggest a change in collective consciousness of humanity, as Jung would say. Perhaps, the medium of a story is to be the key hold over people. A hold that makes them buy a product.

Once, when they were not sophisticated consumers in the world’s most advanced consumer society, those early years of marketing and advertising, they believed everything told them by business advertisers. I certainly did. (Believed I could develop the body on the back cover of the comic book. For just \$2.99. Shipment in six weeks.) But now, as we move into the end of the second decade of the twenty-first century, consumers have little time for ads. Yet still, the Internet wallpapers our computer screens with link ads based on click patterns. We all have different conglomerations of ads on our computer monitors or smartphones. Not much different perhaps. Just different worlds of ads “papered” onto our computer screens.

Ultimately, the application of screenwriting methods to business, the movement of business from shouting messages and slogans to customers to, now, suggesting stories jointly participated in. A huge change. A grand shift between opposition symbols in many ways. The message of the Pisces fish inside a watery environment. The symbol for the age of Pisces. And the symbol of the carrier of this watery environment ... Aquarius.

6.A Natural Evolution of Screenplays
From Entertainment Stories to Political narratives
(Chapter in process being written)

The spread of the screenplay form from the entertainment world to general business makes the area of government a natural target for it. All of this is speculation on my part right now. Yet I suspect many screenplay techniques are being used and tested in current political narratives. Whether there is any coordinating body is unclear. As I noted above, the application efforts of the graduates of the Miller and McKee methods would make an interesting group to study.

In creating a type of system, certainly the ideas of Miller and McKee are important. Yet there seem to be so many other things to consider. We've mentioned some of these in the above chapters and we'll mention other things to consider in the below chapters.

* * *

A number of questions come up.

Is the screenplay form the right form for Political Narratives or will there develop a new hybrid form? Something between novels, poetry and hypertext? It seems important that a script form is used as a script creates characters that a population might identify with, relate to. There are benefits to this large script in culture. There are undoubtedly dangers of allowing a national script to supplant one's own personal story.

What is the screenplay connection between business and government? The similarities and differences. Is a new type of system needed to move a system (such as Larry MacDonald's system above) into the political arena? Or, are the steps and elements different?

As we suggested above, the application of screenplays to government seems to fall into the major areas of 1) campaigns 2) causes and 3) politicians and 4) parties and 5) ballot issues. In other words, screenplay technique should find application to one of these key areas of government.

Might there be developed types of templates for these various "customers" for the application of screenplays to politics? A particular set of questions for the various areas. Questions that call for data in order to create a story or brand.

Might screenplays have their ultimate application to creating political narratives rather than Hollywood stories?

Might this be a form of ultimate control if people are enveloped into stories? Importantly, in the end, it is not the story of the brand as Hero. Rather is the story of the individual person (voter, citizen) as hero. The individual is the true Hero of the business application. The individual voter

in the public world replaces Miller's customer in the private business world. A voter. A consumer. A customer.

* * *

Making the greatest number of voters feel they are/can become heroes/heroines in the grandest Political Narrative of their times. The challenge is far greater than anything else inside a person. Here, the ability to connect somehow to some common, universal feeling of many in culture. A common story, a common narrative.

Will it always be those in control who create this narrative for the rest of us?

Or, do we have a great choice in creating our own narrative rather than adopting the grand one supplied to us.

In many ways, the two choices in the above define much of the political parties today.

It seems to me that an important function of government is to make voters feel ownership in the grand Political Narrative of their party. Constructed in large part, perhaps, using screenwriting and playwriting methods, theories and techniques. A new hybrid form of literature? Is there a special new type of literature devoted to Political Narrative?

The era of broadcast messages has fallen long ago, and the modern world is one of instant images and stories both sent and received. No one has time for ads and commercials that sell things in space and time. No one believes them anymore. They reveal themselves as what they are. Today's consumers – many millennials – want to be consumed by the promise of the first person experience of one's own story rather than a third person observer to someone else's story.

7. Political Narratives

There are many types and forms of narratives. The main definition of narrative is “any report of connected events, actual or imaginary, presented in a sequence of written or spoken words, or still moving images.” The word derives from the Latin verb *narrare*, “to tell,” which is derived from the adjective *gnarus*, “knowing” or “skilled.”

Some of these narratives are listed on the Narrative page of *Wikipedia* where narrative are organized into a number of thematic or formal categories. Some of the categories listed are [non-fiction](#), [biography](#), [journalism](#), [historiography](#), [anecdote](#), [myth](#), [legend](#), [historical fiction](#), [fiction](#), [short stories](#) and [novels](#). Wikipedia notes that Narrative is found in all forms of human creativity, art, and entertainment, including speech, literature, theatre, music, song, comics, journalism, film, television, video games, radio, performance and the visual arts.

Despite its broad use, the formal study of narrative was generally restricted to the literature departments of universities in critical theory programs. Perhaps the greatest modern expansion of the narrative idea is its expansion into the political arena. The expansion of the story form from entertainment to politics, is matched with a similar expansion of the idea of narrative from literature to politics.

Writing in the 2/20/12 *Poynter Review*, Roy Peter Clark offers an interesting observation of John Lanchester that appeared in the *London Review of Books*. “Back when I was at university, the only people who ever used the word ‘narrative’ were literature students with an interest in critical theory. Everyone else made do with ‘story’ and ‘plot’. Since then, the n-word has been on a long journey towards the spotlight – especially the political spotlight. Everybody in politics now seems to talk about narratives all the time; even political spin-doctors describe their job as being ‘to craft narratives.’ We no longer have debates, we have conflicting narratives. It’s hard to know whether this represents an increase in PR sophistication and self-awareness, or a decrease in the general level of discourse.”

The Medium of Narrative

A political narrative offers that invisible environment that Marshall McLuhan talked about in *Understanding Media* and his observation that “The medium is the message.” We are drawn to messages today and fail to see the medium of our lives, the holder of the true message. It suggests a change in narrator from first person to third person. Will there rise some great authors of political narratives in the next few years? Might these people become some of the most important in the nation?

In the years psychologist Carl Jung lived, he speculated on a great collective unconsciousness. Today, with the amount of data we have, this collective unconsciousness does not have to be speculated on but is there in the data of the great search engine, in its patterns and conglomerations of words and images and sounds and voices.

A political narrative needs to be plugged into the great search engine of its time. This gives it the research into creating narratives that it needs. Barring access to all the words of a great search

engine company, a political narrative can grow out of the roots of the nation, like the narrative of populism. But an understanding of the latest modern storytelling technology – in a new political narrative type of screenwriting as we suggest – is the most important element. Someone who knows how to embody the images, characters and words of current culture into a dramatic story that citizens want to participate in by activity and voting. These people will be behind the outside face of the characters they create in the narrative. Certainly, the character does not create them.

* * *

One can spend a lifetime studying scholarly ideas on the idea of “narrative.” Almost entire English Departments in our universities are based around the idea. The word is an essential invitee to learned author’s books these days. It is very appropriate to have it on the tip of many cocktail conversations in DC and LA.

Yet, the type of narrative we focus on is that relatively new form (not even listed in Wikipedia yet) one might call the Political Narrative. There are very few references online to the words “Political Narrative” and most congregate around a few sites. Much of the writing below comes from these sites, bound together into our own story.

Politics is now in a place where candidates fight through with stories rather than ideas. Stories reveal a reality that calls out the audience and also seeks to include more and more characters into the process. The great political stories are woven into one grand narrative with smaller narratives coming out from the grand narrative. The two should fit together with the grace and simplicity of a musical score.

* * *

Our interest is in the grand narratives of culture and not the academic offshoots in its wake. Basically, our interest is in the grandest of narratives of a particular time expressed in the dominant Political Narrative of the time. Perhaps truly effective Political Narratives of particular political times, tie into (through data) what Carl Jung termed the “collective unconsciousness” of a culture as we suggest above. But they certainly have correlations to search actions on the Internet as well as perhaps strong connections to larger historical narratives. (See our article “Electric Symbols” about the potential for Google to create the ultimate cultural narrative, written and published in the 2001 in *First Monday Journal*).

For example, two large historical narratives are the Christian narrative and Communist narratives. In the Christian narrative, “*People are born in sin but THEN have an opportunity for redemption through a Savior.*” Two events connected by the important word “then.” Without the word “then” it is not a narrative. Narratives, like stories, are made from events. Their connections infer causality. Story structure provides a narrative with its power.

The Communist narrative saw its first powerful appearance in the opening lines of the *The Communist Manifesto* which lays the basis for a grand narrative of class battle between the Bourgeois and the Proletariat, the owners of production and the workers in production.

“The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an

uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes. In the earlier epochs of history, we find almost everywhere a complicated arrangement of society into various orders, a manifold gradation of social rank. In ancient Rome we have patricians, knights, plebeians, slaves; in the Middle Ages, feudal lords, vassals, guild-masters, journeymen, apprentices, serfs; in almost all of these classes, again, subordinate gradations. The modern bourgeois society that has sprouted from the ruins of feudal society has not done away with class antagonisms. It has but established new classes, new conditions of oppression, new forms of struggle in place of the old ones.”

In many ways, the message of this first paragraph is similar to the grand Christian narrative. Here, we can change it to read, “People are born into oppression But Then have an opportunity for redemption through revolution.” This offers a powerful narrative that the history of society is the history of class struggles. It is difficult to think of many more powerful narratives.

* * *

Political narratives will seldom be as broad as the ones above. Yet they might also bring elements of these grand historical narratives into a contemporary setting. Using the great historical narratives is almost like riding on the tailwind of some great blockbuster film. There is much to pull one into great historical narratives in our current time of political and social isolation.

Most political narratives define themselves into four or eight-year Presidential elections. In this sense, the narratives come and go with particular political administrations. Political tales don’t last forever. Like empires, one author comments, they go through phases of development, consolidation and decline. Unless they can reinvent themselves, counter-narratives will appear, and the story will need to start all over again.

The Narrative Rise in American Politics

There is growing evidence that political narratives play an increasingly important role in American politics. UC Professor Francesca Polletta in “Storytelling in Politics” notes that pollster Stanley Greenberg declared in an election postmortem of 2004 that “a narrative is the key to everything.” James Carville, famous for engineering Bill Clinton’s presidential victory in 1992, agreed with this assessment saying, “We could elect somebody from the Hollywood Hills if they had a narrative to tell people about what the country is and where they see it.”

Carville went on to remark that the Democrats had to learn to tell stories more than give litanies. In Carville’s view of the time he was advising Clinton, conservative storytellers loomed large. “They produce a narrative, we produce a litany. They say, ‘I’m going to protect you from the terrorists in Tehran and the homos in Hollywood.’ We say, ‘We’re for clean air, better schools, more health care.’ And so, there’s a Republican narrative, a story, and there’s a Democratic litany.”

Presidential Narratives

The grandest political narratives are viewed in Presidential narratives which express the narrative of political parties and grand visions for the direction of America. In the mid-90s, Bill Clinton's narrative was economic growth. In the 2000's, George W. Bush's was protection for the American people. Obama's campaign was built on a story of hope and change. Trump's campaign was built on the story of making America great as it once was.

The true symbolic opposition between Obama and Trump was not in their outwardly apparent oppositions of race, class, demographics and age. Obama represented a particular generation in America while Trump also represented a particular generation. The true symbolic opposition was one of time more than anything else. Trump called for a return to the past while Obama called for movement into the future. The opposition of time periods between the two could not be in greater opposition.

One study listed in *Quantified Communications* has observed the general trend in State of the Union Addresses. These hour-long addresses to Congress and the nation provide Presidents a yearly opportunity to further define their narrative. The study analyzed every State of the Union Address from John F. Kennedy through Barack Obama to find out whether the storytelling trend is taking shape in the recent political landscape.

Despite a few outliers, the study found the general trend in State of the Union Addresses has been toward an increase in storytelling. In fact, during the 55 years studied, there's been a twofold increase during the last 55 years in storytelling language.

(1) Reagan

Ronald Reagan is considered one of the most powerful storytellers who ever lived. It is Reagan who created the mythical, original "great" America that the Trump narrative refers to. In the book *Reagan's Mythical America: Storytelling as Political Leadership* by Jan Hanska, Reagan's ability to talk, profoundly, was examined in its entirety. Hanska explains how Reagan constructed stories using re-created "Americanized" myths such as the "American way of life" and "the American dream."

As Hanska observes in his book, these myths blurred the factual and fictional, conflated the sacred and the absurd, constituted the American dream as an object of belief, and blended the mythical and religious into the political. Hanska's work demonstrates that political narratives are an exceedingly complex form of action. They interweave culturally dominant ideologies, religious beliefs, and myths into powerfully persuasive frameworks for political leaders to deploy. As such, Reagan's "Mythical America" offers a remarkable narrative and strains of this were definitely present during Trump's campaign in 2016. In effect, Trump's message of "Make America Great Again" was a narrative return to Reagan's past "Mythical America."

(2) Obama

President Obama, whose reputation as an excellent speaker predates his stay in the White House, is also attuned to the importance of storytelling. In a 2012 interview, the president said his biggest mistake during his first few years in office was not telling enough stories.

"The nature of this office is also to tell a story to the American people, that gives them a sense of unity and purpose and optimism, especially during tough times. [...] In my first two years I think the notion was, "Well, he's been juggling and managing a lot of stuff, but where's the story that tells us where he's going?" And I think that was a legitimate criticism."

Obama started to learn the importance of telling stories in his early days in politics. His advisor in 2002 was David Axelrod when Obama was running for Senate. Axelrod notes Obama was possibly one of the greatest political storytellers ever but wasn't sharing these stories. Axelrod encouraged him to share his stories. As Axelrod notes:

"I started working with Obama in 2002 when he was looking to run for the Senate. Every night, we'd talk. He'd be out on the road, and he'd share stories about people that he had met. He's a great practitioner of the narrative arts. You saw that in his own writing. But then, he would give political speeches, and they were very high-level policy talks. Finally, I said to him, 'You know, every night, you tell me these moving stories. You should share those stories because they animate the points you're trying to make much more effectively.' He started integrating these stories into his speeches."

* * *

As Sarah Weber notes in *Quantified Communications*, President Obama's final State of the Union is an excellent example. "His strength in that address is in creating small narrative arcs to drive the speech — outlining the obstacles and challenges, the path of progress, and the sense of unified achievement that make a story worth retelling." Here is a part of this speech:

"Each time, there have been those who told us to fear the future; who claimed we could slam the brakes on change, promising to restore past glory if we just got some group or idea that was threatening America under control. And each time, we overcame those fears. We did not, in the words of Lincoln, adhere to the dogmas of the quiet past. Instead we thought anew and acted anew. We made change work for us, always extending America's promise outward, to the next frontier, to more and more people. And because we did — because we saw opportunity where others saw only peril — we emerged stronger and better than before."

Overall, it seems significant to any political narrative of our times, that the Obama vision was of a *new future* while the Trump vision of a *past time*, a past time as recently as Ronald Reagan, when the myth of America's greatest still lived.

(3) Clinton & Trump

The study analyzed Clinton and Trump's performance throughout the primary debates to see whether stories are reflected in their language. Throughout the primary debates the two candidates participated in, both used far more storytelling language than the average politician.

While Trump's use of storytelling hovered in the high 90th percentile throughout the primaries, Clinton's was not as steady.

During the last two democratic debates, Clinton's storytelling language increased significantly, narrowing the gap between her speech and her opponent's. Was it a sign that she was shifting her communication strategy? Regardless of either candidate's political position or qualifications for office, Trump's story has been clear and consistent throughout his campaign, while Clinton's has been harder to pin down. However, Trump used, on the whole, nearly 30% more storytelling than Clinton in the debates.

(4) Sanders & Trump Similar Narratives – Different Solutions

In spite of being very different on major areas like economics, the narratives of Presidential candidates Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump in the 2016 campaign were surprisingly similar in many ways. In the *Berkeley Political Review* (12/5/17) Henry Tolchard observes their similarity in a very interesting article.

As Tolchard notes, "Trump and Senator Bernie Sanders are often compared as both being part of a larger populist trend in politics, or, contrasted for their nearly opposite political ideologies. But their real similarity lies in their rhetoric. Each has persuasive power because of the narratives that they support. Both rely on descriptions of the status quo systems of power being "rigged" against the common people to rile up support. Sanders, in his opening remarks at the fifth Democratic presidential debate, took a stand against the 'rigged economy,' as he also did in advertisement. In describing campaign finance, he said the "system is corrupt, big money controls what's going on.'

Tolchard notes that "Alone, these comments all seem par for the course, but when evaluating next to Trump's they are strikingly familiar. Trump has echoed Sanders in saying that 'it's not just the political system that's rigged, it's the whole economy.' Additionally, his distrust in institutions has led him to also call the political structure 'a rigged system.' The similarity between the two is clearly not in their views about what should be done to fix these problems. Trump favors conservative economic reform focused on 'America first,' while Sanders is a social democrat who supports large government programs to combat economic injustice. Their similarity, and their rhetorical power, is in the narratives that they uphold."

8.Characteristicc, Benefits & Dangers of Political Narratives

Despite their constant appearance in news today, there has been very little research into such things as the characteristics, benefits and dangers of political narratives. There is little on the Internet and even through the searches in Google Scholar. So, I am lucky that through the Internet I found one of the greatest observers of political narratives on an international scale. He is author/philosopher Orlando D'Adamo, Director, Center for Public Opinion, Universidad de Belgrano. In the 2017 issue of *The Conversation* he observed various characteristics and benefits of political narratives. In his article "How Storytelling Explains World Politics, from Spain to the US" D'Adamo notes the characteristics and benefits of political narratives.

Characteristics of Political Narratives

The characteristics of international political narratives relate much to the world of mythology and film protagonists and antagonists. D'Adamo lists the seven characteristics of leading political narratives as:

Tales of power where the "good guys" are victims of the "bad guys."

Blame unscrupulous politicians for letting insidious interests win

Use direct, simple and emotionally charged messages.

Offer Solutions which seem feasible.

Seek recovery of a mythical past, connecting people to their roots and lost values.
Construction of an identity

Revive founding myths

Impose an "Us" Versus "Them" Dialect

Use Simple Analogies

Many elements of screenwriting are in the above characteristics. Whether the above are a final list or simply a beginning is open to debate. It seems to be the start of a list for those attempting to analyze the characteristics of political narratives. Besides the characteristics of political narratives the benefits of them are accessed by some scholars and the below seem to be the major ones.

Benefits of Political Narratives

The benefits of Political Narratives have powerful benefits that D'Adamo mentions in his article are:

Stability and continuity in our lives. Narratives help to orient us

Motivate action by helping to make sense of the world around us

Help construct meaning, purpose and identity for themselves, and

Ignite and nurture passion

We have been discussing the creation of narratives by politicians to control cultural trends. Yet narratives are also methods for the populace to construct disparate facts and weave them together cognitively. As D'Adamo notes, Political Narrative provides a sense of stability, continuity and orientation in life. It helps motivate action by helping make sense of the world. It provides people with hope and passion. Narratives help modern culture construct a meaning and purpose and identity. They nurture passion.

Of course, the grand story created by the Political Narrative of the time, trickles down over all of culture and media and – if a good narrative for the times, tied closely to the main internal concerns of a population of people – it can provide many of the above benefits to the population.

Connecting to the Benefits of Political Narratives in Today's News

But the news each day changes and facts, events and “fake news” needs input into the media system of the nation. Either allied or against the party in power at the time. In an interesting article in the 9/28/16 *National Review* called “Narrative-Building Has Become a Political Obsession,” Jonah Goldberg talks about these attempts by media to weave events into the grand narrative. Both politicians and media does this. As Goldberg writes:

“From terrorism to police violence, politicians and journalists feel compelled to make every fact serve a larger narrative. The most exhausting thing about our politics these days — other than the never-ending presidential election itself — is the obsession with “shaping the narrative.” By that I mean the effort to connect the dots between a selective number of facts and statistics to support one storyline about the state of the union.”

The goal of much media is to place us into larger stories that area taking place right now. The largest and greatest story. The promise of this story is that every person can be a part of this story by accepting a particular narrative. Goldberg notes:

“Narrative-building is essential for almost every complicated argument because it's the only way to get our pattern-seeking brains to discount contradictory facts and data. Trial lawyers understand this implicitly. Get the jury to buy the story, and they'll do the heavy lifting of arranging the facts in just the right way.”

At the end of the article, Goldberg speculates that, “Perhaps it’s because our country is so polarized and our media environment so balkanized and instantaneous. Politicians and journalists alike feel compelled to make facts serve some larger tale in every utterance.”

Dangers of Political Narratives How Loyalty Limits Perception

Certainly not all see benefits in the creation of political narratives. In the 7/20/16 *Kennedy School Review*, Stephen Hawkins and Tommy Flint provide an interesting article “Two Stories, One America: How Political Narratives Shape Our Understanding of Reality.” Drawing upon the support of a burgeoning field of academic research, they describe how our allegiance to narrative leads us to misperceive reality in three ways: we *ignore* pieces of information that don’t fit our narrative, we *dispute* facts that challenge our narrative, and we *maintain* demonstrably false beliefs that confirm our narrative.

Just as there are psychological benefits of believing in narratives, there are also dangers. If narratives help connect the dots in our disconnected culture, they also supply the dots to be connected. Society is always forced into battle so that the battle will distract from the government who started the battle in the first place. The common belief is that private citizens can be a part of the grand political narratives of the times. This is the grandest of narrative to be associated with. In our current time of division, one narrative is to return to a nostalgic past of commonality and community in the nation. The other is to race headlong into a future of division and separation.

These two grand political narratives have an opposition relationship to the symbolism of time. One narrative moves backward while the other narrative moves forward. The Conservative wants to conserve things of the world. The Liberal wants to destroy things to create a new world. The Democratic Party represents the Feminine archetype symbol while the Republican Party represents the Masculine archetype in the world. The grand narratives of each party are Equality for the Democratic Party and Freedom for the Republican Party.

* * *

The point is that citizens are given two grand political narratives in America. Only two and not three or four or more choices available in the political structures of other nations. Perhaps one of the biggest efforts of modern American government is in keeping citizens engaged in a two-party narrative, rather than a three-or-more party narrative in other nations. Modern American government largely through distracting the populace from its effects. A battling two-sided narrative is the best way to distract. Politicians come and go from government. They rise promoting one of the narratives. They fall when the opposite narrative rises.

But the government is always there. The old “deep state swamp” as one narrative imagines it today using the metaphorical connection between America’s capital and a swamp. (A great use of image and metaphor, the great use of a literary device as we will discuss in the next chapter)

It is the true yet hidden controlling force of the nation through its history, through Republican, Democratic and Progressive eras and administrations. The world wars. Civil rights. The Civil War. The early years after the revolution. Administrations and political parties come and go. But the government is always there. The same, unchanging government that was the main force against the individual citizen. As Thomas Paine saw in *Common Sense*, the grand propaganda piece of the American Revolution.

In this later stage of American history, most Americans have forgotten their original struggle was between a people and a government. In most cases, one of the two narratives - Republicans and Democrats - have infiltrated all culture. The two-sided narrative is almost completely invisible to the populace. People are aware of this two-sided narrative as much as fish are aware of water.

In this later state of American history, most voters of the nation have decided which narrative he/she is loyal to. As Hawkins and Flint argue in the article in *The Kennedy School Review*, allegiance to one of these narratives leads citizens holding this narrative makes them misperceive reality in three ways: they *ignore* pieces of information that don't fit our narrative, they *dispute* facts that challenge their narrative, and they *maintain* demonstrably false beliefs that confirm their narrative.

* * *

One can see all of this happening today if they can momentarily peek outside the two-narrative structure they are caught within. Everything is a constant back and forth constant between the two narratives. American culture is directed towards this two-sided narrative. Again, narratives of other nations that do not operate with the two-party system, will offer more major narratives than America's two.

If one can rise above the two-battling sides of culture today, even briefly, can rise above them and look down on them like watching some game from the stands. No longer on the field of play. Up here in the stands. The government always sits up here in the stands and watches the game below. An individual feels different if they can remove themselves from the dual narrative that battles each day in America. It is a battle that more and more seem to get caught up today in these incredibly divided times. Addiction to the daily battle between narratives can be almost like watching a constant tennis match, the ball always going back and forth, the game never at rest.

It is good to be able to observe narratives for a while, even try them out, rather than immediately adopt them as worldviews. But there is the great danger of the narrative of blocking off a great section of experience and reality to a person. The blockage is necessary to maintain a particular view. Maintaining a particular narrative – between the two of them we are always offered - seems more important in America today than searching for new common narrative.

Characteristics, Benefits & Dangers of Political Narratives

Characteristics, benefits and dangers of Political Narratives are something to be aware of when creating Political Narratives. However, they serve little more than a background setting to the real scene of creating the Political Narrative with words.

It seems to me that there will develop a new type of screenwriter/storyteller that will understand how to create these political narratives. A screenwriter who will create scripts for DC rather than Hollywood. The scripts will not be produced as movies but adopted by into such things as political candidates, parties, causes and ballot issues. They will be used in writing speeches, making YouTube videos, approaching the news. Perhaps they go into blogs or Tweets or books about a politician.

There might become a new type of author in America. The new politician as an author of political narratives? A combination of Charles Dickens, Joe Conrad, Stephen King and Thomas Clancy writing a Political Narrative of their time. These new scripts for political narratives might have close relationships to screenplays and plays. Yet they will be a hybrid, a little different. They will have a strong understanding of mythology, symbolism, the meaning of words and literary technique. The true weapons of political narratives are the some of the things we have been talking about and will talk about. Dramatic structure in the past chapters. Literary devices in the next chapters.

In the presentation of the following (as well as the presentation of the previous) we follow our stated methods of using “cool” participatory literary techniques in the narrative of this book. This method is based around the premise that a literary piece that asks rather than answers questions is much more powerful as it invites participation in the creation of a political narrative. One might say that this is the “fan fiction” aspect to the creation of a leading narratives in culture. Hopefully, this book will ask more questions than it answers.

9. Cool Media & Political Narratives

There is the structure of Hollywood screenplays to be adhered to in creating Political Narratives. Yet, this structure is composed of words. Currently, words of description in screenplays allow the Director broad discretion over the final product. The role of Director takes on a new meaning in Political Narratives. After all, who is the Director in a Political Narrative, if in fact there is a Director at all? Is the ultimate Director the politician who applies the narrative?

The ambiguity of the Director's role in Political Narratives should allow screenwriters of Political Narratives much greater power than traditional entertainment screenwriters. One element of this power will be the increased importance of words in Political Scripts and the greater importance of the Description element of screenplays. Screenwriters of Political Narratives will take more control of scene Descriptions and utilize more literary devices and symbolism in them as we discuss below.

Yet before literary devices and methods are applied, the words in Political Narratives should contain words picked from key words on the Internet during a particular period of time. A strong relationship to popular words (and their memes) assures the Political Narrative screenplay will contain key words relating to top concerns in culture. It seems unlikely powerful Political Narratives can be developed without the data input of leading Internet search and social media companies.

But current revelations of bias of the leading Internet companies to a particular political party makes it difficult for the other political party to obtain this important data. This bias presents a true challenge in creating powerful Political Narratives for the party in opposition. Will this always be the situation? In other words, will Political Narratives have greater access to Internet data when they support the bias of the great Internet companies?

* * *

However, regardless of the connection of words used in Political Narratives to Internet data, there are certain literary devices and storytelling elements that can increase the power of Political Narratives by increasing audience (voter) participation, emotion and communication of the narrative. These literary devices have been tested throughout the history of literature. Their methods are behind many of the greatest narratives in history such as the Bible and a narrative like *Pilgrim's Progress*. For example, the *Bible* employs the device of parable and proverb for a large part of its narrative while *Pilgrim's Progress* contains the device of allegory where a narrative is interpreted to reveal a hidden meaning. *Pilgrim's Progress* becomes an allegory of the spiritual journey.

We discuss other powerful literary devices that need application by screenwriters of Political Narratives. Some of these are analogy, metaphor, parody and symbol. While many are familiar with these words yet, few understand their proper application.

It is a worthwhile question to ask what literary devices are the most powerful for the creation of Political Narratives. Should these narratives be written using parables and proverbs as in the Bible? Or, should they employ allegories and symbols? Perhaps they should use all of the literary devices? Might there be a “most effective” combination of the devices in Political Narrative screenplays?

The below briefly discusses some of these devices. It is not meant to be a thorough review of them. Rather, it attempts to provide the beginnings of a discussion in the application of cool media and literary devices to Political Narratives.

Cool Words

One of the more important observations media guru Marshall McLuhan made was that there was *not only hot and cool media* but also *hot and cool messages within media*. I am reminded of a favorite quote of mine from Marshall McLuhan in *Understanding Media*:

“Francis Bacon never tired of contrasting hot and cool prose. Writing in ‘methods’ or complete packages, he contrasted with writing in aphorisms, or single observations such as ‘Revenge is a kind of wild justice.’ The passive consumer wants packages, but those, he suggested, who are concerned in pursuing knowledge and in seeking causes will resort to aphorisms, just because they are incomplete and require participation in depth.”

In effect, there are “cool” words and literary devices that invite “participation” in a story because it is “cool” and incomplete and requires reader/audience participation in completing it. The change from hot to cool media in America is apparent with the change from one-way broadcast media (TV networks, newspapers, radio) to the two-way digital interactive media of the Internet. It is a change from hot to cool media, from being lectured to via broadcast media to having an interaction with media.

Cool Situations

Apart from cool words in narratives that allow greater audience (voter) participation, emotion and communication, one can also observe “cool” situations which allow for greater participation. For example, providing the beginning or mere outline of a narrative allows more participation than providing the ending of the narrative. Or, providing pieces of a narrative might invite greater participation in putting the pieces together rather than providing the assembled whole.

As McLuhan might observe, a completed script is a hot, non-participatory media today while an incomplete script offers a participatory medium and is therefore cool. Incomplete can arise from words and literary forms but also as particular parts or stages presented in a narrative. Providing the beginning of a narrative, or an outline of the script or the pieces of multiple scripts invite greater audience (voter) participation.

Spreadable Media

The cool theories of McLuhan have connection to the phenomenon of “fan” fiction where there is great participation by readers/audience in the creation of narratives. In effect, the traditional distinctions between producer and consumer, author and readers, screenwriter and audience, are becoming blurred. No longer are stories being “broadcast” out from a few places like Hollywood and Madison Avenue. Rather, they are coming from anyone who is Tweeting or blogging or posting videos to YouTube.

Many are familiar with the French Auteur Theory suggesting the director (not the screenwriter) is the real “author” of a film. Participatory narratives are pushing the Auteur concept into scripts where the “author” of a script might not just be the original scriptwriter but other scriptwriters who participate in its creation. And, not simply co-screenwriters who set out at the beginning to create scripts. Rather, co-authors who enter the story process sometime after it has started.

The new role of participatory culture in both creating and spreading new narratives is discussed in *Spreadable Media* (2013) by Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford and Joshua Green. Rather than some fad on the outskirts of popular culture, the new participatory culture is a powerful method for the dissemination of political narratives. The trend is evidenced by that growing form of participatory creation called Fan Fiction and the emergence of widely popular narratives like *Wool*, *Fifty Shades of Gray* and *The Martian*.

10.Literary Devices & Political Narratives

Literary devices are the tools and techniques of language that authors use to convey meaning. Besides the grand categories of participation and non-participation via hot and cool words and phrases, there is a large toolbox of historical literary devices tested through time such as the parables and proverbs in the *Bible* and allegory in *Pilgrim's Progress*. Skilled use of literary devices brings richness and clarity to a text.

A list of the leading literary devices used for political narratives is briefly discussed below. Again, this is meant to start a discussion rather than end it.

Adage - A traditional wise saying or a proverb. A short statement expressing a general truth. A few examples are “Out of sight out of mind” and “The early bird gets the worm.”

Allegory - The representation of abstract ideas or principles by characters, figures, or events in narrative, dramatic or pictorial form. A story, picture, or play employing such representation.

Alliteration - A literary device where two or more words in a phrase or line of poetry share the same beginning consonant sound. The words may be adjacent or separated by one or more words. One of the primary purposes of alliteration is to emphasize something important that the writer or speaker would like to highlight. From Milton to Tennyson, some of the greatest poets have relied upon alliteration from time to time. There's no doubt it adds rhythm, color and beauty to verse.

An example from poetry:

Deep into that darkness peering, Long I stood there wondering, fearing,
Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortal ever dared to dream before
"The Raven," Edgar Allan Poe

An example from prose:

“So, we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past.”
The Great Gatsby, F. Scott Fitzgerald

Ambiguity - a word or expression that can be understood in two or more possible way creating an unclear meaning. *Seven Types of Ambiguity* is a work of literary criticism by William Empson which was first published in 1930. It was one of the most influential critical works of the 20th century and was a key foundation work in the formation of the New Criticism school. The book is organized around seven types of ambiguity that Empson finds in poetry.

Seven Types of Ambiguity ushered in New Criticism in the United States. The book is a guide to a style of literary criticism practiced by Empson. An ambiguity is represented as a puzzle to

Empson. We have ambiguity when “alternative views might be taken without sheer misreading.” The seven types of ambiguity Empson discusses are the following:

- The first type of ambiguity is the metaphor when two things are said to be alike which have different properties.
- The second type is where two or more meanings are resolved into one. Empson characterizes this as using two different metaphors at once.
- The third type is where two ideas that are connected through a context that can be given in one word simultaneously.
- The fourth type is where two or more meanings do not agree but combine to make clear a complicated state of mind in the author.
- The fifth is when the author discovers his idea in the act of writing. Empson describes it as a simile that lies halfway between two statements made by the author.
- The sixth is when a statement says nothing, and the readers are forced to invent a statement of their own, most likely in conflict with that of the author.
- The seventh is when two words within a context are opposites that expose a fundamental division in the author's mind.

Ambiguity is a good example of a leading “cool” participatory literary device. Francesca Polletta’s *It Was Like a Fever* sets out to account for the power of storytelling in mobilizing political and social movements. Drawing on cases ranging from sixteenth-century tax revolts to contemporary debates about the future of the World Trade Center site, Polletta argues that stories are politically effective not when they have clear moral messages, but when they have complex, often ambiguous ones.

Analogy - Similarity in some respects between things that are otherwise dissimilar. It aims at explaining something unfamiliar by using something familiar. Comparison based on such similarity. A form or instance of logical inference, based on the assumption that if two things are alike in some respects, they must be alike in other respects. Examples of analogies are the following:

- Life is like a race. The one who keeps running wins the race, and the one who stops to catch a breath loses.
- Just as a sword is the weapon of a warrior, a pen is the weapon of a writer.
- How a doctor diagnoses diseases is like how a detective investigates crimes.
- Just as a caterpillar comes out of its cocoon, so we must come out of our comfort zone.

- You are as annoying as nails on a chalkboard.

Antithesis - A contrary or opposite opinion, concept, or characteristic. In *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens the beginning reads “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.” Here, Dickens epitomized the very idea of antithesis. In *Paradise Lost* by John Milton, he writes that it is "better to reign in Hell, than serve in Heav'n." Surely, that assertion is debatable, but Milton is making a valid point that it may be better to be in power, even if it's in the darkest depths of the netherworld, than to serve at the feet of another.

Aphorism - It is useful to pursue the various definitions of the word “aphorism” McLuhan alludes to in the Francis Bacon quote. Interestingly, the definition of aphorism brings together a number of famous literary methods, techniques and forms such as adages, proverbs and precepts. In *The American Heritage College Dictionary*, 4th Edition and *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, one finds the following paraphrased definitions:

An aphorism is a terse statement of a truth or opinion; an adage; a brief statement of a principle. Wisdom condensed in a few words. Examples: “Give a man a mask and he will tell you the truth.” (Wilde) “The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom.” (Blake) Aphorisms often take the form of a definition: “Hypocrisy is a homage paid by vice to virtue.” (La Rochefoucauld).’ Aphorisms have been employed throughout history in many literary contexts. One of the most famous modern applications of aphorisms to literary technique is in the work of Nietzsche.

The comment of Marshall McLuhan on a comment of Sir Francis Bacon is good to bring up again in our text. Writing in ‘methods’ or complete packages, Bacon contrasted with writing in aphorisms, or single observations such as ‘Revenge is a kind of wild justice.’ The passive consumer wants packages, but those, Bacon suggested, who are concerned in pursuing knowledge and in seeking causes will resort to aphorisms, just because they are incomplete and require participation in depth.” An aphorism is an important literary device for using cool media in Political Narratives. The major threat to a modern government is that citizens do not feel participation in the grand story of the government.

Using “cool” literary devices and particular images and symbols, a new type of genre of literature might arise. A hybrid literature that demands to be both read and produced in some other form.

Cliché - A cliché is a phrase that is repeated so often, it's nearly meaningless. For example, the phrase "Try walking a mile in my shoes."

Exposition – Provides background information to the reader or listener about the setting, establishing the theme and introducing the characters. In music, the exposition is the first part in the sonata form which introduces the themes used in the composition or the opening section of a fugue. In a play, film or television show, exposition would be used anywhere in the work to give background information on characters and other parts of the work. In a screenplay, exposition comes in scene description and character dialogue.

Humor - that quality which appeals to a sense of the ludicrous or absurdly incongruous: a funny or amusing quality.

Hyperbole - A figure of speech that uses extreme exaggeration to make a point or show emphasis. It is the opposite of understatement. Hyperboles are not comparisons, like similes and metaphors but extravagant and even ridiculous overstatements, not meant to be taken literally. In literature, hyperbole will often be used to show contrast or catch the reader's attention.

Examples:

I've told you to clean your room a million times!
It was so cold, I saw polar bears wearing hats and jackets.
She's so dumb, she thinks Taco Bell is a Mexican phone company.
I am so hungry I could eat a horse.
I have a million things to do today.

Idioms – Popular sayings established by usage as having a meaning not deducible from those of the individual words. For example, “It was raining cats and dogs.” There are many idioms used in popular speech today such as “He/She was thrown under the bus,” or “That rain has left the station.” Other examples of idioms are:

The best of both worlds – means you can enjoy two different opportunities at the same time. By working part-time and looking after her kids two days a week she managed to get the best of both worlds.”

Speak of the devil – this means that the person you're just talking about actually turns up at that moment. “Hi Tom, speak of the devil, I was just telling Sara about your new car.”
See eye to eye – this means agreeing with someone. They finally saw eye to eye on the business deal.”

Once in a blue moon – an event that happens infrequently. “I only go to the cinema once in a blue moon.”

When pigs fly – something that will never happen. “When pigs fly she'll tidy up her room.”

To cost an arm and a leg– something is very expensive. “Fuel these days costs an arm and a leg.”

A piece of cake– something is very easy. “The English test was a piece of cake.”
Let the cat out of the bag – to accidentally reveal a secret. “I let the cat out of the bag about their wedding plans.”

To feel under the weather – to not feel well. “I'm really feeling under the weather today; I have a terrible cold.”

Imagery - What provides the color, or what a reader can see in his or her mind's eye about a particular written work. A few examples:

A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.
Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the Milky Way
"Daffodils" by William Wordsworth

Single sentence images:

He fumed and charged like an angry bull.
He fell down like an old tree falling down in a storm.
He felt like the flowers were waving him a hello.
The eerie silence was shattered by her scream.
He could hear his world crashing down when he heard the news about her.
The F-16 swooped down like an eagle after its prey.
The word spread like leaves in a storm.

Metaphor - A figure of speech in which a word or phrase that designates one thing is applied to another in an implicit comparison, as in "All the world's a stage" or "The curtain of night fell upon us." One thing conceived as representing another; a symbol. A metaphor is a comparison between two things that states one thing is another, in order help explain an idea or show hidden similarities.

Metonymy - Use of a linked term to stand in for an object or concept. Sometimes metonymy is chosen because it's a well-known characteristic of the concept. A famous example is, "The pen is mightier than the sword," from Edward Bulwer Lytton's play *Richelieu*. This sentence has two metonyms:

"Pen" stands for "the written word."
"Sword" stands for "military aggression."

Crown - in place of a royal person
We will swear loyalty to the crown.
The White House or The Oval Office - used in place of the President or White House staff.
The White House will be making an announcement around noon today.
Suits - in place of business people

Onomatopoeia – Means "to make a name (or sound)." That is to say that the word means nothing more than the sound it makes. The word "boing," for example, is simply a sound effect, but one that is very useful in making writing or storytelling more expressive and vivid. Examples:

"Chug, chug, chug. Puff, puff, puff. Ding-dong, ding-dong. The little train rumbled over the tracks." *The Little Engine That Could*, Watty Piper

"Plop, plop, fizz, fizz, oh what a relief it is." (slogan of Alka Seltzer, US)

Oxymoron - An oxymoron is a figure of speech containing words that seem to contradict each other. It's often referred to as a contradiction in terms. As with other rhetorical devices, oxymorons are used for a variety of purposes. Sometimes they're used to create a little bit of drama for the reader; sometimes they're used to make a person stop and think, whether that's to laugh or to wonder. A common oxymoron is the phrase "the same difference." This phrase qualifies as an oxymoron because the words "same" and "difference" have completely opposite meanings. Bringing them together into one phrase produces a verbally puzzling, yet engaging, effect. Other examples:

"Modern dancing is so old fashioned." - Samuel Goldwyn

"A business that makes nothing but money is a poor business." - Henry Ford

"I am a deeply superficial person." - Andy Warhol

Parable - A usually short fictitious story that illustrates a moral attitude or a religious principle such as the Biblical *parable* of the Good Samaritan. Also, something (such as a news story or a series of real events) likened to a parable in providing an instructive example or lesson.

Paradox - a statement that is seemingly contradictory or opposed to common sense and yet is perhaps true; a self-contradictory statement that at first seems true. A paradox is a logical puzzler that contradicts itself in a baffling way. "his statement is false" is a classic example, known to logicians as "the liar's *paradox*." Paradoxical statements may seem completely self-contradictory, but they can be used to reveal deeper truths. When Oscar Wilde said, "I can resist anything except temptation," he used a paradox to point to our fundamental weakness to give in to tempting things (like chocolate or a pretty smile), all the while imagining that we can hold firm and resist them.

Parody – *noun* an imitation of the style of a particular writer, artist, or genre with deliberate exaggeration for comic effect. "The movie is a parody of the horror genre" Other related synonyms for parody are satire, burlesque, lampoon, pastiche, caricature, imitation and mockery.

Personification - When the qualities of a person are assigned to something that isn't human or that isn't even alive, like nature or emotions. There are many reasons for using personification. It can be used as a method of describing something so that others can more easily understand it. It can be used to emphasize a point. It can be used to help paint a picture in your mind. You may in fact use personification without even knowing it.

Proverb - A short pithy saying of unknown authorship in frequent and widespread use that expresses a basic truth or practical precept. Examples: "Too many cooks spoil the broth." Hebrew scriptures include a *Book of Proverbs*. In addition, many poets such as Chaucer, incorporate proverbs into their works.

Satire - The use of humor, irony, exaggeration, or ridicule to expose and criticize people's stupidity or vices, particularly in the context of contemporary politics and other topical issues. It uses mockery, derision, sarcasm, irony and scorn. Much more here based on the research of Eric McLuhan.

Simile – a figure of speech comparing two unlike things that is often introduced by *like* or *as* such as “*cheeks like roses.*” Many have trouble distinguishing between *simile* and metaphor. *Simile* comes from the Latin word *similis* (meaning “similar, like”) and the comparison indicated by a *simile* will typically contain the words *as* or *like*. *Metaphor*, on the other hand, comes from the Greek word *metapherein* (“to transfer”) which fitting, since a metaphor is used in place of something. “My love is like a red, red rose” is a *simile* while “love is a rose” is a *metaphor*. “She’s as fierce as a tiger” is a *simile* but “She’s a tiger when she's angry” is a metaphor. Examples of similes:

As cute as a kitten
As happy as a clam
As light as a feather
As blind as a bat
As bold as brass
As bright as a button
As shiny as a new pin
As cold as ice
As common as dirt
As cool as a cucumber
As hard as nails

11. Storytelling & Ambiguity in Social Protest

One of the foremost scholars on studying political narratives is UC Irvine Professor Francesca Polletta. In her book *It was Like a Fever*, she discusses the power of storytelling in mobilizing political and social movements. The book studies the early civil rights movement when four black students sat down at a whites-only lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina in 1960 and refused to leave. Within a month, sit-ins spread to thirty cities in seven states. Student participants told stories of impulsive, spontaneous action—this despite all the planning that had gone into the sit-ins. “It was like a fever,” they said.

The emphasis on stories as motivation for social movements. As she notes, the data help to counter the instrumentalist and organizational biases of recent social movement theorizing by elucidating the social-psychological and discursive processes involved in recruitment that takes place outside of the frames of formal organizations. Frames are interpretative schemata that enable individuals to locate, perceive, identify and label occurrences within their life space and the world at large. Frames provide a *diagnosis* of the social condition in need of remedy, a *prognosis* for how to do that and a *rationale* for action. Injustice, identity and agency as components of frames.

Polletta argues that narrative is prominent in such interpretive processes because its temporally equips it to integrate past, present and future events and to align individual collective identities during periods of change. Narrative’s reliance on emplotment rather than explanation further engages potential activists precisely by its ambiguity about the causes of collective action. These features distinguish narratives from frames, which are said to contribute to identify-formation through taxonomic atemporal and discursive processes of analogy and difference. Frames’ mobilizing capacity, moreover, is allegedly dependent on clear, no ambiguous, specification of the agents, intentions, and efficacy of protest. Narrative identification supplies powerful incentives to participate.

The research of Polletta draws on other social protest movements ranging from sixteenth-century tax revolts to contemporary debates about the future of the World Trade Center site. One of major findings is that stories are politically effective not when they have clear moral messages, but when they have complex, often ambiguous ones. The openness of stories to interpretation has allowed disadvantaged groups, in particular, to gain a hearing for new needs and to forge surprising political alliances. Narratives’ capacity to make sense of unfamiliar events, to engage as they explain, and to sustain identity during periods of rapid change suggests that they would be especially prominent in movement discourse that develops before movement organizations have consolidated or that occurs outside their auspices.

12.Symbolism & Mythology in Political Narratives (Notes ... chapter in progress)

A symbol is something that represents something else by association, resemblance, or convention, especially a material object representing something invisible. Symbolism occurs when something that has one meaning is used to represent something entirely different. For example, using an image of the American flag to represent patriotism. Symbolism is the medium of symbols where there is movement of these associations. A symbolic narrative places key importance on the movement of symbols within a story.

One of the shortcomings of western thought is that symbols are looked at as dead things in museums, captured, killed and mounted into reference books. This is less the case in eastern culture where the focus is not on symbols as much as the movement of symbols. Symbols are always the *messages* in McLuhan's *messages and mediums theory*. Symbols serve as messages in the medium of symbolism. It is one thing to know the meanings of all the various symbols. Yet, a totally different thing to know how these symbols move in symbolism.

It goes without saying that Political Narratives that follow current symbols movement through symbolism have great power over a culture. This assumes there are great, collective symbols, that everyone has a connection to. Political Narratives using the symbols in the right movement have the most power as Political Narratives.

As we discussed in our manuscript *The Symbolism of Place: The Hidden Context of Communication*, stories are really the symbolic movement in time of events and people ... their movement through places, spaces and time. In the book we argued that the greatest drama results from the greatest change between the opening and closing symbols of a narrative. The symbols we looked at were the key symbols of place, space and time. In effect, place or context was the true definer of what is within place. The box defines the content of the box.

This symbolic element is important to consider in creating the new genre of Political Narrative scripts. The Political Narrative Screenplay will incorporate symbols and symbolism. Perhaps it will develop as an offshoot from a major strain of screenwriting. Perhaps elements of Playwriting will enter into the mix. Perhaps other things will also enter the mix. Like music. So that, in the end, the entire Political Narrative might meld into a narrative somewhat similar to a piece of music.

13.Pseudo-Events & Political Narratives

“We don’t quite know what reality is, anymore. And, more worryingly, we don’t seem much to care.” Daniel Boorstin

In the early 60s, the American scholar Daniel Boorstin wrote a book about the effects of media publicity and advertising on political and social practices in the United States in of the 1950s. The title of the book was *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America* (1961). In the book, Boorstin defined a new term called pseudo-event as creating an ambiguous event that appeals to people’s desire to be informed. Boorstin says that their relation to underlying reality is ambiguous. And, in fact Boorstin notes, its interest arises largely from its ambiguity.

He argued that being in the media spotlight was a strong incentive for public figures to stage artificial events, which became real and important once validated by media coverage.

For Boorstin, pseudo-events were the opposite of propaganda, although both forms of communication have similar consequences and result in public misinformation. Propaganda slants facts to keep the public from learning the truth. On the other hand, pseudo-events provide the public with artificial facts that people perceive as real.

Boorstin didn’t realize the true prophecy of his book at the time. It marked a major distinction in the philosophy behind political narratives. Boorstin said nothing about “political narratives” in his book because the word “political narratives” had not yet been born into usage. The word “narrative” was a fairly common word most popular in literature departments of universities. However, the word “narrative” never escaped from academic halls.

Until Boorstin’s book offered a new method of control not based on propaganda but on the creation of an artificial reality. This was the new method of control that Boorstin saw in development in the 1950s. The change from propaganda to the creation of pseudo-events in the method modern political control is held.

The Invisibility of Pseudo-Events

Although Boorstin did not intend his book to be a political book (Boorstin is recognized as one of America’s greatest historians) the hidden subtext of the book really discusses a new method of political control. It was a method that stood in opposition to the old one-way-broadcast method dominating the early years of mass communication and production in America. It was the one-way-broadcast method of distributing propaganda, of telling a populace a bunch of invented lies and untruths about reality.

It was the era before the two-way interactive communication of the Internet and digital media. In the new digital world, propaganda no longer works for political control. No one tells one truth about reality anymore in the digital world. Broadcast, one-way communication is a medium of the past. Rather, one creates a new reality based on two-way communication. Particular political narratives are released into the Ozone of current culture by one of the three players in the political system: the government or one of the two parties.

Creating pseudo-events is a method not for creating the messages of propaganda but rather an entire new medium or environment, these messages exist in. The difference is contained in the themes of the two famous books *1984* and *Brave New World*. A future of government control over a populace based on propaganda and force and narratives. One envisioned a future of outward control. The other, a future of such distraction that control was no longer needed. Two visions of the future.

* * *

In the novel, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by George Orwell, Great Britain (“Airstrip One”) has become a province of a superstrate named Oceania and Oceania is ruled by the “Party,” who employ the “Thought Police to persecute individualism and independent thinking. The Party’s leader is Big Brother who enjoys an intense cult of personality but may not even exist. The protagonist of the novel, Winston Smith, is a rank-and-file Party member. Smith is an outwardly diligent and skillful worker, but he secretly hates the Party and dreams of rebellion against Big Brother. Smith rebels by entering a forbidden relationship with fellow employee Julia.

Brave New World has a different prophecy of the future. There is no need in Huxley’s book for someone named “Big Brother” to keep the populace in line. There is little need for instances of obvious political control. This is because the population is distracted and engaged in a - largely - continual stream of government created pseudo-events. The pseudo-events that Boorstin identified on a brilliant early radar system form much of the foundation for modern political narratives.

Narratives of the Modern Political System

Much of the modern political system is filled with pseudo-events. The percentage of the events of a day filled with pseudo-events, to my knowledge, has not yet been studied. It's interesting that one of Boorstin’s greatest accomplishments was identifying the type of control power that would power *Brave New World*. Huxley presented a great prophecy of our current political system in his book. But it was really Boorstin who identified one of the key methods for modern political control through political narratives and their created pseudo-events as ways as creating mediums rather than messages. The creation of mediums of communication rather than messages was always the promise of the idea of pseudo-events that Boorstin came up with in the early 60s.

It might be instructive at this time for us to lay out the various narratives from the three competing political elements in America. By modern political system we mean the dynamics between three forces vying for political power today: the government and the Republican and Democratic Parties. Most think in terms of the two ever-dueling parties. This just might be the plan of that third element – labeled by some as the “deep state” - government system. It is a distinction that Thomas Paine made in *Common Sense*, that important piece of propaganda a few months before the American Revolution. In the first paragraph he mentioned that the battle was always between the government and the people. Just two in this battle not three.

Boorstin offers many interesting observations on this new phenomenon of pseudo-events in America of the 50s and 60s. He notes that the events are carefully choreographed, following a prepared script and leaving nothing to chance. In order to maximize the event’s exposure, they are often scheduled in advance, and journalists are informed of the specific time when the event will occur. Pseudo-events are designed to be dramatic, to make them interesting for the public, and they tend to generate iconic images, such as big enthusiastic crowds. Pseudo-events can include press conferences, advertisements, speeches, and other similar events covering issues with little value in terms of content and importance.

* * *

So, the somewhat prophetic thoughts of American scholar and historian Daniel Boorstin who foresees not only the change in control from propaganda but suggests a new type of control in the creation pseudo-events as key aspects of modern political narratives. He provides an interesting example of the way this process might work in the business world of publicity, some of the examples in Boorstin’s book are very instructive. To illustrate the term’s meaning he conjures a hotel. Its owners wish to increase its business. “In less sophisticated times, the answer might have been to hire a new chef, to improve the plumbing, to paint the rooms, or to install a crystal chandelier in the lobby,” Boorstin writes. Instead, the hotel retains a PR counsel, who “proposes that the management stage a celebration of the hotel’s thirtieth anniversary.” Once the celebration has been held, the celebration itself becomes evidence that the hotel really is a distinguished institution.

Boorstin identified ambiguity as an important element for creating a new type of political narrative he was (unknowingly) suggesting in his work *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*. As Boorstin notes, their relation to underlying reality is ambiguous - and in fact, that its interest arises largely from its ambiguity. As he observes:

“We begin to be puzzled about what is really the ‘original’ of an event. The authentic record of what ‘happens’ or is said comes increasingly to seem to be what is given out in advance. More and more events become dramatic performances in which ‘men in the news’ simply act out their script. The story prepared ‘for future release’ acquires an authenticity that competes with that of the actual occurrences on the scheduled date. In recent years our successful politicians have been those most adept at using the press and other means to create pseudo-events.”

* * *

In an interesting article from the 12/8/16 [Atlantic](#), Conor Friederdorf identifies some modern incantations of the method of pseudo-events for control. In “Donald Trump – Master of the Pseudo-Event” the author argues that the Trump is a pro at marshaling ambiguous unrealities to his advantage. In other words, creating and using pseudo-events for political advantage.

Friederdorf brings up some interesting parts of Boorstin’s book in the *Atlantic* article. Writing about the officially sanctioned leak, Boorstin pointed out that “the reporter himself is often not clear whether he is being told a simple fact, a newly settled policy, an administrative hope, or whether perhaps untruths are being deliberately diffused in order to allay public fears that the true facts are really true. The government official himself (who is sometimes no more than a spokesman) may not be clear. The reporter’s task is to find a way of weaving these threads of unreality into a fabric that the reader will not recognize as entirely unreal.” A reporter can, however, decline to report on a leak that seems designed to manipulate the press or the public. As Friederdorf notes, “In the Twitter era, the press cannot ignore statements on the president’s feed that will always be crafted to game current standards of newsworthiness, but neither can it responsibly report on those statements as if they are events rather than pseudo-events.”

The Atlantic article notes that sometimes pseudo-events can backfire. It mentions the event of George W. Bush donning a flight suit, landing on an aircraft carrier, and having his picture taken in front of a “Mission Accomplished” banner years before the end of the war in Iraq. Were contemporaneous observers to conclude that the mission in Iraq had been accomplished? That President Bush believed the mission was accomplished? That Bush knew the mission was not accomplished, but wanted the public to believe that the mission was accomplished? That Bush knew the public would not be convinced by a banner and a photo-op, but wanted the press to report on the event with a photograph of the words “Mission Accomplished” because it would provide a positive news cycle or crowd out bad news?

The Northward Caravan

One of the largest candidates for pseudo-events in progress now (October 25, 2018), two weeks before the mid-term elections, is the northern march of a huge caravan of people from Central America seeking political asylum in America. The great question in this northern march of people is whether it is a created pseudo-event, organized and scripted by a political narrative, or a true organic event, arising not from outside influences but from inner hearts of a people.

Vice President Pence reports that he was told that he was told by the president of a Central American nation that Venezuela was behind financing the caravan. The current administration is looking into the situation as the caravan grows in numbers each day. All media is turned towards this particular political narrative – or pseudo-event – that has imposed itself on the conscious of America two weeks before the mid-term elections.

President Trump tells media that he suspects that there are many “bad people” within the caravan. That it is not all as portrayed – by liberal media – which show photos and video of families in the caravan.

The liberal/Democrat response to the caravan is of course almost a hundred percent in opposition. The belief in Democrats is for the unbounded, commonality of existence represented by ideals of the Global. In effect, in many ways the grand Feminine archetype symbol derived from the corresponding symbols of unconsciousness, birth, water, equality. In opposition to this narrative is the Republican narrative of a bounded world rather than an unbounded one. In effect, the grand Masculine archetype symbol derived from consciousness, growth, freedom.

* * *

The march of the immigrants, refugees or asylum seekers from Central America to the American border around the time of the mid-term elections happens suspiciously close to an important political election. This leads to the question of whether the event is a real grass-roots, organic event stirred by the people or rather a pseudo-event created by a political party to garner support before the midterm elections.

Whether it is a pseudo-event or not, the caravan does symbolize the clash of two narratives. One is that America is being invaded from without by a "mob" that will take jobs from Americans. It is the narrative told by the administration. Invasion from without. The other narrative is that people are seeking political asylum in America which has always welcomed political refugees. Attached to these narratives is the larger clash between the narratives of nationalism and globalism. The nationalism narrative is told by the Republican administration while the globalism narrative is told by the Democrat narrative. The nationalism narrative needs walls and borders to keep others from invading while the globalism narrative needs no walls and borders because the world's nations are melding into one global community.

Again, the two grand paradoxical symbols of America's founding in freedom and equality, clash in the northern march narrative. There are a number of questions to ask about this march. Perhaps the most important one is whether it is real, organic event or another staged pseudo-event.

14. Clash of Narratives

A thesis can be put forward that political narratives have a relationship to the degree of division or unity in the nation. Perhaps the best indicator of America's division/unity is represented by historic statistics from Presidential elections showing popular and electoral votes as well as percentages of Senate and House control. The charts go back to George Washington, who, by the way, obtained all of the popular and electoral votes.

The thesis argues that greater division in the nation is shown by close voting results between both popular and electoral votes in President elections and close divisions in Congress. At the same time, more unity in the nation is shown by lopsided results in Presidential elections and lopsided divisions in Congress.

Do the various percentages between division and unity in America have an effect on political narratives?

Factors in American Unity or Division

In considering unity and division in American politics, there are three major factors to consider: one factor is the elections for President; a second factor is elections for the Senate and a third factor is elections for the House. The argument is made that greatest unity is shown by the four alignments in Column A where the House and Senate are controlled by the President's party. On the other hand, the greatest division is shown by the four alignments in Column E. Movement from the left to the right shows increasing division.

Another factor that should be considered is percentage of control of the House and Senate. For example, even in Column A where the Senate and House are controlled by the President's party, control could be slim opening up the potential for shifts in Congress each two years at mid-term elections. Conversely, in Column E where Senate and House are controlled by the Opposition party, the control could be slim opening up potential for midterm shifts. The two top cells in Column E show a split in the Popular and Electoral Vote (as in the 2016 Presidential election.)

For example, consider Chart A below which shows factors indicating greater unity in the nation on the left (yellow column) moving to lesser unity in the nation on the right (grey column). Greatest unity is indicated where Popular Vote and Electoral Presidential Vote is based on the highest percentages and Senate Majority and House Majority is controlled by the President's party.

As the chart moves to the right through the green, orange, blue columns to the grey column on the right, greater division is shown in the nation. This is indicated by close Popular or Electoral Vote for President and the Senate or House controlled by the opposition party to the President's party.

Greatest Unity A.	B.	C.	D.	Greatest Division E.
Presidential Election - Lopsided Popular Vote	Presidential Election - Lopsided Popular Vote	Presidential Election - Close Popular Vote	Presidential Election - Close Popular Vote	Presidential Election – Loss in Popular Vote
Presidential Election - Lopsided Electoral Vote	Presidential Election - Close Electoral Vote	Presidential Election - Lopsided Electoral Vote	Presidential Election - Close Electoral Vote	Presidential Election – Winner in Electoral Vote
Senate Majority controlled by President Party	Senate Majority controlled by President Party	Senate Majority controlled by Opposition Party	Senate Majority controlled by Opposition Party	Senate Majority controlled by Opposition Party
House of Reps controlled by President Party	House of Reps controlled by Opposition Party	House of Reps controlled by President Party	House of Reps controlled by Opposition Party	House of Reps controlled by Opposition Party

Chart A
President, Senate and House
Major Political Factors in American Unity or Division

Based on the above chart, another chart can be developed showing Presidents with the greatest Popular and Electoral Votes as well as the top Presidents with the lowest Popular and Electoral Votes. Higher Popular and Electoral votes (lopsided to one party) show greater unity in the nation and provide greater endorsement for policies of the President obtaining these higher percentages. On the other hand, lower Popular and Electoral votes show greater diversity and less endorsement for policies of the President.

With this in mind, we ask whether political narratives from Presidents in the Yellow columns showing greater unity have a basic different form of political narrative from those in the orange columns showing lesser unity? In other words, is unity or division a factor in political narratives?

Greatest Unity A. Popular Vote Leading in Greatest Popular Vote %	Greatest Unity Electoral Vote Leading Greatest Electoral Vote %	Greatest Division Popular Vote Leading in Least Popular Vote %	Greatest Division D. Electoral Vote Leading in Least Electoral Vote %
LBJ	FDR	John Adams	John Adams
FDR	Reagan	Abraham Lincoln	Rutherford Hayes
Richard Nixon	Nixon	Woodrow Wilson	George W. Bush
Warren Harding	Lincoln	Bill Clinton	Woodrow Wilson
Ronald Reagan	Reagan	Richard Nixon	George W. Bush
Herbert Hoover	LBJ	James Buchanan	Grover Cleveland
FDR	FDR	Grover Cleveland	Jimmy Carter
Eisenhower	Eisenhower	Donald Trump	Richard Nixon

Chart B
Presidents With Top and Bottom Popular & Electoral Votes
(Yellow Columns = Top Popular & Electoral Votes/ Orange = Bottom Pop & Electoral)

If so, what type of factor? Does it influence the content of words and the type of images used? Is the degree of unity or division shown by these three key national election statistics – President, Senate and House - a major factor in political narratives?

Lacking from the above chart is the control of the Senate and House and the amount of control. Control of Presidency and the two parts of Congress indicate the greatest unity (Yellow column of Chart A) while control of Presidency and one part of Congress indicates less unity (Green column in Chart A) The greatest division is represented where both Senate and House are controlled by the opposition party to the President (Blue and Grey columns in Chart A).

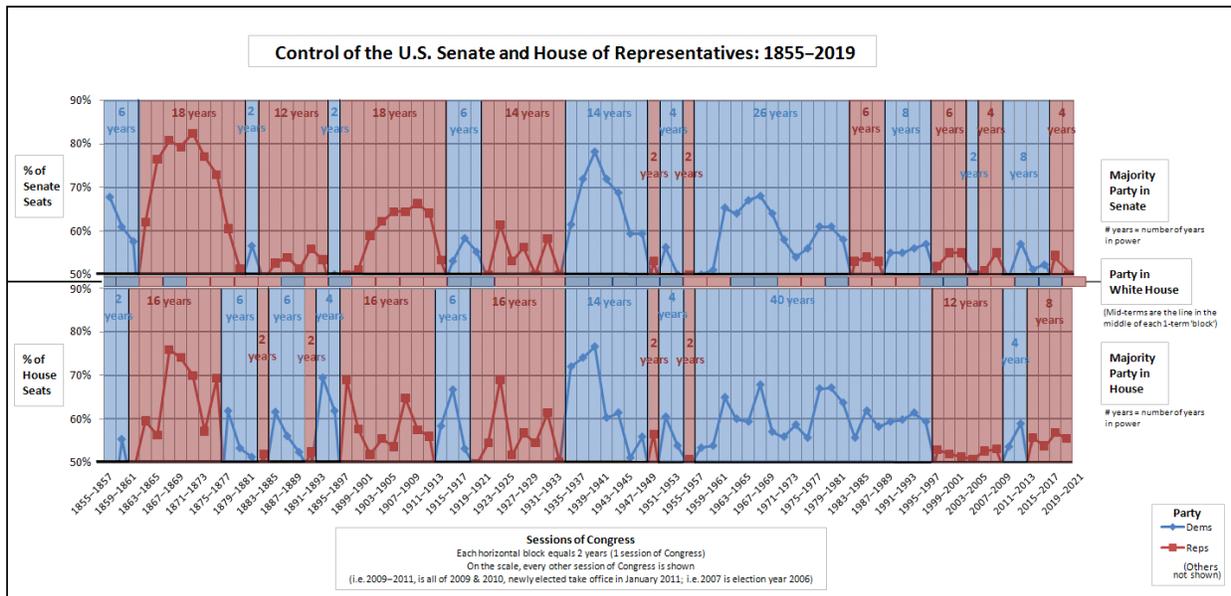


Chart C
Control in Senate and House

An additional factor is the percentage of control by a party of Senate or Congress. Close division between seats in the Senate or House represent a fragile division subject to change at mid-terms. Lopsided divisions are based on more solid foundations and less subject to change at mid-terms. The above Chart C shows historic control in the Senate and House. The most unity is indicated where the top colors (Senate) go into the bottom colors (House). Division is indicated where top colors do not match bottom colors.

Supreme Court Decisions

Certainly, the Supreme Court also offers an important bellwether of the degree of the clash of narratives in America. Like votes for President, lopsided votes in the Senate to confirm Justices show more unity than close votes that show more diversity. In addition, And, affirming or dissenting votes on the Supreme Court show more unity with the President or less unity. For example, most unity is shown by all justices affirming a case related to current Presidential philosophy at 9-0 while most division is shown by close decisions such as 5-4 regarding Presidential philosophy.

Greatest Unity A.	B.	C.	D.	Greatest Division E.
Presidential Election - Lopsided Popular Vote	Presidential Election - Lopsided Popular Vote	Presidential Election - Close Popular Vote	Presidential Election - Close Popular Vote	Presidential Election – Loss in Popular Vote
Presidential Election - Lopsided Electoral Vote	Presidential Election - Close Electoral Vote	Presidential Election - Lopsided Electoral Vote	Presidential Election - Close Electoral Vote	Presidential Election – Winner in Electoral Vote
Senate Majority controlled by President Party	Senate Majority controlled by President Party	Senate Majority controlled by Opposition Party	Senate Majority controlled by Opposition Party	Senate Majority controlled by Opposition Party
House of Reps controlled by President Party	House of Reps controlled by Opposition Party	House of Reps controlled by President Party	House of Reps controlled by Opposition Party	House of Reps controlled by Opposition Party
Supreme Court 9-0 decisions in favor of President	Supreme Court 8-1 decisions in favor of President	Supreme Court 7-2 and 6-3 decisions in favor of President	Supreme Court 5-4 decisions in favor of President or 4-5 against President	Supreme Court 9-0 decisions against President

Chart D
Unity and Division of Supreme Court Decisions

Unity & Division’s Effect on Political Narratives

We return to our question of whether greater division or unity between political parties produce different political narratives than unified nations? If so, what are the key elements of these different narratives? Are different words, symbols, images contained in the two narratives? In fact, is there a distinction in categories between narratives from a unified nation versus a divided nation?

15. Structuring A New Narrative Form

A hybrid of screenplay, poem and novel. Mixed with use of literary devices and particular words and key data sources.

Use of screenwriting sequence and steps but not elements of screenplays such as scenes, descriptions and dialogue. Movement more towards a new type of visual novel, a new type of film experience perhaps. A combination AI and virtual reality experience for those who read it. The Political Narrative author is a multi-media artists.

Will modern government control maintain and enhance modern Political Narratives making them more sophisticated in creating spellbinding narratives and stories to surround our lives?

Early challenges seem in creating a type of prototype template for placing the elements of this new type of screenplay/novel into a narrative, story form.

Will the Political Narrative literary form be the modern literary form? Fulfilling the thoughts of a number of philosophers that politics is basically a literary endeavor. The next great politicians will be the next great authors of their times.

(There should be an Association of Political Narrators so information and research in this area can be shared. APN might be a liberal or conservative organization. Suffice it is to say – in our era of a completely divided nation – it will be controlled by one of the two parties so that another version of APN representing the other party will be necessary. But such are the times.)

The chart below represents a screenplay from the perspective of the movement of symbols into a system of symbolism. We identify context and context symbols. Context symbols are those seldom noticed but forming an environment of perception around all of us. Content symbols are those symbols of culture: the products of culture, the objects and events of culture.

Into all of these symbols are introduced those symbols of movement known as characters. A Hero/Heroine. A villain. A helper, mentor. The basic three needed for modern drama.

Our argument is that the greatest drama is really within the unseen subtext of the contextual symbolism that changes in the narrative. The key elements of this symbolism are place, space and time. The change of these elements from the beginning to the ending of a narrative, the most powerful oppositions from beginning to ending of a story make the greatest narratives, the greatest stories. These symbols are identified and placed into a seven-step narrative structure below. This structure follows closely general screenwriting structure illustrated in Miller's book.

1. A character (customer)

- 2.Has a problem
- 3.Meets a guide (the brand)
- 4.Who provides a plan
- 5.That calls them to action
- 6.Helps avoid failure
- 7.Ends in success

We place these elements into our seven-step plot structure below. The Miller steps are below the standard screenwriting steps in green. Political words are in orange below the pink.

	Act I		Act II			Act III	
	Weakness A Character Voter	Desire Has a Problem	Opposition Meet a Guide Politician	Plan Provide a Plan	Battle Gets called to action Votes	Self- Rev. Helps avoid failure	Equil. Ends in success Wins
Context Symbols - Place - Space - Time							
Content Symbols - Objects - Quantity - Qualities - Events							
Characters- - Hero - Villain - Other							

A. A Plot Structure Table Based on Movement of Key Symbols
(7 Step Plot Sequence)

As we have suggested, it is probable political narratives will achieve a new sophistication and dominance in the future. The techniques of Hollywood (rather than its content) will be transferred to DC to create a new hybrid form of screenplay used to construct the political narratives. The above template to be overlaid to the current screenplay and novel forms.

There is a need for new elements to be considered as included in screenplays writing the new political narratives of the culture. New literary devices. A new dramatic structure. Uses of symbols and symbolism in creating a new method for the creation of political narratives as the above chart requires. Perhaps this all is somewhat of a writing guide for political hopefuls who are writing their autobiographies as screenplay narratives. Those who understand politics is increasingly about narrative structure are way ahead of the game. Politics is no longer a battle between singular ideas but rather the back-and-forth attack of two battling political parties. These

two parties have dominated the American political narrative structure since the beginning of American history. Might a new method of applying screenplay techniques to political narratives.

Appendix A.
Examples of Narratives
(Hopefully, business and law school cases will develop that ask questions)

Conservative & Liberal Narratives

As we see it, the conservative narrative goes something like this:

By nature, people are immoral and lazy. But Christian families create moral, hard-working children, and our capitalist economy rewards their hard work. Our government exists to keep our prosperity safe from evil, both at home and abroad. And this is how America became great: self-disciplined people were given a chance to succeed and granted a government to protect them. Today America holds the moral high ground because we alone have set up the right balance of freedoms and rewards.

Liberals just don't get it. While government policies to reduce poverty have not worked, liberals won't admit that the solution lies in certain cultures and families becoming more self-disciplined. They can't see that welfare rewards laziness; that drug use leads to inactivity; that our moral standards are in free-fall; and that other religions aren't just different, they're false. And since they blame our government for society's failures, they don't really believe in America and are more trusting of international groups like the UN.

We would tell the American liberal narrative, on the other hand, as follows:

By nature, people are pretty much the same everywhere. Race, religion, and gender are just superficial categories that allowed white Christian men to subjugate others. These artificial categories justified American slavery, segregation, sexism, and homophobia. The social movements for women's rights, civil rights, and gay rights have been slow marches toward a more just society and economy. Our government exists to help move forward this work of making society fairer for all.

Conservatives just don't get it. Conservatives can't see that some people are facing harder struggles because of historical prejudices. They won't admit that government could fix these injustices—most developed countries have used government to provide a high standard of living for all. They can't see that wages are too low for the poor to advance, that our legal system disproportionately punishes minorities and the impoverished, and that Christianity is used to defend prejudices against women and gays. Oblivious to these problems, conservatives are blindly patriotic, believing America to be infallible.

Kennedy School Review

Two Stories, One America: How Political Narratives Shape Our Understanding of Reality

July 20, 2016

BY STEPHEN HAWKINS AND TOMMY FLINT

<http://ksr.hkspublications.org/2016/07/20/two-stories-one-america-how-political-narratives-shape-our-understanding-of-reality/>

An English Political Narrative

What do Political Narratives look like in relation to the facts they use? How do they change a particular number of facts into a narrative? There should be a developing library on this topic alone. Neil Shockley discusses the change from facts and slogans to Political Narratives. Stockley, an English political consultant, writing in the [Nickstockley.blogspot.com](http://nickstockley.blogspot.com) (5/27/11) provides a distinction between political slogans and narratives. Stockley notes that “To make a political narrative stick, you need a causality, a ‘then.’ For example, ‘Free, fair and green’ is not a narrative. It’s a (bad) slogan. So is ‘muscular liberalism.’”

He compares a political statement of the time against a narrative of the statement. The statement is “*Liberal Democrats believe in healthcare available to all, free at point of delivery, based on clinical need, not ability to pay.*”

Translated into a narrative, the statement would sound something like this. “In March 2011, the Liberal Democrat spring conference voted overwhelmingly for more accountability and openness in commissioning, to reject turning the health service into for safeguards against cherry-picking by private sector providers... and against the undermining of local NHS services. Then, Nick Clegg insisted on scrapping the requirement that Monitor, the NHS regulator, compels hospitals to compete with each other. Clegg has since put himself on collision course with the Tory health secretary, Andrew Lansley by saying that a clause in the health and social care bill encouraging ‘any qualified provider’ to take over services from the NHS should be radically rethought or dropped.”

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By Robert McKee as told to Drake Baer

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<https://storynomics.com/resources/>

The Communist Manifesto as Story

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Manifesto.pdf>

The opening of *The Communist Manifesto*, lays the basis for a grand world story of class battle between the Bourgeois and the Proletariat, the owners of production and the workers in production. “The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master[‡] and journeyman, in a word,

oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes. In the earlier epochs of history, we find almost everywhere a complicated arrangement of society into various orders, a manifold gradation of social rank. In ancient Rome we have patricians, knights, plebeians, slaves; in the Middle Ages, feudal lords, vassals, guild-masters, journeymen, apprentices, serfs; in almost all of these classes, again, subordinate gradations. The modern bourgeois society that has sprouted from the ruins of feudal society has not done away with class antagonisms. It has but established new classes, new conditions of oppression, new forms of struggle in place of the old ones.”

Is there a relationship between powerful stories and powerful political theories through history? Have stories been used to create powerful narratives for many years, not just modern times?

Political Narratives and Political Reality

Shaul R. Shenhav

International Political Science Review / Revue internationale de science politique

Vol. 27, No. 3 (Jul., 2006), pp. 245-262

The latest Wikipedia [definition](#) of narrative captures this: “any report of connected events, actual or imaginary, presented in a sequence of written or spoken words, or still or moving images.”

Wikipedia on Narrative : A **narrative** or **story** is a report of connected events, [real](#) or [imaginary](#), presented in a sequence of written or spoken words, or still or [moving images](#),^[u] or both. The word derives from the Latin verb *narrare*, "to tell", which is derived from the adjective *gnarus*, "knowing" or "skilled".^{[2][3]}

Narrative can be organized in a number of thematic or formal categories: [non-fiction](#) (such as definitively including [creative non-fiction](#), [biography](#), [journalism](#), [transcript poetry](#), and [historiography](#)); fictionalization of historical events (such as [anecdote](#), [myth](#), [legend](#), and [historical fiction](#)); and [fiction](#) proper (such as [literature](#) in [prose](#) and sometimes [poetry](#), such as [short stories](#), [novels](#), and [narrative poems and songs](#), and imaginary narratives as portrayed in other textual forms, games, or live or recorded performances).

Narrative is found in all forms of human creativity, art, and entertainment, including [speech](#), [literature](#), [theatre](#), [music](#) and [song](#), [comics](#), [journalism](#), [film](#), [television](#) and [video](#), [video games](#), [radio](#), [gameplay](#), [unstructured recreation](#), and [performance](#) in general, as well as some [painting](#), [sculpture](#), [drawing](#), [photography](#), and other [visual arts](#), as long as a [sequence](#) of events is presented. Several art movements, such as [modern art](#), refuse the narrative in favor of the [abstract](#) and conceptual.

On Narratives

Shawn Callahan

Anecdote
5/25/11

A narrative must have a narrative structure. That is, it is told as a story. I realize this mixes up John's experiences, story, narrative trajectory a little but please bear with me. For example, John comes close to giving us narrative structure when describing the Christian narrative when he says, "*people are born in sin but have an opportunity for redemption through a Savior.*" This is a statement rather than the narrative but anyone familiar with Christian ways will immediately fill in this statement with the stories that help us make sense of it. The narrative version of this statement is simply "*people are born in sin but THEN have an opportunity for redemption through a Savior.*" Two events connected. Without the 'then' it's not a narrative. Narratives, like stories, are made from events. Their connections infer causality. Story structure provides a narrative with its power.

List of the benefits of narratives:

- stability and continuity in our lives. Narratives help to orient us
- narratives motivate action by helping to make sense of the world around us
- narratives also help participants construct meaning, purpose and identity for themselves, and
- narratives help to ignite and nurture passion within us

But they hold equally true for stories. Narratives are a type of story. A big story. An explanatory story.

Stories tell us? Political narrative, memes, and the transmission of knowledge through culture

Journal

[Communication Research and Practice](#)

Volume 1, 2015 - [Issue 1](#)

[John Hartley](#)

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/22041451.2015.1042424>

In a Political Game All About Storytelling, Which Candidate is Using Narrative to Get Ahead?

Sarah Weber

<https://www.quantifiedcommunications.com/blog/storytelling-in-politics>

As political hopefuls have begun to realize this, they've infused their campaigns with more and more storytelling. In the mid-90s, Bill Clinton's narrative was economic growth. In the 2000's,

George W. Bush's was protection for the American people. Obama's campaign was built on a story of hope and change.

Are our presidents using more storytelling language in their individual communications than their predecessors? What about our current presidential hopefuls? Are their strong narrative foundations (or lack thereof) reflected in their campaign communications?

We analyzed every State of the Union Address from John F. Kennedy through Barack Obama to find out whether we could see the storytelling trend taking shape in the recent political landscape, and we analyzed Clinton's and Trump's performance throughout the primary debates to see whether their stories are reflected in their language.

The answer, in both cases, is yes.

Despite a few outliers, the general trend in State of the Union Addresses has been toward an increase in storytelling language—there's been a twofold increase during the last 55 years.

President Obama, whose reputation as an excellent speaker predates his stay in the White House, is also attuned to the importance of storytelling. In a 2012 interview, the president said his biggest mistake during his first few years in office was not telling enough stories.

"The nature of this office is also to tell a story to the American people, that gives them a sense of unity and purpose and optimism, especially during tough times. [...] In my first two years I think the notion was, "Well, he's been juggling and managing a lot of stuff, but where's the story that tells us where he's going?" And I think that was a legitimate criticism."

President Obama's final State of the Union is an excellent example. His strength in that address is in creating small narrative arcs to drive the speech — outlining the obstacles and challenges, the path of progress, and the sense of unified achievement that make a story worth retelling.

"Each time, there have been those who told us to fear the future; who claimed we could slam the brakes on change, promising to restore past glory if we just got some group or idea that was threatening America under control. And each time, we overcame those fears. We did not, in the words of Lincoln, adhere to the dogmas of the quiet past. Instead we thought anew, and acted anew. We made change work for us, always extending America's promise outward, to the next frontier, to more and more people. And because we did — because we saw opportunity where others saw only peril — we emerged stronger and better than before."

Trump used, on the whole, nearly 30% more storytelling than Clinton.

The Science of Stories: How Stories Impact Our Brains

<https://www.quantifiedcommunications.com/blog/science-of-stories>

Noah Zandan

Quantified Communications (No Date)

Whatever the format, there's no denying that a well-told story has a powerful impact on its audience. In fact, there's an oft-cited statistic claiming that messages delivered as stories can be up to 22 times more memorable than just the facts.

Your Brain on Stories

When we hear good stories, two changes occur in our brains: one is neurological and one is chemical.

When we hear straight facts, two areas of our brains light up: language processing and language comprehension. But when we listen to stories, neural activity increases fivefold—we're using our motor cortexes and our emotion and visual image processing centers, we're imagining sensations, and we're processing emotional reactions. What this means is that more of our brains are at work, so we're more focused on the story and more likely to retain it later.

At the chemical level, when we hear stories, our brains release oxytocin, the bonding hormone that causes us to really care about the people involved. This is why we sometimes treat our favorite fictional characters as real people, why sharing personal stories is the fastest way to bond with strangers, and why storytelling is a politician's best weapon. Not only are we hearing about somebody's experience, but we're living it right along with them. The more of their experience we share, the more oxytocin is released, and the more likely we are to internalize that story and think about it later.

Using Storytelling in Politics

Published by Ciara O Riordan | 23 FEBRUARY 2018

Ecanvasser

Politics is now in a place where candidates fight through with stories rather than with an idea. Stories reveal a reality that calls out the audience and also seeks to include more and more characters into the process.

Donald Trump pushed a story that resonated so much with some Americans that he now finds himself the President of the United States. What was his story? Put simply, that the United States wasn't good enough and that he was the man to make it better - "Make America Great Again".

* * *

David Axelrod recently spoke about the power of narrative arts which he learned a great deal about when working with possibly one of the greatest political storytellers ever.

"I started working with Obama in 2002 when he was looking to run for the Senate. Every night, we'd talk. He'd be out on the road, and he'd share stories about people that he had met. He's a great practitioner of the narrative arts. You saw that in his own writing. But then, he would give political speeches, and they were very high-level policy talks.

Finally, I said to him, “You know, every night, you tell me these moving stories. You should share those stories because they animate the points you’re trying to make much more effectively.” He started integrating these stories into his speeches. And the rest, as they say, is history.

* * *

Take Ronald Reagan, a man considered one of the most powerful storytellers that ever lived, tagged with creating the mythical, original, “great” America. In a book by author Jan Hanska, Reagan’s ability to talk, profoundly, was examined in its entirety. Hanska explains how Reagan constructed stories using re-created, “Americanized” myths such as the “American way of life” and “the American dream”.

These myths blurred the factual and fictional, conflated the sacred and the absurd, constituted the American dream as an object of belief, and blended the mythical and religious into the political. Hanska’s work demonstrates that political narratives are an exceedingly complex form of action. They interweave culturally dominant ideologies, religious beliefs, and myths into powerfully persuasive frameworks for political leaders to deploy. As such, Reagan’s Mythical America is a remarkable achievement (**Oldenburg, Christopher J.**), and strains of this were definitely present during Trump’s campaign in 2016.

For future candidates, it may be important to test your messaging and your “story”. This is common practice when it comes to testing campaign TV ads and slogans. US politics is currently leading the way, employing focus groups to listen to candidates narratives and storytelling ability.

Storytelling in Politics
UC Irvine
by Francesca Polletta

<http://faculty.sites.uci.edu/polletta/files/2011/03/Contexts-Storytelling-in-Politics.pdf>

Pollster Stanley Greenberg declared in an election postmortem of 2004 that “a narrative is the key to everything.” James Carville, famous for engineering Bill Clinton’s presidential victory in 1992, agreed: “We could elect somebody from the Hollywood Hills if they had a narrative to tell people about what the country is and where they see it.”

In Carville’s remarks, conservative storytellers loomed large. “They produce a narrative, we produce a litany. They say, ‘I’m going to protect you from the terrorists in Tehran and the homos in Hollywood.’ We say, ‘We’re for clean air, better schools, more health care.’ And so there’s a Republican narrative, a story, and there’s a Democratic litany.”

Telling Democratic stories, according to Democratic party strategists like Robert Reich and Robert Kuttner, would do more than win elections. Strong, compelling narratives, they argued, would open the door to enacting a progressive agenda in the

Recent research suggests we process stories by a third route. We immerse ourselves in the story, striving to experience vicariously the events and emotions the protagonists experience.

What matters is not so much the stories you tell as the extent to which the stories you tell resonate with the stories your audience already knows.

Politicians should use the familiar to draw ordinary Americans in; when they're absorbed, tell them something different than what they expect to hear.

How storytelling explains world politics, from Spain to the US
Orlando D'Adamo
Director, Center for Public Opinion, Universidad de Belgrano
February 6, 2017 2.42am EST • Updated June 8, 2018 10.13am EDT
The Conversation

Nine characteristics of political narrative

1. They are **tales of power**, wherein the “good guys” are victims of the “bad guys”. Trump’s [recent inauguration speech](#) showed numerous antagonistic relationships, pitting “Washington” against the people; evil politicians, who did nothing while “the jobs left and the factories closed”, versus poor citizens.
2. They **blame inept or unscrupulous politicians** for letting insidious interests win – for example, Iglesias has railed against the monsters of “financial totalitarianism” that have [humiliated Spaniards](#) – and position themselves as the heroes who will recapture past righteousness (with an epic battle of good and evil).
3. They **use a direct, simple and emotionally charged messages**: “I will build a wall and [Mexico will pay for it!](#)”
4. They **offer solutions**, which must seem feasible, even if they aren’t. They have to show that another future is possible. Former Brazilian president Lula’s “zero hunger” [campaign](#) is a good example.
5. They seek to **recover a mystical past**, connecting people to their roots and lost values. Where and when? That doesn’t matter, as long as the narrative revives people’s dreams: “[Make America Great Again](#)”
6. They construct, or reconstruct, an identity whose sole reference point is often a leader who defines themselves as something different and new. Adding an “ism” to the end of a name

supports this idea: “*El Chavismo*”, “Kirchnerism”, “Maoism”. The narrators of the greatest political stories are charismatic leaders who can easily devolve into authoritarianism. This isn’t always the case, and South Africa’s Nelson Mandela and Spain’s Felipe González are notable exceptions.

7. They **revive founding myths** by citing, for example, America’s Founding Fathers (or in Trump’s case [Abraham Lincoln](#)) or their society’s revolutionary origins (as in Cuba and China).
8. They **impose an us-versus-them dialectic**. The “enemies” may be Muslims or immigrants ([for Trump](#)), or the insatiable European Union ([for Iglesias](#)). With time, this tends to rip apart the social fabric; consider the case of the [Kirchners in Argentina](#) who left a divided nation behind them.
9. They **use simple analogies and linear explanations**. Pablo Iglesias often says “blessed people, damned caste” to differentiate the citizenry from the political elites who’ve clung to power in Spain for [the past 40 years](#).

Political tales don’t last forever; like empires, they go through phases of development, consolidation and decline. Unless they can reinvent themselves, counter-narratives will appear and the story starts over again.

THE POWER OF POLITICAL NARRATIVE

[HENRY TOLCHARD](#)

DECEMBER 5, 2017

Berkeley Political Review

<https://bpr.berkeley.edu/2017/12/05/the-power-in-a-political-narrative/>

Two Sides/Similar Narratives

Trump and Senator Bernie Sanders (I-V) are often compared as both being part of a larger populist trend in politics, or contrasted for their nearly opposite political ideologies, but their real similarity lies in their rhetoric. Each has persuasive power because of the narratives that they support. Both rely on descriptions of the status quo systems of power being “rigged” against the common people to rile up support. Sanders, in his opening remarks at the fifth [Democratic presidential debate](#), took a stand against the “rigged economy,” as he also did in [advertisements](#). In describing campaign finance, he [said](#) that the “system is corrupt, big money controls what’s going on.” Alone, these comments all seem par for the course, but when evaluating next to Trump’s they are strikingly familiar. Trump has echoed Sanders in [saying](#) that “it’s not just the political system that’s rigged, it’s the whole economy.” Additionally, his distrust in institutions has led him to also [call](#) the political structure “a rigged system.” The similarity between the two is clearly not in their views about what should be done to fix these problems. Trump favors conservative economic reform focused on “America first,” while Sanders is a social democrat

who supports large government programs to combat economic injustice. Their similarity, and their rhetorical power, is in the narratives that they uphold.

Friday, 27 May 2011

Political narratives - a few basics

Neil Stockley

These observations are very relevant to politics. To make a political narrative stick, you need a causality, a 'then.' For example, "Free, fair and green" is not a narrative. It's a (bad) slogan. So is "muscular liberalism."

"Liberal Democrats believe in healthcare available to all, free at point of delivery, based on clinical need, not ability to pay" is not a narrative either. It's a statement of belief.

Here's an outline of what an accompanying narrative would look like.

"In March 2011, the Liberal Democrat spring conference voted overwhelmingly for more accountability and openness in commissioning, to reject turning the health service into for safeguards against cherry-picking by private sector providers... and against the undermining of local NHS services. Then, Nick Clegg insisted on scrapping the requirement that Monitor, the NHS regulator, compels hospitals to compete with each other. Clegg has since put himself on collision course with the Tory health secretary, Andrew Lansley by saying that a clause in the health and social care bill encouraging 'any qualified provider' to take over services from the NHS should be radically rethought or dropped."

Narrative-Building Has Become a Political Obsession

National Review (September 28, 2016)

By Jonah Goldberg

<https://www.nationalreview.com/2016/09/political-narratives-make-facts-serve-larger-storyline/>

From terrorism to police violence, politicians and journalists feel compelled to make every fact serve a larger narrative. The most exhausting thing about our politics these days — other than the never-ending presidential election itself — is the obsession with "shaping the narrative." By that I mean the effort to connect the dots between a selective number of facts and statistics to support one storyline about the state of the union.

Narrative-building is essential for almost every complicated argument because it's the only way to get our pattern-seeking brains to discount contradictory facts and data. Trial lawyers understand this implicitly. Get the jury to buy the story, and they'll do the heavy lifting of arranging the facts in just the right way.

Perhaps it's because our country is so polarized and our media environment so balkanized and instantaneous. Politicians and journalists alike feel compelled to make facts serve some larger tale in every utterance.

13. The Cool Media of This Idea

The materials presented above are really meant to be “cool” and participatory. It is the story of a beginning rather than an ending. This area appears so new that it has little formal organization. Yet, this is a problem with the individual observer to the world today who cannot see beyond the veil of appearance.

Hopefully this initial watercolor sketch will create a cooler and more participatory literary text. Here, that creature studied in this work called a Political Narrative is delivered in speculations about what it is but not a final product form is never produced.

In a large sense, the above narrative observes the possibility of creating this grand narrative using the most modern storytelling techniques. Combined with Internet data and a knowledge of the powers of various literary devices like metaphors, aphorisms, similes, parables, proverbs, adages and idioms. And, so many more literary devices.

The greatest compliment of a Political Narrative is not necessarily the populace's agreement with a story but rather their participation in creating and living its narrative. This seems to be the greatest element in powerful Political Narratives.

"A campaign manager reveals the storytelling strategies used to elect Mr. Bush with openness and candor, and in doing so lays bare the fundamental narrative strategies that remain at the core of today's presidential campaigns. But Mr. McKinnon believes that the power of storytelling has a dark side that voters should be more aware of. His new message is a warning to all citizens: *You're being manipulated, and our democracy relies on your ability to see that.*"

How to Win An Election

NY Times Op-Docs

2/18/16

Sarah Klein & Tom Mason

Every election cycle, we're asked to make monumental decisions about which people and policies should control our country, and we have to sort through a barrage of information to arrive at our selections. Often, we pick the candidate who breaks through the noise with a message that resonates with us. The politicians that prevail are excellent storytellers.

Candidates running for office work hard to reduce the complexities of the modern world into simple, soundbite-friendly stories. They invoke heroes and villains, fear and hope. As filmmakers, we understand the power of story to inspire, persuade and even manipulate people in ways that can be hard to recognize. So, in this particularly story-rich election cycle, we set out to make a film that looks past the latest debate zingers and campaign-trail gaffes that dominate political coverage and focuses on how storytelling serves as the foundation of successful modern campaigns. The result is this Op-Doc, in which one of the most influential American political strategists in recent history, Mark McKinnon, explains how it works.

Common Features of Political Storytelling

Victims

Villains

Heroes

Opportunities

Threats

Resolution

Fear

Hope

The Politics of Storytelling: Variations on a Theme by Hannah Arendt (Critical Anthropology) Second Edition

By Michael Jackson

Hannah Arendt famously argued that politics are best understood as a power relationship between private and public realms. And storytelling, she argued, creates a vital bridge between these realms, a place where individual passions and shared perspectives can be contested and interwoven. In *The Politics of Storytelling*—revised in this 2nd edition with a new preface and design—anthropologist Michael Jackson explores and expands on Arendt’s notions, bringing stories from all around the world into impressive cross-cultural analysis.

Storytelling may make political ads powerful persuaders
Penn State News

Matt Swayne
July 12, 2018

The persuasive potential of using stories in political ads may make them powerful tools for politicians and should become a focus for future research, according to a team of researchers. In a study of 243 ads from the 2014 U.S. senatorial and gubernatorial campaigns, researchers said candidates used three types of narrative ads: autobiographical, voter stories and testimonials. The researchers added that winners tended to use positive autobiographical narratives, while losers used negative attack ads narrated by an anonymous announcer.

“This is really the first of perhaps several studies on the use of narratives in political ads,” said Fuyuan Shen, professor and head of the department of advertising and public relations, Penn State. “But it's important to point out that this study is based on a content analysis — it analyzes what types of advertisements have been used and who has used what, in terms of stories, but we can't draw a causal effect yet. If a loser used an attack ad it might be because he or she felt the race was too tight. It doesn't mean only losers use attack ads.”

Shen said that using voters to tell their own stories in ads may be particularly persuasive, but also problematic because they could lend themselves to spreading disinformation.

"I think the voters' stories on issues are particularly powerful and that is really prominent in the research that we've seen," said Shen. "Instead of attacking opponents on their records, or using rhetorical statements, the voters are just telling stories about how a candidate's policy affected their lives."

Shen added that the difficulty of verifying information in a narrative ad may make it harder for voters to tell the difference between accurate information and deception.

"Maybe the people in the ads say the candidate's policy made them lose their jobs — how do you discount that?" said Shen. "Stories are hard to discount because the information is hard to verify."

Other industries — business and healthcare, for example — have long used narratives because the technique is more compelling and persuasive, said Shen, who worked with Michail Vafeiadis, assistant professor of public relations at Auburn University, and Ruobing Li, a former doctoral student in mass communications at Penn State and currently assistant professor in the Manship School of Mass Communication at Louisiana State University.

"Stories are powerful in changing people's opinions and involving people in the message — plus stories are hard to discount," said Shen. "If stories are used in political ads they can potentially be a powerful influence on individuals."

According to the researchers, who report their findings in the *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, currently online, narrative ads use a storytelling structure that differentiates them from other forms of political advertisements, such as informational attack ads.

"A narrative ad requires three things — characters, plots and causal relations," said Shen. The researchers conducted a content analysis of narrative ads that candidates for U.S. Senate and governorship posted online during the 2014 political campaign. The initial search for campaign ads uncovered a total of 1,514 ads — 585 from senatorial campaigns and 929 from gubernatorial campaigns. Of those, researchers identified 243 narrative ads — 185 gubernatorial and 58 senatorial ads.

Each ad was analyzed according to its tone, emphasis, and verbal and nonverbal cues. The researchers also examined specific issues mentioned in the ads, including, for example, economic concerns, crime and gun control, abortion, health care, taxes and education. They also noted what types of appeals — logical or emotional, for example — were used and whether the dominate speaker was the candidate or someone else.

In the future, the researchers would like to set up experiments to determine if there actually are causal links between narrative ads and persuasiveness.\

It Was Like a Fever

STORYTELLING IN PROTEST AND POLITICS

FRANCESCA POLLETTA

Activists and politicians have long recognized the power of a good story to move people to action. In early 1960 four black college students sat down at a whites-only lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina, and refused to leave. Within a month sit-ins spread to thirty cities in seven states. Student participants told stories of impulsive, spontaneous action—this despite all the planning that had gone into the sit-ins. “It was like a fever,” they said.

Francesca Polletta’s *It Was Like a Fever* sets out to account for the power of storytelling in mobilizing political and social movements. Drawing on cases ranging from sixteenth-century tax revolts to contemporary debates about the future of the World Trade Center site, Polletta argues that stories are politically effective not when they have clear moral messages, but when they have complex, often ambiguous ones. The openness of stories to interpretation has allowed disadvantaged groups, in particular, to gain a hearing for new needs and to forge surprising political alliances. But popular beliefs in America about storytelling as a genre have also hurt those challenging the status quo.

A rich analysis of storytelling in courtrooms, newsrooms, public forums, and the United States Congress, *It Was Like a Fever* offers provocative new insights into the dynamics of culture and contention. <http://faculty.sites.uci.edu/polletta/files/2011/03/It-Was-Like-a-Fever.pdf>

Narrative rather than framing important in organizing social protests. Study of sit-ins during the early 60s. Frames are interpretative schemata that enable individuals to locate, perceive, identify and label occurrences within their life space and the world at large. Frames provide a diagnosis of the social condition in need of remedy, a prognosis for how to do that and a rationale for action. Injustice, identity and agency as components of frames.

Narratives' capacity to make sense of unfamiliar events, to engage as they explain, and to sustain identity during periods of rapid change suggests that they would be especially prominent in movement discourse that develops before movement organizations have consolidated or that occurs outside their auspices.

I argue that narrative is prominent in such interpretive processes because its temporally configurative equips it to integrate past, present and future events and to align individual collective identities during periods of change. Narrative's reliance on emplotment rather than explanation further engages potential activists precisely by its ambiguity about the causes of collective action. These features distinguish narratives from frames, which are said to contribute to identify-formation through taxonomic atemporal and discursive processes of analogy and difference. Frames' mobilizing capacity, moreover, is allegedly dependent on clear, no ambiguous, specification of the agents, intentions, and efficacy of protest. Narrative identification supplies powerful incentives to participate.

Together, these data help to counter the instrumentalist and organizational biases of recent social movement theorizing by elucidating the social-psychological and discursive processes involved in recruitment that takes place outside of formal organizations.

How “narrative” moved from literature to politics & what this means for covering candidates

BY ROY PETER CLARK · FEBRUARY 20, 2012
POYNTER

John Lanchester offers a brief take on this phenomenon in the *London Review of Books*:

“Back when I was at university, the only people who ever used the word ‘narrative’ were literature students with an interest in critical theory. Everyone else made do with ‘story’ and ‘plot’. Since then, the n-word has been on a long journey towards the spotlight – especially the political spotlight. Everybody in politics now seems to talk about narratives all the time; even political spin-doctors describe their job as being ‘to craft narratives.’ We no longer have debates, we have conflicting narratives. It’s hard to know whether this represents an increase in PR sophistication and self-awareness, or a decrease in the general level of discourse.”

Kennedy School Review

Two Stories, One America: How Political Narratives Shape Our Understanding of Reality
July 20, 2016
BY STEPHEN HAWKINS AND TOMMY FLINT

<http://ksr.hkspublications.org/2016/07/20/two-stories-one-america-how-political-narratives-shape-our-understanding-of-reality/>

As we see it, the conservative narrative goes something like this:

By nature, people are immoral and lazy. But Christian families create moral, hard-working children, and our capitalist economy rewards their hard work. Our government exists to keep our prosperity safe from evil, both at home and abroad. And this is how America became great: self-disciplined people were given a chance to succeed and granted a government to protect them. Today America holds the moral high ground because we alone have set up the right balance of freedoms and rewards.

Liberals just don't get it. While government policies to reduce poverty have not worked, liberals won't admit that the solution lies in certain cultures and families becoming more self-disciplined. They can't see that welfare rewards laziness; that drug use leads to inactivity; that our moral standards are in free-fall; and that other religions aren't just different, they're false. And since they blame our government for society's failures, they don't really believe in America and are more trusting of international groups like the UN.

We would tell the American liberal narrative, on the other hand, as follows:

By nature, people are pretty much the same everywhere. Race, religion, and gender are just superficial categories that allowed white Christian men to subjugate others. These artificial categories justified American slavery, segregation, sexism, and homophobia. The social movements for women's rights, civil rights, and gay rights have been slow marches toward a more just society and economy. Our government exists to help move forward this work of making society fairer for all.

Conservatives just don't get it. Conservatives can't see that some people are facing harder struggles because of historical prejudices. They won't admit that government could fix these injustices—most developed countries have used government to provide a high standard of living for all. They can't see that wages are too low for the poor to advance, that our legal system disproportionately punishes minorities and the impoverished, and that Christianity is used to defend prejudices against women and gays. Oblivious to these problems, conservatives are blindly patriotic, believing America to be infallible.

Drawing upon the support of a burgeoning field of academic research, we will describe how our allegiance to narrative leads us to misperceive reality in three ways: we *ignore* pieces of information that don't fit our narrative, we *dispute* facts that challenge our narrative, and we *maintain* demonstrably false beliefs that confirm our narrative.

narrative

noun

a story or account of events, experiences, or the like, whether true or fictitious.

a way of presenting or understanding a situation or series of events that reflects and promotes a particular point of view or set of values The rise of the Tea Party and the weakness of the Obama economy have fueled a Republican *narrative* about Big Government as a threat to liberty ... — Michael Grunwald

The media *narrative* around Kelly's appointment had two central ideas ... : He would calm and professionalize the White House, and he would provide a more measured leadership style than his boss.— Perry Bacon Jr.

Websters

a [particular](#) way of [explaining](#) or [understanding events](#):

There was [pressure](#) on [academics](#) to [construct](#) narratives of the [period](#) that were [positive](#).

Both [sides](#) in the [conflict](#) have a narrative of victimhood.

the [grand](#) narratives of [nation](#), [race](#), and [faith](#)

Cambridge Dictionary

A Science of Literary Devices

It is very probable that politics will be increasingly be controlled by sophisticated political narratives. Not written by one author geniuses but rather authors/politicians plugged into great narratives rather than the battling two narratives.

Technology now is able to identify and rank the leading words of culture. These words are matched to products. By extension, they could certainly be linked to political narratives.

Perhaps words run in cycles and with words, literary devices. Perhaps there are periods of times when a particular literary device works better than others, when satire in scripts works better than proverbs in them. Literary devices are part of the internal weapons of the modern scriptwriter of political narratives. They are matched with the words picked for the narrative from social and search Internet media.

It seems reasonable to suspect that someday, screenwriters of political narratives will have access to the leading words of a culture at a particular time. Perhaps one of the most important products of a great search engine empire are noting the dynamics of words. The most popular words in culture. The greatest rising words and the greatest declining words, ranked from searches.

From this list, the top nouns and verbs selected. The ones trending. The images used. The leading literary devices applied? It seems so easy to join a particular side of the narrative in creating this new screenwriter of political narratives. But the true science and excitement of this is in the fact that there is a possibility to create a new type of political narrative outside the two that are locked in battle now. Science is based on leaving the two-narrative struggles and perceiving the world outside this narrative. From neither of the two narratives but rather one narrative.

Script Elements

John Truby

Premise

The story idea stated in a single sentence. Suggests the essence of the story.

Seven Key Structure Steps

The seven key story structure steps are the major stages of the story's development and of the dramatic code hidden under its surface. They are:

1. Weakness and need
2. Desire
3. Opponent
4. Plan
5. Battle
6. Self-Revelation
7. New Equilibrium

Character

Create characters by drawing from the original idea and connecting and comparing them in a character web. Then, decide the function each is to perform in helping the hero develop.

Theme (Moral Argument)

The author's moral vision or how people should act in the world. Instead of making the characters a mouthpiece for a message, express the theme inherent in the story idea through story structure that surprises and moves the audience. Hero must make a moral choice typically near end of story. To be a true choice, hero must either select one of two positive outcomes or avoid two negative ones.

Setting (Story World)

Create the world of the story as an outgrowth of the hero. It will help define the hero and show the audience a physical expression of his growth.

Symbol Web

Symbols are packets of highly compressed meaning. Determine a web of symbols

that highlight and communicate different aspects of the characters, the story world and the plot.

Plot

From characters, the right story form is discovered. The plot grows from the unique characters. Use of 22-step structure (the 7 steps plus 15 more) a plot is designed in which all the events are connected under the surface and build to a surprising but logically necessary ending.

Self-Revelation, Need, Desire

Ghost & Story world

Weakness & Need

Inciting Event

Desire

Ally or Allies

Opponent and/or Mystery

Fake-ally Opponent

First Revelation & Decision: Changed Desire & Motive

Plan

Opponent's Plan and Main Counterattack

Drive

Attack by Ally

Apparent Defeat

Second Revelation & Decision: Obsessive Drive, Changed Desire &

Motive

Audience Revelation

Third Revelation & Decision

Gate, Gauntlet, Visit to Death

Battle

Self-Revelation

Moral Decision

New Equilibrium

Scene Sequence (Scene Weave)

Before writing scenes, develop a list of every scene in the story with all the plotlines and themes woven into the tapestry. Place in a sequence.

Scene Construction & Dialogue

Write the story, constructing each scene so that it furthers the development of the hero. Write dialogue that doesn't just push the plot but has a symphonic quality to it, blending many "instruments" and levels at one time.

Premise

The story stated in one sentence. It is the simplest combination of character and plot and typically consists of some event that starts the action, some sense of the main character, and some sense of the outcome of the story.

1. Write something that may change your life.

2. Look for what's possible. Explore options and brainstorm the many paths the idea can take and choose the best one.
3. Identify the story challenges and problems.
4. Find the designing principle.
5. Create the basic character change equation

Examples

The Godfather. The youngest son of a Mafia family takes revenge on the men who shot his father and becomes the new Godfather.

Casablanca. A tough American expatriate rediscovers an old flame only to give her up so that he can fight the Nazis.

Star Wars. When a princess falls into mortal danger, a young man uses his skills as a fighter to save her and defeat the evil forces of a galactic empire.

Avoid Split Premises

Split premise: A man falls in love and fights his brother for control of a winery.

Single premise: Through the love of a good woman, a man defeats his brother for control of a winery.

Designing Principle

(Abstract. Deeper process going on in the story)

The designing principle is what organizes the story as a whole. It is the internal logic of the story, what makes the parts hang together organically so that the story becomes greater than the sum of its parts. It is what makes the story original. It is the seed of the story.

Examples

The Godfather.

Premise: The youngest son of a Mafia family takes revenge on the men who shot his father and becomes the new Godfather.

Designing Principle: Use the classic fairy-tale strategy of showing how the youngest of three sons becomes the new "king."

Tootsie.

Premise: When an actor can't get work, he disguises himself as a woman and gets a role in a TV series, only to fall in love with one of the female members of the cast.

Designing Principle: Force a male chauvinist to live as a woman.

Harry Potter Books.

Premise: A boy discovers he has magical powers and attends a school for magicians.

Designing Principle: A magician prince learns to be a man and a king by attending a boarding school for sorcerers over the course of seven school years.

Moses, Book of Exodus.

Premise: When an Egyptian prince discovers that he is a Hebrew, he leads his people out of slavery.

Designing Principle: A man who does not know who he is struggles to lead his people to freedom and receives the moral laws that will define him and his people.

Character Change

After premise and designing principle, the most important thing is the fundamental character change of the story's hero. Character change is what the story hero experiences by going through

his struggle. At its simplest level, it can be represented by a three-part equation.

Weakness x Action = Change

$W \times A = C$

1. Write premise line
2. Determine basic action of hero
3. Opposites of this action for W and C

* * *

Example

An uptight, henpecked man becomes involved with a gang of outlaws and gets a divorce.

W = uptight, henpecked man

A = involved with outlaws

C = gets a divorce

John Fraim

John grew up in Los Angeles and has a BA from UCLA and JD from Loyola Law School. He has had a career as a marketing executive and is founder of [GreatHouse Stories](#), a script and story consulting firm. John is a media and cultural critic as well as a novelist, screenwriter, photographer, filmmaker, musician and dioramist.

A former Board Member and Marketing Director for the [Palm Springs Writers Guild](#), he is Founder of the [Desert Screenwriting Group](#), one of the largest screenwriting groups in California. He is the author of four books and many published essays, articles and short stories. His book *Battle of Symbols* was published by Daimon Verlag (Zurich) and his book *Spirit Catcher: The Life & Art of John Coltrane* received the Best Biography Award from the Small Press Association. His most recent book is *Londonderry Farewell* co-authored with Tom McKeown.

He has had a long-term interest in symbolism and is considered a leading authority in this area. His major writings on symbolism are published on [Symbolism.Org](#) site. He was a consultant on symbolism for the film *DaVinci Code* and wrote a popular column titled “[Script Symbology](#)” for *Script Magazine*, the world’s leading screenplay magazine.