

# EYEING THE COMIC: NARRATIVITY AND VISUALITY

NANDAN SEBASTIAN ROSARIO (2016HUZ8529)

Department of Humanities and Social Sciences

## ABSTRACT

I argue that the visual has expressivity of its own that is capable of narration. The visual communicates through colour, bodily effect, directionality of line and completeness. These features allow visuals to be read without reducing them to the written. Theorists of the man-made form of visual communication that is the comic argue that its unique narrativity lies in its ability to create weblike connections of visual sequences. I argue that this view, which opposes the web of the comic to a line of traditional codex narrative, disregards the complex, doubled structure of related beginning and end found in even the most traditional codex narrative. Further, this view—which treats the web of the comic as nothing more than a web of thematic and allusive connections—disregards the visual and is based, I argue, on their assumption that the visual is incapable of narrating. With these theories, narrativity is attributed only to the allusive figures in the visual. The possibility that the visual may have its own narrativity does not arise.

I try to show how the visual communicative resources created by the art of the comic such as the gutter, the panel, the suspensions between elements and the page, demand and elicit a non-linear and responsive visual reading. I claim that the metaphors of sights and knowledge have led to the under-theorisation of these resources. I develop a theory of reading visually by drawing on holistic theories of sight that situate sight within mobile bodies acting towards fulfilment of goals and with the other senses. Instead of empty marks to be investigated, visuals become dynamic and possess meaning and directionality, even before they are harnessed as allusive figures. The many suspensions of sight and story in the comic led me to articulate the action of the comic book as a comedic action of endless regeneration, revelation and reversal of distanced terms. I argue that embracing the comic element of the comic book creates a framework for a theory of visual narration based on the expressivity of the visual