

Screenwriting Technique & Political Narrative

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1.Stories

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.

The Modern Story Form of Screenplays

There is growing evidence from areas like cognitive and neuroscience that stories have more persuasive influence than rational arguments of traditional advertising and sales methods. 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.

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.

* * *

The application of screenplays to government (the public sector) seems to initially fall into a few major areas. One, is the application of screenplays to *political parties*. A second is the application of screenplays to *political candidates*. A third is the application of screenplays to *political causes*. 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

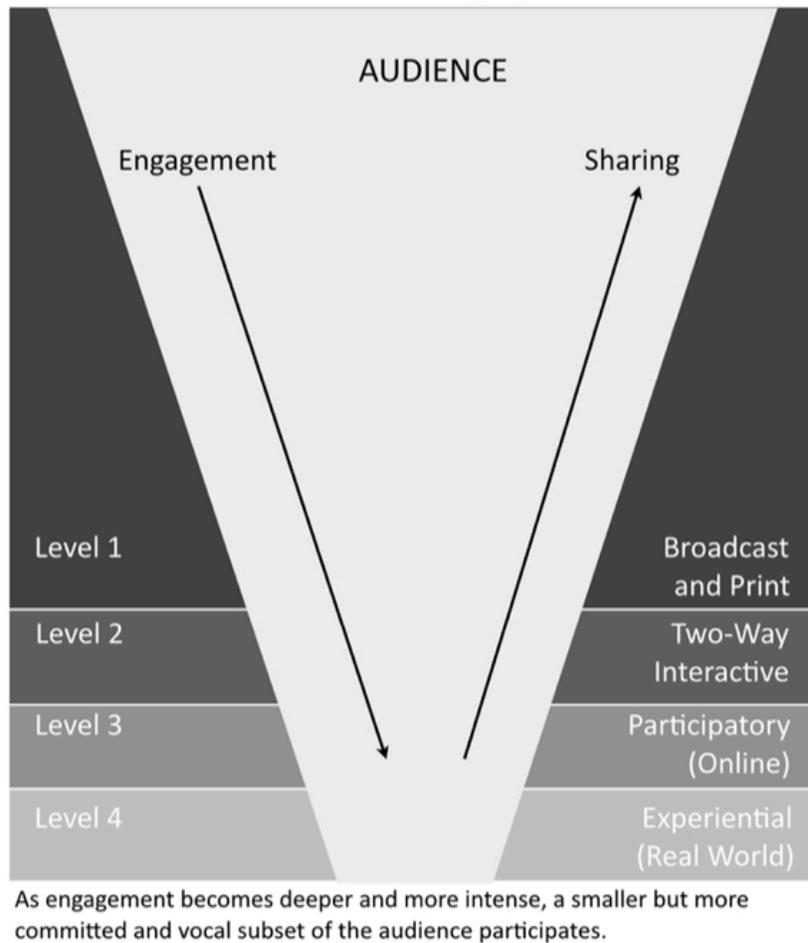
The persuasion methods of sales and advertising has traditionally been based on rational argument. However, new studies are showing that today stories are more effective at persuasion than rational argument. One of the leading academic institutions leading research in this area is the Columbia University 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. Building A Story Brand

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 MacDonald Interpretation of the Miller System

My good friend Larry MacDonald of Santa Rosa, California has developed a three-column chart that incorporates Miller's ideas into a powerful checklist system. Larry has put this into a chart and we publish the chart below so that fellow researchers in this area might benefit. Note Larry's incorporation of Miller's steps he adds to them in his chart.

Of course, the important thing is the success in the application of the Miller method and the below chart to businesses. Interestingly, this information is available somewhere as Miller's book has generated many marketing people committed to the Miller Method. Of course, their experience is important to examine for the application of the Miller method to business.

StoryBrand	Project:	Client:
The HERO	Customer/character	
The Hero wants	Singular focus, Relevant to survival	
Has a problem	Root source Singular Relatable Real	
Villain		
Internal		
External		
Philosophical		
Meets a Guide	Us	
Empathy-Connection		
Authority-Expertise		
Gives a plan		
Process		
Agreement		
Calls to action		
Direct		
Indirect		
Helps avoid failure	What is at stake? Cost of inaction. Worst case if fails to act.	
Ends in success - vision of future	How they will change, Vision of greatness, Feelings	
Character transformation	From>to	

Larry MacDonald Chart

6. 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.

7.Screenplays:
A Natural Evolution of Their Application
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.

8. Political Narratives

The word narrative is one of the most popular words of our time, meaning so many things to so many people. In its relationship to a story, it creates a type invisible environment of the story we all live in without noticing it as fish don't notice water. A story narrative in its largest form today is a grand social and cultural story for a particular culture at a particular moment in its history. In effect, the greatest form of narrative today is the political narrative. There might become a science of doing this. There might already be one.

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.

* * *

There are various types of narratives studied mainly by academics and put into practice by all types of authors or narrators. In the article "Political Narratives and Political Reality" in the *International Political Review* (July 2006) by Shaul Shenhav, one of the foremost international researchers in the area of political narratives, the author refers to the definitions of "narrative" in *WikiPedia*. I'll leave in the hypertext below since it leads off into interesting areas.

In the main definition of narrative it notes "any report of connected events, actual or imaginary, presented in a sequence of written or spoken words, or still moving images." This of course perfectly defines a screenplay for a film as we've noted in previous chapters of this book.

The real definition should stop pretty close to the definition above – the best political narratives of the future might come from a special new "genre" of screenwriters. But the definition in

Wikipedia goes on and on into a vast landscape of other narratives of society and culture. For example:

“Wikipedia on Narrative notes 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 or both. The word derives from the Latin verb *narrare*, “to tell,” which is derived from the adjective *gnarus*, “knowing” or “skilled.”

Narrative can be organized in a number of thematic or formal categories: [non-fiction](#) (such as definitively including creative non- [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

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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.

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."

9.Characteristics & Benefits of Political Narratives

One of the greatest observers of political narratives on an international scale is the 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

He observes major characteristics of Political Narratives. The characteristics relate much to mythology and the world of film. D'Adamo lists the seven characteristics of leading Political Narratives as the seven below:

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 Political Narratives are in the above characteristics. Whether the above are a final list or simply a beginning is open to debate. It seems to be a pretty worthy 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

The benefits of Political Narratives are always two-way streets. We've been discussing them in connection to providing narratives for political power over a population. However, the population also receives a great benefit from having a Political Narrative or grand story of the time one might say, for a leading Political Narrative of the time is the greatest story of the culture at this time.

As D'Adamo notes, in a quickly changing world, 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 Today's News to Political Narrative

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 are 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.”

Characteristics & Benefits of Political Narratives

Certainly, the characteristics and benefits 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 write his scripts from and about DC and not Hollywood. The scripts will not be produced as movies but adopted by political candidates and parties, causes and ballot issues. There might become a new type of author in America. A combination of Charles Dickens, Joe Conrad, Stephen King and Thomas Clancy writing the great Political Narratives of the time. These have close elements to screenplays and plays, yet they are different. Depending more on the meaning of words and literary devices within them.

The true weapons of political narratives are really literary devices which have proven their effectiveness over thousands of years. This is why they have obtained the status as “literary devices.” They are not hiding but very open for discovery and exploration in countless reference books and guides. We have consolidated these into a list of devices in the next chapter.

A Short 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 (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.”

10. Literary Devices & 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 literary devices to Political Narratives.

Hot & 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.

Hot & 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*.

Literary Devices

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*. A list of the leading literary devices are briefly discussed below. Again, this is meant to start a discussion rather than end it. I don’t suggest the below list is complete. Only a start at a listing of literary devices to be employed in Political Narratives.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.”

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

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.”

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.” One thing conceived as representing another; a symbol.

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.

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.

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.

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. Some synonyms are mockery, ridicule, derision 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.

11.Symbolism & Political Narrative (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 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.

(Our Symbolism Chart for Writing Symbolic Screenplays Here)

12. Structuring A New Narrative Form Screenplay / Novel / Poetry / Play

(Notes ... chapter in progress)

A hybrid of screenplay, poem and novel form. 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.

(Chart here ... using symbolism chart and new ideas to create a new template structure for writing Political Scripts)

(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.)

Form of new genre.

Elements of the new genre.

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 current book is a mix-up of various authors and ideas. Arranged in a chapter structure. There is not as much argument in this book as presentation of various ideas and thoughts. The reader will hopefully read through the above like someone going through a buffet.

Picking things they want and leaving others.

This is what this collection of words attempt to do it seems to me.

The greatest compliment is not agreement with a story but rather participation in creating a story. This seems to be the greatest element in powerful Political Narratives.

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Storytelling That Moves People

By Robert McKee and Bronwyn Fryer

Harvard Business Review

<https://hbr.org/2003/06/storytelling-that-moves-people>

The Business of Story

Exclusive Interview with Robert McKee

http://www.nsaspeaker-magazine.org/nsaspeaker/july_august_2013?pg=14#pg14

Screenwriting for Executives

Video Interview with Robert McKee

Big Think

<https://bigthink.com/videos/screenwriting-for-executives>

Examples of StoryNomics in Action

<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

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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.

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.