

VISUAL  
LITERARY CRITICISM

on  
'The Arrival'  
by Shaun Tan

VALIA RASSA



COMMENTARY  
CRITICAL READING  
THEORIES



# COMMENTARY

*Words have a remarkable magnetic pull on our attention, and how we interpret attendant images: in their absence, an image can often have more conceptual space around it, and invite a more lingering attention from a reader who might otherwise reach for the nearest convenient caption, and let that rule their imagination.*  
Shaun Tan

## Site

*The Arrival* is a migrant story told as a series of wordless images that might seem to come from a long forgotten time. A man leaves his wife and child in an impoverished town, seeking better prospects in an unknown country on the other side of a vast ocean. He eventually finds himself in a bewildering city of foreign customs, peculiar animals, curious floating objects and indecipherable languages. With nothing more than a suitcase and a handful of currency, the immigrant must find a place to live, food to eat and some kind of gainful employment. He is helped along the way by sympathetic strangers, each carrying their own unspoken history: stories of struggle and survival in a world of incomprehensible violence, upheaval and hope.

*The Arrival*, by Shaun Tan, is a graphic novel that deals with the theme of migrant experience, a story about somebody leaving their home to find a new life in an unseen country, where even the most basic details of ordinary life are strange, confronting or confusing – not to mention beyond the grasp of language. The author deals with common problems faced by migrants, notions of belonging, particularly the finding and losing of it, grappling with language difficulties, homesickness, poverty, loss of social status and recognizable qualifications, separation from family, uprooting, strangeness, dislocation, complexity and so on.

In a graphic novel, there is far more emphasis on continuity between multiple frames, it is actually closer in many ways to filmmaking than book illustration. The author has chosen this certain technique, a long fragmented visual sequence without any words that best captures a certain feeling of uncertainty and discovery, to engage with his topic. He used graphic pencil on cartridge paper to create a series of sepia-toned drawings.

He combines realistic reference images of people and objects into a wholly imaginary world. So, it is not pure fantasy, although he creates a fictional place unfamiliar to readers of any age or background, illustrating strange lands, birds 'bird-like', trees 'tree-like', people dressed strangely, confounding apartment fixtures, peculiar street activities. Peculiar creatures emerge from pots and bowls, floating lights drift inquisitively along streets, doors and cupboards conceal their contents, and all around are notices that beckon, invite or warn in loud, indecipherable alphabets.

The experience of immigrants draws an interesting parallel with the creative and critical way of looking. There is a similar kind of research for meaning, sense and identity in an environment that can be alternatively transparent and opaque, sensible and confounding, but always open to re-assessment. The power of storytelling invites us to walk in other people's shoes, or contemplate our own shoes also, as possible strangers in our strange land.

## Site-writing

My site-writing project is actualized in a second book, *Critical Reading*, which basically consists of diagrams and constitutes a visual version of literary criticism raising critical questions in terms of both storytelling and critic storytelling.

The graphic novel is a literature work devoid of words and its images are confronted in a linguistic manner, treated as words. This novel is seen as a fictional story that reveals its hidden meaning during the

process of reading. The absence of any written description plants the reader more firmly in the shoes of an immigrant character. There is no guidance as to how the images might be interpreted, and we must ourselves search for meaning and seek familiarity in a world where such things are either scarce or concealed. The power of this kind of silent narrative resides not only in removing the distraction of words, but rather slowing down the reader in places so that he/she might mediate on each small object and action, as well as reflect in many different ways on the story as a whole.

According to Saussure, language is a sign-system and the elements of language acquire meaning not as a result of some connection between words and things, but only as parts of a system of relations. Structuralism is concerned with systems which do not involve 'signs' as such, but which can be treated in the same way as sign-systems (Selden 2005: 64). The structure of the story of *The Arrival* is examined both conceptually and in a formalist manner.

There is something intriguing in the pace at which a reader pages through *The Arrival*, which raises the question of 'how is the pace of narrative controlled?', especially when there are no words. Interested in its rhythmic structure, and in excess of rhythm, and the shape of this story, I have initially analysed this type of silent narrative and conducted multiple readings in order to understand the logic and the tools of the author. Exploiting the author's material and tools, the aim of this project is to explore the potentiality of the critical act not writing about the object, but writing as the object. This type of writing, as Jane Rendell argues, allows a certain creativity to intervene in the critical act as the critic comes to understand and interpret the work by remarking it on his/her own terms (Rendell 2010: 7).

Having critical theories accompanying me during this critical reading process, I contemplated the role of the reader as co-creator and the interplay of reader and writer in the joint production of meaning. One of the most conspicuous aspects of contemporary literary criticism is an emphasis upon reader and the act of reading. There are various debates over the identity of 'the' reader and many theorists explain and describe their work by defining the particular sense of the 'ideal reader' for them. For instance, for the Structuralists, the ideal reader is the one equipped with the knowledge of all the necessary literary convention and capable of decoding the artwork, surpassing any sort of limitation. Correspondingly, for Umberto Eco, the ideal reader (*lettore modello*), who shares with the writer the same codes of the creation of the text and cooperates with the writer in the production of the meaning, is a textual construction (Eco 1979: 7,11).

Catherine Belsey's reflection on the 'Critical Practice' may provide a better account of the term critical reading. Considering criticism as a practice which produces knowledge, she says: 'While the text as it really is will be the final object of critical knowledge, it is never given but progressively discovered. In producing a knowledge of the text, criticism actively transforms what is given. It is not a process of recognition of the truth, but work to produce meaning. Possibilities of meaning are not discovered by transcendent geniuses who refuse the obvious reading: on the contrary, they circulate between text, ideology and readers. Thus, author and reader (even when these are conceived as ideal types created by the formal strategies of the text) no longer present the symmetrical poles of intersubjective process understood as communication. Instead, critical practice is seen as a process of releasing the positions from which the text is intelligible. Liberated from the fixity of the communication model, the text is available for production in the process of reading' (Belsey 2002: 139). Therefore, critical reading aims to depict a substantial stage (seen either as the interpretive process of the ideal reader or the productive reading of the critic) of the critical practice.

Motivated by the fragmented visual sequence, the initial intention was to experiment with the order of these fragments/images and question the shape of the narrative. This demanded a thorough understanding of the original narrative and structure of the book.

In order to question the shape of the narrative, I needed to negate the linearity of its character, which pre-existed thanks to the physicality of the book. I dismantled the book and started to reconfigure the order of its fragments and make my own taxonomies (the characters of the story, the places, the practice of space,

the functions, the encounters of our hero, the architecture of the fictional setting, whatever instinctively excites each reader).

I found myself in consistent dialogue with the author. A visual of the whole narrative was prevailing in my head, and was dismissed from my mind only when it took the form of a map as concrete image.

**The title**, the only textual element of the text, gave rise to this critical process. Looking up the 'arrival', one can easily direct his perception in the stream either of space, or subject or journey towards an accomplishment. Each definition could bring the story to a different end. For example, taking the 'arrival' as the act of arriving at a certain place would close the story at the point in which our hero arrives at the new world, that is in the middle of the second chapter.

**[Blue map]** Throughout the plot, the hero comes across three strangers, each one recounting his own short story. These three stories are extracted from the main narrative and can now be read in parallel, so the reader can detect various similarities and comment on the role of them or how the life of these characters overlaps in depth of time and space.

**[Pink map]** Another layer of reading identifies the role of the layouts. The layouts are given name after their use and the rhythm of actions they illustrate.

**[Pattern map]** A significant point is the discovery of a pattern, that is, a certain sequence of three layouts that is repeated at the end of the story. This calls into question the linearity of the narrative. Can the narrative be seen as circular given the role of the pattern? If the story starts and closes in the same way, what has changed and what has remained unaffected? How is the transformation defined? The Mobius strip is a form that derives from the branch of mathematics called Topology. Topology in general studies these properties of geometric forms that remain invariant when certain transformations take place.

Joseph Campbell, developing the work of Vladimir Propp, detected a common structure running through hero myths and stories from around the world. According to his theory, "the hero's journey" forms a circle and the hero starts from the known place, proceeds to an unknown place and always must return to the known place. Following Campbell's theory (Campbell, 1968), it is examined whether the circle of Campbell closes in the story of Shaun Tan. The hero never returns to his home literally but, in a conceptual level, through this journey the hero arrives at reconciliation with the unknown place and rediscovers his own values, which have now taken a different form.

**[Deconstruction map]** This last diagram renders the function of restatement in the course of the plot. The story ends by bringing to the fore the condition of the native land. None transformation has occurred at the known place. The oppressive threat that forced our hero to uprooting is still existent. The known place can be considered as unknown now, due to the presence of the threat, and correspondingly the new world as the provider of the intimacy that the hero had lost. A reverse of the known and the unknown place eliminates the circle and questions whether the main character is actually a hero, or a traitor, who evades and lets the problem unresolved. The circle of this criticism closes with the binary opposition 'arrival-departure' in relation to the notion of immigration.

**[Theory pamphlet]** This constitutes a theoretical base, which accompanied and inspired me during this critical process. For this pamphlet, some of the layouts drawn by the analysis of *The Arrival* have been used, in order to form a correspondence between a visual and a written criticism. The theories are to be combined in a conceptual way in order to form the intended argument of the critic. It should be mentioned though that the reader of this project does not have to be aware of this theoretical background, necessarily, in order to follow the *Critical reading*.



## **Bibliography**

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Campbell, J. (1968) *The hero with a thousand faces* (2nd ed., Bollingen series; 17). Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Eco, Umberto (1979) *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts*, ed. Thomas Sebeok, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979.

Rendell, J. (2010). *Site-writing: The architecture of art criticism*. London: I.B. Tauris.

Selden, R., Widdowson, Peter, & Brooker, Peter. (2005) *A reader's guide to contemporary literary theory* (5th ed.). Harlow: Pearson Longman.

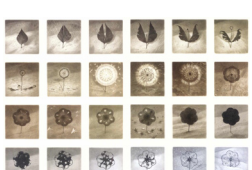
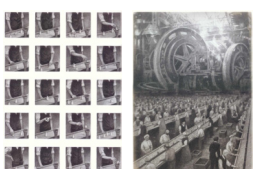
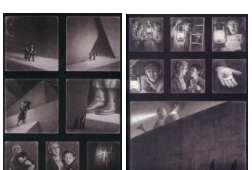
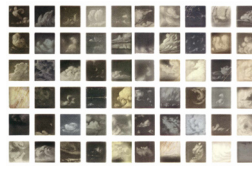


# CRITICAL READING











arrival

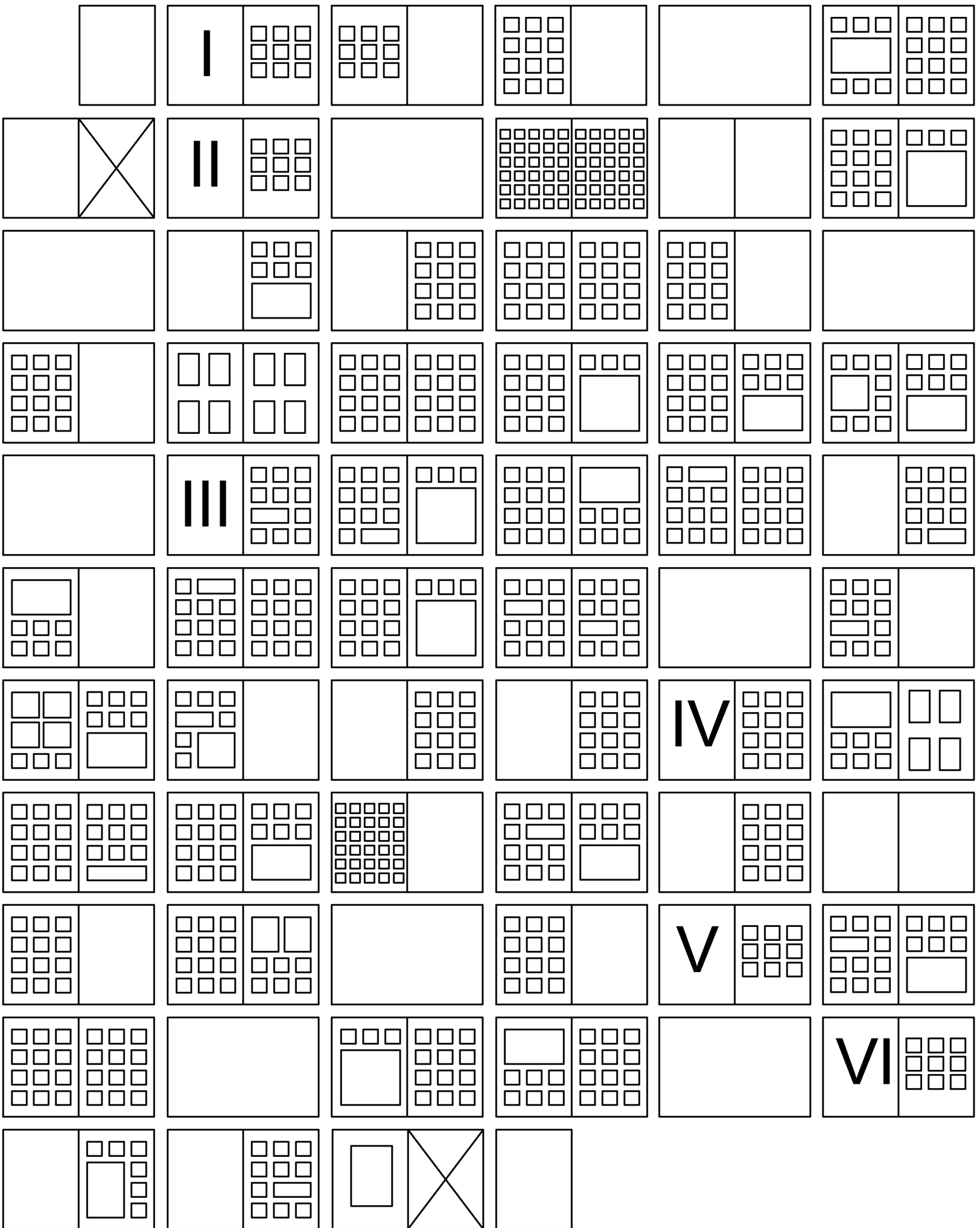
n 1: accomplishment of an objective [syn: arrival, reaching]

2: the act of arriving at a certain place; "they awaited her arrival"

3: someone who arrives (or has arrived) [syn: arrival, arriver, comer]







a)



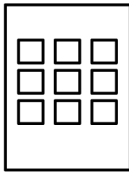
moment/ topography  
used as a method for situating sth/sb

b)



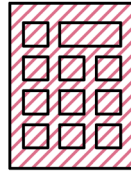
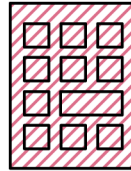
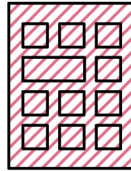
panorama

c)



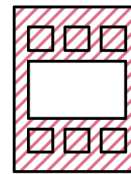
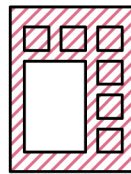
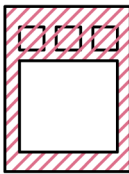
distinct, meaningful objects,  
usually follows an (a)

d)



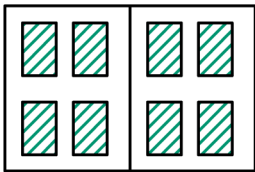
fast motion,  
closer to film-making

e)



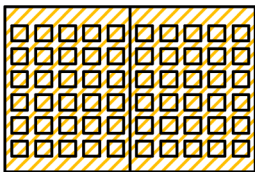
slow motion/ pauses

f)



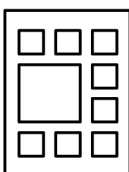
staccato,  
to appose alternative practices of space

g)

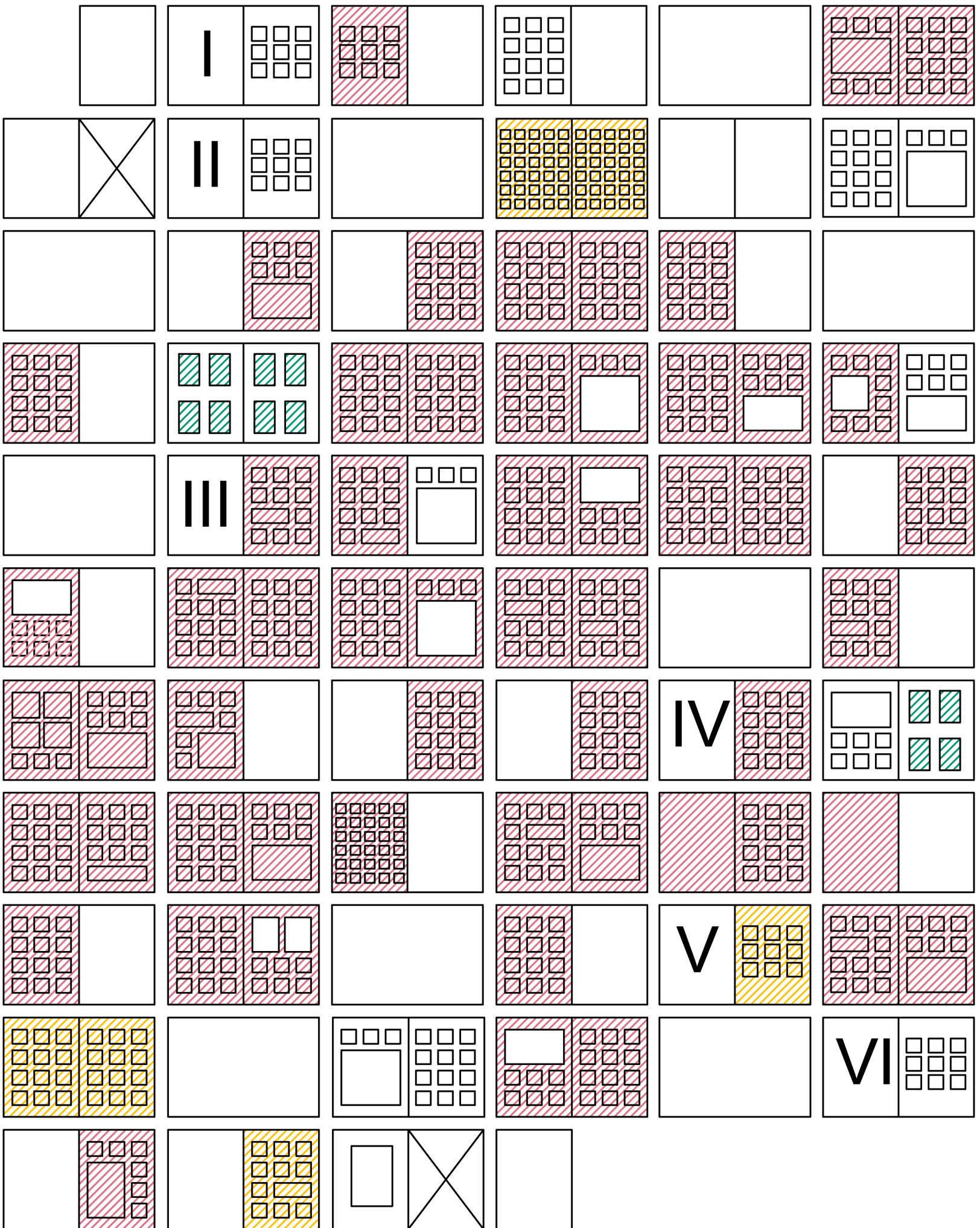


repetitive motifs,  
to illustrate the passing of time

h)



irregular motion of the eye





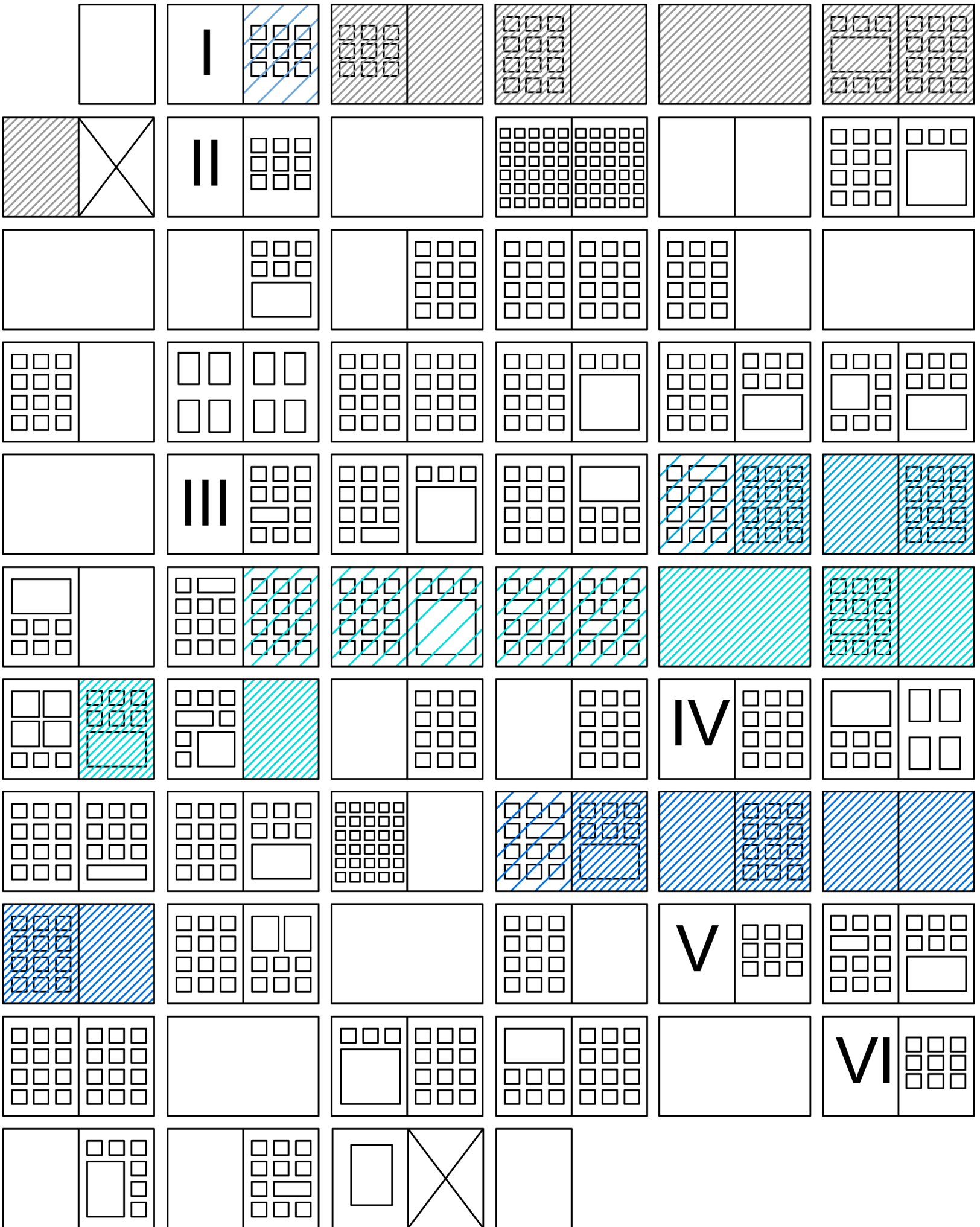
The 3 stories (encounters with strangers) are extracted from the main narrative and read in parallel.

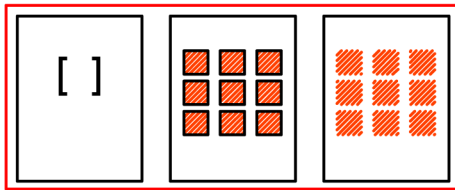
- the main narrative remained unaffected
- no causal relationship
- their role is to strengthen the background of our hero and the cause of the uprooting.



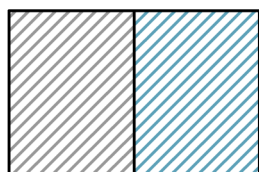
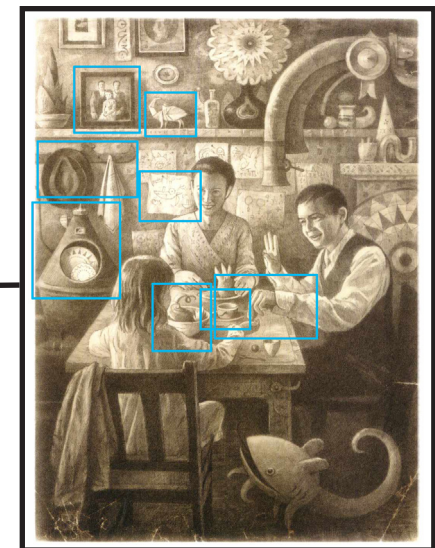
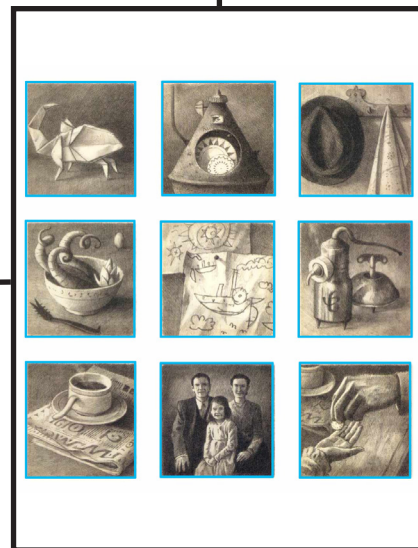
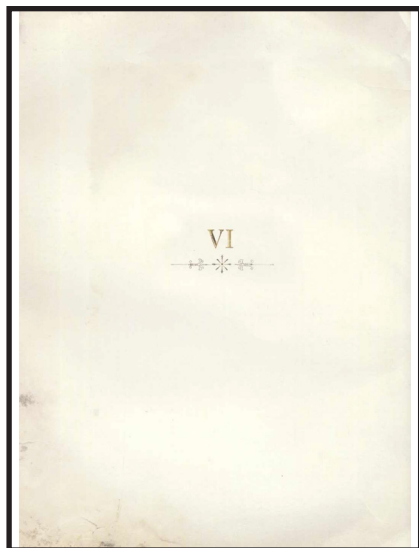
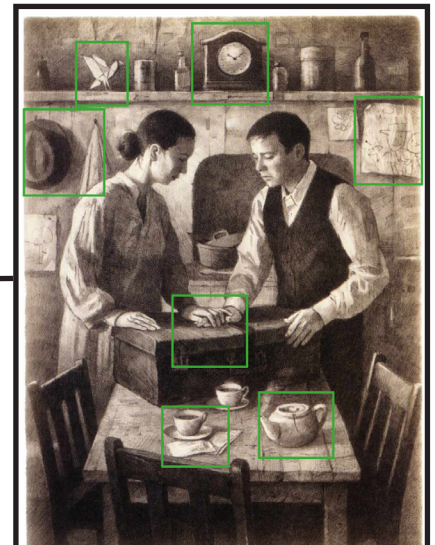
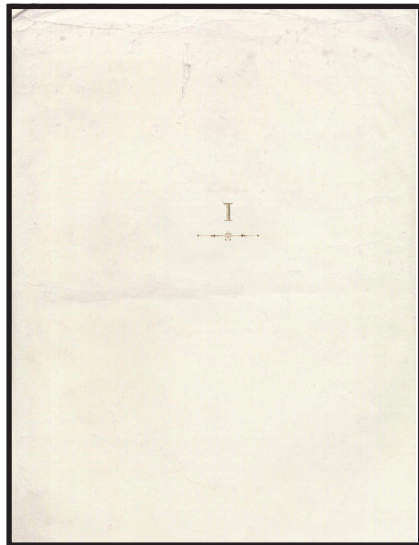
In literary criticism, “mise en abyme” is a type of frame story, in which the main narrative can be used to encapsulate some aspect of the framing story. The term is used in deconstruction and deconstructive literary criticism as a paradigm of the intertextual nature of language -that is, of the way language never quite reaches the foundation of reality because it refers in a frame-within-a-frame way to other language, which refers to other language etc.







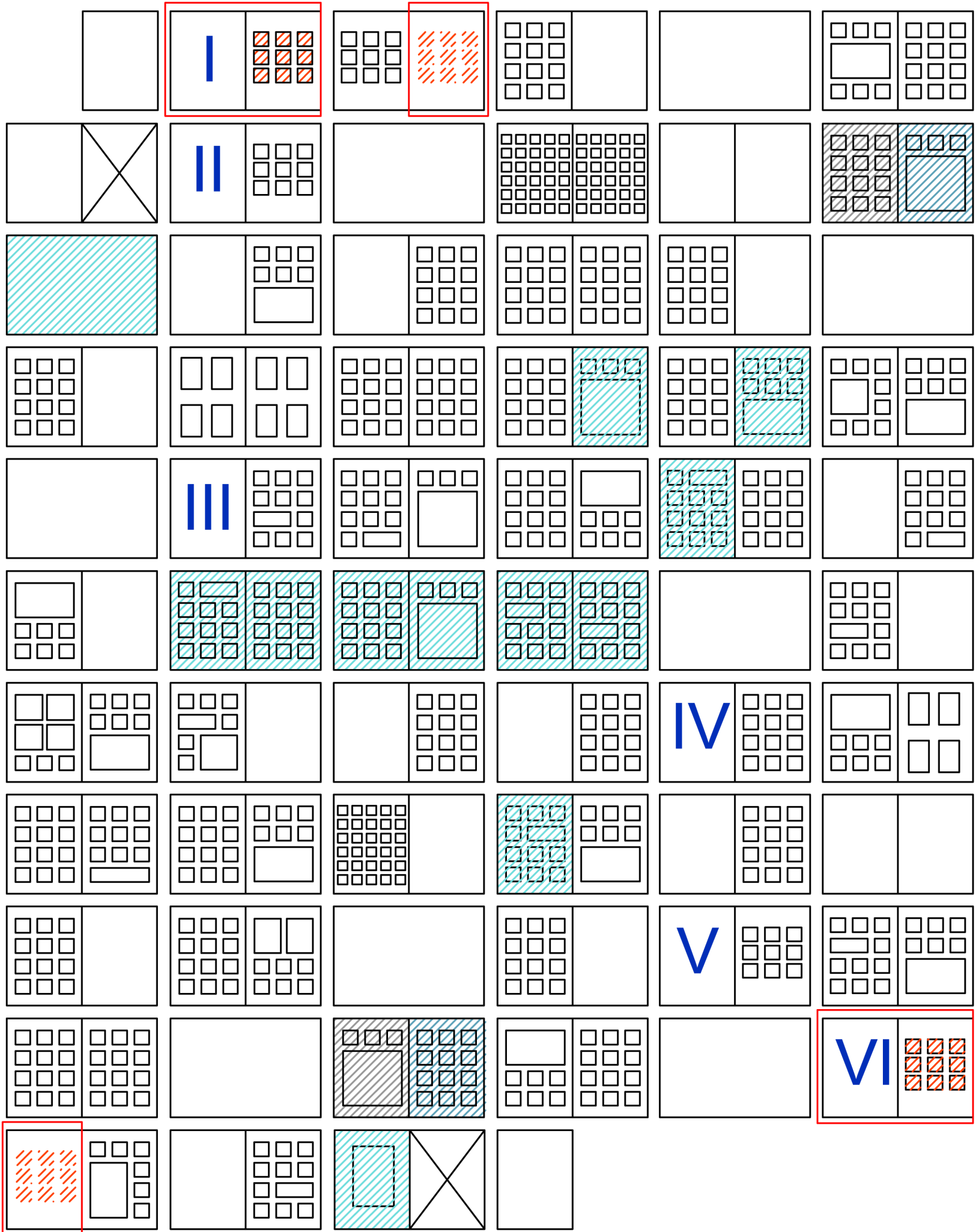
RETURN PATTERN



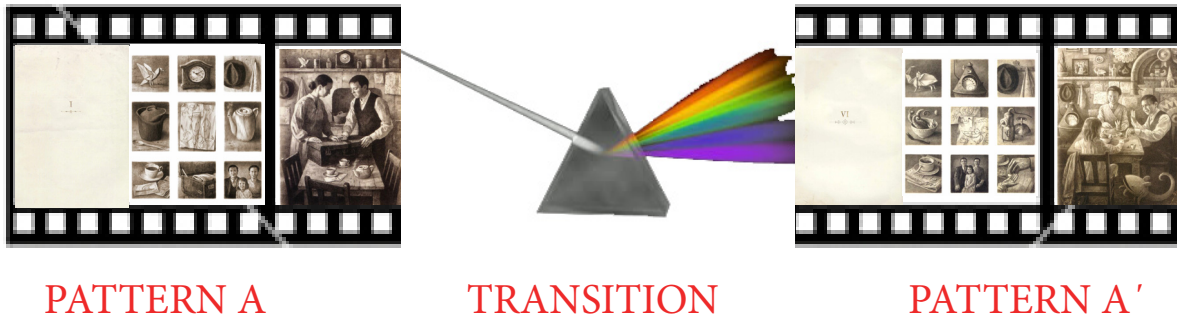
memory- foreshadow



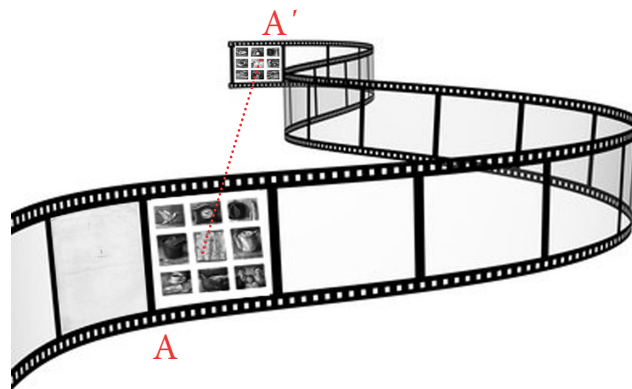
encounters (new world, room, pet, strangers)



# LINEAR NARRATIVE

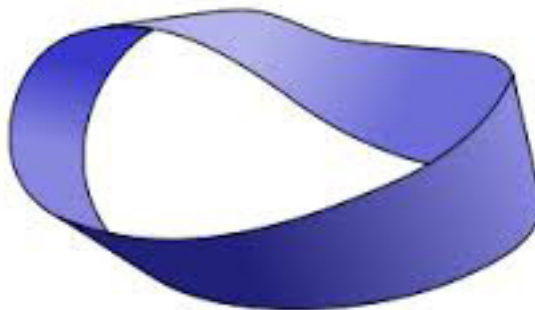


# CIRCULAR NARRATIVE

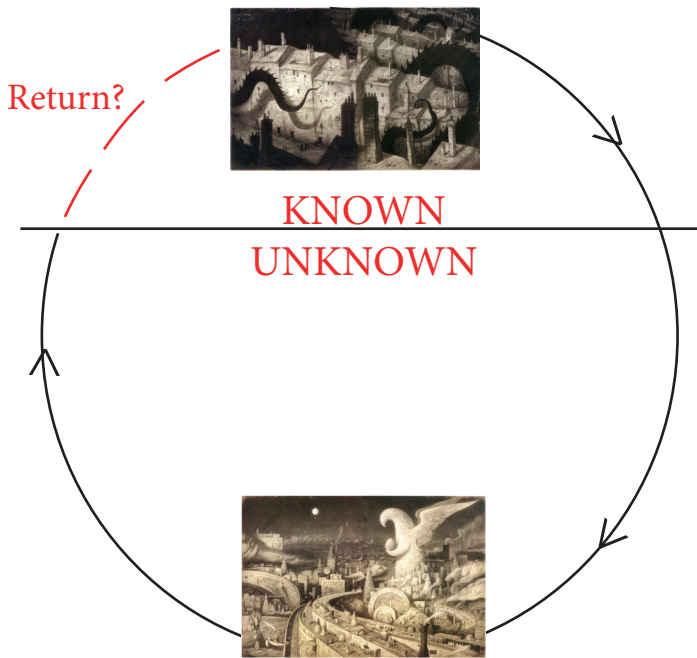
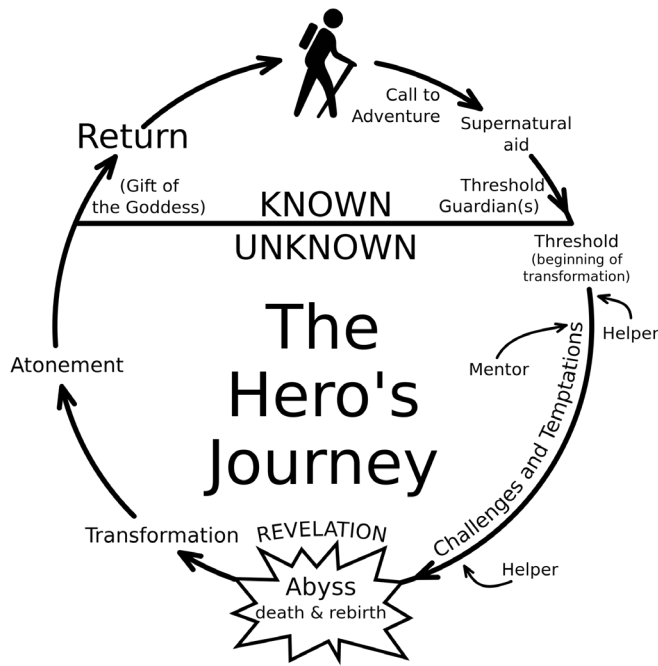


# 3D NARRATIVE

MOBIUS STRIP







Joseph Campbell, working in narratology and comparative mythology, discovered common patterns existing beneath the narrative elements of hero myths and stories of any origin. The concept of monomyth refers to the theory that sees all mythic narratives as variations of a single story. Based on this common structure, Joseph Campbell in his book 'The hero with a Thousand Faces' describes the hero's journey in 17 stages. Some key points are mentioned below.

#### THE ORDINARY WORLD

Heroes exist in a world that is considered ordinary

#### THE CALL TO ADVENTURE

For heroes to begin their journeys, they must be called away from the ordinary world. Heroes must be removed from their typical environment. Most heroes show a reluctance to leave their home, their friends, and their life to journey on a quest. But in the end they accept their destiny.

The new world the hero is forced into is much different than the old one. Campbell describes this new world as a "fateful region of both treasure and danger...a distant land, a forest, a kingdom underground, beneath the waves, or above the sky, a secret island, lofty mountaintop, or profound dream state...a place of strangely fluid and polymorphous beings, unimaginable torments, superhuman deeds, and impossible delight". Regardless of the details, the new world is sure to be filled with adventure.

#### ENTERING THE UNKNOWN

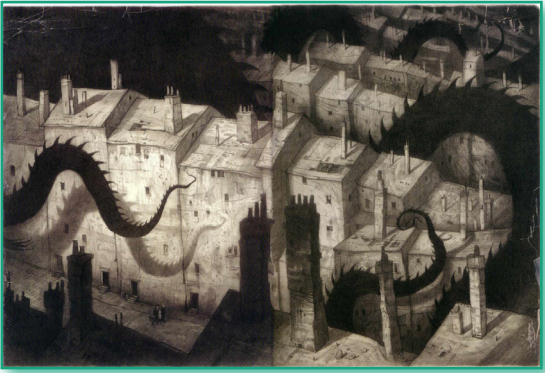
As soon as they arrive, the heroes enter a world they have never experienced before. Filled with supernatural creatures, breathtaking sights, and the constant threat of death, this outside world has its own rules. The heroes learn how to respect these rules as their endurance, strength, and mettle are tested time and time again. Finally, it is all about the journey itself and not the end of it.

#### ALLIES/HELPERS/ TESTS

The heroes progress through a series of tests, a set of obstacles that make them stronger, REWARD AND THE JOURNEY HOME

After the heroes complete the Supreme Ordeal and have the reward firmly in hand, all that is left is for them to return home.

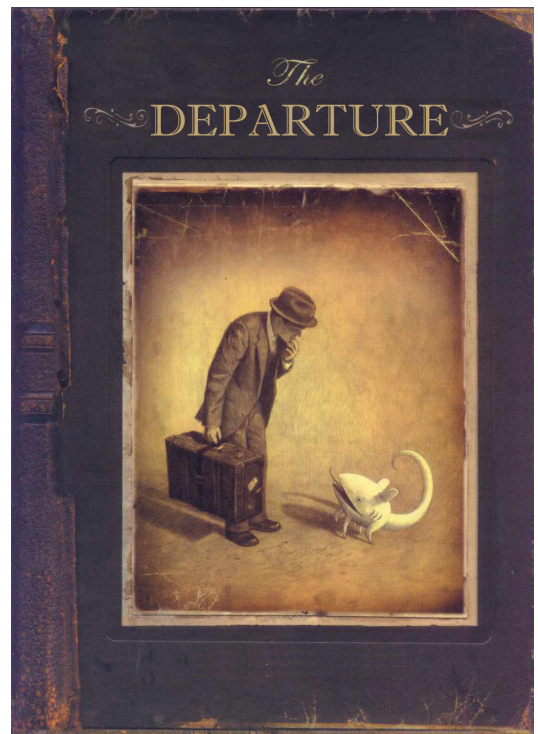
Success on the heroes' quest is life-changing, for them and often for many others. By achieving victory, they have changed or preserved their original world.

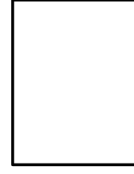
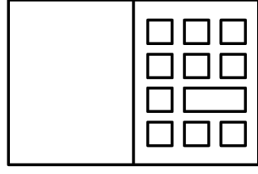
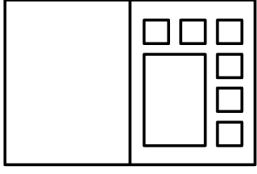
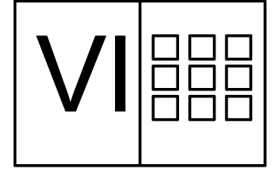
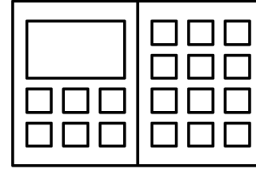
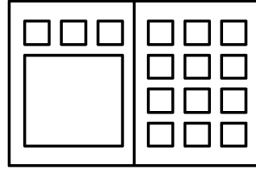
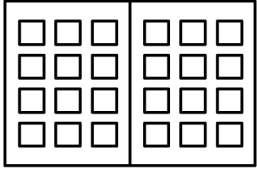
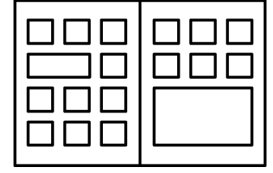
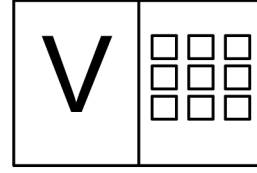
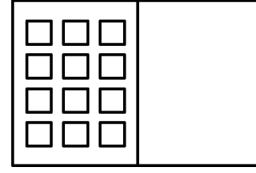
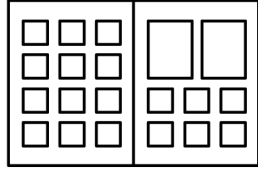
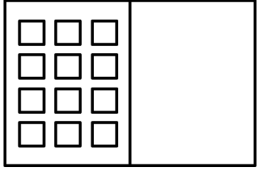
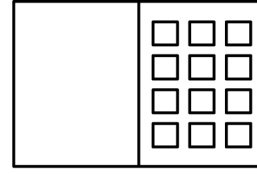
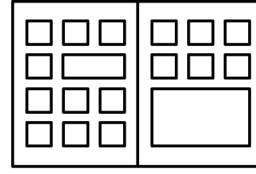
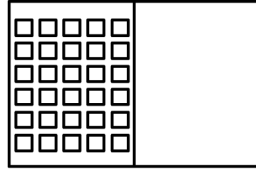
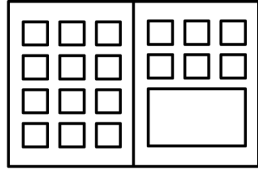
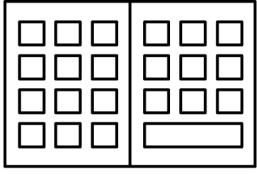
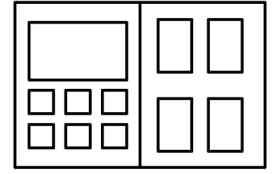
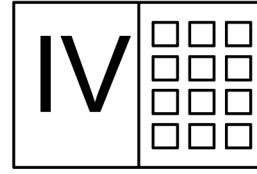
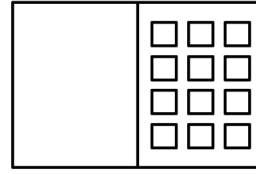
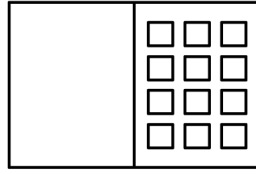
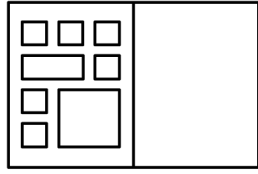
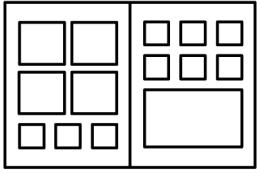
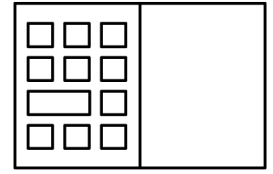
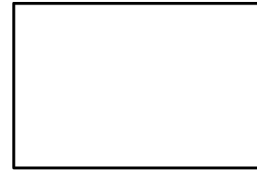
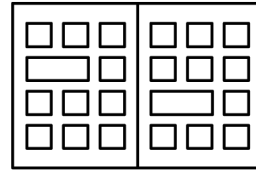
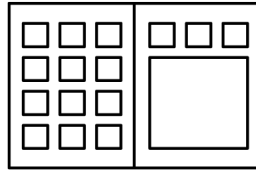
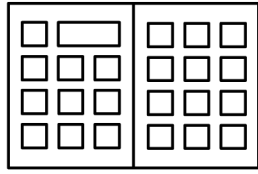
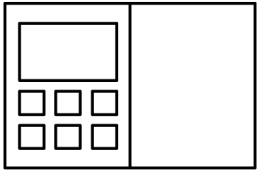
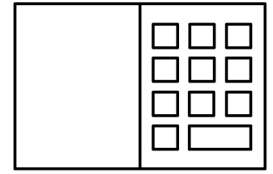
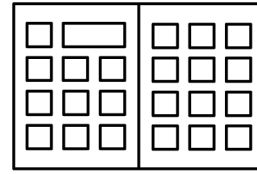
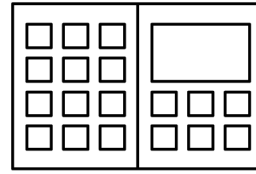
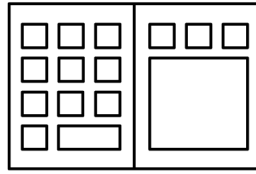
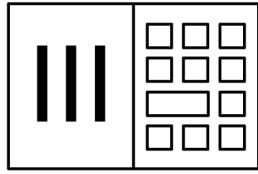
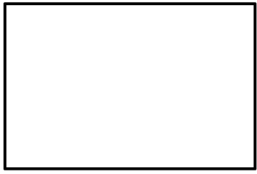
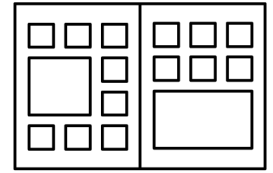
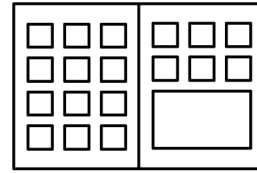
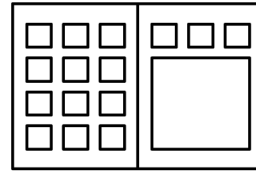
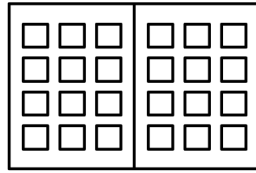
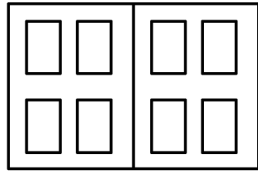
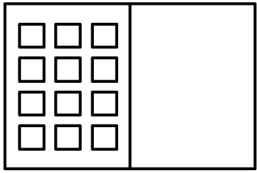
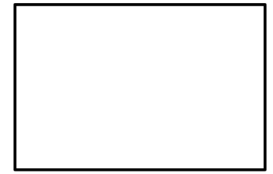
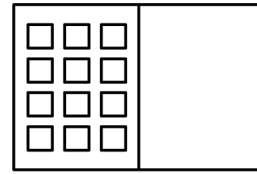
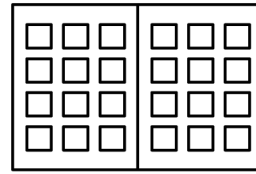
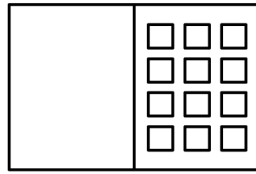
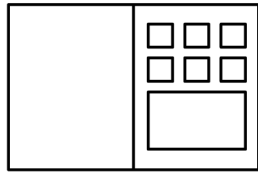
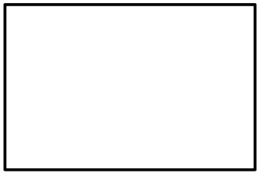
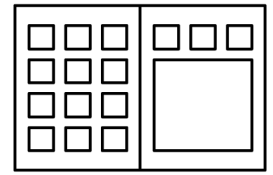
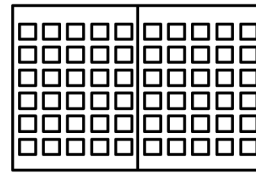
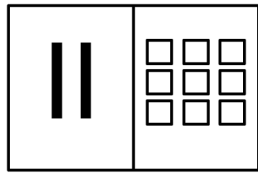
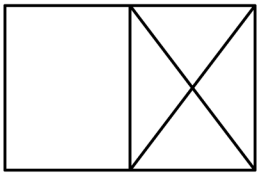
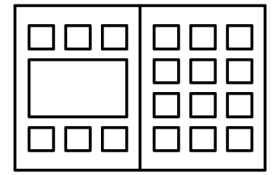
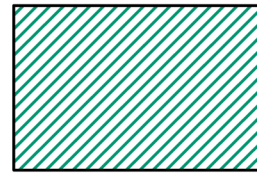
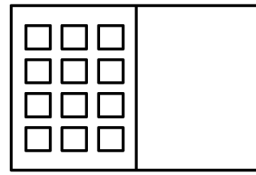
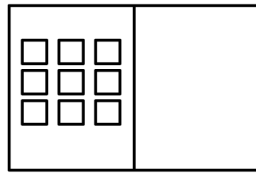
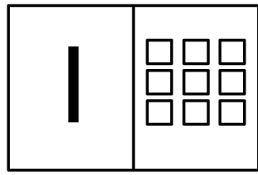
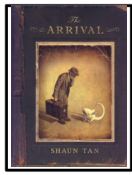


UNKNOWN



KNOWN







# THEORIES









Reading is not a matter of personal values, Catherine Belsey argues. The concern of Critical Practice is the reading process. Catherine Belsey's interest is in the transformation brought about in our sense of what a text is as well as what reading is, by the theories developed in France after the Second World War on the basis of the linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure. Expressive realism, the traditional way of understanding the text as a means of access to the author's view of life, has been challenged by post-Saussurean work on language, which constituted evidence that there was a strong sense in the critical institution of its inadequacy. Post-Saussurean theory starts from an analysis of language, proposing that language is not transparent, not merely the medium in which autonomous individuals transmit messages to each other about independently constituted world of things. On the contrary, it is language which offers the possibility of constructing a world of distinct individuals and things, and of differentiating between them. The transparency of language is an illusion, thus the notion of a text which tells a (or the) truth, as perceived by an individual subject (the author), whose insights are the source of the text's single and authoritative meaning, no longer stands.

One of the most important assaults of expressive realism was the work of the American New Critics in the 1940-50s which, arguing that the quest for the author's intentions had nothing to do with literary criticism, begot a liberation from the authoritarianism of the expressive theory. Subsequently, the assertion of the role of the reader in relation to the literary work comes to the fore. At its best, interest in the reader is entirely liberating, a rejection of authorial tyranny on favor of the participation of readers in the production of a plurality of meaning; at its worst, reader-theory merely constructs a new authority-figure as guarantor of a single meaning, a timeless, transcendent, highly trained model reader who cannot be wrong.

I



Relying on Saussure's linguistic theory, literature structuralism flourished in the 60s. Saussure rejected the idea that language is a word-heap gradually accumulated over time and that its primary function is to refer to things in the world. Language is a sign-system, that is, words are not symbols which correspond to referents, but rather are 'signs', which are made up of two parts: a mark, either written or spoken, the signifier, and a concept, what is 'thought' when the mark is made, the signified. The elements of language acquire meaning not as a result of some connection between words and things, but only as parts of a system of relation. Structuralism is concerned with systems which do not involve 'signs' as such, but which can be treated in the same way as sign-systems.

Structural narratology started in 1928 with the publication of Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of Fairy Tales*. Propp claimed that despite apparent differences, all stories follow similar actions and share similar characters. He believes there are fixed and changing elements in the stories. Names and traits may change, but the actions remain the same. Propp categorizes his findings in four formulas: fixed elements, 31 functions, and 7 spheres of action. A function is the basic unit of the narrative 'language' and refers to the significant actions which form the narrative. These follow a logical sequence, and although no tale includes them all, in every tale the functions always remain in sequence. The last group of functions is as follows:

- 25 A difficult task is proposed to the hero.
- 26 The task is resolved.
- 27 The hero is recognized.
- 28 The false hero or villain is exposed.
- 29 The false hero is given a new appearance.
- 30 The villain is punished.
- 31 The hero is married and ascends the throne.

Claude Lévi-Strauss, the structuralist anthropologist, analyses the myth in a structuralist manner. He calls the units of myth 'mythemes' (compare phonemes and morphemes in linguistics) which are organized in binary oppositions like the basic linguistic units. Lévi-Strauss is not interested in the narrative sequence, but the structural pattern which gives the myth its meaning. The meaning of every mytheme depends on the interaction and order of the units within the story and the meaning of the mytheme is formed based on this structural model. He believes that this linguistic model will uncover the basic structure of the human mind- the structure which governs the way human beings shape all their institutions, artefacts and forms of knowledge.

A. J. Greimas, in his *Sémantique Structurale* (1966), offers an elegant stream-lining of Propp's theory. While Propp focused on a single genre, Greimas aims to arrive at the universal 'grammar' of narrative by applying to it a semantic analysis of sentence structure. In place of Propp's seven 'spheres of action' he proposes three pairs of binary oppositions which include all six roles (actants) he requires:

Subject/Object, Sender/Receiver,  
Helper/Opponent

The pairs describe three basic patterns which perhaps recur in all narrative:

- 1 Desire, search, or aim (subject/object).
- 2 Communication (sender/receiver).
- 3 Auxiliary support or hindrance (helper/opponent).

In this respect Greimas is more truly 'structuralist' than the Russian Formalist Propp, in that the former thinks in terms of relations between entities rather than of the character of entities in themselves. In order to account for the various narrative sequences which are possible he reduces Propp's thirty-one functions to twenty, and groups them into three structures (syntagms): 'contractual', 'performative' and 'disjunctive'.

The work of Tzvetan Todorov is a summation of Propp, Greimas and others. All the syntactic rules of language are restated in their narrative guise – rules of agency, predication, adjectival and verbal functions, mood and aspect, and so on. The minimal unit of narrative is the 'proposition', which can be either an 'agent' (e.g. a person) or a 'predicate' (e.g. an action). Finally a succession of sequences forms a text. The sequences may be organized in a variety of ways, by embedding (story within a story, digression, etc.), by linking (a string of sequences), or by alternation (interlacing of sequences), or by a mixture of these.

Such studies aim to define the general principles of literary structure and not to provide interpretations of individual texts. Raman Selden, in his book "An Introduction to Contemporary Literary Theory" believes that structuralism is necessarily static and anti-history. They do not believe in the starting point and that of receiving point to its interpretation (Selden 1989, Chapter4).

Structuralists attack the idea that language is an instrument for reflecting a pre-existent reality or for expressing a human intention. They believe that 'subjects' are produced by linguistic structures which are 'always already' in place. Within structuralism of codes' discovery, there are rules and systems that underlie all cultural and social activities of human being. Structuralists apply the principles of archeology and geology as their models and believe that what is observed at the surface is merely a small part of the iceberg. The real justification of the levels can be obtained only through digging and contemplation in levels. It can be argued that all sciences are structural in this regard. Reading beneath the lines is exactly the structuralists' interpretation of the text.

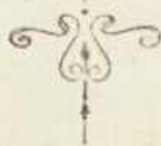
The poststructuralist critics of structuralism introduce the concept of the 'speaking subject' or the 'subject in process'. Instead of viewing language as an impersonal system, they regard it as always articulated with other systems and especially with subjective processes. This conception of language-in-use is summed up in the term 'discourse'.

Ronald Barthes, in his short essay 'The Death of the Author' (1968), rejects the traditional view that the author is the origin of the text, the source of its meaning, and the only authority for interpretation. His author is stripped of all metaphysical status and reduced to a location (a crossroad), where language, that infinite storehouse of citations, repetitions, echoes and references, crosses and recrosses. The reader is thus free to enter the text from any direction, to connect the text with systems of meaning and ignore the author's 'intention'. (Selden 1989, p.150)





II





Reader-response and reception theories have arisen since the late 1960s, mainly in Germany and the United States. Reader-response and reception theory, taken together, are concerned with how people other than the author or creator contribute to the meaning and import of a work of art. In literary matters they are concerned with the practice of making meaning on the part of a reader. If we think widely about reception, myriad receivers affect the significance of cultural works: readers, viewers, literary agents, gallery owners, film companies, critics, publishers and so on. As a general theory of appropriation of works of art by all forces involved in their transmission and reception, reader-response and reception theory have connections with many theoretical approaches, such as semiotics, phenomenology, post-structuralism, psychoanalysis, etc.

Theory response and reception theory consist versions of phenomenology basically, since they both originate from the way that the phenomenological reality is projected in the conscience either of an individual subject or of a collection of subjects –even though they have been mixed with different theoretical approaches (post-structuralist consideration of Roland Barthes, the Marxist criticism of Tony Bennet and Terry Eagleton, the feminist aesthetic view of Judith Fetterley, the deconstruction of Jacques Derrida and of Paul de Man). The subject intellectual movement of dealing with the reader, was established at the university of Constance, late 1960, with its main representatives Hans Robert Jauss and Wolfgang Iser, whose ideas consist an evolution of Edmund Husserl's and Martin Heidegger's thinking. It finally evolved as a movement of the last decades of the 20th century, not only in the German but also in the Anglo-Saxon area.

In 1967, during his inaugural lecture at the newly founded pilot university of Constance, Hans Robert Jauss, supported that the study of literature should deny the biographical criteria and stop, permanently, examining the things through the viewpoint of the productive author. The historians of literature should gradually realize the significance of the role of the consumer-reader in the literary process and start occupying themselves with the issue of the reception that the readers reserve for the literary work. For Jauss each literary work is a response to the questions raised by the horizon of expectations. The interpretation of works should for this reason, focus not on the experience of an individual reader, but on the history of a reception of work and its relation to the shifting aesthetic standards and total expectations, which let the artwork be read differently at different periods.

Wolfgang Iser also turned to the study of the reading process itself, as well as to the reader's response to the text and worked out a text method, which examines/considers reading as a bidirectional relation between the text and the reader. Iser identifies the artwork with the specific experience of the reader and focuses his interest in the course of the reader through a text, analyzing the way that the readers produce meaning connecting, completing things that have remained unutterable, anticipating and concluding, with their expectations being, finally, confirmed or rejected.

On the other hand, Stanley Fish considers the text as an exclusive product of the reader and admits a full domination in its construction. The text and the writing intention do not exist out of the experience of the knowledgeable reader. The individual interpretive anarchy confines, anyway, the existence of interpretive communities, that is groups of persons which use their own interpretive strategy. So the possible cut of the reader form the interpretive strategy of the community entrenches the possibility of 'wrong interpretation'. (Fortier 1997, p.132)

Reader/recipient: All the assortments of the reader-recipient tried by the theorists, are based on a broader double distinction: in the real and hypothetical, 'ideal reader', that takes various names by the scholar in each case: latent, implied, involved, expected, registered, virtual, ideal, perfect, adequate, original, informed, architecture super reader. For example, for the structuralists, the ideal reader is the one equipped with the knowledge of all the necessary literary convention and capable of decoding the artwork, surpassing any sort of limitation. Wayne C. Booth, created the latent reader according to the latent author. The writer creates his reader similarly to his alter ego. The most successful reading is the one that the two created selves, the writer and the reader, are in complete accord. Wolfgang Iser extended the meaning of the latent reader, considering him as a textual structure that helps the real reader fill in the gaps and complete the indefinite points of the text. Gerald Prince considered the interpretation as an interaction between the narratee (the fictional person to whom the narrator addresses his narration), the virtual narrator (the person for whom the writer imagines that he creates the artwork and is different than the real reader) and the ideal reader (the person who fully understands the writer's intentions and reads the text perfectly). Correspondingly for Umberto Eco, the ideal reader (lettore modello) who shares with the writer the same codes of the creation of the text and cooperates with the writer in the production of the meaning is a text construction. The super-reader of Michel Riffaterre and the informed reader of Stanley Fish are both ideal readers, equipped with all the necessary codes for the interpretive process and they consist essentially substitute critics.

Additionally, from a Marxist point of view, Janet Wolff sees the artist as cultural producer and moves progressively away from the idea of artist-as-creator. (Wolff 1993, p.95) She tries to show that the named artist plays much less of a part in the production of the work than our commonsense view of the artist as genius, working with divine inspiration, leads us to believe. She argues that many other people are involved in producing the work, that social and ideological factors determine or affect the writer/painter's work, and that subsequently audiences and readers play an active and participatory role in creating the finished product.

Consumption produces production... because a product becomes a real product only by being consumed. For example, a garment becomes a real garment only in the act of being worn; a house where no one lives is in fact not a real house; thus the product, unlike a mere natural object, proves itself to be, becomes, a product only through consumption. Only by decomposing the product does consumption give the product the finishing touch. (Marx 1973)

The reader/viewer/audience is actively involved in the construction of the work of art, and without the act of reception/consumption, the cultural product is incomplete. Wolff elaborates, this is to say that consumption complements and completes production.



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