NARRATING SPACE / SPATIALIZING NARRATIVE
WHERE NARRATIVE THEORY AND GEOGRAPHY MEET

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Where narrative theory and the geohumanities meet

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In other areas of geography that use ethnographic methods, the term "narrative" is a substitute of "oral history" or "autobiography." These uses do not necessarily imply the incorrect applications of narrative concepts, but narrative theory has more to offer geographers as a body of concepts that can aid geographers in analyzing stories and text across many media in new and inventive ways.

Narratology is concerned with one type of discourse, but does not necessarily encompass all the work being done in geography that questions the discursive foundations of its theory, method and practice. We mention this because the concept of narrative is applied somewhat loosely in geography. Terms like "narrative" and "storytelling" are used increasingly, but inconsistently to emphasize the tentative and situated nature of explanation and theory.
1. **Narrative space:** Space and places as the physical environment in which the characters of narrative live and move. This “storyworld,” has received the greatest attention in both narratology and geography.

2. The space that serves as context and occasionally referent for the text: Narratives not only describe space they are situated in physical space. Storytelling is affected by the spatial and temporal distance between storyteller and audience and by their locations.

Nabokov’s map of Kafka’s *Metamorphosis*

Stevenson, *Treasure Island*

Prof. Jerry Lewis, Kent State
3. The space taken by the text itself:
Isn’t text always two-dimensional? What about texts and narratives that move off the page and screen entirely and are positioned in the environment to tell stories using signs and inscriptions at historical sites and in museums.

4. The spatial form of the text:
The concept of spatial form can be extended to any kind of design formed by networks of semantic, phonetic or more broadly thematic relations between non-adjacent textual units—a major issues in the worlds of hypertext, cyberspace, and digital storytelling.
What about narrative cartography?

Charles Joseph Minard, Napoleons Russian Campaign of 1812-13 (1869)

William Henry Jackson (1861)
The infinite canvas

In a digital environment, there's no reason a 500-panel story can't be told vertically --

-- or horizontally like a great graphic skyline.

We could indulge our left-to-right and up-to-down habits from beginning to end in a giant descending staircase --

-- or pack it all into a slowly revolving cube.

In a digital environment, comics can take virtually any size and shape as the temporal map -- comics' conceptual DNA -- grows in its new dish.
Print, though, presented a landscape of tiny cul-de-sacs, asking readers to leap to new paths every few panels based on a complex protocol...

A protocol
imported from the right and down
tradition of the printed word.

On the angular canvas we call "the page" has been the only venue for long-form comics this century, and several generations of artists have devised thousands of creative solutions to the problems it presents; solutions I've counted on for the last 200 pages!

Seasoned artists know, for example, that it's desirable to place establishing shots at the beginning of a spread or page to create a sense of place in subsequent panels.

They've also learned to tailor the last panel on the right-hand page to act as a tease for the next page (whether the story requires it or not).
There are other ways to arrange stories, but…

the problem is that for narratologists, a narrative must “recount events chronologically” (Nelson Goodman 1981).

Time is essential: “Only one kind of thing may be narrated: a time thing” (Robert Scholes 1981)

Gerald Prince (1989) maintains, narrative “may be defined as the representation of real or fictive events and situations in a time sequence.”
Are maps temporal vs. non-temporal media?
Storytelling with Maps

Edward Segel & Jeffrey Heer, Narrative Visualization: Telling Stories with Data (2010, p. 1145)

http://storymaps.esri.com/home/
http://mapstory.org/
It's Win or Wipe Out: There's No Middle Ground for Miller

Tackling Grizzly, Start to Finish

Every time I see him ski, I'm entertained.

A 24-year-old U.S. skier is favored to win some gold.
“In learning to read comics we all learned to perceive time spatially, for in the world of comics, time and space are one and the same.”

Maps:
space (real) = space (scaled)

Comics:
space = time

Multimedia maps:
space = space or time
Margaret Pearce,  
*The intricacy of these turns and windings*  
(2008)
The cul-de-sac where I grew up. Built on the land immediately outside the graveyard - the unhallowed ground, where they used to bury the suicides, witches and murderers back in olden times. If you were lucky, you might dig up a bone or two if you dug a hole in the back garden. Not that we did.

I was the wrong man in the wrong place at the wrong time.
Locative narrative, locative media & more