Feminist Writings
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The Narratology of the graphic_ Exploring the contemporary Graphic novel

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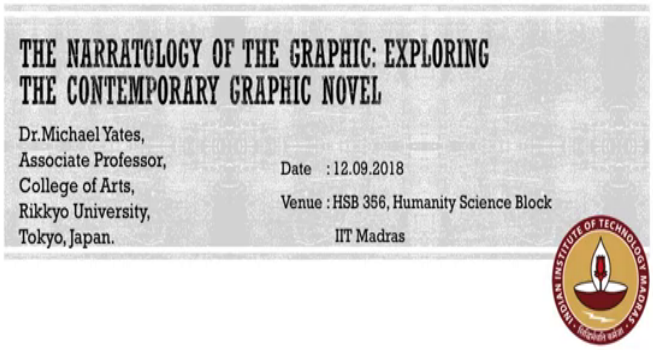

Prof. Avishek Purai It is a special lecture, offered by Dr. Michael Yates. He was very kind to come over to deliver this lecture. The (())(0:24), the narratology of the graphic exploring the narrativity of the contemporary graphic novels. So, this is where Michael earlier researched because he is an anthologist walking on the post-modernist tradition and he was just telling about his new project which is working on, the project on the collage, which is about visual culture and visual narratives and we looking forward to hear more about it as we go on.

And I believe this particular lesson draws on that project a little bit, so he is happy to answer the questions in that as well, if you have any at the end. So, what we will do is, we will let him deliver the lecture and maybe to end can make it a Q & A session, where you can ask questions narrated at him. So, without further delay, I would request Michael to come. Thank You.

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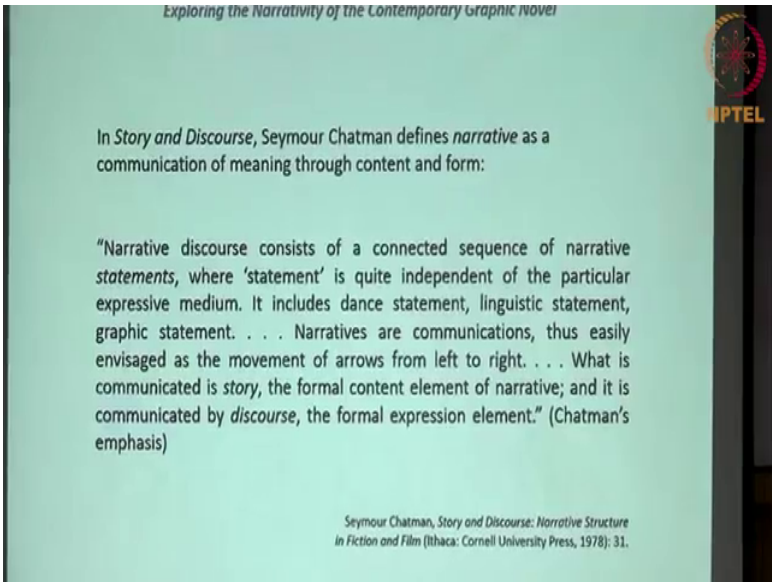

Dr. Michael Yates - In his introductory chapter of story in discourse of 1978, Seymour Chatman briefly outlines the relationship of Narrative and Poetics. He describes the fundamental practices of narrative theory and provides a general sketch of the semiotics of narrative structure published in the same year. Will Eisner's A Contract with God, first published in 1978 introduces the term graphic novel into the greater cultural lexicon of the arts and the humanities. And of course also the publishing industry, which, which is not something to take lightly.

However, beyond the simple historical simultaneity, what also links these two works and their respective author is the fact that not only did Chatman study of narratology initiate its analysis of Story and Discourse through the use of an almost purely graphic text, which was a comic strip, but Eisner, who is most famous as being a comic book writer, was later to publish two of the most influential volumes on the semiotic analysis of graphic narrative, comics and sequential art in 1985 and graphic storytelling and visual narrative in 1996.

So we have got a narratologist using comic strips and a comic artist writing about narrative theory. So, all at the same time. And yet, despite the auspicious early correlation of Chatman's graphic conscious narratology and Eisner's introduction of the graphic novel into mainstream literary discourse. In the years following the publication of these texts, there is been no deficit of debates surrounding these terms and terminologies. Especially those

introduced by Chairman's and conception of narratology and Eisner's designation as a graphic novelist, right?

The whole idea of what is a graphic novelist, are these novels really started at the end of the seventies and snowballed through the 80s. It is still a debate, right? Indeed, at the same time of, of this study that I'm doing right now, several recently published studies, in both of these areas. So, the comic book studies, but also narratology, they begin with very self-conscious acknowledgement of the theoretical divide that continues to mark the border between the narratological and the graphical.

Although each of these scholars that are published now, it is just as anxious to admit that the motto, the mutual understanding remains crucial to the continued development of these two fields. So they, they back off while recognizing the importance of collaboration. It's, it's, it's an awkward moment, for sort of graphic, literary studies. Anyway. So the obvious questions posed by this theoretical divide are, how did narratology lose its direct connection to the visual language of the graphic and how can this connection be re-established?

In this workshop, I hope to discuss some of the factors influencing the ongoing discrepancy between narratology and comics scholarship and proceed to suggest that means I've reintroducing graphic narrative back into the realm of contemporary narratology. Later in the third section of this workshop are then apply this revised approach to the narratological analysis of the visual language of the graphic narrative. Using some examples from Art Spiegelman, Brian O'Malley and Chris Ware.

Then finally, I'll conclude this, workshop by talking about contemporary scholarship and how further interdisciplinary and mutually engaged dialogue that can occur between narratological studies and comics scholarship. And of course some of you may be more well versed with comic studies than others. I know talking about comic studies in Japan is a very hairy proposition because many of my students know more about it than I do, right? They have, they have grown up on comics and Manga and their ability to understand the graphic is incredible. So, let us, let us move to the theoretical divide.

So, a primary to an assessment of how contemporary narratology lost touch with comics scholarship, especially as concerns the visual language of graphic narrative is an examination of where Chatman's narratological analysis left off, and what more recent theories and

definitions of narrative say about the field of narratology at the present moment. So, what is the basis of Chatman's narratology and what are the theoretical sources of his approach?

From the outset, Chatman explicitly states that the dualist and structuralists study of narrative, presented in his, his first book here, might best be thought of as a continuation and synthesis of the ideas and critical practices introduced by French structuralists such as Roland Barthes, it is Tzvetan Todorov and Gérard Genette.

And with this structuralists tradition and its theoretical background, Chatman indicates that the general intention of his study is to posit a what and a way of narratological analysis. Chatman continues the what of narrative I call the story, and the way I call its discourse. So, he is based on this structuralist tradition, but he is trying to bring it a little bit forward through a synthesis. However, it is safe to think of, Chatman's project as classical narratology, right, very much old school narratology.

In further definition of what he views as the what and way of Story and Discourse. Chatman suggest a framework for the structural analysis of narrative that focuses on the textual object as a communication composed of narrative statements. It is a very much, he has a communicative approach to what narrative is, right? It is, it is saying something, it is communicating something ideally between author and reader.

So here is a quote from his work "Narrative discourse consists of a connected sequence of narrative statements where statement is quite independent of the particular expressive medium," which is something to keep in mind as we go on. "It includes dance statement, linguistic statement, graphic statement, and so on. Narrative statement and to state narratively are used here as technical terms for any expression of a narrative element viewed independently of its manifesting substance, right? So it is society, it is culture.

Narratives are communications, thus easily envisaged as the movement of arrows from left to right or in Japan, right to left, right. From implied author to implied audience what is communicated is story, the formal content element of narrative. And it is communicated by discourse, right? The medium, the formal expression elements as specified in this passage, Chatman's structural approach to narrative considers the what of the story as both separable from and directly related to the way of the discourse and form.

The structure of the relations between these paired components accordingly shapes the nature of the communicated narrative. Right? So, how you say it makes the narrative. However, what is most significant, at least for the purposes of today's workshop, is not only the Chatman's structural overview considers the formal content of narrative in relation to the formal expression of narrative, but also that this approach provides a broad theoretical framework for the Trans Medial analysis of narrative as a communication composed of statements that can be delivered through gestural, through dance, gestural modes of discourse, verbal modes of discourse, such as linguistic statements, obviously, and visual modes of communication as well. Such as the graphic statement of a comic book.

But before we returned to the, the topic of discourse analysis and its central importance to the interpretation of graphic narrative, we must first fast forward three or four decades and briefly consider where and when narratology shifted its direction or another words where narratological epicenter of this divide is actually located. Firstly, it is necessary to recognize that recent theoretical approaches to the definition of narrative have not denied the importance of the kind of structural analysis made by Chatman.

He is still very much a respected narratologist. However, the contemporary move away from structuralist narratology right? Or classical narratology, towards a more cognitive narratology, right. They are having to do with thought, eye tracking, etc., habitual processes of textual analysis, for example, and also new cultural ways of Cognizant's. So those, those aspects have been recently brought into narratology. Okay.

For the cognitive narratologist, the movement of arrows from left to right or right to left as in Japan is most significant for its introduction of what David Herman terms Mind Relevance or what Marie-Laure Ryan, who is one of the people will be focusing on today, refers to as the cognitive construct or mental image built by the interpreter in response to the text.

So she's very much in a reader response sense thinking about that relationship, right? The texts are not so much a script so much as a play between author and reader, but also author and text and also text and reader, all at the same time, that whole network of relationships is central to Ryan's approach, and this reverses the polarities of the structuralist analysis, right? Seen as a negotiation between an implied author and an implied audience, right? As Chatman brings up.

Cognitive analytical practices tend to be more directly concerned with the negotiations involved between an actual author and an actual audience in the construction of an implied text, right? So, it is the text that is unclear. We have an actual author, we have an actual living reader, but it is the text that is unclear. What is actually being communicated is suddenly the focus of cognitivist narratology, right?

So following the lead of similar genetic, sorry, generic, natural or cognitive categorizations of narrative, by other neurotologist such as Gerald Prince and Monika Fludernik and David Herman. Ryan's categorical assessment and narrative across media moves Chatman's communicative model into the cognitive realm by arguing that narrative does not simply denote the textual act of representation. Instead, narrativity presupposes the capacity to generate the cognitive construct of an imagined story world. To the text whole purpose is to create a world in your mind, right?

If a story world has been conjured, then you are probably dealing with a narrative, right? That is her definition, her very broad, generic definition, right? But it is still very much a cognitively based. It is going on within your imagination, right? So, rather than narrativity being imminent within the story, like somehow mysteriously present in the book. It is all about the relations of the text itself. So, Ryan's cognitive approach states that the text must bring to mind the following representations in order to be considered a narrative. So, let us look at Ryan's kind of checklist.

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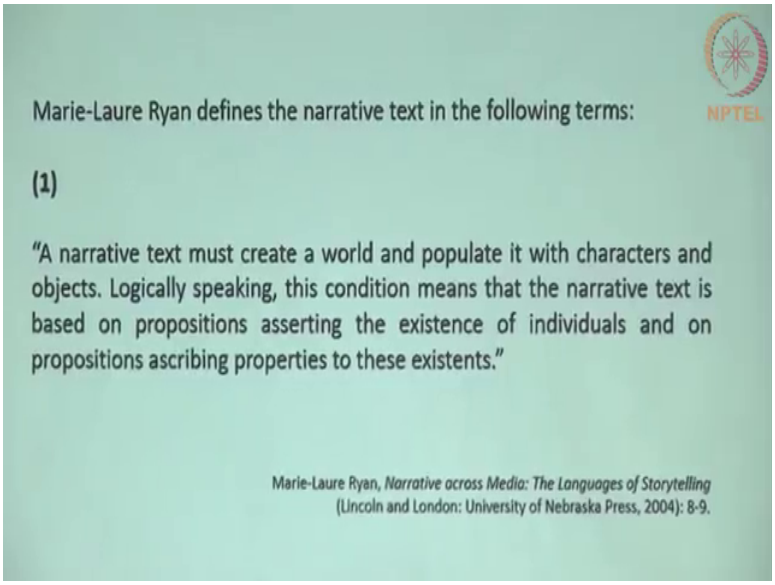

So, this is her first term. She says “A narrative text must create a world and populate it with characters and objects”. Logically speaking, this condition means that the narrative text is based on propositions asserting existence of individuals and on propositions ascribing properties to these existents. So, you need characters and they need to be doing something right. And a mannequin isn't enough, right? You can't just have a character and leave that person on their own, like things have to occur, which brings us to the second stage.

The world referred to by the text must undergo changes of state that are caused by non-habitual physical evidence, either accidents, happenings, or deliberate human actions. These changes create a temporal dimension and placed the narrative world in the flux of history, right? So you can see some development here.

In order for you to have a narrative, we need this, this world to exist with characters and it has to be within the flux of history, right? It can be its own history, it can have its own physics, its own rules of behaviour, and morals and ethics and biology, et Cetera, right? So science fiction is not being denied here, but it has to have its own sort of space time continuum.

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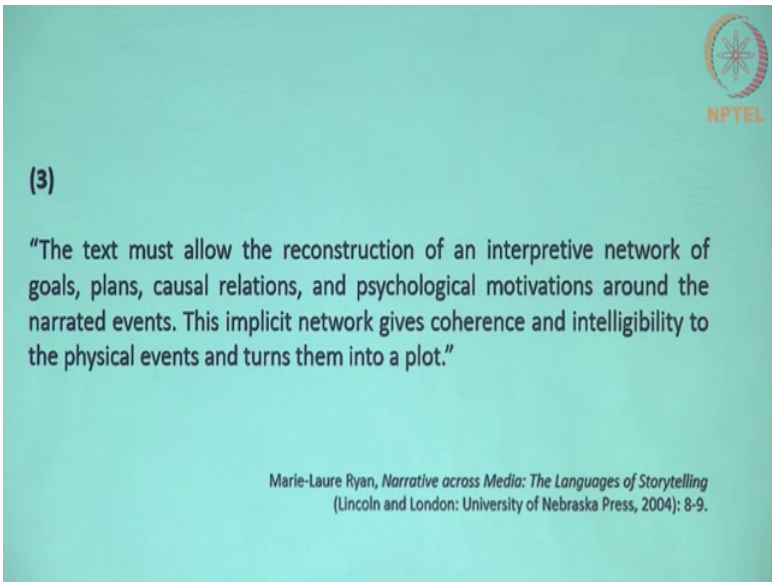

And the third point, “The texts must allow the reconstruction of an interpretive network of goals, plans, causal relations and psychological motivations around the narrated events. This implicit network gives coherence and intelligibility to the physical events and turns them into a plot.

So, if you check these three boxes, according to Ryan, you have, you have got yourself a narrative, right? So, you need characters, you need a story world, and there needs to be some sort of an internal, mental capacity for these characters to be at least human like in their, in their psychological motivations, etc. Right? So those are Ryan's prerequisites.

When a script fulfils these conditions, Ryan explains, it creates a narrative script. So far, they does not appear to be anything in this approach that might suggest a truly radical departure from the structuralist, a method by Chatman earlier. Indeed, other than the general suggestion of the audience's active cognition during the interpretive process. Ryan's three conditions of narrative appear to conform to a pattern not unlike and the framework of narrative, that we've already seen from Chairman, right?

The so called classical analysis of narrative events, right? However, immediately following this itemized one, two, three list, Ryan asks, how compatible is this formula with nonverbal forms of narrative to which she responds rather than locating narrative video in an act of telling, my definition anchors it in two distinct realms and in the demarcation of these two realms, Ryan contends that the fully functioning semiotic object of the narrative script, the narrative itself necessarily implies a spectrum of narrative that spans between the two modalities of intentionality.

So, intentionally being a narrative and potentially having negativity, that's her spectrum. It is either intentionally made and created as a story, as a story narrative, or it could be turned into a narrative. In further classification of the terms of this approach Ryan states, "The property of being," and she puts that in scare quotes, "The property of being a narrative can be predicated on any semiotic object produced with the intent of evoking a narrative script in the mind of the audience.

Having narrativity on the other hand means that something is able to evoke such a script in addition to life itself, pictures, music or dance can have narrativity without being narratives in a literal sense. And that is where the divide really sort of suddenly thrust itself into the earth has a big crack between these two areas of study.

We can have a script, but maybe it is not narrative is what Ryan is suggesting. And for comic scholars, for anybody in visual literacy, that's a bit of a shocking statement. How can, how

can it have narrativity but not be a narrative? Right. So that's where today is workshop, is going next to explore that. Right.

So, back to Rayan, the fullest form of narrativity occurs, Ryan maintains when the text is both intended as narrative and possesses sufficient negativity to be construed as such. So if it's, consciously made as a narrative and also the reader sees it as a narrative than to her, it is perfect, 100% grade A narrative, right? It is, it has got the seal of approval.

However, without taking issue with the inherent, inherently problematic intuitionalism in Ryan's proposed modal spectrum, right? It is nevertheless, very necessary to wonder what exactly is this literal sense and that is being imposed here by Rayan. All right. Especially if something is said to have sufficient narrativity and it is, it is incredibly vague.

And furthermore, why is that non, why is it that nonverbal texts as well as other nonverbal means of storytelling such as dance? Why are they here conceived to be somehow at non-literal in their narrativity? What is, what is non literal about the language of a gesture or sign language for that matter? Right? So I think there's something missing. In order to answer these questions Ryan reveals the verbal bias inherent in her approach to the question of the narrative text.

For according to Rayan, it seems clear that, “Of all the semiotic codes, language is the best suited to storytelling.” That's what she says. “Every narrative can be summarized in language, but very few can be retold through pictures exclusively and quote.” Of course, this response fails to adequately recognize the semiotic interplay and the subtle communicative capacity of gestural linguistics.

Again, sign language, for example, not to mention the formal complexity of other, uh, visual forms of language such as a diagrammatic discourse. The visual language of graphic narrative as we will see. But putting all of these aside for the moment and returning to Ryan, it is necessary to locate the precise terms of this verbal bias and determine its literal relation to the theoretical, the theoretical divide just did earlier.

In her appeal to previous studies as such as Solve Words, Pictures Can't Say Ain’t and Slow Myth Raymond Keenan's how the model neglects the medium. Ryan's states that a visual

media lack the code, the grammar and the syntactic rules necessary to articulate specific meanings, right?

She falls back on rhetoric. How can a picture have grammar? How can a visual narrative have any kind of code or syntax is her sort of default position? If it doesn't have this kind of grammar code and syntax, it can't be narrative, right? Only verbal forms of storytelling to her can have that.

But I am suggesting today that no, that's not the case, right? Comics books have their own visual or even multi, multi modal a means of, of encoding, creating their own syntax, their own timing visually and also verbally. So that is what we are going to look at today. So back to the divide.

An important hint at the reason for this verbal bias can be found in the general narratological attitude towards the question of nonverbal graphic narrativity. Indeed, any textual object lacking a conventional manner of verbal encoding, of grammatical structuring and of syntagmatic inscription is excluded from the literal narrativity on this very basis.

However, even the most cursory engagement with graphic narrative, right? Even just a quick look at a comic strip demonstrates that the code, grammar and syntax of the graphic is precisely the complex that binds the graphic narrative together, right?

It has a very obvious grown grammar code and Syntax, despite its lack of, of necessary verbal connectivity. Right. So that's what we are gonna look at today. So, in an attempt to better articulate the code, grammar and syntax of the graphic narrative, today we will be looking at three, three sort of sample cases. We will be looking briefly at Art Spiegelman’s Maus, which maybe you are familiar with.

I will also look at Bryan Lee o'malley’s Scott Pilgrim, and we will also look at Chris Ware’s Jimmy Corrigan, The Smartest Kid on Earth.

And, I think, Chris Ware is my favourite, my personal favourite? So, if you have heard of him or you are interested in Chris Ware’s works I am happy to talk about it. And if you are not aware of Chris Ware, then you should check him out. He is, he is a brilliant storyteller and an incredible illustrator.

Very, very detailed. I hope you would enjoy it if you give it a chance. So if through this approach today to the visual language of the contemporary graphic novel, the precise terms of the narrativity of these narrative scripts will be considered and the multimodal practices involved in both the creation and the interpretation of these texts will be explored. In order to continue, however, it is important to first define the encoding practices at typical of narrative.

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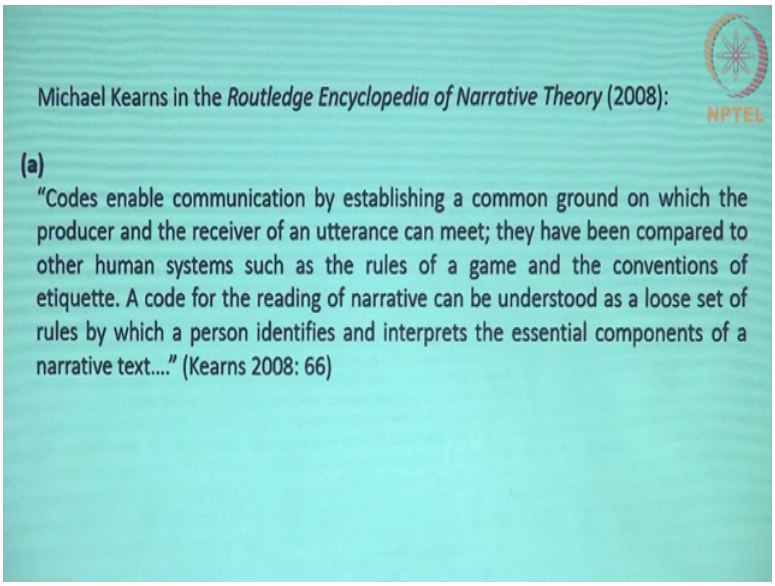

So, let us look at coding here. So we've seen all that. So these will be the texts we are looking at. So, in the Rutledge Encyclopaedia of narrative, Michael Kerns defines code thusly, he says "Codes enable communication by establishing a common ground on which the producer and the receiver of an utterance can meet. They have been compared to other human systems such as the rules of a game and the conventions of etiquette.

A code for the reading of narrative can be understood as a loose set of rules by which a person identifies and interprets the essential components of a narrative text." Right? So, it is again a communicative device. He goes on, "Initially recognizing the text as a narrative, a reader will then apply the proairetic code to organize the text actions." So, stop there for a moment.

Proairetic, the term proairetic, it was meant by Roland Barthes to represent action in a sequence, right? If it is, if you have a hermeneutic process, right? Of course, you are revealing the mystery, right? I got the Christie, author Conan Doyle rely heavily on the

hermeneutic Code, right? Because we know there is a murder and the whole narrative is to find out who did it right or what led up to the death, right?

That is hermeneutic, but the proairetic is we have a gunslinger, right? In my example, and he shoots, but we don't know if he was successful. We don't know if he got shot, right? The proairetic leads from action to action and the suspense is maintained through that unknowing.

So it is slightly different than the suspense of the hermeneutics, right? So, that is one of the codes and the next code, the referential codes to connect the texts world, to accepted bodies of knowledge, the semic code to organize its characters and, and characterizing details, the symbolic code to follow the text development of narrative suspense and the Mythic Codec Code by which the tech signals and the reader infers and the culture suggests what codes are appropriate for a given text.

So, as you can see, each of these codes are not mutually exclusive to the others, right? There is a quite a bit of overlap between these, these coding practices. Bbut I think it is still safe to add a further code. I think the suggestion of a graphic code would help to, develop this further, Right?

So today's, might be added, the graphic code by which the reader filters each of these encoding systems through the visual organization of a graphic texts, formal layout. It is visual style, it is Chromatics, right? The colours or lack of colour, and its selected modes of inscription, right?

So, does this comic artist have a wiggly jagged hand like Charles Schulz for the Peanuts comic? Right? It has a roughness to it, but it is a, it is a familiar roughness. It is a human roughness, as you will see with Chris Ware, there is a kind of inhuman cleanness to his lines and his colours. It has a certain plastic quality to it. Right?

But that is an important part of the language of the story he is telling. Right? How the author or artist creates it, gives it a certain nuance, right? And none of these other codes really appreciate that, that level of nuance.

Good! One of the most obvious and significant differences between the encoding and decoding practices, a verbal narrative and those of the graphic novel involves the Space

Shield, temporal dimension, right? Space Time. When you are reading a story, you are taking up real actual time. But the time in the comic strip reading experience is different.

It is tinkered with by the artist, right?

So, the spatial temporal dimensions of the textual material at slightly different than on the page. The page of a graphic novel, whether or not it employs verbal information, narration or dialogue allows for an immediate multiplicity of reading practices and decoding techniques. As a multimodal text, the graphic novel typically confronts the reader with a sequence of framed events that must be deciphered, before there is any kind of order or relationship placed on the text.

This reading is processed on both a global and a local scale because the visual layout of the graphic novel allows and sometimes even requires the reader to survey the visual content on the page prior to commencing a closer reading of the panels. So, many works these days require a double reading, but some of them even a triple reading, right? So when you open the page, you are automatically reading because the layout strikes your eye and some layouts are not immediately accessible.

You need to find out where to start. The assumption that you're going to go from left to right or right to left is often played with by the artist. Or you end up with a page that circular or triangular or bent or blank, right? Where do you start when the page is blank? So that kind of reading process, is both immediate and then more precise and local as you look at the panels. And then perhaps before you turn the, again, you are doing another global reading. So, the reading process is altogether different.

The circularity of these reading processes that's involves the reader and a two stage decoding of the presented narrative material. The first global reading takes in the layout style mode of the text, and this primary reading is followed by the local reading that attempts to connect each of the contextual elements into the sequence of a narrative that makes the relationship of these elements appear to relate in some meaningful way, right?

So you are trying to cognitively construct it, right, but you are doing that, yourself, right? In other words, the initial global reading as a survey, of the overall import of the text from a wide perspective and the secondary local reading is an engagement with the precise encoding

and decoding of the narrative, from a specific heuristic perspective, right? So you are decoding on a very local level there.

Both of these interrelated reading practices inform the reader as to the sequence, mode and function of the panels as they suggest the system of vectors that order the reading process and emphasize, or imply a certain reading pattern that might best be described as the special temporal relations between depicted events. So, there is often a suggestion of vectors, right?

There might not be arrows, but there might be actual arrows telling you how to read the bits, dotted lines, darts for example, or outlining, maybe the colour changes. We go from dim to dark or dark to light. So, the artist is expected, we expect the artist to give us a way of reading, right?

If we get jumbled on the page, maybe we give up immediately and that would defeat the purpose. So the author and artists are very aware of that relationship. They don't want to let the reader down because it is, it is always a dodgy proposition when you give something unreadable, when you give them what Bart's calls the red hot text, right? That is just textual and little else. So, I think especially authors today are very aware that they are appealing to a new audience.

Okay. Let us see. While there is a vast number of structural and cognitive processes involved in both of these reading practices, for brevity sake today I will be focusing on the symbolic nature of the graphic and coding and how these coded elements can be juxtaposed to suggest the sequence, that forms the basis of graphic narrative.

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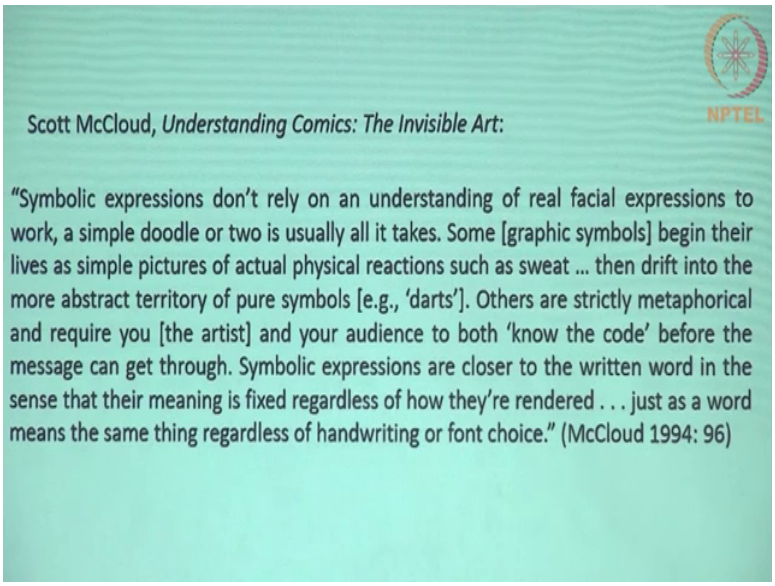

So, let us look at one of the most prominent graphic narrative scholars today, Scott McCloud. He states, "Symbolic expressions don't rely on an understanding of real facial expressions to work, a simple doodle or two is usually all it takes. Some [graphic symbols] begin their lives as simple pictures of actual physical reactions such as sweat… then drift into the more abstract territory of pure symbols, such as darts. Others are strictly metaphorical and require you the artist and your audience to both 'know the code' before the message can get through. Symbolic expressions are closer to the written word in the sense that they're meaning is fixed regardless of how they're rendered… just as a word means the same thing regardless of handwriting or font choice.

So, to give you an example, there is simple stick figure, unhappy. This figure has, has been giving us a symbolic vocabulary of unhappiness, alright? Of course, you have probably seen something similar before, right? So you have, you have been taught the language of this symbol, right?

But once an artist uses it in his graphic text, he is relying on this vocabulary. Otherwise this would just be some circles and lines, right? He is expecting you to recognize this as a humanoid face with eyes and a mouth, feeling in a certain way.

It has an emotional content implied by the lines over the eyes, right? How you tilt the lines changes the emotion that you are trying to convey. This is the language of the graphic, right?

These, these are and follow grammatical rules, codes and the syntax. And if you betray it, then you lead to lack of communication.

Even one line changes it all together. What, what is he feeling? confusion, nausea. We have no idea what he is feeling. Okay? So that is really what the graphic artist is playing with, right? And that is what Scott McCloud is suggesting here according to McCloud, "The conventions of use and connotation and that order meeting within the visual language of the graphic are not unlike the mechanisms of the literal alphabetical encoding in verbal language.

Both of these systems are built upon and the contextual positioning of symbols and decoding practices that serve to connect these symbols to some conventional pattern of usage and the meanings attached to each particular instance of usage. So, we have a word for the smiley face or the sad face, right?

It has a specific emotive but also verbal and meaningful, aspect, right. We can, we can locate it. We can name it regardless of whether it is graphic or not. Applying this theory to a brief reading of a set of panels from Spiegelman's Maus, should be sufficient to demonstrate how this occurs within the graphic text. So, let us have a look at some panels from Maus here.

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So, this is in the introduction to Art Spiegelman's Maus and as, as any good introduction will do, it introduces us to the characters and creates a certain context for the reading of the novel. So, in these panels we, we meet Art, right, who is, the author's avatar, and we also meet Art's

father Vladik who is the, in a certain sense of the narrator of Maus, the narrative. So we were introduced to these two characters. We can see the kind of bonds that they have, the father son relationship, and were also introduced to an interesting kind of philosophy. Right?

In these panels, Art falls down, he hurts his knee and he is complaining about his friends "Ah! My friends left me!" and Vladik says, "Friends, Oye, nce you are locked in a room with no food for a week, then you could see what is friends," he says it. So, his English seems to be slightly different. It is not the standard and we learn as the narrative goes on, he is Polish, he is of Jewish ancestry, etc. And we start to learn about the Nazi occupation of Poland, etc. Right?

So, in this beginning, we, we, we get a taste for Vladik's personality, we are introduced to another world. We are brought into the story world of the novel, right? And it stunned in a very standard, very conventional way, right? This is not a comics strip that should be difficult for most of us to read, right? It follows patterns that were used to. He changes things up later on, but it is always safe to begin, with something that might be accessible.

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Let us look to the next pattern. When we start to think about code, we have to start to think about what things are being encoded might, even just lines on the my face and ways of depicting the characters has their, has its own language of emotion, has its own language of, impact on the development of the story.

So let us have a look at some of these symbols, right? So as the character Vladik and Vladik, kind of leaps in and out of time, but he is, he is both simultaneously in Rijo Park, New York, and he is also simultaneously back in Poland as he tells the story. So, it has a very interesting play with, with temporal here and with the time frames within the narrator's mind. So, as the character Vladik recount certain aspects of his life in Poland to his son Art.

The story briefly describes Vladik's courtship of Anya and we see that here. As well as Vladik's prior romantic attachment to a character named Lucia. So, another Maus, and because we are not familiar with maybe Maus facial expressions, etc. it gives the artists, and a new place to go, a new set of challenges as well, as we will see.

Over the course of these two facing pages, several distinct meanings are encoded symbolically without any need for further verbal signposting, right? So, as we can see here in the third panel, the shading to Anya's face indicates embarrassment. She speaking in English, she thinks that Vladik doesn't understand English and he calls her out and says "I can speak English." And she, her face reddens, right?

In a black and white comic, we can't show red or pink, so we have to shade it. So there is a language to that, that shading for embarrassment, right? And this is a perfect example right hand before the mouth shading. Okay, we read that as embarrassment.

In the fourth panel of figure four here the steeply inclined lines above the eyes of both characters indicates they are both angry, they are having a bit of a fight. In the fifth panel, the dark shading of Lucia's face indicates the darkness of depression and dread. And in the final panel, the 'u' shaped symbol beneath and Lucia's eye indicates that she is crying, right?

So this symbolic language can be decoded and made into verbal language quite easily. While these examples are unexceptional and indeed most of us can quite obviously have a proficiency of decoding them. It is what is exceptional about it, about this is its efficiency, right?

The efficiency of the symbolic code, the tremendous nuance that it adds to the meaning of each of these panels in the sequence. And also the simple fact that a visual fluency and decoding these symbols can be acquired. So, it is something that shouldn't be underestimated, but it often is underestimated.

So, now that the basis of reading, has been established, the question remains as to how these elements and the panels in which they operate unite to create a grammatical sequence. So, where is the grammar? If we have a language, what is the grammar of the graphic? According to McCloud, the crucial component of the interaction that takes place in the creation and comprehension of graphic narrative is closure. Let us skip to that.

In this panel he describes closure. As McCloud illustrates in these panels here, the cognitive process that occurs in the space between the panels and the symbolic elements of the text is precisely the sequencing process that allows us to connect these unconnected graphic moments and mentally construct a continuous unified reality.

Otherwise, all of the panels would sit or float in their own story worlds, right? It is that closure that allows us to create a sequence, a cognizant of both sequence that gels into a story in our head as we read. It is that process that is necessary and he calls that closure.

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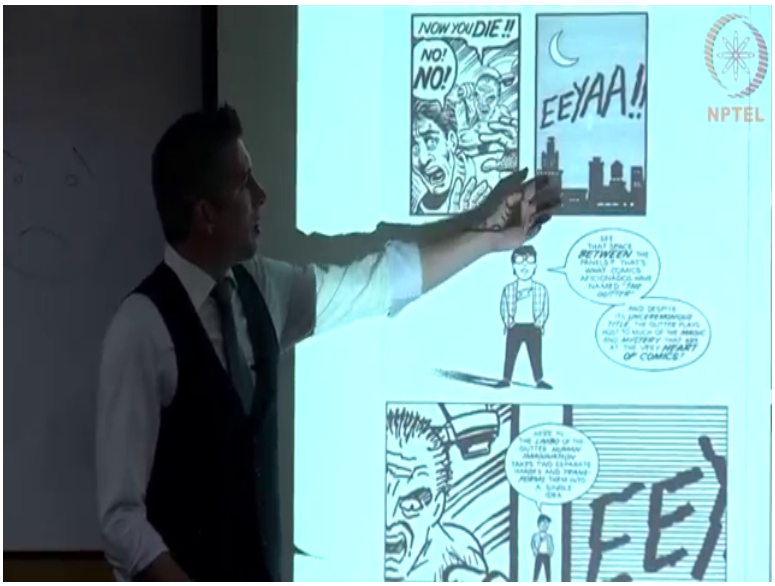

So as we can see in between these there is a lot of suggestion going on in the mind, right? In order for these to have closure, in order for them to connect, this axe wielding maniac probably has to kill or at least hit the other character with his axe. Hence we get this. Yeah, right?

Of course, there are many different kinds of closure and sometimes the closure is not perfect or is meant to create confusion in the, in the reader. Here I think it is quite, quite obvious, but

the point that Scott McCloud brings up that I think is the most important is that all of this occurs in the gutter.

In the gutter is the space between panels. That is where your mind is asked to go into action. The graphic artists gives us clues for some sort of sequence, but all of the imagination, all of the story world really exists within your own cognition, right up in your head. That is where these connections are made. Like otherwise they would float alone. They would not have any kind of sequential action at all.

McCloud continues, “If visual iconography is the vocabulary of comics, closure is its grammar. And since our definition of comics hinges on the arrangement of elements, then in a very real sense, comics is closure according to and McCloud. But what exactly is the grammar of closure? Taking a set of characteristic examples from Bryan Lee O'malley's Scott Pilgrim and we can see the cognitive process of closure.

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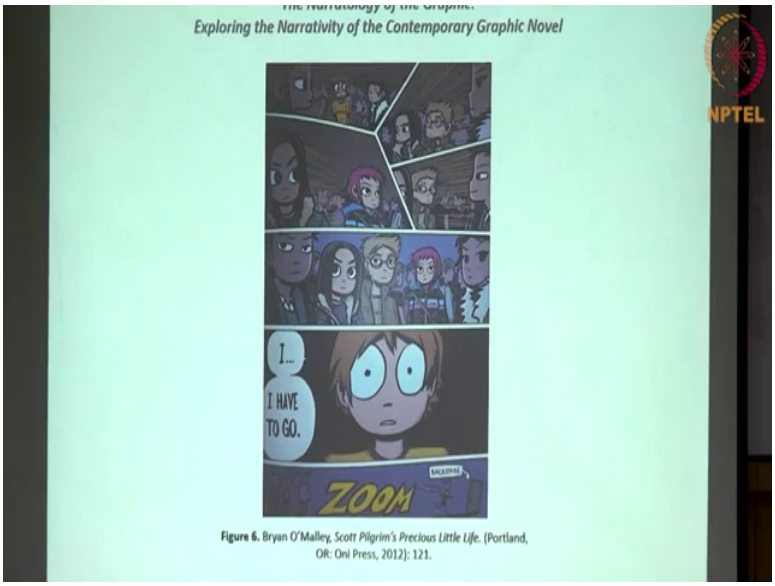

Figure 6. Bryan O'Malley, *Scott Pilgrim's Precious Little Life*. (Portland, OR: Oni Press, 2012): 121.

So, let us have a look that O’Malley here. So again, there is a lot of action going on in between the panels. So, in the first panel we start to establish that meaningful glances are taking place at this party, right, Scott? I will tell you the story very briefly. It is, it is super simple. Scott has two girlfriends. It is not that complicated. But it causes problems for him. And at this moment, both girls are in the same room and he is having trouble coping with the anxiety. So as we see at the bottom, he, he runs away “Oh No”.

So this is the moment where everyone realizes that Scott has two girlfriends and they are both here at the same time. Sso these darts between the panels at the top indicate those meaningful glances and it is our job to put those, those panels into a grammatical sequence of she looked at him, he looked at her, she looked at him, he looked at her, etc. right?

And those darts give us a direction towards the character that is making that the meaningful glance occur. So it is following a very much a kind of sentence structure of subject, action, predicate. And then we have a nice kind of period at the end of the statement here at the bottom, right? So very much, one page sentence structure.

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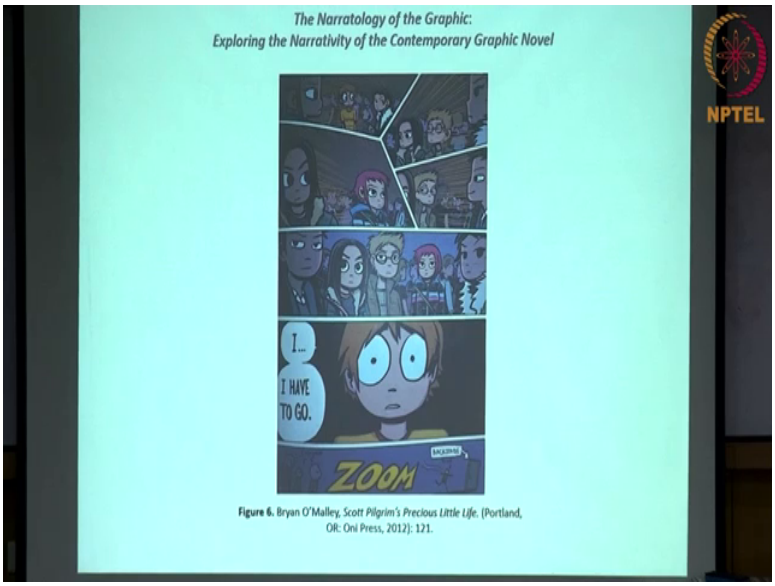

Figure 6. Bryan O'Malley, Scott Pilgrim's Precious Little Life. (Portland, OR: Oni Press, 2012): 121.

Let us move on to the next example. So, here we have a very, a typical fight scene. But the transitions here I think are worth a little bit of consideration, especially when we start to talk about grammar and syntax. So, following McCloud's definition of the term closure specifies the meaning by which time and motion are described or implied graphically, right?

So, this is a kind of time signature. And then McCloud's taxonomy of the term closure typically occurs through the following six, six types of panel to panel or element to element transition. Like the different kinds of transitions, just as in film at different wipes and filters and cuts. Comics has the same.

So six of them, there is moment to moment. So time progressing, such as in these sectors sequences, action to action. Like there is some action to action transitions going on here as

well. Subject to subject, right? In a dialogue especially or as you zoom in on a place like subject to subject or scene to scene is another way, aspect to aspect, especially when you are describing a space, maybe the windows, the chairs, the audience, the podium.

So, we are moving from subject to subject or aspect to aspect and also non-sequitur transitions, right? Suddenly we have Charlie Brown walking down the street with his poodle, not poodle, his beagle, snoopy. And then suddenly snoopy turns into, I don't know, a potato. It doesn't make any sense. So non sequitur transitions are also an option for the artist.

So, let us look at these panels, the panels in figure six that was the last one, and according to McCloud's terminology or an example of moment to moment transitions, like something occurring in a sequence, these transitions require very little closure, in cognitively connecting the panels into a semblance of logical sequential order over an implied period of time. It makes sense, because they look similar enough that you can follow it and think, okay, things are happening in that story world, right? And time is taking place.

Okay, let us look at this scene and let's see, hmm, where am I gonna, thus in this is seeing the reader easily infers the Scott pilgrim has caused some anxiety. Let us go back and he has caused some anxiety to develop among his friends. The darts indicate that a rapid progression of meaningful glances as the sequence flashes from moment to moment. In figure seven here on the left, but also in in figure eight, the transitions alternate between subject to subject and action to action and backed to subject to subject.

This alternating arrangement allows the characters to be viewed from a variety of perspectives. It also describes the passage of time and suggest the shape of the space in which they exist, connected into a unified pattern describing a set of characters, events and existence within a specified story world to use Ryan's term. The closure that completes each sequence, sequential process of implied actions shows us how this story goes forward in time.

And as we will see later, the shape of the panels, the size of the panels, even the colours used in this panel, in these panels gives us a certain sense of how much time they are taking. Small panels, small time, big panels could, could take quite a while. Right? So the artist is asking you to spend more time and to sort of imply more time into the size and shape and structure of each panel.

So, the panel size and shape has a temporal quality. Okay. So, now that the code and grammar of the visual language of the graphic narrative has been established, we will just say it has established. It only remains to define the syntax and how our complete visual system of syntactical relations amounts to a justification of a given narratives and narrativity right. Given graphic texts narrativity, unfortunately, and unfortunately we won't have a whole lot of time to delve very deeply into graphics syntax.

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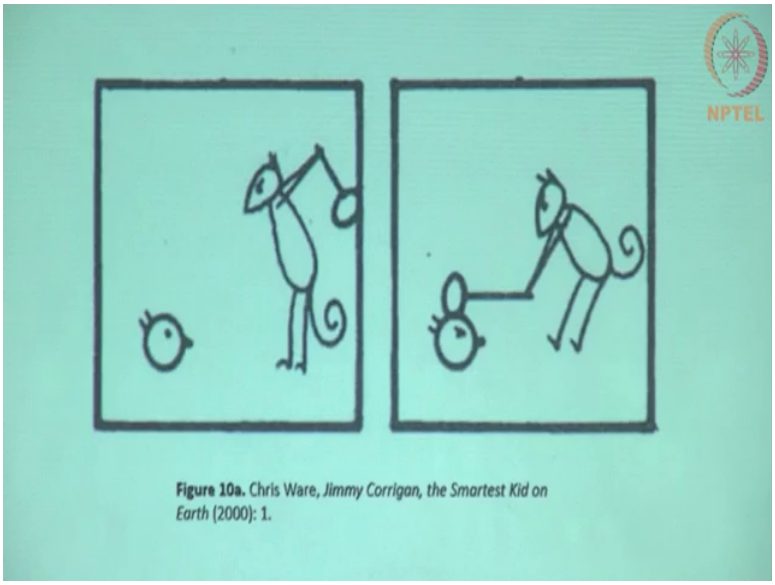

Figure 10a. Chris Ware, *Jimmy Corrigan, the Smartest Kid on Earth* (2000): 1.

Nevertheless, a few short observations can be made through an exploration of Chris Ware's Jimmy Corrigan. Briefly look at some graphic syntax and this is where the, the topic gets a little hairy because there are a lot of different definitions about syntax and its relationship to narrative and to storytelling, right?

But although definitions of narrative syntax vary widely in their terms perspectives and their basic approaches, the definition forwarded here follows that of William Labov and Frederick Emory. So they are theorists very active in the seventies and eighties, but still current today. And what they said was narrative syntax is to be conceived as a paratactic sequence of independent clauses whose verb actions match a corresponding order of events. So something happening.

The utility of this formulation of narrative syntax can be found not only in its applicability to the all manner of media and forms of communicative expression, but also on its focus upon

the generative nature of the movement from clause to paratactically Juxtaposed clause. So, how clauses really relate to other clauses within some sort of statement.

If we recall Chatman's definition of narrative as communication, "The movement of Arrows from left to right," and McCloud's concept of closure". This definition also asserts that narrative syntax is reliant upon the specific grammatical ordering of depictive events as they occur in a given sequence. So the way that they're put together creates the syntax.

So we can see very, very basic syntax here. The rules are implied through the closure that this cat or this Maus figure is hitting a cat head. We, we are told very little of how to read this, but we assume if we are moving from left to right, that some sort of hitting action is taking place. So we can think of these as independent clauses, but if we think of them as independent and they float alone, but if we think of them as having some sort of syntax, then we need to connect them as two parts to a statement, right?

Perhaps the subject, introducing the characters, introducing the action, and then we have a kind of object construction here in the second panel, which gives us the closure, which gives us some sort of action taking place. We have a kind of subject verb and object agreement, right? Of course, the verb is kind of falling here in the closure space, right in the gutter. We have to assume that action is taking place. There is no way for us to prove it. It happens only cognitively.

As described in the previous analysis of visual grammar, the sequencing, sequential ordering, various in meaning, depending on, how the items involved, depending on the items involved in each transition. So, it really depends on what sort of material we have in each panel. Nevertheless, it is the vectored movement from transition to transition over a range of items and events that specifies the syntactical rules of a narrative text. So again, the narrative texts in graphic terms is creating its own syntax. Every author has his own kind of signature syntax.

In the self-professed interest of introducing the reader to the rules of graphic syntex. Ware's Jimmy Corrigan begins with a purely graphic exposition of the set of syntactical rules necessary for illiterate reading of the visual language applied in the novel. So it is a kind of key to reading the novel and he gives it at the beginning of his, of his work and it's incredibly detailed.

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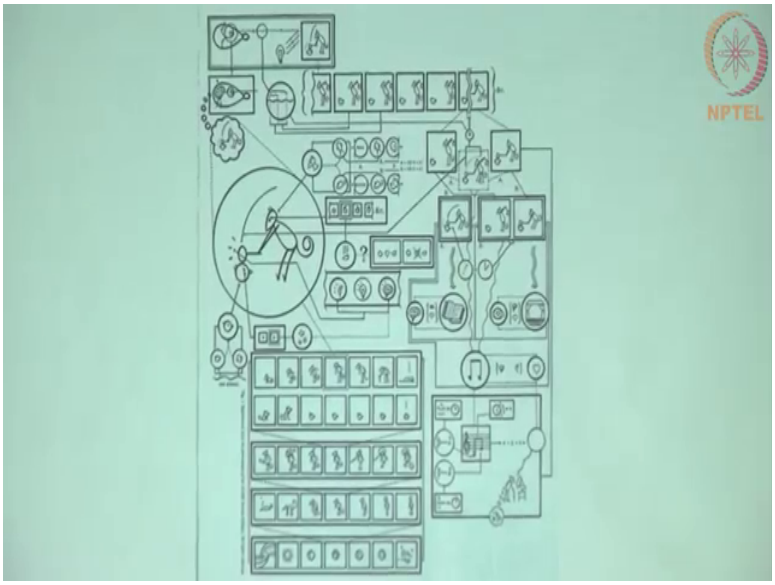

And I was, I really would like you to have had a copy so you can look at the detail here and sort of read the symbolic language here. but I will have to do it for you. But this is on, I think the first or second page of his book and he is basically saying to the reader “This is how this work is going to go. This is the syntax of this graphic text.”

So, if you understand the rules as I am using them, then you will be fine. But if you don't, if you can't figure this out, then maybe you need a little bit of practice. So he is giving us a run through before we even get to the beginning of the novel, it is very kind.

Okay! Although Ware's diagram may initially appear quite daunting and in its incredible intricacy, careful attention to the interaction of its parts and the proposition suggested by its interlinked network of vectors reveals that in this relatively small diagram, taking up about two thirds of a page where is not only succeeded in graphically explaining the syntax of visual language.

This diagram also elucidates several of the spatial temporal structures involved in the sequential graphic storytelling and presents a very convincing and theoretically sophisticated case for the cognitive nature of graphic narratives in general. All without recourse to any verbal language, more extensive than, ‘etc’, ‘or’ and ‘see’ above, right? So those are the few tiny little verbal clues that he spices it with. But otherwise it is almost entirely a graphic.

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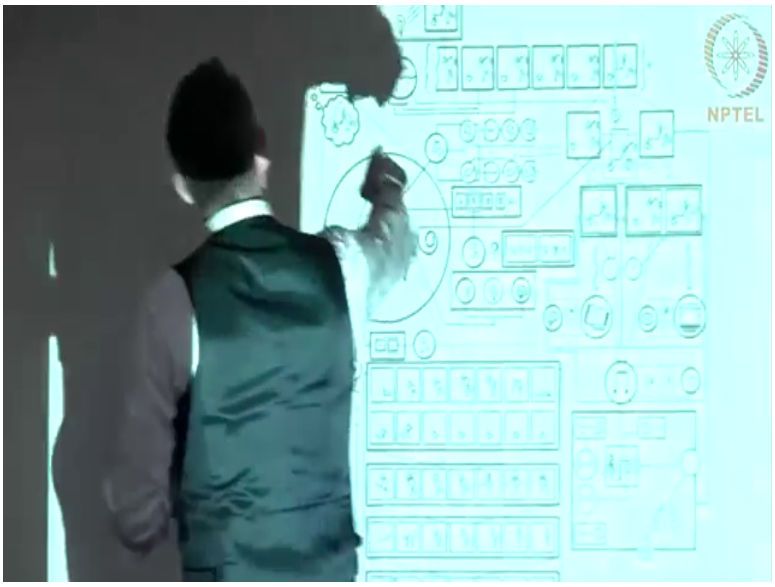

The diagram begins in the top left section up here with a description of how the eye in the presence of light receives an image in the form of a wave. The image in question being a simple line drawing of a stylized Maus, striking a bodyless cat's head with a hammer. So the light enters the eye and something happens.

This wave reflecting the shapes and colors in the image is described as being interpreted by the brain before being reproduced in the mind or memory as an approximation of the image on the page. So, it goes into the eye, into the brain. It is something is being recognized and it is entering the memory.

Following the vectors leading from the top. The diagram explains that each image in a graphic sequence is conveyed to the brain in a similar fashion, right? So this is an ongoing process. And following a further vector, the diagram explains that each of these cognitive acts of translating light data into mentally reproduced imagery takes place over a period of time.

So this isn't instantaneous. This is timed. This, the diagram suggests is the basis of the sequential nature of panel to panel as spatiotemporal tradition, transition. So, as panels move time goes on and that is where a closure occurs.

Linked to the bottom of the row of panels, describing this sequence further, sorry, let me start that again. Linked to the bottom of the row of panels describing the sequence is a further

explanation of how time is involved in the cognitive linking of sequential panels shown by an overlapping of the components of two example events.

So, A, A plus B, so we have a sequence here and we have sort of a beginning at an end and here in this ghostly section in between is the suggestion that some action is occurring, which gives us a few choices. Immediately below these three panels are another three panels separated by… The first panel on the left suggests that the two sequential panels depicting separate events can be linked by coded signs within the panel.

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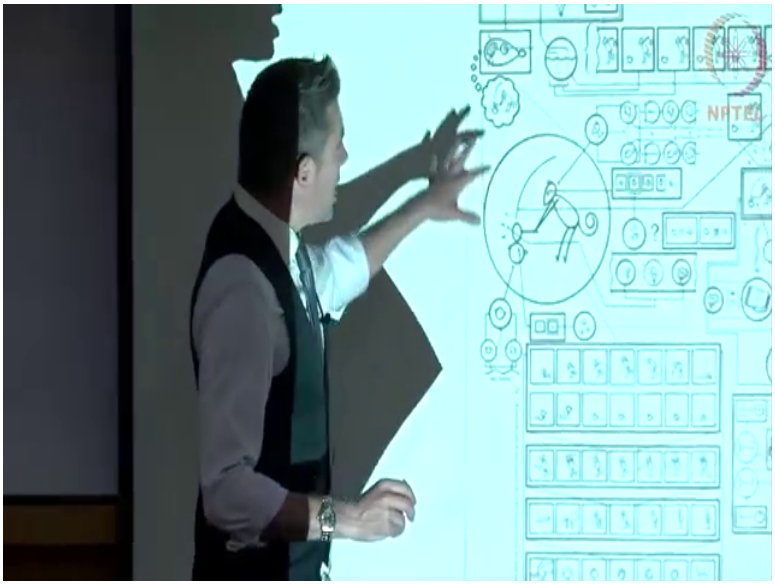

So we, we have an encoding here and as you go through it, different parts of the comic reading process described.

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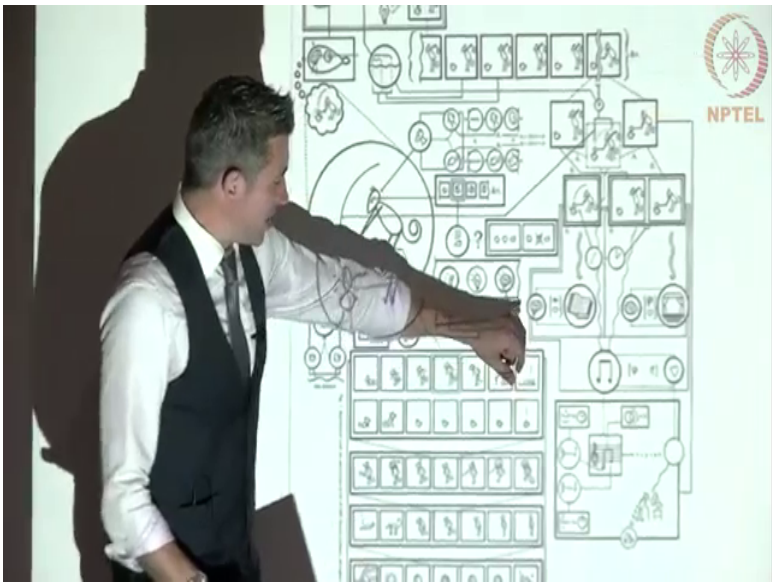

So we have the brain, and I'm sorry this is so it's very small. It's hard to see, but this is a brain and it is being likened to its relationship to books. So just as the brain likes books, the brain can also like reading visual material. Also the eye is being connected to a presidium arch here. So it is suggesting, the comics scholarship is similar to a kind of stage performance, right? The kind of play that is going on the page is akin to a theatrical performance, right?

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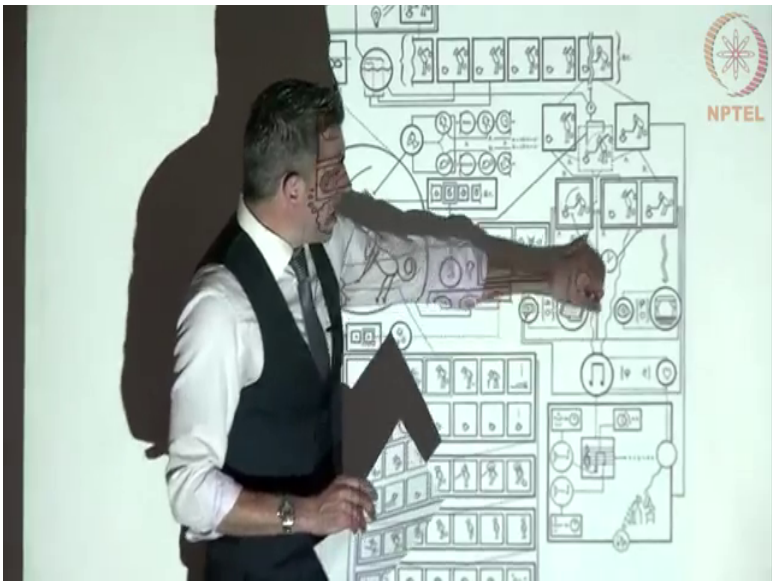

Likewise, these wavy lines coming down to this musical note, give us a sense of musicality and musicality in the graphic is of course graphic, but it is suggested by of course, style,

colour, page layout, right? And like music, it is reliant upon a certain sense of size, right? And again, as I said earlier, the size of the panel indicates the amount of time necessary to cognitively deal with it, right?

You have a large, it, it very physically, very actively takes you more time to process it. Whereas a very small, simple panel is much more immediate. And the author plays with that timing and is very aware of that. So that is something that the readers should also be aware of. And in this, these panels, we get more examples of how sequences occur and how sort of anthropomorphisation can occur, right? Like we have Maus turning into a man, for example, our cat turning into a man.

In this further panel, we see the use of kind of graphic adjectives, right? When we stereotype, when we give props to our characters. When we tell a story, the visual adjectives or adverbs are the kinds of things that they are gifted with as, as objects to use in that, that story or that sequence. So that is being described here as well. So all in one page where whereas giving us an incredibly detailed and sophisticated lesson in how to read graphic narratives. Anyway, I will wrap up.

So, final suggestions. Now that we have looked at the code, the grammar and the syntax and those were the sticking points of Ryan's definition of narrative. So, I think we havve adequately, recognize that this does occur within graphic narrative.

So still, some final suggestions, as each of the analyzed texts makes adequately apparent. Ryan's conditions of narrativity as well as worth proposed and neurotological requirements of code, grammar and syntax are all abundantly discernible in the graphic structures and cognitive processes involved in the creation and interpretation of the contemporary graphic novel.

Of course, as the parallel fields of narratology and comics scholarship continue to develop and expand new unforeseen connections and further theoretical divides are likely to manifest themselves. However, it is hoped that the approach taken today in this workshop thus more too faster and increased exchange of ideas rather than to delimit the scope. For, it's important to recognize that and while the burgeoning field of comic scholarship has very little to lose by an exclusion from narratology.

It is quite obvious that narratology would be losing something if, if graphic language appreciation, the analysis of graphic grammar and syntax, were not brought in. So this is more of a project for improving their ontology, right. Cause they have a quite a bit to lose if they don't appreciate nonverbal narrative. And that's, that's my, my stump that I stand on. So thank you very much for your time.

SPEAKER 1 - I really enjoyed.

DR. MICHAEL YATES - Thank You! Anything at all. Yes.

SPEAKER 1 - I wanted you to ask about(())(74:55) some of the syntactic structure. I am very convinced about how graphic narratives are inclined with the narratives, the syntactic, standard syntactic structure of language. But, I am not an expert in graphic Narratives at all, can graphic Narratives come up with a language of (())(75:17). I have in mind the illustrations of (())(75:20) in this poetry. I don't think there are certain (())(75:25), a syntactic structure of it where you have SPU or SOPU. So, I also work on performance, I mean in Chennai, in Tamil theater we have a lot of experiments with primordial sounds and all that, so what is that, I mean it is not in lines with the standard, I mean syntactic structure of language so (())(75:50) that…

DR. MICHAEL YATES - Indeed, yes. I think it is especially dance and even any kind of use of sound in dance has a specific purpose. Like it might have a symbolic coding. It might have some, sort of the cultural meaning as well. Or it might just be punctuation between gestures or postures. Right. And that is part of the storytelling process as well. But I think any kind of tradition, any kind of genre, we'll establish its own conventions, and with those conventions comes a kind of standards syntax, right?

As we have seen in some of the examples, right? Using square panels is kind of a very typical way of showing a story on a page. You don't have to use squares, but it is just, it is easy. It is readable. Right? And, the sense that one page makes one statement at one, it operates on the level of a kind of paragraph is another conventional, development that has just occurred.

Some of these are, are very actively, being played with by the artist. Some artists tried to develop their own syntax, right? Getting away from square panels for example. But it is

always risky, right? If you do develop your own syntax, if you give up on the conventional syntax and try your own, it is at your own panel. It is risky to do so.

But I do think there are a lot of artists that are playing with forum more and more to try to expand it, to try to expand it, not only to expand it for the sense of making it bigger, but also to avoid it being locked into something constricting. Right? Because like any kind of grammar or syntax, the rules can disallow certain, certain things.

So, at least within the graphic, I think that's something that's continuously being pushed and pulled on. I think probably within dance as well, you can choose to bring on certain things or ignore certain things, but if you ignore those conventions, maybe you are starting your own, a new genre, right? Maybe it is no longer what it came from. So that would be my answer. Thank you!

Dr. Avishek Purai - (())(78:51), graphic narrative, sketching (())(78:57).

DR. MICHAEL YATES - Yeah, definitely. Definitely. He has brought up frequently. And his, whether he is a narrative illustrator or whether we can think of these as graphic narratives is a question that comes up. Personally, I think there are some of his works that have a narrative quality. Others that are purely illustrative, right? They are meant to enact moments from, from his poetry or from mythology, et cetera. But I do think there is a very direct line between Blake and his works and what artists such as Chris Ware are doing today, like that, it is not happening in a vacuum. That's for sure.

SPEAKER 2 - Since you have worked with Japanese students, I would like to know how your experience has been, how it discourse of visual narrative are created in Manga. Specially because Manga usually is serialized, so the way their courses are developed and even their narrativity, how it is related to, making serialized in the sense that their inclusion in the narrative is a gradual process instead of having been planted in to the narrative, fully form….

DR. MICHAEL YATES - Can you repeat the last part?

SPEAKER 2 – Like there are long running Mangas like One Piece and Naruto, they include a serialized way of inserting course in the narrative.

DR. MICHAEL YATES - Right.

SPEAKER 2 – They start a thing and then it becomes, which is very typical of that Manga, and then it acquires a narrative meaning of its own.

DR. MICHAEL YATES - I think that is true. Right. And that is one thing that I think, narratologist in this area are starting to think about is that, when we look, when we think about this as a story world, right? Then One Piece, for example, Naruto, maybe even Superman, right?

Some of these story worlds overlap, right? We have the Marvel world and the Marvel world has a kind of similarity between the characters, right? And they can come together as a team as the Avengers for example, but when they are in their own separate story worlds, they are sort of comic, physics can be very different, right?

The comic physics of Peanuts, right? Charles Schulz is very different from the Marvel world of superheroes, right? Her,. Charlie Brown can be strong and maybe jump off of a building, but he is going to probably hit his face on the ground, right? It doesn't have the same physics that we get in Superman, right?

And so what makes those, those realms different and unique is I think what some theorists are just starting to think about, right? That there is not just one graphic comics story world. There are as many as there are artists drawing them. And I think that, as those, those works get serialized, that sense of story world integrity is increased.

And so I think it is in the artists' interest to keep serializing, to sort of gel their sense of that story world. And I think, at least my students enjoy that serial quality because they are having that, that sense of other worldly reality confirmed again and again, and it is satisfying

SPEAKER 2 - (())(82:53) common tradition, this is on being metafictional while trying the formal invitation from (())(83:04) while the Eastern Manga, they try to be hyper real in their (())(83:10).

DR. MICHAEL YATES - Yeah, that is true, that is a good point. I think artists, even from the very beginning, some of the early animators before (())(83:18), but at the same, well, even before Disney, were constantly playing with the media and showing us, yes, this is animated. This is a hand drawing a dinosaur, and this is the dinosaur hitting the camera. All right. So,

that kind of metafictional quality was there from the beginning, I think, especially with the West.

But as you said in eastern, especially Japanese comics, there is hyper reality but there's not that sense of breaking the wall. Right. You don't, you don't let them call crossover. But especially American illustrators love the crossover, love to play with a theoretical ideas of authorship and, agency. So, it is a little bit of a different thing. All right. Nice. Nice comment. Thank you.

SPEAKER 3 - As you were speaking of specific movements within (())(84:24) where you also said (())(84:26) and then you guys really need it when you are going through the movement and (())(84:32), I mean it serves the story but it also serves the colors of the tapered bottles, so, how do you make sense of that with graphic narrative?

DR. MICHAEL YATES - Right. He is very playful and he does not want us to know everything, but he is very much of the proairetic side of coding rather than the hermeneutic. He goes sequence to sequence, but he wants to maintain that suspense. And so I think those cut outs, for example, you can make your own in, in this, this work. He, he gives us a couple of pages where we can cut out the page and make our own little story world in 3D, but you can cut out the little house and put the little figures. Who are the characters in the story?

We can make our own little diorama of the novel and maybe play out our own version. And it is fascinating because nobody else does that, but it does create a break in the sequencing. It is an artificial pause, but it doesn't really jolt us back to reality. It puts us in another kind of playful spot.

We are being asked to be children in a certain sense and play with toys and enjoy the act of constructing. So, these are all kind of sign posts to the narrativity, right. It is a reminder of this is a story, this is created, but it's also a reminder that, yeah, well we always do that. That is what we do. We are always imagining, we are constantly making up stories, having memories, creating story worlds in our own lives.

So, it is a kind of meta side stepping, where there is a pause. There is a kind of peaceful pause, very playful, peaceful, innocent pause before we are brought back and we, as you said, we might not be brought back where we were left off. Jolts and time jolts and memory. And I

think Chris, where really wants us to remember that everything is made up. It is all a story that we shouldn't take things so seriously because we are not good at remembering things sometimes. Thank you.

Dr. Avishek Purai – So, could you tell us (())(87:30).

DR. MICHAEL YATES - Definitely! I think Jimmy Corrigan is a perfect example because he is a kind of, it is never clear where or when he is. We know that he is in this city that is kind of like Chicago and there is a kind of Chicago in history as the background, but he wears short trousers, very sort of 1910 sort of newsboy trousers. But he seems to be living in 20th century Chicago.

So there is this kind of an anachronism to him as a character and he sort of floats in and out between his own memories. And it is the constructed memory of his grandfather's time a hundred years before. There is this kind of overlapping of character is this anachronism and these sort of fading ins and fading outs and metalepsis constantly being sort of jolted in and out of time periods. It is very much a part of the structure of that novel.

But it is never established for sure where or when we are. And I think the author plays with that, to his benefit to keep you constantly wondering, I think is one of the beautiful parts of that in our narrative. Other of his works tend to be more fixed, but, requiring different things of you. He is very much a demanding a graphic artist.

He expects a high level of consideration and a lot of your time, he expects a lot of your time. So if you ever get into Chris Ware's studies be prepared to spend, a lot of times, it's like reading Joyce, right? The only graphic. Joyce. Right. So…

Dr. Avishek Purai – (())(89:42) Thank you one more time, it has been a really interesting session and thank you all for coming.

DR. MICHAEL YATES - Thank you.