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Coms 168
April 1, 2014

“The Picture Story Of The United States”
Annotated Bibliography

This annotated bibliography is designed for research and understanding in theory and application of criticism to the artifact, “The Picture Story Of The United States.” This artifact is a comic book that uses both text and visual images in order to tell different stories in American history. A piece that has both written and visual communication adds more complexity to the analyst. Therefore, the bibliography needs to be focused on research that speaks to visual and written cues. The research prior to a critical analysis has to accomplish an understanding of the context surrounding the piece, finding resources from other disciplines, and understanding a theory of analysis.

First, gaining an understanding of the context was difficult because the author and publisher is unknown. So gaining clues from the rhetor and their possible purpose for creating the artifact was not possible like other pieces. Therefore, most of what context will cover will be from common sense of being American and already having knowledge of these stories. There does not have to be extensive research to understand the people involved in the piece, like it is needed in other cases.

Next, looking into other disciplines was helpful in understanding the piece. The artifact covers many subjects: history, sociology, child psychology, as well as rhetoric. The piece is rich enough to be studied under all of these disciplines and lend some understanding to critical analysis. A theory and aspect that is prevalent in sociology is a thought of “Master Narrative.” This is a master story that runs through many generations, passed through many generations, and represents a tried and true characteristic. Since the artifact contains many stories, it has the potential to carry a master narrative.

Therefore, research was spent on looking for master narrative in pieces like Thorne and McLean and from Michael Yellow Bird.

Finally, time was spent on looking for theory that lends to the context and the thought of master narrative. Through looking at many search models, the one that works the best with the artifact is the Ideological approach. This looks at possible, big picture ideas of the rhetor. It could also lend weight to the message being institutional, being passed down through many generations by those possibly in power. This was found through looking at pieces by Sonja Foss and Takis Poulakos.

Performing a critical analysis on “The Picture Story Of The United States” requires using common sense of American history, using sources from other disciplines, and understanding rhetorical theory. All of these aspects amounted to a diverse selection of sources that will lead to an informed and grounded approach to analysis.

Bird, M. Y. (2004). Cowboys and Indians: Toys of genocide, icons of colonialism. *Wicazo Sa Review*, 19(2), 33-48. Retrieved from: <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/wic/summary/v019/19.2bird.html>

“Cowboys and Indians: Toys of Genocide, Icons, and Colonialism” was written as a personal perspective of Michael Yellow Bird, a social studies scholar of Humboldt State University. It covers the differences in the historical narrative of a Native American from a “White” American. Yellow Bird speaks on the power that the master narrative can have on society, specifically on his own childhood as a Native American growing up in North Dakota.

Westerns on film or TV are prime examples of a master narrative. The stereotype of uneducated, savage Indians could be defeated by bright, heroic cowboys. Music is another fashion in which a master narrative could be carried out. Heroic, large and sweet-sounding compositions are played throughout these television programs when the “Cowboys” were on screen. Meanwhile, large rhythmic sounds and dissonant chords would be heard during Indian dances or raids. These elements to Yellow Bird, although through personal reflection, could be seen throughout other cultural instances of a master narrative.

Foss, S. (1996). Ideological criticism. *Rhetorical criticism: Exploration and practice*, 2, 291-302.

Rhetorical criticism: Exploration and practice by Sonja Foss is written for students learning to perform critical analysis, covering different styles and approaches to criticism. Chapter 8 covers an Ideological approach that focuses on big picture ideas that may be underlying or institutional in nature. “The primary goal of the ideological critic is to discover and make visible the dominant ideology or ideologies embedded in an artifact and the ideologies that are being muted” (Foss, 295-96). The term of “Hegemony” is also discussed, being important because the powers that an ideology can have on the audience. The institutional use of narratives and the values they create have the potential to maintain the status quo of the ones in authority. The chapter concludes with the process of performing an ideological critique, forming a research question, selecting units of analysis, and performing analysis and evaluation of the artifact.

Poulakos, T. (1987). *Recovering the voices of the text: Rhetorical criticism as ideological critique*. Conference Proceedings -- National Communication Association/American Forensic Association (Alta Conference on Argumentation); 1987 *Argument & Critical Practices*, p39-44, 6p

Poulakos addresses the notions of Ideological Criticism and its application to rhetoric. First Poulakos addresses rhetoric and its possible complexities, noting that its function is to bring out two distinct, but simultaneous voices. One voice is the voice that speaks for what is found in the text and the other voice speaks for what can be. This can be seen as either ideological or utopian, depending on which side the artifact comes from and who holds the power. From an ideological perspective, three stages of analysis are used in order to gain rhetorical perspective: political, social, and cultural.

At the political level, the artifact is addressed as a “Symbolic Act,” working as symbolic acts and solutions to issues. At the social level, the artifact cannot be seen solely as individual text, but as ammunition to the underlying debate between two opposing sides. Finally, at the cultural level, the artifact can hold the potential of being a piece of cultural revolution. With these three levels, the ideological perspective is re-defined as “residual dominant sign system, while the Utopian is conceived as the emergent or anticipatory sign system which resists assimilation to the cultural dominant” (Poulakos, 40).

Stoner, M., & Perkins, S. (2005). *Making sense of messages: A critical apprenticeship in criticism*. (pp. 296-319). Boston. Houghton Mifflin Hartcourt.

Making sense of messages: A critical apprenticeship in criticism is written for instruction for students performing rhetorical criticism. The book covers covers the basic functions of describing, analyzing, interpreting, and evaluating an artifact, while using various search models and theories. Chapter 17 of the text is entitled, “Visual Communication.” The purpose of this chapter is to focus on the role of visual images and how they relate to persuasion. Images alone are considered indeterminate, not carrying meaning. But when paired with verbal or written text, the image can enhance or reinforce the purpose of the message.

Stoner and Perkins introduce the reader to terms originally adapted by C.S. Pierce that classify different types of visual tools, including icons, indices, and symbols. Each one respectively represents the message physically, associatively, or figuratively. These terms are important to looking at artifacts that have a visual component. Knowing the arrangement, timeliness, and positioning of an image are key to the rhetor’s purpose in creating the message and could prove to be persuasive.

Suh, T. (1999). *Visual persuasion*. Communications Research Trends, 19(3), (pp. 3-15). Retrieved from: http://cscs.scu.edu/trends/v19/v19_3.pdf

The article *Visual Communication* was written by Taewon Suh in 1999. The article covers aspects of visual communication and its effect on persuasion. Suh first identifies visual communication to be both pervasive and persuasive, meaning that the visual images that surround rhetoric today are overwhelming in the amount and direct in their deliberative attempt to persuade. The article covers two main points in the early in the paper, which is basic to most visual communication research: 1) Visual images are persuasive messages reduce the information processing burden, make a message more attention-getting, and reinforce message arguments. 2) It is believed that visual images have the superiority in memory over words.

The article also provides definition to key terms, like index, icon, symbol, and the criterion for resemblance, quickness, and ambiguity. Finally, Suh covers criticism of visual images and how most research is aimed at the relationship between the image and reality. The use of image

manipulation, objectivity, idealization, and sexual appeals are all aspects that correct what the rhetor may see as a limitation in order to make something “Reality” to reality.

Thorne, A., & McLean, K. C. (2003). Telling traumatic events in adolescence: A study of master narrative positioning. *Connecting culture and memory: The development of an autobiographical self*, 169-185. Retrieved from:
<http://books.google.com/books?id=iK3iLnZp8MEC&lpg=PA169&ots=JJcpHwbywx&dq=Thorne%20%26%20McLean&lr&pg=PA169#v=onepage&q=Thorne%20%26%20McLean&f=false>

The essay and study, written by Avril Thorne and Kate C. McLean of the University of California at Santa Cruz, takes an approach to understand adolescence and the effect of traumatic events through looking at the quality of self-telling narrative. Thorne and McLean decided to focus on adolescence because of its primetime in forming values and opinions that could carry into adulthood. This is important to understanding the rhetoric of artifacts that are targeted towards adolescence. Thorne and McLean also give the definition of “Master narrative.” Master narratives are stories, anecdotes, or even values that are perpetuated in large and small ways throughout generations by cultural stakeholders. They are made by those that hold institutional power and authority, and speak to things that are seen as “Tradition” or “The way things are.”