Book Review
Basic Elements of Narrative

อัญญรัตน์ อำพันพงษ์*
Anyarat Ampanpong
มหาวิทยาลัยศิลปากร
Silpakorn University

Over the past few decades, narrative has gained considerable attention. Its recent concept reveals that it has not only been discussed among scholars of humanities and social sciences, but it has also become interdisciplinary knowledge disseminated by researchers in other multiple fields whose work concerns narrative inquiry. To introduce core themes of narrative, in response to the increase of stories and storytelling which can be found in a lot of communicative media, Herman discusses basic elements of narrative in his book with the hope that his approach enable readers fully understand what narrative is by highlighting that narrative should be viewed in three ways – 'as a cognitive structure, a type of text, and a resource for communicative interaction.'

The body of the book is broken down into three main sections. The first section contains six chapters. For readers who are familiar with scholarship on storytelling can select any particular topics that they are interested in, as the writer states that it is not necessary for

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* อาจารย์ อัญญรัตน์ อำพันพงษ์ อาจารย์ประจำสาขาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษ ภาควิชาภาษาตะวันตก คณะโบราณคดี มหาวิทยาลัยศิลปากร

readers to follow the chapters in sequence. Although Herman suggests that readers who do not have fundamental knowledge in narrative probably need to start the book with Chapter 2 in order to gain more insights about framework approach relating to the interdisciplinary perspectives on narrative and narrative theory, I, for this point, have a different opinion. Personally, I have found that it is vital for those readers to have an overview of narrative which is discussed in the first chapter. Apart from learning a working definition of narrative, which enables them distinguish storytelling from other modes of presentation, Chapter 1 can be used as a blueprint because it also gives Herman's thumbnail sketched approach developed in the book. This chapter, moreover, briefly provides the outline of the book together with an introduction to four basic elements of narrative – (i) situatedness, (ii) event sequencing, (iii) worldmaking/world disruption and (iv) what it's like, which can be found in other chapters.

Although Herman claims that stories can be analyzed by those mentioned basic elements, he further discusses that some of them have sub-elements of their own. Situating stories in Chapter 3 are closely related to ideas from some fields of study such as sociolinguistics, social psychology, and narratology. In this chapter, the write relaborates how the first element 'situatedness' plays an important role in a mode of representation. He points out that, for interpreters, a story world is reconstructed by textual clues, and at the same time, storytelling practices can shape communicative contexts. The second identified element, 'event sequencing', is presented in Chapter 4. Instead of focusing on his case studies, he gives more general ideas of the concept of text type. Also, in this chapter, he

indicates commonalities and contrasts among describing, narrating and explaining which should be viewed as cognitive activities and forms of communicative interaction. In Chapter 5, the writer illustrates how to build a storyworld by introducing the third element, 'worldmaking' or 'world disruption'. As storyworlds can be created by narratives, semiotic cues should be taken into account to analyze narrative ways of worldmaking. Because the centrality of the last chapter Nexus of Narrative and Mind is about the notion of an experiencing consciousness, Herman emphasizes that idea by borrowing "what is it like", a term used among philosophers of mind as his fourth element of narrative. Overall, in Chapter 6, Herman, examines the impact of events on the mind regarding a particular experience.

The case studies scattered throughout the book represent storytelling in different communicative media. Therefore, to be able to follow Herman's arguments based on those examples, I think readers need to read this section beforehand. The excerpts of those examples are added in the Appendix section. For literary narrative, Ernest Hemingway's "Hills Like White Elephants" (1927) is selected while *UFO* or *the Devil* (2002) is an example of narrative told during face-to-face communication. A graphic novel written by Daniel Clowes, *Ghost World* (1997) is also put on the list together with screenshots from Terry Zwigoff's film adaptation of *Ghost World* (2001) which is used as film narrative. The writer also adds Glossary as the third section of this book. It is very helpful for readers to understand key terms of narrative study.

Even though it is written in a manner suitable for advanced students or scholars in the fields of literary studies and sociolinguistics, *Basic Elements of Narrative* is undoubtedly useful for other readers who are also interested in narrative. Basic elements of narrative developed by Herman's approach, however, should not be employed or used as a reference by only academic scholars. His book contains some profound insights that can be applicable to our everyday life activities such as everyday face-to-face communication or even the communication in the digital world these days because narrative, undeniably, is part of interpersonal communication.