The Scripted Life of Public Truth: From Pseudo-Events to Pseudo-Worlds

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Abstract

This article theorises 'the new paradigm of mass communication[1]', 'the media scenario[2]' and pseudo-events and pseudo-worlds as the central operating units of the new paradigm of mass communication and of the media scenario. Building on The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America, pseudo-events are treated not as occasional distortions of public life but as a routine mode of reality-production: events increasingly occur in order to be narrated, circulated, replayed, and emotionally 'confirmed' by audiences. The argument extends this logic from events to worlds. Drawing on possible worlds theory and contemporary narratology associated with Marie-Laure Ryan, pseudo-worlds are defined as coherent but strategically engineered storyworlds that can be entered, inhabited, and defended as if actual. In networked environments, these worlds are sustained less by evidence than by repeatable narrative roles, affective cues, and the infrastructural design of platforms. Hyperlinks, interfaces, and procedural media function as ontological switches that intensify re-centring and multiply 'world transitions', enabling rapid movement between fiction, documentation, and hybrid scenography. As a result, publics no longer share a single 'mass' reality but participate in overlapping and competing world-models, each with its own internal truth conditions and moral coordinates. The media scenario is therefore approached as a system of world-building in which attention, identity, and political alignment are organised through scripted participation rather than deliberation. The article concludes that the key struggle of contemporary communication is not primarily over facts, but over the design, accessibility, and durability of pseudo-worlds that convert narrative coherence into social power.

Keywords

pseudo-events; pseudo-worlds; possible worlds theory; storyworlds; media scenario; world-building; hypertext and hyperlinks; ontological switching; platform mediation; scripted participation; narrative reality-production; interpretive communities

The Theory of Possible Worlds

'Fiction creates a world that departs from the actual world, yet remains connected to it through shared principles of intelligibility.'
— Marie-Laure Ryan

[1] Ayolov, P. (2026). The New Paradigm of Mass Communication. [online] doi:https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.5998697.

[2] Ayolov, Peter (2026) The Media Scenario: Scriptwriting for Journalists eBook: Kindle Store. Amazon.com: [online]

In the book[3] The Theory of Possible Worlds and Contemporary Narratology (2019), Alastair Bell and Marie-Laure Ryan propose a systematic approach to possible worlds theory by taking it beyond the limitations imposed by traditional philosophy and structuralism on language. Their ambition is to overcome what was once described as the 'prison of language'—the idea that thought and meaning are entirely subordinated to linguistic structure and cannot be conceived outside it. Possible worlds theory escapes this trap by offering a model in which language is not a boundary but an instrument for describing multiple realities. Narrative is thus understood not as a product of a closed linguistic system, but as a dynamic construction of worlds that can exist, intersect and transform according to the logic of imagination. The central idea of the theory is that every statement, whether philosophical, scientific or literary, can be understood within the framework of a world—actual or possible. Truth, from this perspective, is not absolute but contextual: a proposition may be true in one world and false in another. This shift frees semantics from its dependence on empirical reality and situates it within a network of possibilities in which language is no longer merely a system of signs, but a tool for modelling conceivable scenarios. Within each such scenario, words, meanings and relations follow the internal logic of the given world rather than a universal norm. This reconceptualisation has decisive consequences for literary theory. First, it rehabilitates fiction as a legitimate object of truth—not because fiction is 'true' in our world, but because it is true in its own. Second, it allows criticism to rethink reference without falling back into naïve realism. Possible worlds provide a way of understanding how literature speaks about reality without duplicating it. The literary work becomes a laboratory of modalities—a space in which the limits of the possible, the moral, the necessary and the impossible are explored. From this follows a new understanding of the reader's role.

If every text projects its own 'textual actual world', then the act of reading becomes a process of re-centring—a temporary relocation of consciousness into that world, which is experienced as actual within the logic of pretence. The reader does not merely observe fiction from the outside, but inhabits it from within, recalibrating their own system of beliefs and meanings. This explains why fictional events can provoke real emotions: they occur in a world in which the reader temporarily lives. Possible worlds theory also introduces the key principle of minimal departure—the idea that readers carry over as much of their real-world knowledge as possible, altering only what the text explicitly requires. In this way the fictional world always remains close to the real one, yet never fully coincides with it. This balanced distance constitutes the foundation of literary imagination: it explores new possibilities without severing ties to the familiar. The theory also rethinks narrative structure itself. Every story can be viewed as a system of interconnected worlds—a primary world that establishes the facts of the narrative, and multiple sub-worlds generated by the thoughts, desires and fears of characters. Action becomes movement between these worlds, a collision of competing possibilities and values. Plot development and resolution are not merely changes in events, but reconfigurations of relations between worlds: which possibilities are realised, which remain closed. On a broader level, possible worlds theory offers a model for understanding genres as different profiles of accessibility between worlds. Realist narrative maintains proximity to our world, the fantastic partially disrupts it, and alternate histories overturn it entirely. This typology is not simply a classification of texts, but an instrument for describing how culture imagines reality and its limits. By moving analysis beyond linguistic constraints, possible worlds theory transforms narratology into a modal science—not of words, but of possible modes of existence that narrative can model. It shows that language is not a prison, but an open system capable of projecting multiple realities,

[3] Bell, A. and Ryan, M.-L. (2019). Possible Worlds Theory and Contemporary Narratology. University Of Nebraska Press.

each with its own logic, morality and truth. In this sense, literature does not merely reflect the world, but multiplies it: it creates a horizon of possibility in which thought, imagination and language are released from the obligation to coincide with actuality and begin to generate worlds of their own.

How Does Narrative Become a Storyworld?

'Storyworlds are mental models of the situations and events described in a narrative—models that readers construct on the basis of textual cues.'
— Marie-Laure Ryan

In Possible Worlds Theory, Bell and Ryan develop the idea that narrative does not merely communicate events but constructs entire universes—storyworlds—that function as thinkable, inhabitable and analysable worlds. This concept shifts possible worlds theory from philosophical modality into narratology and shows how fictional and non-fictional discourse can be understood within a unified framework of world-building. Narrative, from this perspective, is no longer simply a structure of words or a sequence of actions, but a model of existence—a way in which language, imagination and culture generate alternative spaces of meaning. A storyworld is a cognitive and artistic construct with its own ontology, agents, temporality and laws. It is not merely a stage on which events occur, but an organised system of relations that produces a sense of coherence and reality. The text may be only a blueprint, yet in the reader's mind a complete world is assembled—one with geography, social order, causality and moral coordinates. This capacity to construct 'more than is said' is the key to narrative power: stories engage because they invite imagination to supplement, expand and inhabit the world that language outlines. Possible worlds provide the conceptual tools for thinking this 'worldness'. They introduce the idea that the truth and meaning of any statement depend on the world in which it is evaluated. Every narrative thus establishes its own actual world, distinct from ours but comparable to it along certain parameters. To the extent that this world shares laws, values or logics with reality, the reader can orient themselves and draw inferences. When differences become more pronounced—as in fantasy or alternate history—it is precisely the violation of realist rules that sustains curiosity and meaning. Storyworlds therefore arrange themselves along a spectrum, from those closely aligned with the actual world to those that are fully autonomous or even impossible. The worlds constructed by narrative are not necessarily fictional. Every documentary or autobiographical text also builds a world-image that may diverge from lived reality. In non-fictional narratives the world is a reconstruction of the real; in fictional ones it is a creative act of invention. The difference lies in the status of reference: the real world serves as a source in the former and as a model in the latter. In all cases, the reader constructs a mental model rather than merely registering facts or descriptions. Bell and Ryan emphasise that worldness does not depend on the scale of the narrative, but on its coherence and internal logic. Even a minimal text can contain the germ of a universe if it provides sufficient information about relations between events, spaces and actions. Conversely, large-scale narratives unfolding across multiple works and media create expanded storyworlds in which individual stories function as episodes within a broader cosmology. This marks the transition from possible worlds to story universes—cultural constructs that exist beyond any single text and can be shared, continued and rewritten by different authors and audiences.

The concept of the storyworld also raises questions of identity and continuity. When do two narratives belong to the same world? The answer lies in the degree of overlap between characters,

spaces, temporal order and moral code. When these elements are preserved, new stories operate as extensions; when they are fundamentally altered, parallel worlds or alternative versions emerge. This logic of multiplication also explains phenomena such as transmedia storytelling, in which a single world is retold and reconfigured across different media—literature, film, games, comics—each adding its own layer to the shared imaginary space. Worlds also differ in their degree of completeness. Philosophical possible worlds are ideally complete: for every proposition, it is either true or false. Narrative worlds rarely achieve such completeness. They contain gaps, undisclosed facts and indeterminate elements. These gaps are not weaknesses but sources of strength, because they compel imagination to collaborate. The reader fills in the omissions by constructing a personal version of the world and thus participates in the act of creation itself. In this sense narrativity is not merely the transmission of events but a dialogue between text and consciousness, between fiction and cognition. Ultimately, the shift from possible worlds to story universes transforms the nature of narratology itself. It turns narrative analysis into an investigation of world-building—of how language creates inhabitable spaces, how texts organise experience as a world, and how audiences move between real and imagined universes. Within this framework literature and media cease to function as mirrors of reality and become its co-authors—systems that do not merely describe the world, but produce it, expand it and multiply it within the boundless field of the possible.

Hyperlinks as Ontological Switches

'In hypertext, reading becomes a navigation through a network of possible worlds.'
— Marie-Laure Ryan

Alistair Bell and Marie-Laure Ryan examine how possible worlds theory can explain the transformed nature of narrative in the digital age. They show that hypertextual and multimedia narratives do not merely extend traditional concepts of story and plot, but transform the very ontology of fiction itself. In digital prose, hyperlinks function as ontological switches that reorder the boundary between the fictional and the real. This shift alters the understanding of narrative experience: the reader no longer moves only within a single textual world, but participates in a continuous passage between multiple worlds—fictional, documentary and networked. Digital prose, as analysed by Bell and Ryan, cannot be conceived outside its technological environment. It is created for the screen and through the screen, incorporating movement, sound, image and interactivity. Here the act of reading becomes navigation, and the hyperlink becomes a gesture that opens a new direction of meaning. Possible worlds are materialised not solely through language, but through the network architecture of the internet itself, which enables the simultaneous existence of different realities. Each click opens a door into another modal domain: from a fictional text to a documentary website, from an imagined scene to a real archive. In this context the hyperlink is not merely a technical element, but a medial symbol of modality—a sign that the boundary between worlds is in motion. Bell and Ryan identify three primary effects of these links that transform the reader's position in relation to the narrative world. The first is the blinking effect: a rapid and repeated shifting between the fictional and the actual world. The reader is simultaneously aware of leaving the text and continues to conceive the abandoned world as real. This ambiguity produces a new sense of presence—being both inside and outside the narrative at once. The second effect is updating, whereby a link leads to a real source capable of altering the interpretation of the fiction. The real document becomes part of the narrative's internal logic and refreshes its claim to truth. The third

effect is fusion—the moment in which the link merges the two worlds so that the boundary between them dissolves. Fiction turns into document, and document into narrative. These effects are not stylistic devices but deep ontological operations. They require the reader to perform constant 're-centring', a term Ryan uses to describe the imaginative relocation of consciousness from the actual world to the world of the text.

In the digital context this relocation becomes bidirectional and repeatable: each link triggers a momentary exit and return, through which the reader not only inhabits but actively reconstructs the world of the work. Reading becomes continuous ontological labour—a synchronisation of the real and the virtual. In this way possible worlds theory acquires a new function. It no longer merely describes the logical relations between fictional and actual worlds, but models the very process of movement between them. Digital prose, through its interactivity and multimodality, demonstrates that fiction is not a stable object but a dynamic configuration of relations. Each hyperlink is an act of transfer—a kind of portal that connects worlds and recalibrates their ontological coordinates. This new form of narrative also demands a new type of reader. The reader is no longer a passive observer but an active participant who selects, combines and interprets. Digital culture turns the reader into a navigator of worlds, a co-author of meaning. This leads to a rethinking of authorship itself: the author no longer controls a linear structure but designs a system of possibilities that allows multiple trajectories. In this way hypertext becomes a model of the world itself—not hierarchical and stable, but networked, relational and open. Bell and Ryan emphasise that hyperlinks do not simply destroy the illusion of reality, but complicate it. They enable distance and immersion, irony and empathy at the same time. When a link leads to a real document, the effect is not distraction but intensified authenticity. Digital narrative does not deny the real; it weaves it into its own structure, turning the network into a space of ethical and emotional engagement. Ultimately, possible worlds theory applied to digital prose reveals that hyperlinks are not merely tools of navigation, but metaphysical mechanisms of connection. They transform the reader into a mediator between fiction and reality, and the text into a dynamic network of worlds. Digital narrative does not abolish traditional narrativity; it reconfigures it—from a closed system into an open field of possibilities, where meaning emerges in the very act of moving from one world to another.

Rethinking Narrative through the Digital

'Digital environments are procedural; they represent their content through algorithms. They are not just stories we read, but worlds we navigate.'
— Janet H. Murray

In the book[4] Playing at Narratology: Digital Media as Narrative Theory (2019), David Punday reverses the direction of inquiry: not how theory explains digital media, but how digital media already produce theory by turning abstract narratological concepts into working code and practical algorithms. The central claim is that when code encounters story, narratology is reformatted. Storytelling ceases to function only as an analytical model and becomes an operating system in which interfaces, rules and algorithms perform the work of narrative structures. Instead of asking whether digital forms are 'true' narratives, the analysis reveals how they bring to the surface the latent assumptions of theory itself. What is an event when it occurs

[4] Punday, D. (2019). Playing at narratology : digital media as narrative theory. Columbus: The Ohio State University Press.

at runtime? What is a character when agency is distributed between player input, animation and procedures? What is setting when space is navigable and procedural rather than merely descriptive; what is a world when it is configured through databases, rules and simulation? What is narration when direction is embedded in affordances, feedback loops and state trees? The digital environment shifts the status of narrative from fixed text to a system of possibilities. The interface is no longer a neutral window but a rhetoric: the cursor, camera movement, menus, metrics and hubs guide attention and tempo in the same way that discourse once guided point of view and montage. Rules act as an implicit narrator: they define horizons of possibility, sanction choices and 'speak' through their consequences. Algorithmic temporality replaces the linear time of plot with cyclical regimes of trial and error, checkpoints, repetition and emergent configurations; tension is encoded in systems of risk and reward, while the narrative arc is translated into rhythms of difficulty and mastery. In this regime, the event is an executable action arising from the encounter between user input, system state and probabilistic mechanics; fabula becomes a trajectory through a space of states, and discourse becomes the interface economy of showing and withholding.

The character turns into a composite: a visual layer, behavioural scripts, statistical parameters and systemic positioning; subjectivity is constructed through camera, sound, haptic feedback and informational access. Setting becomes an organisational logic: it maps access, filters tasks, packages narrative possibilities and assigns semantic weight to movement. The world is an ontological specification in which rules determine what counts as causal, possible, permitted and meaningful; transmedia extensions function as tests of identity and continuity under new constraints. From this follow methodological adjustments for narratology itself. Rather than pursuing universal schemes, it examines strategies that travel across media: prompting, mapping, simulating, executing. Instead of opposing 'story' and 'description', it treats description as the management of attention and access; instead of insisting on a single narrator, it analyses distributed modes of authorship in which system design, level architecture and interface composition function as a narrative voice. Instead of understanding immersion solely as an effect of illusion, it reconceives it as a competence of use: learning the grammar of interaction in which meaning emerges from practices rather than from representations alone. Digital forms historicise theory itself by showing that so-called classical concepts always contained an executable potential that is now literalised in code. This displaces sterile debates between 'old' and 'new': the value of the digital lies not in abolishing tradition but in making it visible and operational. Ultimately, the book argues that digital narrative is narratology by other means: a laboratory in which abstract categories become engineering problems and hypotheses become systems people act within. When code meets story, theory does not merely adapt to a new medium; it gains a mirror that forces it to specify itself, to become sensitive to materials, rules and interfaces, and to think of storytelling as a practice of design, play and interpretation within a single operational environment.

Positioning the Reader in Digital Narrative

'In cybertext, the user's traversal is a function of physical construction; the reader is not only a reader, but also a player, a figure who moves the pieces.'
— Espen J. Aarseth

In Playing at Narratology, David Punday rethinks the classical categories of storytelling in order to explain how digital media transform the relations between author, text and reader. He begins

from the premise that narrative has always involved an act of mediation—someone tells someone else that something has happened. In the digital environment, however, this structure is destabilised and rearranged, because storytelling no longer takes place solely through language, but through actions, choices and interfaces. Punday shows that digital narrative reveals a new form of mediation—not only between voices, but between systems and participants. This shift requires a theoretical move beyond the narrator, towards models that conceptualise the reader as simultaneously interpreter and operator. Digital narration introduces a different mode of participation. It is not merely a 'told world', but a system of rules that the reader must learn in order to move within it. Punday notes that every digital text establishes its own grammar of action—what a click means, what an icon unlocks, what enables navigation. Positioning the reader thus shifts from interpretation to execution. Reading becomes interaction, and narration becomes a programmed procedure in which meaning emerges from the joint operation of user and code. This transformation turns rules into narrative elements: they are no longer a hidden frame, but a source of meaning, tension and narrative rhythm. In this context, Punday introduces the concept of 'intrigue'—a structural plan through which the system guides the participant's actions while the narrative unfolds. Intrigue is not simply a sequence of events, but an underlying mechanism that organises the experience of reading. It establishes possibilities, constraints and feedback, placing the reader in the role of an explorer who must decode the internal logic of the work. In this way, the digital text always operates on two parallel levels: the narrative level, where someone 'tells', and the level of intrigue, where someone 'designs' how one must act in order to access the telling. This double positioning turns the reader into both listener and participant, discovering the plot through their own moves. The interactivity of digital forms also reveals a new type of 'narrative agency'.

Traditional narrative conveys information through voice, point of view and style, whereas digital narrative delegates this function to system architecture. Code, interface and rules become equivalents of the narrator. They do not 'speak', but 'govern', by defining routes, signalling possibilities and setting boundaries. Punday describes this as a rhetoric of use: every interaction is simultaneously a meaningful act and a gesture of interpretation. The theory of the implied author is thus rewritten—not as a hidden textual norm, but as a design that channels reader behaviour. The role of the audience changes accordingly. Classical narratology distinguishes between authorial and narrative audiences—the former recognising artistic codes, the latter accepting the fiction as real. In the digital environment, a third position emerges: that of the participant, who must understand not only meanings, but also system mechanics. This participant reads rules, tests them through practice, and learns what can and cannot be done. From this arises a new form of interpretative competence—not literary, but procedural. The reader no longer seeks hidden meaning, but explores the boundaries of possibility. Digital narrative does not abolish storytelling; it extends it into a new dimension. It combines linguistic and algorithmic mediation, making interaction itself part of narrative logic. Every link, every choice and every action becomes an act of storytelling. The story thus unfolds not only in the text, but in the very process of use. The reader is no longer merely the addressee of a message, but a co-author who constructs the plot while participating in it. The result is a new form of narratology—one that is both medial and material. It analyses not only what is said, but how the system enables it to be experienced. Storytelling is no longer a single act, but a constellation of interactions between text, interface and user. This requires a theory that understands narrative not as a product, but as a process; not as fixed meaning, but as a dynamic of use. In the digital age, the narrator fragments into multiple voices, codes and protocols. Intrigue and rules of action become new instruments of narration, and the reader becomes a figure who simultaneously listens and plays, reads and creates. Beyond the narrator begins the space where story and system meet—and where

narratology must learn to think not only how stories are told, but how one must act in order for them to be told at all.

Digital Artefacts and the New Narratology

'The procedural and participatory nature of digital environments makes the computer not just a delivery system, but a co-author of the narrative experience.'
— Janet H. Murray

David Punday examines how digital artefacts do not simply change the way stories are told, but fundamentally rethink the structure of narrative theory itself. His central claim is that when the medium changes, the logic of narration changes with it. The machine is no longer a neutral conduit of meaning, but an active participant that shapes thinking, perception and action. Digital technologies thus do not merely offer new expressive forms; they challenge the inherited assumptions of narratology itself—what it means to have a narrator, a plot, time and an audience, when all of these categories are embedded in software and interface design. Punday shows that classical narratology developed in an era when literature appeared to function as a universal platform. The book, the page and the order of reading were so stable that they were perceived as transparent. The digital transition disrupts this transparency by making materiality visible. Every interface—mouse, touchscreen, sensor, VR headset—rewrites not only interaction, but the very idea of action, time and space. This shift transforms the medium from background into event, from tool into co-author. Digital artefacts bring to the surface mechanisms that were previously hidden: the rules that guide perception and the protocols that define what can be done within a given narrative system. Within this framework, Punday identifies two new figures: the narrator and the 'intrigator'. The narrator organises voice and temporal flow, while the intrigator designs the actions through which the reader or player advances the story. This dual structure reveals that narrative is no longer purely linguistic, but procedural. Meaning emerges from interaction between user and system, between human intention and programmatic logic. The reader does not merely interpret, but performs. Every click, pause or error becomes part of pacing and dramaturgy. Narrative time is supplemented by 'interface time'—the rhythm of clicks, delays and loading sequences. Space is likewise doubled: there is the world of the story and the orienting space through which the participant navigates. These dimensions are not decorative additions, but structural components of narrative experience.

Punday emphasises that narratology has always been close to the logic of play. Its systemic impulse, its pursuit of models and classifications, already framed storytelling as a combination of rules and variations. Digital media literalise this tendency. Theory, once applied to fictional structures, becomes visible in practice: stories unfold through interfaces, buttons, scripts and algorithms. The artefact itself demonstrates what plot, character or voice are by translating them into mechanics. This engagement with the machine is not a formal experiment alone, but a way of probing the limits of narration. The central conclusion is that action becomes a new mode of understanding. To grasp the story, the participant must learn to operate within the system, and this learning process is itself meaningful. Digital narrative cannot be 'read' without being played. This produces a new kind of audience—not a passive recipient, but an active agent who understands through practice. Punday notes that the rules governing play are rhetorical gestures no less than the sentences that tell a story. Narrative theory must therefore account for these material elements, because they determine how the reader is positioned within the narrative. Digital artefacts, in Punday's view, do not undermine narratology; they compel its evolution.

They are not evidence of the end of storytelling, but laboratories for its rethinking. Where traditional literary analysis sought meaning within the text, digital culture tests meaning through the interface. The interaction between human and machine becomes the new equivalent of the author–reader relation. Theory can no longer limit itself to interpretation; it must address design, code, environment and action as components of narrative structure. In conclusion, Playing at Narratology: Digital Media as Narrative Theory demonstrates that the stories of our time are built not only from words, but from algorithms. When machines participate in the production of meaning, they cease to be mere tools and become co-authors of new ways of thinking. Punday calls for a more flexible theory, one that recognises artefacts as thought experiments and accepts play as a mode of knowledge. In the digital world, narrative no longer unfolds on the page, but on a screen that thinks back—and in doing so proves that storytelling was never purely a human affair, but a collaborative action between story and machine.

Political Scenarios of Tomorrow

'For most people, political language is the political reality.'
— Murray Edelman

In his article[5] 'Screenwriting and Political Narrative' (2018), John Frame examines how script-based thinking is reshaping the way political stories and public meanings are produced. The text proposes a new perspective on the relationship between narrative and power, showing that in the contemporary media environment political events increasingly resemble scripts—carefully structured, emotionally charged and oriented towards a predefined effect. The authors explore how political narratives turn into new forms of 'pseudo-events' that do not merely reflect reality but actively produce it through the dramaturgy of participation. These constructed worlds bind viewers and citizens to an experience, offering not information but involvement in a predesigned plot. From this emerges the central idea that future politics will be written as a script—with clear acts, conflicts and protagonists. The argument begins from the recognition that stories possess greater persuasive power than arguments. Narratives activate not only reason but also the senses, imagination and emotions. They engage audiences more deeply because they generate identification rather than rational assent. Political narratives exploit precisely this psychological and neurological force of storytelling: they create a sense of shared drama in which every citizen can find a role. Political messaging ceases to function as a logical proposition and becomes a narrative line—with heroes, antagonists and climactic moments. This transformation alters the very nature of public communication: from a contest of ideas it becomes a struggle between stories. The key mechanism of this shift is the script. In script-based thinking every story follows a dramatic structure—inciting incident, obstacles, turning points and resolution. This formula, long mastered by cinema and advertising, is now applied to politics. Campaigns, causes and ideological movements are designed as scripts that direct attention, shape emotional engagement and generate a predictable trajectory of development. The political party becomes a guide, the citizen a protagonist, and the 'world' of political action a curated universe of images, sounds and actions in which truth is secondary to experience. This logic is especially visible in the digital environment. The internet provides a continuous stream of behavioural data that allows political 'screenwriters' to calibrate their plots in response to audience reactions. Speeches, videos and posts are tested, rewritten and edited in real time until they achieve maximum impact. The

[5] Midnight Oil Studios. (2018). Screenwriting & Political Narrative by John Fraim. [online] Available at: https://midnightoilstudios.org/2018/10/14/screenwriting-and-political-narrative/ [Accessed 12 Oct. 2025].

pseudo-event, once described as a media illusion, now becomes a living world—interactive, personalised and continuous.

Politics is no longer a sequence of facts but a constant flow of simulated events that feel real because they generate engagement and a sense of belonging. The central concept in this theory is immersion. The deeper viewers or citizens are immersed in a narrative, the harder it becomes to distinguish fiction from reality. For this reason the political message of the future will not be expressed through slogans, but through the construction of entire worlds—interactive campaigns, virtual communities and local 'hubs' where participants do not merely listen but act. The goal is not to inform but to involve, to create an experience in which people perform their assigned roles. This shift turns the audience into co-authors and blurs the boundaries between politics, marketing and art. Script-based structures also raise ethical concerns. The more refined the craft of persuasion becomes, the subtler the potential for manipulation. Political scripts can generate solidarity, but they can also manufacture illusions by replacing genuine public dialogue with a dramaturgical simulation of participation. This creates the need for a new form of literacy—the ability to recognise narrative mechanisms and rhetorical techniques through which political 'realities' are produced. Democracy requires not only storytellers, but critical readers of those stories. Script-based thinking, however, is not solely an instrument of propaganda; it can also become a tool for democratic imagination. If political stories are written honestly and with empathy, they can offer society a shared stage where different perspectives find a place within a broader narrative. Politics then becomes an art of meaning rather than merely a struggle for power. Screenwriting in political narrative outlines a future in which political messages will be constructed using the methods of cinema and advertising, but also with the ethical potential of responsible storytelling. The world of pseudo-events and constructed realities will not disappear; on the contrary, it will continue to expand. The question is whether these worlds will serve manipulation or understanding. The politics of tomorrow will be a politics of authors—those who know how to write not just speeches, but worlds in which citizens can recognise themselves as protagonists of a shared story.

From Scripts to Story Systems

'We need stories in the same way we need dreams.'
— David Foster Wallace

In the book[6] StoryNomics (2018), Robert McKee and Thomas Gerace describe how the logic of screenwriting migrates from the film industry into business, and how this shift gradually transforms the very understanding of communication, persuasion and power. They advance the claim that storytelling is not merely a marketing tool but a fundamental grammar of human perception, through which any message can be transformed into experience. From this emerges the model of storytelling as a system—not a single story, but an integrated world in which people recognise themselves as protagonists. This transformation, originating in the corporate sphere, signals a future politics in which narrative determines action rather than the reverse. The central idea of StoryNomics is that in an age of informational abundance, attention is the scarcest resource. People do not respond to data, claims or advertisements, but to stories that allow them to make sense of their own experiences. McKee and Gerace articulate seven core steps of

[6] Mckee, R. and Gerace, T. (2018). Storynomics. Twelve.

effective storytelling: a character, a problem, a mentor, a plan, a call to action, the avoidance of failure and success. Derived from dramatic structure, this sequence becomes a universal model for building trust. It functions as an algorithm of human attention, arranging information into emotional rhythms and providing a clear direction for action. At the heart of the model lies the idea of ‘the customer as hero’. This reconfigures the traditional approach in which the brand positions itself as the central subject of the story. Instead of broadcasting its achievements and values, the narrative turns toward the individual and their search for resolution, security or meaning. The brand assumes the role of mentor—a figure combining empathy and competence, offering a plan and accompanying the hero toward success. This role is not one of domination but of guidance: the company does not rescue, it supports. In this way a deeper form of communication emerges, based on identification rather than persuasion. When applied consistently, the brand ceases to be a source of noisy advertising and becomes an architect of an environment that the user inhabits. Communication shifts from isolated messages to systems of experience—journeys, rituals and interactive spaces that construct a world with its own rules and meanings. Narrative becomes an ecosystem rather than a campaign.

This marks a transition from a monological to a dialogical model of communication: people are no longer an audience, but participants. This shift also has a profound cognitive logic. People do not seek information, but context. Story is a form of contextualisation that transforms facts into meaning. This is why it is so powerful—it does not describe the world, it models it. In a contemporary culture where attention is contested by countless messages, the most effective actors are not those who shout the loudest, but those who succeed in enveloping participants in an experience, turning them into co-authors. Storytelling thus becomes a form of soft power that guides choice without appearing coercive. On a theoretical level, McKee and Gerace conceptualise storytelling as an energetic system in which tension between desire and obstacle sustains interest. When a company or political actor manages this tension with precise structure and authentic emotion, trust emerges. But the greater this power, the greater the risks. Systematised narratives can be used for manipulation: by simplifying reality, by inventing false antagonists and by maintaining constant emotional dependency. In such cases, narrative ceases to be a tool of understanding and becomes a mechanism of control. This logic explains why business scripts increasingly migrate into politics. The voter is constructed as a hero with a problem—social insecurity, economic inequality, fear of the future—who encounters a mentor in the form of a party or leader. The political programme becomes a ‘plan’, and the campaign a sequence of ‘scenes’ leading toward a promised resolution. Politics thus begins to function like a serial narrative with recurring motifs and recognisable roles that sustain a sense of meaning and direction. The ethical dilemma posed by StoryNomics is whether these story systems will serve human development or reinforce market and political dependency. McKee and Gerace insist that a good story is one that creates value beyond the sale—one that helps people see themselves as active participants in a larger process. The true power of storytelling lies not in manipulation, but in its capacity to unite, inspire and encourage conscious action. In conclusion, StoryNomics formulates a shift from stories to story systems. In a world saturated with information, structured narrative becomes a new form of order. The model of ‘the customer as hero’ demonstrates that effective communication is grounded not in self-promotion, but in empathy. This logic is already transforming business and is poised to reshape politics, turning public life into a network of interconnected narratives in which people do not merely consume meaning, but actively produce it.

The Invisible Architecture of Pseudo-Events

'A pseudo-event is not spontaneous, but comes about because someone has planned, planted, or incited it.'
— Daniel J. Boorstin

In the 2012 edition[7] of The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America, Daniel Joseph Boorstin, in dialogue with later media theorists such as Douglas Rushkoff, outlines a theory of the hidden structure of contemporary publicity, in which social and political reality is produced not through facts but through carefully staged performances. At the centre of this structure stands the pseudo-event: a planned, orchestrated and endlessly reproduced occurrence whose primary purpose is not to happen, but to be reported. Pseudo-events form the invisible architecture of the image society. They do not merely inform; they predefine the boundaries of what can be thought and determine the environment in which meaning is already fixed before it is even articulated. This concept marks a transition from classical propaganda to a subtler form of power exercised through context. Where authority once attempted to control thought through words, it now shapes the environment in which words acquire meaning. The pseudo-event is a media construct that does not rely on coercion, but operates through attractiveness, repetition and ritual. It organises attention, directs emotion and erases the distinction between reality and its representation. In this model, truth is no longer something that must be argued, but something that must be staged in the correct setting.

The mechanism of the pseudo-event rests on three elements: script, image and repetition. The script provides a causal framework—a beginning, a conflict and a resolution; the image delivers the visual impact that substitutes for substance; repetition stabilises the sense of reality. Together, these layers form a system in which the boundary between action and representation dissolves. The more an event is replayed, shared and commented upon, the more real it appears. Reality is no longer validated by facts, but by the number of witnesses. The psychological power of this model derives from the human dependence on narrative and from the economy of attention. People do not experience the world as isolated facts, but as stories that link events into causal sequences. Pseudo-events offer ready-made stories—short, clearly structured and emotionally charged. They are easily consumed because they satisfy the demand for meaning with minimal cognitive effort. In an age of informational overload, this ease becomes a decisive advantage. The staged appears more credible precisely because it is more accessible.

The ethical danger lies in the invisibility of the stage. When the architecture of presentation remains unseen, audiences lose the ability to distinguish the produced from the spontaneous. The pseudo-event does not present itself as fiction, but as reality itself. It eliminates uncertainty and contingency—the very elements that make life real—and replaces them with an ordered spectacle of predictable reactions. Society gradually becomes a theatre in which every actor believes they are merely a spectator. The loss is not only cognitive, but existential: individuals cease to participate in their own history and begin to inhabit someone else's script. Political and media institutions refine this technique by transforming communication into the management of attention. Power is no longer grounded primarily in ideology, but in the capacity to maintain a constant stream of spectacles that replace genuine debate with dramaturgical conflict. In such an environment, every side generates its own pseudo-events—visual and emotional constructions that confirm a preselected narrative. The result is a fragmented society in which multiple 'realities' coexist, each sustained by its own spectacle.

[7] Daniel Joseph Boorstin and Rushkoff, D. (2012). The image : a guide to pseudo-events in America. New York (N.Y.): Vintage Books, Cop.

The way out of this closed circuit is not the rejection of media or representation itself, but the recognition of the architecture that sustains them. When citizens learn to identify how pseudo-events are produced, they recover a measure of lost autonomy. What is required is a new form of critical literacy directed not at content, but at form: at how an event is constructed, what its scenography conceals, and which emotions it seeks to activate. The invisible architecture of pseudo-events is, in fact, an architecture of meaning. It determines what can be thought and felt by replacing reality with a continuous flow of carefully staged visibility. To understand this architecture is to cross the boundary between spectator and participant, between image and action. The act of recognising the staged is itself the first gesture of freedom in a world where truth is no longer spoken, but placed on stage.

From Narrative to Script

'We become what we behold. We shape our tools and thereafter our tools shape us.'
— John Culkin

At the end of the first chapter, the analysis returns to Media Narrative by Prof. Snezhana Popova in order to formulate a conclusion and a logical transition towards the theme of the media script. This transition is not a simple theoretical shift, but a key symptom of the contemporary communicational condition. Popova demonstrates that the digital environment has disrupted the classical form of narrative, replacing it with a new logic: the logic of the script, in which action becomes more important than meaning, and reaction displaces understanding. In the world of online media, people no longer tell stories in order to be heard, but in order to remain connected. Words no longer mediate between consciousnesses; they function as markers of presence. More communication no longer produces more understanding, because communication has ceased to be dialogue and has become a continuous stream of actions. The digital environment places the individual in a state of permanent participation. Each user is simultaneously author and audience, spectator and actor, director and character within a personal media world. The internet collapses all communicational functions into a single, uninterrupted interaction without clear beginning or end. Texts are produced, replicated and erased in motion, while authorship dissolves into collective production. As a result, language loses its stability. Words cease to function as carriers of meaning and become instruments of strategy. Communication is no longer an attempt at understanding, but a competition for attention. Every post, share or comment is a move in a game governed not by moral or logical rules, but by tactical ones. In this new communicational ecosystem, the boundary between content and form disappears. The message is no longer perceived through what it says, but through how it operates. Narrative has lost its autonomy and has transformed into script: not merely a sequence of events, but a programme for action that anticipates the behaviour of participants. Digital speech becomes repetitive, templated and predictable. It operates through ready-made patterns that can be reproduced endlessly without loss of force. This is why communication increasingly feels like permanent simulation: everyone speaks, no one listens; everyone responds without having heard the question.

The script is a structural form that replaces human interaction with an automatic model of participation. It does not seek mutual understanding, but measurable outcome. Narrative was an act of semantic creation, whereas the script is an act of functional execution. In the digital environment this means that truth is no longer measured by correspondence to reality, but by effect. A successful story is not the one that is true, but the one that generates more reactions. Communication submits to a new economy of attention in which the most valuable element is not argument, but emotional impact. In this process, media cease to function as intermediaries

and become players within the game. They do not merely report; they act. They produce contexts, create rituals and organise scenes in which the viewer is simultaneously audience and instrument. Audiences that once listened now perform. Every online action, from liking a post to signing a petition, becomes part of a larger strategic construction that sustains the circulation of the digital flow. Reality is experienced as a continuous spectacle in which individuals affirm themselves through visibility and reaction. This reconfiguration of communication produces a new type of identity: temporary, flexible and dependent on the algorithms that render it visible. The narrative that once expressed inner coherence fragments into short, discontinuous scripts. Each has a beginning and a response, but rarely a semantic closure. Communication becomes a collection of micro-narratives that sustain the illusion of community, while beneath it lies a growing sense of isolation. The game of continuous interaction replaces the need for truth with the need for movement.

The transition from narrative to script is not only technological, but anthropological. It marks the end of the human being as storyteller and the beginning of the human being as player. Narrative requires time, listening and patience; the script demands speed, reaction and execution. The script is the product of a culture that values effect over content and visibility over understanding. It is a form of social organisation in which communication does not aim at shared meaning, but at permanent activation. The conclusion of the first chapter therefore points to the fact that the digital age has transformed narrative into script and communication into action without memory. In this new reality, media do not merely reflect the world; they produce it through staged scenes, repeatable plots and algorithmic dramaturgy. The script becomes the fundamental principle of social life, an instrument for organising attention and behaviour. It is precisely here that the next step begins: the examination of the media script as the dominant model of contemporary communication, in which society no longer simply narrates itself, but places itself on stage in order to remain in motion.

Conclusion

Pseudo-events and pseudo-worlds are no longer marginal phenomena of media culture; they have become the dominant architecture through which contemporary reality is organised, experienced, and contested. In the new paradigm of mass communication, events increasingly occur in order to be narrated, circulated, and reacted to, while worlds are constructed to provide stable frames of meaning within an otherwise fragmented informational environment. What once appeared as distortion or spectacle has evolved into a structural principle of public life: reality is no longer primarily encountered, but staged, formatted, and inhabited through media scenarios. Possible worlds theory helps clarify why these constructions are so effective. Pseudo-worlds do not persuade by falsifying facts, but by offering coherent environments in which propositions appear meaningful and emotionally credible. Within such worlds, truth is not judged by correspondence to an external reality, but by internal consistency, narrative repetition, and communal reinforcement. Hyperlinks, interfaces, and algorithmic pathways function as ontological switches that facilitate rapid movement between factual reference, fictional elaboration, and hybrid forms of documentation. The result is a condition of permanent re-centring, in which individuals repeatedly relocate their sense of reality across multiple, competing world-models.

In this environment, media power operates less through ideology than through design. Scripts, images, and interactive affordances prestructure participation, assigning roles, emotions, and

trajectories before reflection can occur. Pseudo-events provide the episodic rhythm, while pseudo-worlds supply continuity, identity, and moral orientation. Audiences do not merely witness these constructions; they sustain them through sharing, commenting, and performative alignment. Participation becomes the mechanism through which worlds stabilise themselves, transforming users into co-authors of the very realities that shape them. The transition from narrative to script marks a decisive anthropological shift. Communication no longer aims at understanding, but at activation; meaning yields to effect, and truth to impact. Public discourse increasingly resembles a continuous rehearsal of roles within prewritten scenarios, where disagreement takes the form of parallel worlds rather than shared debate. Under such conditions, the danger is not deception alone, but enclosure: the gradual loss of the ability to imagine reality outside the available scripts. Yet recognition of this architecture also opens a space for agency. To understand pseudo-events and pseudo-worlds as constructed is to recover a measure of interpretative freedom. Critical literacy today must move beyond fact-checking toward world-checking: asking how realities are staged, which roles are offered, and what forms of participation are being demanded. The future of democratic communication depends not on escaping media scenarios, but on learning to navigate them consciously—deciding when to enter, when to interrupt, and when to refuse the script altogether.

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