

Klaus Speidel*

What narrative is

Reconsidering definitions based on experiments with pictorial narrative. An essay in descriptive narratology

<https://doi.org/10.1515/fns-2018-0033>

Abstract: Unacknowledged by its practitioners, narratology has often been revisionary rather than descriptive when categorizing narratives. This is because *definitions*, *expert judgment* and *personal intuition*, traditionally the main tools for categorization, are vulnerable to media blindness and to being theory loaded. I argue that to avoid revisionary accounts of ordinary everyday practices such as narrative or gameplay of which non-experts have a firm understanding, expert categorizations have to be tested against folk intuitions as they become apparent in ordinary language. Pictorial narrative in single pictures is introduced as a specific case of categorization dispute and an experiment laid out in which non-experts assess if different pictures tell stories. As the chosen pictures correspond to different criteria of narrative to varying degrees, the experiment also serves as an implicit test of these criteria. Its results confirm monochrony compatibilism, the position that single monochronic pictures can autonomously convey stories. While the pictures rated high in narrativity correspond to traditional criteria of narrative, I argue that the way in which these criteria are usually interpreted by narratologists is problematic because they exclude these pictures from the realm of narratives. It is argued that the way marginal phenomena are categorized is essential for a sound understanding of even the most paradigmatic objects of a domain because categorizations influence definitions and definitions ultimately guide interpretations.

Keywords: Theory of Definition, Intuition, Visual Narrative, Ordinary Language, Experimental Narratology

*Corresponding author: Klaus Speidel, University of Vienna, Labor für empirische Bildwissenschaft/Lab for Cognitive Research in Art History (CReA), Institut für Kunstgeschichte der Universität Wien/Department for Art History, Garnisongasse 13 (Campus, Hof 9), A –1090 Wien, E-Mail: klausspeidel@gmail.com, <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-7922-3826>

1 Descriptive narratology, the diversity constraint and the centrality of categorization disputes

The subtitle of this text is inspired by P. F. Strawson's 1959 book *Individuals. An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics* in which Strawson (1996: 9) argues that traditional metaphysics is often revisionary rather than descriptive, inadvertently prescribing how to think about the objects in the world rather than describing how we actually think about them. I believe the same criticism applies to narratology. Many narratologists who seemed to believe that they describe what narrative is or how narrative works, have inadvertently offered revisionary accounts. They did so, among other things, because they failed to sufficiently assess the extension of expressions such as “narrative” or “telling a story” in ordinary language. Descriptive narratology can be defined as an approach that seeks to describe rather than prescribe how people think about (aspects of) narrative(s). For instance, the paradigm of narrative most narratologists operate with is still word-based, while most people would agree that there are many narratives that are not. Even though Roland Barthes (2005: 109), Claude Bremond (1964), Tzvetan Todorov (1969: 10) and many others have long argued that not all narratives are verbal and despite the “transmedia turn” in narratology, presentations on films and pictures were rare at the ENN 2017 in Prague (less than 10 % each) and less than 5 % treated wordless music. This might be linked to the fact that the existence of mimetic narrative¹ and narrative in wordless music is still under dispute. However, here like elsewhere good reasons might not be the most influential factor: As most narratologists first learn about narratives through texts (Hausken 2004: 394), they might easily fall prey to a cognitive bias which Liv Hausken calls “media blindness”. As Hausken (2004: 392) explains, “theories that are seemingly independent of the medium are usually implicitly tied to a particular medium”. While narratology has discovered video games, newspaper articles, oral utterances and abstract comics as objects of study, its *paradigm cases* are still complex, verbal and often long literary narratives. This may lead narratologists to consciously or unconsciously hold that the specificities of such verbal texts – for instance *double timeline* – characterize narrative *tout court* and cause problems in categorizing less paradigmatic productions.

Even if most theorists have an opinion about what a narrative is, explicit categorization disputes only engage a handful of them. Most scholars rather focus

¹ Gaudreault (1989) and Stohn (2001) provide clarifications of this concept as used by Plato and Aristotle, respectively.

on developing general theories or specific concepts and on analyzing paradigmatic creations. Let me start by explaining why this disinterest in categorization can be problematic. General theories need to respect the “diversity constraint” (Lopes 1996: 32): they must be general enough to account for all entities of the kind under consideration. A theory of pictures needs to account for a child’s drawing, a cubist painting as well as a *trompe-l’oeil* or a photographic snapshot. Likewise, if we want to be sure that our theories of non-mimetic narratives, unnatural narratives, unreliable narration, point of view, suspense and curiosity, etc. do not only apply to a subset of narratives, for instance verbal ones, we need to know where narratives and narrativity occur. An analogue example may further clarify why correct categorization matters for interpretation.

When we define a game as “A system in which players engage in an artificial conflict, defined by rules, that results in a quantifiable outcome” (Salen and Zimmerman 2003: 80), cooperative activities are excluded from the realm of games. But are badminton or volleyball not games when participants try to make it easy for their partners to hit the shuttle or ball? Our intuition seems to tell us that they are. If this intuition turned out to be stable across subjects, we could want to replace (a) “artificial conflict” by something else to account for what we can call “folk categorization dispositions”, perhaps (a') “artificial conflict or cooperation” or (a'') “artificial interaction”. Such a change will not only lead to a definition that adequately categorizes badminton and volleyball in the park and other cooperative games as games. It will have much wider implications. Making (a') or (a'') instead of (a) a central element in a definition of games implies a different understanding of what a game is and why people play games. Therefore it modifies what is considered salient in gameplay, even when we analyze games dominated by competition. Based on an understanding of games that integrates (b'), scholars of game studies will naturally start to account for cooperative elements, even in mainly competitive games. With a definition integrating (b''), which remains unspecific as to the nature of the interaction, all kinds of exchange between players can be seen as important to the game as game. Perhaps competition and collaboration are only some of the interactions that are essential. Other forms of exchange, such as *hindrance* or *encouragement* might suddenly appear to be elements of gameplay, perhaps even when they do not appear in the rules².

² It is not essential to my argument whether some game theorists would actually feel uncomfortable when confronting my criticism and I am certain that other moves could be made to avoid my objections, where distinguishing between *game* and *play* like Gonzalo Frasca (1999) – with competition being considered important for the former only – might be a simple option. I also do not believe that my reflections are relevant to the somewhat artificial ludology vs. narratology debate, where most participants seem to have settled for accepting the quite commonsensical

Ultimately, theorists could then relativize the importance of rules for games and develop a new theory of gaming. If discrepancies between folk categorizations and expert theories are taken seriously – and they certainly should be – they can thus have a strong impact on a discipline. This shows not only how important definitions are, but, more importantly, how definitions are important: When definitions are modified to include non-paradigmatic entities, the ways we analyze paradigmatic ones changes too. Influencing which aspects of the entities at stake appear as salient, definitions guide interpretations and can ultimately affect general theories. Therefore categorization problems are to be taken seriously, even by scholars who see their task as analyzing prototypical creations, such as verbal narratives in narratology (or competitive games in game theory).

2 Definitions and intuitions

A major reason for theorists to want to define important concepts of their domain narrowly has been that they wanted to avoid that “anything goes” (cf. Revaz 1997: 69). As Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan (2006: 17) has put it: “if everything is narrative, nothing is”. But this underestimates people’s capacity to intuitively categorize ordinary things, even when they cannot provide criteria. As Wittgenstein (cf. 2009: § 68–71, § 76–77) argued, the fact that we are not able to explicitly state the criteria for applying a concept doesn’t fundamentally impair our use of it: “For how is the concept of a game bounded? What still counts as a game, and what no longer does? Can you say where the boundaries are? No. You can *draw* some, for there aren’t any drawn yet. (*But this never bothered you before when you used the word ‘game’ [emphasis mine].*)” (Wittgenstein 2009: § 68). In many cases, we are unable to clearly define a concept, yet we still know when it applies and when it does not. Arguably, the purpose of defining an ordinary concept such as *game*, *narrative* or *story*, is to provide explicit criteria for judgments we are already able to make (Schöttler 2016: 164)³: “definitions need to stand the test of intuitions, not the opposite.” (Speidel 2013a: 179). If definitions oppose intuitions, they lead to revision, not description. The definition of narrative as “the representation of actions or events” is a textbook case of revisionary narratology because it counter-intuitively turns recipes and weather forecasts into narratives. When Tzvetan

point of view that games have narrative elements but are not a subcategory of story (see Simons 2007).

³ The same might also be true for concepts which apply to natural entities like water, heat, forest, etc., but as I am here concerned with cultural products, I do not need or want to argue so.

Todorov (1973, 44) declared that recipes are “imperative narratives” to save his definition, this was certainly witty, but also quite *ad hoc* and unconvincing. The fact is that it proved notoriously difficult to devise a definition of narrative that does not misclassify recipes and weather forecasts or exclude real narratives. At the same time, it was always easy for anyone to intuitively understand that *Cinderella* tells a story and that the weather forecast does not (cf. Prince 1999: 43). Intuitive categorizations by ordinary speakers should therefore guide us when we design and assess definitions. How do we learn about intuitions? By checking if definition-based categorizations match intuition-based ones. As Stephen Laurence and Eric Margolis explain:

Forming an intuition is a matter of determining how we would categorize things in a given situation. Thus intuitions correlate with categorization dispositions and categorization dispositions correlate with content. *The result is that intuitions are broadly correlated with content on virtually any theory of content.* For this reason, they can be used as evidence for content, that is, evidence that a concept truly applies when intuition says it does. (Laurence and Margolis 2003: 279)

But given the reliability of intuitions, why do we need definitions at all? To put a first answer briefly: Intuitions inform us how to categorize this or that, but not why; they tell us which artifacts are narratives, but they cannot tell us what a narrative is. Intuitions can hardly be discussed, definitions can. Therefore we would not be doing science any more – at least not in the sense where most of us understand it today – if we only relied on intuitions. To understand what something is (and how it works), we need more than the ability to reliably categorize different productions (cf. Chatman 1983: 55). This is where definitions of ordinary concepts have a role to play. They provide *reasons* for categorizations we already know how to make. To conclude this section, we can say that intuitions not definitions are essential when we want to settle categorization disputes. Definitions certainly play important roles in research, but – as opposed to a common misconception and the ensuing misuse – being gatekeepers for a specific subject domain should not be one of them.

3 Major positions concerning pictorial narrative and the role of examples

In order to evaluate different ways to tackle categorization disputes and explore a new way to deal with them *in concreto*, I here want to look more closely at the debate concerning pictorial narrative. But the approach I describe would also be

relevant to assess the narrative potential of other marginal cases, such as, for instance, drama, wordless music or abstract comics. Since Lessing (1853) first distinguished the spatial and the temporal arts in 1766, suggesting that the former *should only* – but often misinterpreted as saying that they *could only* (Speidel 2013a : 181–184) – be used to depict states, the central question concerning pictorial narrative has been: Can some single pictures be said to autonomously convey stories – and thus be classified as *narratives* (Wolf 2003: 180) – and if yes, which kind of pictures? Wendy Steiner (1988, 2004), Aron Kibédi Varga (1989, 1990), Jean-Marie Schaeffer (2001), Werner Wolf (2002, 2003, 2011), Michael Ranta (2013), Klaus Speidel (2013a, 2013b, 2018a), Peter Hühn (2015) and Tobias Schöttler (2016) have addressed this problem within a narratological framework. They all develop a *compatibilist* argument, arguing that there are single pictures that autonomously convey stories. Looking more closely, we can however distinguish different kinds of compatibilism and the accompanying incompatibilisms. *Monochrony – or strong – compatibilists* like Ranta (2013), Speidel (2013a, 2013b, 2018a) and Hühn (2015) believe that *single pictures* only explicitly depicting one moment in time can autonomously convey stories. This is something *monochrony incompatibilists* like Steiner (2004: 172), Wolf (2002: 96), Kibédi Varga (1990: 97) and Schöttler (2016: 178) deny. These authors believe that only works that explicitly depict several moments in time, for instance by repeating figures or by juxtaposing several pictures, can communicate stories⁴. Let us call them *polychrony – or medium – compatibilists*. As opposed to them, Seymour Chatman (1990), Françoise Revaz (1997), Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan (2006) and Jean-Marie Schaeffer (2001) are *incompatibilists* concerning narrative in the single picture. They embrace *sequence – or weak – compatibilism*, i.e. the belief that only picture series and films can convey stories. Sequence (or weak) compatibilism and polychrony compatibilism are probably the most common positions in narratology. *Full incompatibilism* concerning pictorial narrative, the position denying that there is any intersection between the set of pictures and the set of narratives is relatively rare, but was prominently

⁴ We sometimes see “*Simultanbild*” in German and in French “*succession simultanée*” instead of “polychronic” (*polychronisch/polychronique*). However, these expressions presuppose that “simultaneity” is the default for pictures, which is problematic in light of pictures produced by children at an early age, in different cultures and at different times (Speidel 2013a: 184–186). In English, “pluriscenic” or “polyscenic” and “polyphase” single picture is also sometimes used. These terms are misleading as there are certainly pictures showing different “scenes” happening *simultaneously*, and it is not really clear what a “phase” is and thus how to individuate phases in such a way as to distinguish monophasic from polyphasic pictures. As it is temporality that is at stake, I recommend “monochronic” and “polychronic” as the most clear terminological choice.

held by Gérard Genette (1980, 1983). More recently, Paul Barolsky (2010: 112) has also attempted to show that “there is no such thing as narrative art”.

4 Arguments for and against pictorial narrative

Any categorization question can be represented in terms of set theory. To say that pictorial narrative in monochronic pictures exists is, for instance, to affirm that there is an intersection between the sets of P and N, where P is the set of monochronic pictures and N is the set of narratives. There are two recurrent strategies to find out if there is an intersection: assessing if there is any *conflict between essential criteria of the definitions of Ns and Ps*. If there are none, Ps can be Ns, otherwise Ps cannot be Ns. Alternatively, it is possible to try to find *at least one specific example that is both P and N*. If there is a P that is also an N, this implies that Ps *can be* Ns. Like in other categorization disputes, both the first approach, where the compatibility of criteria is assessed, and the approach where we look for examples have been frequently used in arguments about pictorial narrative. The role and importance of examples in compatibilist and incompatibilist theories however differs greatly. Incompatibilists usually suggest that there is some kind of incompatibility between the *concept* of narrative as properly defined and what can be communicated with pictures. Pictures are then used as illustrations without much argumentative weight⁵. As opposed to this, compatibilists usually make extended use of specific examples in their arguments. Given that incompatibilists deny that pictorial narrative of a certain kind exists, a *single undisputed case of narrative in a specific kind of picture* would be enough to prove that incompatibilism concerning this kind of picture is wrong.⁶

Over the years, I have identified three major strategies to establish if single pictures can tell stories.

The argument from definition has largely dominated in narratology. Theorists argue based on definition alone or use definitions and examples, trying to show that some specific single picture corresponds to the criteria of a plausible definition of narrative.

⁵ While this is different in Barolsky 2010, he commits a fallacy of defective induction when he argues that no picture can convey a story based on his discussion of a single example which, according to him, does not do so.

⁶ Compatibilists who argue from example rather than theory can also be less confrontational, as they do not necessarily have to dispute the conceptual points made by their incompatibilist counterparts. They can accept them at least for the sake of argument.

The argument from intuition suggests that we should trust our intuition that single pictures communicate stories or that they do not.

The argument from expertise urges us to rely on expert judgment concerning the existence of pictorial narrative.

These strategies are often intertwined. Thus we, as experts, can reject or embrace definitions based on our intuitions concerning specific artifacts, accept definitions because they have been developed by experts in our field or look for expert confirmation of our intuitive assessments. To get a clear sense of the specific limits of each strategy, it is however useful to discuss them separately. After doing so, I will introduce a fourth strategy: the *argument from ordinary language*. It claims that definitions of terms like “telling a story” or “narrative” should not be incompatible with the ways they are used in ordinary language as assessed in valid experiments. I will then expose an experiment to find out what kind of pictures are naturally said to tell a story by non-experts, with the aim of settling the categorization dispute concerning pictorial narrative.

5 The argument from definition

Definitions of narrative or *the criteria of such definitions* usually play such a prominent role when *pictorial narrative in single pictures* is discussed that we might come to believe that checking if *single pictures can correspond to a sound definition of narrative* is the only available strategy. Thus researchers like Gérard Genette (1980, 1983), Seymour Chatman (1990), Françoise Revaz (1997, 2009), Emma Kafalenos (1996), Jean-Marie Schaeffer (2001), Marie-Laure Ryan (2004) and Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan (2006) have argued that (autonomous) narrative in the single picture does not exist because *according to a plausibly narrow definition* such a picture cannot convey what is necessary for narrative. Marie-Laure Ryan (2004: 139) argues that “since pictures, left by themselves, lack the ability to articulate specific propositions and to explicate causal relations, their principal narrative option is [...] the *illustrative mode*”.⁷ She considers that pictures cannot represent causal links between story events and therefore cannot convey a story autonomously. Seymour Chatman (1990: 7) and Jean-Marie Schaeffer (2001: 15) believe like Lessing (1766) that pictures cannot convey stories because as opposed

⁷ The idea that pictures are limited in their ability to convey cause and effect relationships has been widely accepted since the beginning of the 18th century, when French art theorist Roger de Piles (1708: 453) first stated that “painting can well represent all facts of a story in their right order by multiplying pictures [*Tableaux*], but can neither show their cause nor their links.” However, this idea is wrongheaded as we will see shortly (see also Speidel 2013a, 2013b; Schöttler 2016).

to texts, they do not have double temporality, they do not govern the order of access to their elements⁸. Werner Wolf (2002, 2003) and Wendy Steiner (2004) have argued from definition for *polychrony compatibilism*. I myself have also argued from definition on several occasions (Speidel 2013a, Speidel 2013b, Speidel 2018a), defending *monochrony compatibilism*. For the reasons given in sections I and 2, I have however come to consider the strategy from definition to be problematic when it is used to settle categorization disputes. Why shouldn't we then argue from our intuitions?

6 The argument from intuition and its problems

The *argument from intuition* is based on the conviction that intuitive categorizations can be trusted. In an article where the narrativity of pictures is at stake, the philosopher Nelson Goodman argues for monochrony compatibilism based on his intuitive assessment of the narrativity of different kinds of pictures. The crux of his argument is his description of *The Conversion of Saint Paul* (1567), a monochronic picture by Pieter Brueghel, of which Goodman (1981: 333) affirms that “[it] tells a story and tells it so compellingly that we tend to forget that nothing in the picture literally moves, that no part of the picture precedes any other in time, and that what is explicitly shown is not actions taking place but a momentary state [emphasis mine]”. It is on the basis of this experience that Goodman states that even pictures which only depict one moment can tell stories. But is the intuition of a single expert that *one* monochronic painting tells a story sufficient to ground monochrony compatibilism? Many narratologists are skeptical... .

Aron Kibédi Varga (1989: 108) believes like Marie-Laure Ryan (2004: 139) that the evocation of familiar stories is the only option available for single monochronic pictures. Like Jean-Marie Schaeffer (2001: 12), he believes that a painting like *The Conversion of Saint Paul* merely *reminds* viewers of a verbal narrative they already know. If the pre-text is culturally well entrenched, it may well happen that a picture which only reminds spectators of a familiar story is experienced as communicating it. Goodman, who certainly knew the story of the conversion of Saint Paul, may be a case in point. Given that his monochrony compatibilism is based on his intuition that Brueghel's *Conversion of Saint Paul* tells a story and this intuition is problematic, his whole argument falls apart. This case shows that

⁸ I am convinced that the representational timeline criterion is flawed (see Speidel 2013a, 2013b and 2018a) because world knowledge allows us to understand represented timelines, but rather than specific arguments I here want to focus on kinds of arguments.

intuitions are prone to be influenced by previous knowledge, some of which can be quite specialized, and are not to be trusted under all circumstances. Therefore intuitions we have alone in an armchair are not a sound basis for our arguments. One way out of the predicament of a single-handed intuitive judgment of one expert is to look at the assessment of an *expert community*.

7 The argument from expertise and its problems

The *argument from expertise* is based on the conviction that categorizations by domain experts can be trusted. Bence Nanay (2009) has thus argued for monochrony compatibilism concerning pictorial narrative based on the fact that art historians often consider it unproblematic that certain monochronic pictures tell stories. Like Göran Sonesson (1997), Nanay holds that the representation of a single action is sufficient for pictorial narrative⁹. More precisely, Nanay's theory of what he calls "narrative pictures" is based on the identification of "goal-directed actions" in representations (Nanay 2009: 125). In Nanay's account, the representation of such actions comes quite close to a necessary and sufficient condition for narrative. However, this criterion is essentially backed by his appeal to expertise, namely "the way the term 'narrative picture' is used by art historians" (Nanay 2009: 123)¹⁰. Art historians' categorization dispositions then become the tortoise on which the elephant of Nanay's definition of narrative stands¹¹. There are both specific and general reasons that make it relatively shaky ground. First of all, many theorists have called art historical expertise concerning matters of narrative into question. Wendy Steiner (1988: 2) notes that "the general art historical use of the term 'narrative' seems incomprehensible to literary scholars." The art-historian Lorenzo Pericolo writes: "Art history, which has mostly emerged from the early modern debates about the *istoria*, has stubbornly continued to appraise visual narratives with criteria that are frankly obsolete" (Pericolo 2011: 94) and according to Werner Wolf (2002: 24), "*questionable narrativisations [fragwürdige Narrativierungen]*" are frequent in art history, and the use of "narrative" in most texts about art is "purely intuitive and accordingly vague." Again, I do not believe that the use of intuitions is a problem *per se*, but I do believe that just like

⁹ I am convinced that this is far too large, but as mentioned above, the specifics of the argument are not at stake here. What we are interested in are the argumentation strategies.

¹⁰ For a critical discussion of the question of narrative from an art historical perspective see Kemp 1996a, 1996b and Pericolo 2011. For discussions from an archeological perspective, see, for instance, Brilliant 1984 and Giuliani 2013.

¹¹ The image is used by Wilfrid Sellars (1956: § 38) in his criticism of sense data.

the intuitions of narratologists, those of art historians may be defective because of their professional background. Art history students are taught to quickly grasp which narrative, if any, a picture refers to. A naked couple with a snake is likely to *evoke* the Fall of Man not only to Christian audiences but also to most art historians and by just looking at a figure's pose a well-trained art-historian can often tell what character and story is referenced. However, depicting a pose or a few clues and attributes does certainly not amount to *autonomously conveying a story* in the ordinary sense of the expression. While narratologists are more theory-conscious, we have already seen in section 1 that they are prone to media-blindness. This is likely to influence intuitions as much as definitions. Furthermore, both the intuitions and the language of art-historians and narratologists are likely to be theory-loaded.

As Thomas Kuhn (1996), Norwood Hanson (1958) and other theorists of science have shown, observation is influenced by the paradigms dominating a scientific community. As Hanson (1958: 19) puts it, "seeing is a 'theory laden' undertaking." As expertise in most disciplines is linked to possessing theoretical knowledge and even holding theoretical beliefs, we may be particularly ill-advised to rely on expert intuitions concerning ordinary objects of inquiry. The way art historians or narratologists use phrases like "this painting tells a story" could be problematic precisely *because* they are experts. As Eugen Fischer recently explained, expert use of ordinary language may be particularly problematic:

Psycholinguistic findings reveal that some ordinary language is privileged – not normatively but psychologically: The uses of words a subject employs and encounters most frequently shape associative memory processes that duplicate semantic and pragmatic inferences [...]. In many cases, philosophers will use and encounter well established terms most frequently in certain familiar senses. When they give such terms a new use without realizing its novelty, they will hence unwittingly continue to make leaps of thought which duplicate semantic and pragmatic inferences licensed by the terms' familiar use. (Fischer 2014: 132–133)

In other words: as philosophers, narratologists and art historians who specialize in narrative, we are particularly prone to using expressions like "telling a story" inconsistently because we cannot entirely forget the meaning of such terms in ordinary language while we theorize.

Given that experts can be affected by media-blindness, theory-leadenness and inconsistency, the approach which seems the most promising is working with non-experts, whose use of ordinary language is likely to be less biased. Working with a sufficiently high number of people should help compensate possible idiosyncrasies and the influence of theoretical knowledge some of them might have acquired.

8 Ordinary language as a basis for descriptive narratology

The idea that ordinary language use is a valuable indicator of the extension of concepts is quite old. P. F. Strawson's (1996: 9) descriptive metaphysics, which we evoked above is based "upon a close examination of the actual use of words", which he says to be the "the best, and indeed the only sure, way in philosophy". Ludwig Wittgenstein (2009: § 43, § 92) and John Austin have also suggested that analyzing the ways ordinary people use words may help us to either *solve* or *dissolve* philosophical problems. Wittgenstein (2009: § 43) famously held that rather than abstract criteria, the "use in the language" is essential for the meaning of a word. The most articulate defense of this *approach* has been provided by Austin:

Our common stock of words embodies all the distinctions men have found worth drawing and the connexions they have found worth marking, in the lifetime of many generations: these surely are likely to be more numerous, more sound, since they have stood up to the long test of the survival of the fittest, and more subtle, at least in all ordinary and reasonably practical matters, than any that you or I are likely to think up in our arm-chairs of an afternoon – the most favoured alternative method. (Austin 1961: 130)

According to this, we should rely on the meaning terms have in ordinary language rather than the special meaning they sometimes receive in theoretical contexts. What is often overlooked by both critics and advocates of Austin's approach is the fact that he speaks of *ordinary and reasonably practical matters* only. This seems to be a reasonable restriction as non-expert categorizations are likely to be useless for subjects like molecular biology. Even the nature of being or the freedom of will might not be sufficiently ordinary for non-experts to have much to say about them. Narrative, however, is quite different in this respect. After all, "all classes, all human groups, have their narratives" (Barthes 2005: 109) and storytelling performs many functions in society. It is thus both ordinary and practical. Looking at when ordinary people use the expression "to tell a story" should then be a relatively trustworthy indicator of what kind of representations really tell (or *communicate*) stories. Given that representations that tell stories are usually considered to be narratives (Gaudreault 1988: 84; Wolf 2003: 180; Currie 2010: 6), such investigations also teach us about what narratives are¹². The information

¹² The fact is that the term "narrative" is not as frequent as the practice of narrating. Children ask their parents to tell them a story and people tend to say, for instance, "That was a great story"

obtained can then be used to evaluate our definitions and the ways they are usually interpreted.

9 Narratives in single pictures: Designing an experiment

Based on what has been said so far, an interesting approach to pictorial narrative emerges: taking pictures of a certain kind, for instance monochronic pictures that depict goal-directed actions, and asking people with no particular scholarly expertise on either narrative or pictorial art if they think that they tell stories. If categorizations obtained with such experiments oppose those based on theory, the burden of proof then lies with the theorist.

A well-designed and well-conducted experiment on pictorial narrative will, first of all, check whether participants agree that certain kinds of pictures tell stories. As storytelling is likely to be a question of degrees rather than categories alone (Currie 2010: 34; Prince 2012: 26), Likert scales seem more adapted than simple yes/no answers, where certain thresholds, above which an answer counts as a “yes” can be defined.

We should also make sure that participants are not misled by previous knowledge of the story communicated by a picture, which could systematically falsify their intuitions. A simple way to avoid this pitfall is to choose pictures that communicate stories that the participants are not acquainted with. Pictures that convey new stories and do not have a verbal pre-text or pictures that communicate relatively unknown stories can be chosen¹³, where works that are unknown to participants are preferable. As the latter cannot be determined beforehand, the effect of familiarity on other judgments will have to be assessed in the experiment.¹⁴ By choosing relatively unknown pictures while also showing a sufficient

rather than “That was a great narrative.” This is also true in other languages: in German (“Geschichte,” as in “eine schöne Geschichte,” is more common than “Erzählung,” as in “eine schöne Erzählung”) and in French (“histoire” as in “une belle histoire” is more common than “récit” as in “un beau récit”). As non-experts speak about stories and storytelling more than narrative and narrating, they might be more reliable when categorizing representations as stories.

13 *Pre-text* or *Prättext* is used in art history to refer to the verbal narrative evoked by a work of art.

14 While there is a logical possibility that a viewer has become familiar with the story conveyed by a picture that conveys a new or relatively unknown story without ever having seen the picture conveying it, we can presume that such cases can be neglected. This does, of course, not exclude that viewers are familiar with the script that a picture evokes.

number of pictures to a sufficient number of participants, we can hope to find at least a few cases where the picture and story is unfamiliar to most viewers.

If previous knowledge of the story that is evoked was a condition for pictorial narrative, as different theorists (e. g. Kibedi-Varga 1989; Schaeffer 2001) have argued, there should be a strong correlation between knowing a picture beforehand and considering that it communicates a story.

Given that general reflections have to be applicable to diverse sets (Lopes 1996: 32), pictures should be chosen to reflect the diversity of picture-making and narrativity. Viewers should see pictures from different times and contexts. However, of course, one example of a kind of picture, where viewers agree that it does convey a story, would be enough to prove wrong the corresponding incompatibilism. To verify if viewers apply an “every-picture-tells-a-story” rule, which might arguably call into question the reliability of their intuitions, at least one picture that belongs to a genre traditionally considered to be low in narrativity by art historians (landscape, portraiture, allegory) and with a level of narrativity that is expected to be lower according to narrative theory should be included for each viewer.

A study also ought to include *polychronic* pictures which explicitly depict several moments, for instance by showing the same actors more than once, because, as mentioned above, theorists like Aron Kibedi-Varga (1989, 1990), Wendy Steiner (2004) and Werner Wolf (2002, 2003, 2011) consider polychrony to be a necessary criterion for pictorial narrative. If participants implicitly embraced this concept of narrative, the polychronic pictures should turn out to be the only ones with high storytelling ratings.

10 Experimental evidence

10.1 Introduction and participants

A study was designed according to these reflections in order to test if non-experts consider some pictures to tell story, while considering others to do so to a lesser degree. To avoid choosing visual stimuli at random, pictures were chosen in accordance with criteria that often appear in definitions of narrative and categorized as higher, medium and lower narrativity.

Two hundred and twenty eight individuals recruited through social networks, groups of interests and mailing lists participated in the experiment (mean age: 31; 139 female; 89 male; 4 no indication; 1 other). Participants came from various domestic, cultural, social and educational backgrounds and they were not experts in the field of arts.

10.2 Stimuli

Fifteen paintings served as the stimuli. Three contemporary street art paintings (i.e. Banksy, 2006, 2011; Dran, n.d.), three paintings from the XVII century (i.e. Greuze 1777; Hogarth 1742; c.1743), three Baroque art paintings (i.e. Domenichino c.1615, c.1617, c.1635), three history paintings from the XIV century (i.e. Lorenzetti 1341; Lorenzetti 1332, 1339), and three pages without words from picture books for children (i.e. Nordqvist 1991, 1997, 2008) were used. All materials used were in a digital form and the entire experiment was set up on Social Science Survey (Leiner 2014).

The twelve art paintings and the three pages from the children's books were chosen for diversity, because they are commonly unknown to non-experts and according to major criteria commonly used to define narrative in narratology, interpreted in such a way that they are compatible with monochronic single pictures. They are i) representation of *humanlike agents*, ii) *event representation*, iii) *conveying the timeline of story events*, iv) *extraordinariness/eventfulness of these events*, v) *conveying causal connections between the events*. I expected all of these to contribute to narrativity. Based on Speidel (2013a), the representational timeline criterion that is regularly used by incompatibilists, e.g. Christian Metz, Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan or Jean-Marie Schaeffer, was excluded. If this was problematic, none of the 10 pictures in the medium and high narrativity groups should appear as telling a story to the participants. I should here mention a last point concerning definitions: they usually leave room for interpretation. There are thus two ways different narratologists might fail less paradigmatic narratives: their definitions might be too narrow or the way they *interpret and apply* the defining criteria might be too restrictive given the ordinary concept of narrative. As mentioned in section 5 above, criteria iii) and v) have previously been used to justify monochrony or full incompatibilism. I believe that the underlying interpretation is problematic (Speidel 2013a, 2013b, 2018a). I consider that monochronic pictures can convey causality and several events of a story by showing different states and events that form part of a causal continuum, where viewers spontaneously use story scripts and world knowledge to reconstruct the rest. According to my interpretation, Hogarth's *Bagnio Scene* corresponds to criterion v) because it conveys a causal relationship between a man who is bleeding, a bloodstained sword laying on the ground, a second man fleeing through the window (and many other picture elements). This picture is not at odds with iii) because it conveys previous events through traces or by showing states that are so unstable that viewers will most certainly think of past and, possibly, future events (cf. Speidel 2018 c: 441–443).

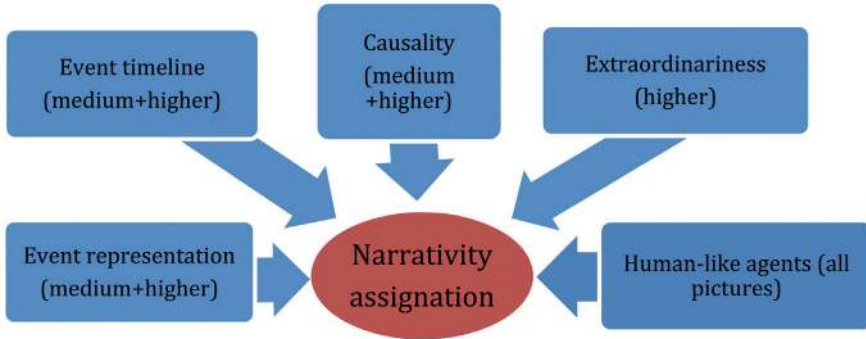


Figure 1: Criteria influencing narrativity as used in experiment

Based on these criteria according to my liberal interpretation, degrees of narrativity were defined, namely higher, medium and lower (Figure 1). While all pictures showed human-like agents, only the higher and medium pictures made it possible to systematically reconstruct temporal and causal relationships and showed extraordinary events. The events in higher pictures were considered to be more extraordinary than those in medium pictures. *Extraordinariness* was used to separate medium from higher narrativity pictures because since Aristotle’s *peripeteia*, conceived as an *unexpected turn (para doxan)*, so many definitions have insisted that for ideal narratives, there needs to be some kind of disruption in the chain of story events (Herman 2009: xvi; Todorov 1992: 121) or that at least one of the represented events has to appear as “significant” (Schmid 2010: 8) or “extraordinary” (Hühn 2009) in the storyworld.

Pictures of lower narrativity either showed states rather than events or multiple disconnected events. They also tended to show more ordinary situations, such as a market scene, people resting by a river, children posing for a portrait, or an old man contemplating objects.

To clarify how our interpretation of the criteria motivates our classifications, let us look at the XVIII century painting style (Figure 2) with paintings by William Hogarth and Jean-Baptiste Greuze. William Hogarth’s “Marriage à la Mode: The murder of the count” (c. 1743) was chosen as a picture higher in narrativity because it represents *human agents* and several *events* (such as a woman interacting with a man who has been hurt, armed men coming through the door, while another person is escaping through the window). In accordance with Speidel (2013a: 181, 189–190, 2018a), it was also predicted to cue interpreters to draw inferences about the *temporal* and the *causal* relationships of the depicted events. The depicted scene is obviously high in *extraordinariness* – in fact it is a crime scene. This was contrasted to “The ungrateful son” (Greuze 1777), which also

represents *agents* and *events*, namely a dispute. However, its *timeline* seemed less obvious and the *causal* relations more difficult to perceive (Did the father first get angry and the son decide to leave because of this or the opposite? What is the role of the man by the door?). Given this and the fact that a dispute is less *extraordinary* than a crime, this painting was assumed to be medium in narrativity. The third picture in the group was *The Graham Children* (Hogarth 1742). Being a group portrait, it contains *human agents*, who interact somewhat, but has no clear *timeline*, shows few *events*, few strong *causal* relations and nothing that had to be considered as *extraordinary* by a non-expert public given the context. It was therefore predicted to be lower in narrativity, according to theory.



Figure 2: Pictures of style 2 (XVIII century) classified in order of narrativity from higher to lower

For each style of pictures, similar possibilities were evoked, and choices and assignments were made and discussed in groups of experts in art history and psychology at the CReA and EVA labs of the university of Vienna respectively, thus combining art historical and psychological expertise.

10.3 Questionnaire

Two Seven-point (1-not at all through to 7-absolutely) Likert scales were devised on SoSci Survey (Leiner 2014) to correspond to degrees of storytelling (“How strongly do you agree with the following statement: This picture tells a story.”). The scale included the option to answer “I can’t tell.” Values from 1 to 3 were considered as “No,” 4 as neutral and 5 to 7 as a “Yes.”

In addition, participants were asked to respond to the item “Did you know this picture before” by choosing among “Yes,” “I’m not sure,” and “No.” For “Yes” answers there was the additional item: “If applicable, indicate the painter or the title, or tell us about the context where you saw the image before.”

10.4 Procedure

Participants received an invitation link to the survey through social networks and mailing lists. When participants clicked on the link, it redirected them to the SoSci Survey platform. In the first screen, they read a debriefing statement that explained the aim of the study and general instructions. No mention of storytelling or narrative was included. At the bottom of the first page they were asked to press “Next” when they were ready.

When they pressed “Next” they were presented with the picture considered of medium narrative value for fifteen seconds and they were asked to respond to a series of questions. At the end of the first part participants read a short thank you note and were informed that in the second and final part they would view the picture of the painting again for as long as they wished and reply to additional questions. Following the picture of medium narrative value each participant was required to repeat the same procedure for the higher and for the lower narrative pictures. The storytelling question was asked at the end of the second part of the questionnaire when participants had already engaged with the pictures in multiple ways and had, among other things, been invited to sum up the content of the picture.

10.5 Design

Data was analyzed by a 3x5 mixed design. “Style” of painting was the between-subjects factor with five levels, namely Style 1: Street art (XXI century), Style 2: XVIII century, Style 3: Baroque (XVII century), Style 4: XIV century and Style 5: Pictures from children’s books (XX century). Additionally, Narrativity (i.e. *predicted* degree of narrativity) was the within-subjects factor with three levels: “Higher,” “Medium,” and “Lower.”

The dependent variable “Storytelling” was the narrativity scores participants gave when asked if the picture tells a story (*see above: Questionnaire*).

“I can’t tell” responses were assigned the value of -1, were removed and analyzed separately. In total, twenty two cases of participants were removed pairwise according to the “I can’t tell” criterion.

Participants were randomly allocated to the five groups defined by “Style” (SoSci Survey presented different styles to different participants at random). Also, participants always viewed the pictures in the following order: Medium-Higher-Lower, to first familiarize them with the procedure before they saw the picture predicted to be highest in narrativity according to narrative theory as interpreted in the study. As mentioned before, the last picture mainly served the purpose of

determining if participants would apply an “every-picture-tells-a-story” rule. There were forty-five, forty-six, forty-five, forty-five and forty-seven participants in groups 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, respectively.

Last but not least, responses to the question “Did you know this picture before” were first analyzed according to their frequencies before they were treated as an additional factor.

All statistical analyses in the current study were conducted using IBM SPSS v.24 (2016).

Frequencies were calculated for the independent variable Knowing. Only twenty-five out of six hundred and eighty-four responses were “Yes” which account for only 3.7% of the observations. Seventy-three responses were “I am not sure” and the remaining five hundred and eighty-six responses on that question were “No”. Therefore, Knowing was not included in the analysis for further investigation.

10.6 Results

“Predicted degree of narrativity” that reflects higher, medium and lower in narrativity pictures will be referred to as “narrativity” from hereon, the ratings by participants as “storytelling”.

In general, pictures that were higher and medium in narrativity received higher storytelling scores than pictures lower in narrativity across all styles of paintings (Table 1).

Table 1: Means (μ) by Narrativity

| Degree | Higher | Medium | Lower |
|--------------------|--------|--------|-------|
| Mean μ (Total) | 5.79 | 5.86 | 3.84 |
| Standard Error | .096 | .102 | .129 |

The mean scores of higher, medium and lower in narrativity pictures were $\mu=5.79$ (SE=0.96), $\mu=5.86$ (SE=0.102) and $\mu=3.84$ (SE=0.129), respectively.

Frequencies were calculated for “I can’t tell” responses of the storytelling question. Participants could not tell if a picture was narrative or not, most frequently, when the picture was of lower narrativity.

There were significant differences between the scores of higher, medium and lower narrative street art paintings at the 5% level using the Huynh-Feldt correction ($F_{(1.571,64.415)}=3.866$, $p=0.035$), among the scores of higher, medium and

lower XVIII century paintings at the 1% level using the Huynh-Feldt correction ($F_{(1.672,70.213)} = 111.946, p < 0.001$, among the scores of higher, medium and lower Baroque paintings at the 1% level ($F_{(2,80)} = 32.292, p < 0.001$), among the scores of higher, medium and lower XIV century paintings at the 1% level ($F_{(2,78)} = 76.697, p < 0.001$) and among the scores of higher, medium and lower narrative pictures from children’s books at the 1% level ($F_{(2,86)} = 8.308, p = 0.001$).

For street art paintings, LSD comparisons revealed significant differences in the scores between pictures of higher and lower narrativity ($p = 0.022$, Cohen’s $d = 0.239$) only. In addition, Bonferroni post-hoc pairwise comparisons revealed significant differences between the scores of lower and higher XVIII century paintings ($p < 0.001$, Cohen’s $d = 1.24$) and the scores of lower and medium paintings of the same style ($p < 0.001$, Cohen’s $d = 1.26$). With regard to Baroque paintings, Bonferroni post-hoc comparisons revealed significant differences between the scores of lower and medium ($p < 0.001, d = 0.819$), lower and higher ($p < 0.001, Cohen’s d = 0.527$) and medium and higher paintings ($p = 0.005, Cohen’s d = 0.469$). In XIV century paintings, Bonferroni post-hoc comparisons revealed significant differences between the scores of lower and medium pictures ($p < 0.001, Cohen’s d = 1.17$) and lower and higher pictures ($p < 0.001, Cohen’s d = 1.40$). Finally, post-hoc Bonferroni pairwise comparisons revealed significant differences between lower and medium pictures ($p = 0.004, Cohen’s d = 0.414$) and between lower and higher pictures from children’s books ($p = 0.007, Cohen’s d = 0.414$).

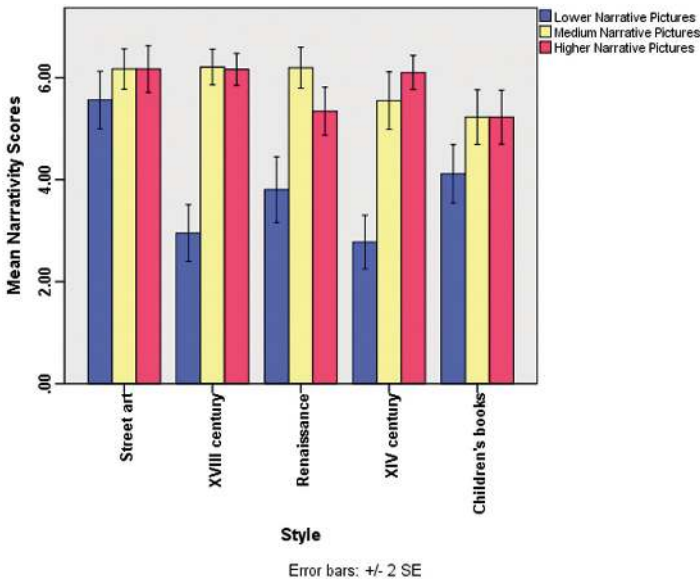


Table 2: Mean narrativity scores across styles

10.7 Discussion

These results suggest that according to non-experts some single monochronic pictures tell stories. Several medium and higher monochronic pictures in the experiment obtained mean storytelling scores of over 6 out of 7, where significant differences with pictures predicted to be lower in narrativity according to theory were also observed. The two polychronic pictures of middle and higher narrativity in the children's book group and the polychronic picture of higher narrativity in the XIVth century group did not get higher storytelling ratings than the monochronic pictures in the other groups. As opposed to what polychrony compatibilists like Kibédi-Varga, Steiner or Wolf have argued, polychrony is not a condition for pictures that convey stories nor does it even seem to have a significant positive impact on levels of storytelling. It is even possible that monochronic pictures, where knowledge of causal relationships can be applied to determine timelines (quite like when we enter a room and discover a specific situation) more robustly convey causal relationships and timelines than pictures where two events that have not simultaneously occurred are shown in a continuous space. It proved sound to exclude the *representational timeline* criterion held by authors like Christian Metz (1968: 27), Seymour Chatman (1990: 7) or Shlomith Rimmon-Kenon (2006: 16) from our list. If all goes well it will soon be little more than a reminder of the kind of revisionary narratology that media-blindness can lead to.

Participants also quite consistently rated pictures considered to be of lower narrativity according to narrative theory as significantly lower in storytelling than pictures hypothesized to be higher. This makes it difficult to disqualify the participants' assessments as being one of "wild narrativization". As opposed to what some psychologists might have expected, participants do definitely not apply an "Every-picture-tells-a-story-rule".

This indicates that – if applied as suggested – most criteria used in narratology are consistent with criteria implicitly used by non-experts and that definitions of narrative are, in fact, acceptable by and large. What seems to count for participants is that pictures actually convey event timelines, causal relationships, etc. where it does not matter whether they are entirely explicit. More generally, our results suggest a reception-based interpretation of the criteria of narrative, which also seems to be in accordance with cognitive narratology. It appears that high degrees of narrativity can be achieved when major story events, timelines and causal links are implicated. This clearly hints at one place where media-blindness, theory-leadenness and inconsistency can lead to a breakdown: rather than the criteria themselves, it is particularly narrow ways of interpreting them that narratology needs to give up. Our results further oppose criteria of narrative such as the *language* criterion held by Genette (1966: 152) and Barolsky (2010: 111)

and the *complication-resolution* criterion as interpreted by Françoise Revaz (1997: 95), where pictures have to *explicitly* show a complication and resolution.

Knowing the picture beforehand played no part and as the stories conveyed by the pictures that got the highest average ratings (Street Art and XVIII century) did not have literary pre-text, knowing the story beforehand is no condition for considering a picture to convey a story. Thus Ryan's and Kibédi Varga's thesis that monochronic single pictures can only illustrate stories that are already known beforehand has been falsified. Here, it must however be noted that this does not exclude that viewers used generic story scripts such as a *surprised lover script* for Hogarth (1743–1745) or a *catastrophe and rescue script* for Banský (2006) when interpreting the pictures.

If our argument for the validity of experiments with non-experts is sound, all this is strong evidence for monochrony compatibilism, the thesis that pictures only explicitly depicting one moment can indeed convey stories. To reject this result and to maintain different, theory-driven categorizations, is of course a theoretical possibility, but if my argument is correct, it implies that we leave the realm of description and enter the domain of prescription. Taking up Walter Dubislav's (1981: 2) distinction, we could say that theorists who define ordinary concepts in ways that oppose non-expert use, make *assignments* (*Festsetzungen*) rather than *assessments* (*Feststellungen*), in sum, they engage in what I have called revisionary narratology, rather than its descriptive counterpart (see section 1).

The way pictures *convey causal and temporal relationships* might provide insights for narrative in other media and the results seem to encourage that we give a more prominent role to *narrative implicature*, as pictures rated high in storytelling such as the painting by Hogarth (Fig. 1) convey many story events (e.g. the infidelity or the fight) *only implicitly*, more specifically through traces (cf. Speidel 2018c: 441–443, for the concept of trace-based narrative). Thus the results could be considered to speak for reception-based definitions of narrative such as Didier Coste's (1989: 65), who suggests that narrative texts are texts where “the quest for narrative significance is the first satisfied and the most rewarding”.

10.8 Problems and open questions

Based on the criterion of extraordinariness alone, it proved difficult to distinguish representations that have a high degree of narrativity from depictions where viewers assigned medium degrees. There are two possible explanations for this: either our initial assessment of the extraordinariness of the events depicted in the different pictures was problematic or the extraordinariness criterion alone is

insufficient to distinguish medium from high narrativity. Perhaps represented timelines and causal relationships are sufficient for storytelling and extraordinariness is less important than has often been suggested or the fact that the lower pictures corresponded strongly to other criteria compensated for the lack of extraordinariness in what they depicted. For instance, a picture from a children's book that depicts a man and a cat engaging in gardening activities may not be *extraordinary*. Nonetheless, other criteria (such as the clear timeline and causality involved in gardening activities) may explain the relatively high storytelling scores it received. Similarly, in street art paintings *extraordinariness* may not have been the most influential among different criteria that led to the high storytelling scores of virtually all pictures of that style, where the difference between lower and medium levels was not statistically significant. While a depiction of three boys standing around a third seems indeed much less extraordinary than, say, an image of a girl who survived a catastrophe that is "attacked" by the media as in Banksy (2006), the former picture may still evoke frames such as bullying and corresponding event scripts. While *causal chain* and *event timeline* may have been unclear, the constellation may still have been too *extraordinary* not to reward a quest for narrative significance. It may also have corresponded to a criterion which I had not considered when classifying the pictures according to narrativity, *experientiality*, i.e. "highlighting the pressure of events on real or imagined consciousnesses affected by the occurrences at issue" (Herman 2009: xvi).

In future research, the possibility of a weighed contribution of different criteria on the storytelling ability and degree of storytelling should be assessed and experientiality might be added as a criterion.

11 Conclusion and future research

It has been argued that at least in the case of ordinary concepts, the validity of definitions should be assessed through intuitions as reflected in categorization dispositions. Definitions as well as expert intuitions and language use were shown to be problematic for categorizations because they are prone to media blindness (Hausken 2004), can be theory-loaded (Hanson 1965: 54–62) and can mesh-up ordinary and theoretical meanings (Fischer 2014: 132–133). Categorizations by non-experts as assessed in large-scale experiments were presented as an alternative. It was argued that in narratology and other fields concerned with describing and analyzing ordinary everyday practices, studying the categorization dispositions of laypeople can and should ground decisions concerning the conditions of subject domain membership. An experiment around pictorial narrative was introduced and its theoretical implications were presented. Using such

studies as the basis of our definitions and theories, we can avoid that we inadvertently try to *revise* how terms like “narrative”, “story” or “game” *are used* rather than describing *what they mean*. In the future, it would be interesting to perform similar experiments with other marginal cases, e. g. wordless music and so-called non-mimetic narratives, where abstract figures seem to interact with each other, for instance in comics (see Baetens 2011, 2013). I believe that we would encounter substantial narrativity differences between, say, a rather static Mondrian painting such as *Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue* (1930) and dynamic Malevich paintings such as *Suprematist Painting* (1916) or even *Red and Black Square* (1915). Is it not likely that “the degree of narrativity of an ‘unstable’ constellation (with non-parallel edges, not-centered in the image, etc.) of different shapes (of unequal sizes and colors, of divergent geometric shapes, etc.) generally tends to be higher than that of a stable constellation of identical shapes” (Speidel 2018b: 120)? The hypothesis remains to be tested. There is thus plenty of room for future experiments in descriptive narratology.

Acknowledgements: The research for this publication was made possible through a grant from the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) within the scope of my two-year project “M1944: Towards an Experimental Narratology of the Image” at the Lab for Cognitive Research in Art History (CReA) at the University of Vienna. I would like to thank CReA founder Raphael Rosenberg for his trust and support. The members of CReA and the EVA Lab at the university of Vienna have helped me develop the experiment and Pamela Heilig has played an important role in implementing it. Neil Cohn, Laura Commare, Michael Forster, Helmut Leder, Dominic Lopes, Matthew Pelowski, Françoise Revaz, Marie-Laure Ryan, Maria Schreiber as well as Werner Wolf have given helpful feedback on first versions of the survey, and Eva Specker has helped with data cleanup and a first draft of the statistics. Dominik Leiner from SoSci Survey has been very responsive while I conducted the survey and following the completion of the experiment. Rena Katikos has edited a first, Shatila Mehraeen a later version of this essay. Nicolas Kleinschmidt has given helpful feedback on an earlier version from a philosophy of science perspective. Theodosios Evgenikos has done the statistical calculations. I assume responsibility for all remaining errors.

References

- Austin, John Langshaw. 1961. A plea for excuses. In J. O. Urmson & G. J. Warnock (eds.), *J. L. Austin: Philosophical papers*, 123–152. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Baetens, Jan. 2011. Abstraction in comics. *SubStance* 40(1). 94–113. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41300190> (accessed: 9 August 2018).
- Baetens, Jan. 2013. Abstraction et narration: une alliance paradoxale (notes sur la bande dessinée abstraite), *Études de lettres*, 3–4. 45–68. <http://edl.revues.org/572>(accessed ...).
- Barthes, Roland. 2005. Introduction to the structural analysis of narratives. In Martin McQuillan (ed.), *The narrative reader*, 109–115. London: Routledge.
- Barolsky, Paul. 2010. There is no such thing as narrative art. *Arion* 18(2). 111–123. <http://www.bu.edu/arion/volume-18-barolsky-narrative-art/> (accessed: 25 August 2018)
- Bremond, Claude. 1964. Le message narratif. *Communications* 4. 4–32.
- Brilliant, Richard. 1984. *Visual narratives. Storytelling in Etruscan and Roman Art*. Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press.
- Chatman, Seymour. 1983. *Story and discourse. Narrative structure in fiction and film*. Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press.
- Chatman, Seymour. 1990. *Coming to terms. The rhetoric of narrative in fiction and film*. Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press.
- Coste, Didier. 1989. *Narrative as communication*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Currie, Gregory. 2010. *Narratives and narrators. A philosophy of stories*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Dubislav, Walter. 1981. *Die Definition*. Hamburg: Meiner.
- Fischer, Eugen. 2014. Verbal fallacies and philosophical intuitions: The continuing relevance of ordinary language analysis. In Brian Garvey (ed.), *J. L. Austin on language*, 124–140. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Frasca, Gonzalo. 1999. Ludology meets narratology: Similitude and differences between (video) games and narrative. *ludology.org*. <http://www.ludology.org/articles/ludology.htm> (accessed: 9 August 2018).
- Gaudreault, André. 1988. *Du littéraire au filmique. Système du Récit*. Paris & Québec: Méridiens Klincksieck & Presses de l'Université Laval.
- Gaudreault, André. 1989. Mimésis et diègèsis chez Platon. *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* 94(1). 79–92.
- Genette, Gérard. 1966. Frontières du récit, *Communications* 8. 152–163.
- Genette, Gérard. 1980. *Narrative discourse. An essay in method*. Jane E. Lewin (trans.). Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.
- Genette, Gérard. 1983. Letter to André Gaudreault 22 of February 1983, quoted in André Gaudreault. 1988. *Du littéraire au filmique. Système du récit*. Note 8, p. 29. Paris/Québec: Méridiens Klincksieck/Presses de l'Université Laval.
- Goodman, Nelson. 1981. Twisted tales; Or story, study, and symphony. *Synthese* 46(3). [The Richard Rudner Memorial Issue]. 331–349.
- Giuliani, Luca. 2013. *Image and myth. A history of pictorial narration in Greek art*. Joseph O'Donnell (trans.), Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Hanson, Norwood. 1958. *Patterns of discovery*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Hausken, Liv. 2004. Textual theory and blind spots in media studies. In Marie-Laure Ryan (ed.), *Narrative across media: The languages of storytelling*, 391–403. Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press.
- Herman, David. 2009. *Basic elements of narrative*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Hühn, Peter. 2009. Event and eventfulness. In Peter Hühn, John Pier, Wolf Schmid and Jörg Schönert (eds.) *Handbook of narratology*. Berlin & New York: Walter de Gruyter.
- Hühn, Peter. 2015. Visual narratives: Narration in paintings and photographs. *Literaturwissenschaftliches Jahrbuch* 56. 349–365.
- IBM Corp. Released 2016. IBM SPSS statistics for Windows, Version 24.0. Armonk, NY: IBM Corp.
- Kafalenos, Emma. 1996. Implications of narrative in painting and photography. *New Novel Review* 3(2). 54–65.
- Kemp, Wolfgang. 1996a. *Die Räume der Maler. Zur Bilderzählung seit Giotto*. München: Verlag C. H. Beck.
- Kemp, Wolfgang. 1996b. Narrative. In Robert S. Nelson (ed.), *Critical terms for art history*, 58–69. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Kibédi Varga, Aron. 1989. *Discours, récit, image*. Liège & Bruxelles: Pierre Mardaga.
- Kibédi Varga, Aron. 1990. Visuelle Argumentation und visuelle Narrativität. In: Wolfgang Harms (Ed.), *Text und Bild, Bild und Text. DFG-Symposium 1988*, 356–367. Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler.
- Kuhn, Thomas. 1996. *The structure of scientific revolutions*, Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Leiner, Dominik J. 2014. SoSci Survey. <http://www.socisurvey.com> (accessed: 9 August 2018).
- Lessing, Gotthold Ephraim. 1853. *Laocoon or the limits of poetry and painting*, E. C. Beasley (trans.), London: Longman.
- Lopes, Dominic. 1996. *Understanding pictures*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Metz, Christian. 1968. Remarques pour une phénoménologie du narratif. In Christian Metz, *Essais sur la signification au cinéma*, 25–35. Paris: Klincksieck.
- Nanay, Bence. 2009. Narrative pictures. *The journal of aesthetics and art criticism* 67(1). 119–129.
- Pericolo, Lorenzo. 2011. *Caravaggio and pictorial narrative: Dislocating the istoria in early modern painting*. London: Harvey Miller Publishers.
- Prince, Gerald. 1999. Revisiting narrativity. In Walter Grünzweig & Andreas Solbach (eds.), *Grenzüberschreitungen: Narratologie im Kontext / Transcending Boundaries: Narratology in Context*, 43–51. Tübingen: Gunter Narr.
- Prince, Gerald. 2012. Récit minimal et narrativité. In Sabrinelle Bedrane, Françoise Revaz & Michel Jacques Viegnès (eds.), *Le récit minimal. Du minime au minimalisme. Littérature, arts, media*, 23–32. Paris: Presses Sorbonne Nouvelle.
- Ranta, Michael. 2013. (Re-)Creating order: Narrativity and implied world views in pictures. *Storyworlds* 5. 1–30
- Revaz, Françoise. 1997. *Les Textes d'action*. Metz: Université de Metz.
- Revaz, Françoise. 2009. *Introduction à la narratologie: Action et narration*. Bruxelles: Groupe De Boeck.
- Rimmon-Kenan, Shlomith. 2006. Concepts of narrative. In Matti Hyvärinen, Anu Korhonen & Juri Mykkänen (eds.), *The travelling concept of narrative. Studies across disciplines in the humanities and social sciences*, 10–19. Helsinki: Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies.
- Ryan, Marie-Laure. 2004. Still pictures. In Ryan, Marie-Laure (ed.), *Narrative across media: The languages of storytelling*, 139–144. Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press.

- Salen, Katie & Eric Zimmerman. 2003. *Rules of play: Game design fundamentals*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Schaeffer, Jean-Marie. 2001. Narration visuelle et interpretation. In Jan Baetens & Mireille Ribière (eds.), *Temps, narration & image fixe. Time, narrative and the fixed image*, 11–27. Amsterdam: Rodopi.
- Schmid, Wolf. 2010. *Narratology: An introduction*, Alexander Starritt (trad.), Berlin & New York: De Gruyter.
- Sellers, Wilfrid. 1956. Empiricism and the philosophy of mind in H. Feigl & M. Scriven (eds.), *Minnesota studies in the philosophy of science*, vol. I, 253–329. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Simons, Jan. 2007. Narrative, games, and theory. *Game studies* 7 (1). <http://gamestudies.org/07010701/articles/simons> (accessed: 9 August 2018).
- Schöttler, Tobias. 2016. Pictorial narrativity: Transcending intrinsically incomplete representations, In Natalia Igl & Sonja Zeman (eds.), *Perspectives on narrativity and narrative perspectivation*, 161–182. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing.
- Sonesson, Göran. 1997. Mute narratives. In Ulla-Britta Lagerroth Hans Lund & Erik Hedling (eds.), *Interart poetics. Essays on the interrelations of the arts and the media*, 243–250. Amsterdam: Rodopi.
- Speidel, Klaus. 2012. Dispositif pictural et problèmes de narration: l'exemple de La libération de St. Pierre par l'ange de David II Teniers. In Jean-René Gaborit (ed.), *Actes du 132e congrès national des sociétés historiques et scientifiques, Paris/Arles, 2007*, 85–92.
- Speidel, Klaus. 2013a. Can a single picture tell a story?, *Diegesis* 2(1). 173–194. <https://www.diegesis.uni-wuppertal.de/index.php/diegesis/article/view/128/158> (accessed: 9 August 2018).
- Speidel, Klaus. 2013b. *Narration visuelle et récit iconique. Raconter une histoire en une image*, doctoral thesis, Université Paris Sorbonne.
- Speidel, Klaus. 2018a. *Jak pojedyncze obrazy opowiadają historie. Krytyczne wprowadzenie do problematyki narracji ikonicznej w narratologii* [How single pictures tell stories. A critical introduction to the problem of iconic narrative in narratology]. In: Katarzyna Kaczmarczyk (ed.), *Narratologia transmedialna. Wyzwania, teorie, praktyki* [Transmedial narratology. Challenges, theories, practices]. Krakow. [English manuscript: www.academia.edu/35764470/Klaus_Speidel_How_single_pictures_tell_stories_A_critical_introduction_to_narrative_pictures_and_the_problem_of_iconic_narrative_in_narratology (accessed: 9 August 2018).]
- Speidel, Klaus. 2018b. The problem of narration in abstract art / Le problème de la narration dans l'art abstrait. In: Marianne Derrien & Sarah Ihler-Meyer (eds.), *Flatland. Narrative Abstractions*, Esslingen/Luxemburg: Cantz. https://www.academia.edu/36061517/The_Problem_of_Narration_in_Abstract_Art_Le_probl%C3%A8me_de_la_narration_dans_lart_abstrait. (accessed: 9 August 2018).
- Speidel, Klaus. 2018c. Lolita vs. the Hickey: How stories become spatial. A call for trace-based narratives in art. In Brigitte Kowanz & Peter Kozek (eds.), *Transmediale Kunst/Transmedia Art. lightness and matter*, 433–443. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Steiner, Wendy. 1988. *Pictures of romance. Form against context in painting and literature*. Chicago: Wendy. 1988. University of Chicago Press.
- Steiner, Wendy. 2004. Pictorial narrativity. In Marie-Laure Ryan (ed.), *Narrative across media: The languages of storytelling*, 145–177. Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press.
- Stohn, Günther. 2001. Ein Beitrag zum 3. Kapitel der Poetik des Aristoteles (1448 A 20–24). *Hermes*, 129(3). 344–352.

- Strawson, P. F. 1996. *Individuals. An essay in descriptive metaphysics*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Todorov, Tzvetan. 1969. *La grammaire du décameron*. The Hague & Paris: Mouton.
- Todorov, Tzvetan. 1973. Le discours de la magie. *L'Homme* 13(4). 38-65
- Todorov, Tzvetan. 1992. *Poétique de la prose*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil.
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 2009. *Philosophical investigations*. P. M. S. Hacker & Joachim Schulte (eds.), G. E. M. Anscombe (trans.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wolf, Werner. 2002. Intermediale Erzähltheorie. In Ansgar Nünning & Vera Nünning (eds.), *Erzähltheorie transgenerisch, intermedial, interdisziplinär*, 23–104. Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier.
- Wolf, Werner. 2003. Narrative and narrativity: A narratological reconceptualization and its applicability to the visual arts. *Word & Image* 19(3). 180–197.
- Wolf, Werner. 2011. Narratology and media(lity): The transmedial expansion of a literary discipline and possible consequences. In Greta Olson, *Current trends in narratology*, 145–180. Berlin & New York: De Gruyter.
- Laurence, Stephen & Eric Margolis. 2003. Concepts and conceptual analysis, *Philosophy and phenomenological research* 67(2). 253–282.

Appendix

List of pictures:

1. Banksy, *Media*, 2006
2. Banksy, *Los Angeles*, 2011
3. DRAN, *Untitled [Three boys standing around a forth who wears a pink neck scarf]*, n.d.
4. William Hogarth, *Marriage A-la-Mode 5, The Bagnio*, 1743-1745
5. William Hogarth, *The Graham children*, 1742
6. Jean-Baptiste Greuze, *The ungrateful son*, 1777
7. Domenichino, *St. Cecilia*, 1615-1617
8. Domenichino, *Diana and her Nymphs*, 1616-1617
9. Dominichino, *Landscape with a Fortified Town*, c. 1634-1635
10. Pietro Lorenzetti, *Saint Humility transports Bricks to the Monastery*, c. 1341
11. Ambrogio Lorenzetti, *Scenes from the Life of Saint Nicholas*, c. 1332
12. Ambrogio Lorenzetti, *Allegory of Effect of Good and Bad Government*, detail: market scene, c. 1339
13. Gardening scene in Nordqvist, S. (1991). *Aufruhr im Gemüsebeet*. Hamburg: Oetinger.
14. Cat and Rooster scene in Nordqvist, S. (1997). *Findus und der Hahn im Korb*. Hamburg: Oetinger.
15. Grandpa looking at object in Nordqvist, S. (2008). *Die verrückte Hutjagd*. (A. Kutsch, Ed.) (1st ed.). Ham: Ellerman.

Credits:

William Hogarth, *Marriage A-la-Mode: 5, The Bagnio* (1743–1745), Wikimedia Public Domain

Jean-Baptiste Greuze, *La malédiction paternelle – Le fils ingrat* (1777), © Musée du Louvre/
A. Dequier – M. Bard

William Hogarth, *The Graham children* (1742), Wikimedia Public Domain