

City University of Hong Kong

SM2105 Narrative Srtg & Aesthetics

Project 02

Title:

Analysis of a time-based work using Narrative Pictogram(s)

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Caroline Leaf: *The Street* (1976)



“The Street” is an animation video, It is a story about a family’s reactions to the passing of their grandmother, also about circling the family group and the crowded dwellings that make the young man yearn for his grandmother’s room

Although it is talking about grandmother is dying but it doesn't have much description about grandmother or about the character of her. The video mainly describing the think of how the surrounding people react to death, not concerning the dying, and it happened and still happening in some society, that’s maybe why the title of the video is called “The Street”. The role of the whole story is about synecdoche and symbolism. It is kind of a microcosm of humanity pathetic reality.

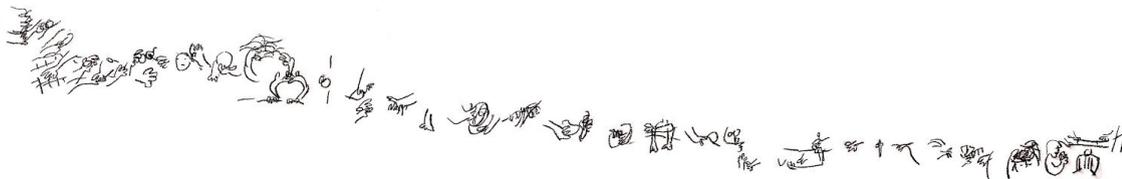
The whole animation is described as happened in one hot summer .By using ‘Synecdoche’, the summer time is compressed to a 10 minutes video, barely giving us or the characters time as with our own lives to fully comprehend the magnitude of what is passing before us. The whole video doesn’t have many scene. Most of the scene are around the house. The story only described the time of and before grandma dying, so hasn't talk about the grandma’s life before she lied on the bed.

The voice-over from the background is a voice of a man ,it refers to the main character of this story, a little boy. He tells the story from his angle of his childhood. He slept with his sister. He wanted to have his own room and he was waiting for grandma’s room, that’s mean he was waiting for grandmother’s dead. Mother took the responsibility of taking care of grandma. There was a part that illustrating about a daily life of mother. She cooked for their meal, cleaning the house, taking care of all family members. In the first half of the story, father only appeared when having dinner. However, when mother got sick, because no other family members wanted to take care of grandma, father directly send grandmother to the sanatorium. Father didn't care grandmother’s feeling. For him , grandmother was a family’s bundle without contribute. Although he had the responsibility to take care but he won’t be sorry to see her gone .Grandma is a symbol of life and death , wanted and unwanted in the story.

Since grandma can’t talk at all, so the animation try to describe grandma character by her acts. In the beginning of the video, it is a close up of her hand. Given often blank or cursory backgrounds, and figures portrayed as sometimes only rudimentary lines rather being used up in providing locations for action, the changing dimensions take the narrative forward. Grandma hands are always

keep crossing, she sleeps on her bed every day. When little boy comes in and kisses her goodbye every morning, to express her feeling she will hold the boy's hands. But the boy doesn't like her at all and usually fling away her hands. When the father wanted to send her to sanatorium, she hold the bedside, showed that she didn't wanna leave.

In the animation, it has applied the 'Metamorphosis' to tell the daily life of mother by keep transforming her hands holding things. From mixing something for cooking transform to combing daughter's hair. From the object hair transform to a towel, and use the towel to clean the floor, then hands back to cooking meal, always busy and repeatedly. But whenever she heard grandma groan, she would leave all of her holding to hold grandma and console her. It shows that mother really care about grandma. In contrast, everytime when father appeared in the video, he was eating, if not, he was holding money. That showed his character in what he cared about. In the second half part of the video, he was holding the wine after grandma died, but mother was holding the tissue paper for wiping tears. About the boy, he was holding a ball when walking home. After his grandma dead, his mother try to give the relics of grandmother to her children, the jewellers to the boy but he just couldn't take it. There doesn't have many scene about sister, she only appeared in the scene of eating and in her own bedroom, combing her hair. Again, what the characters holding show the things they care, 'Synecdoche' applied in here.



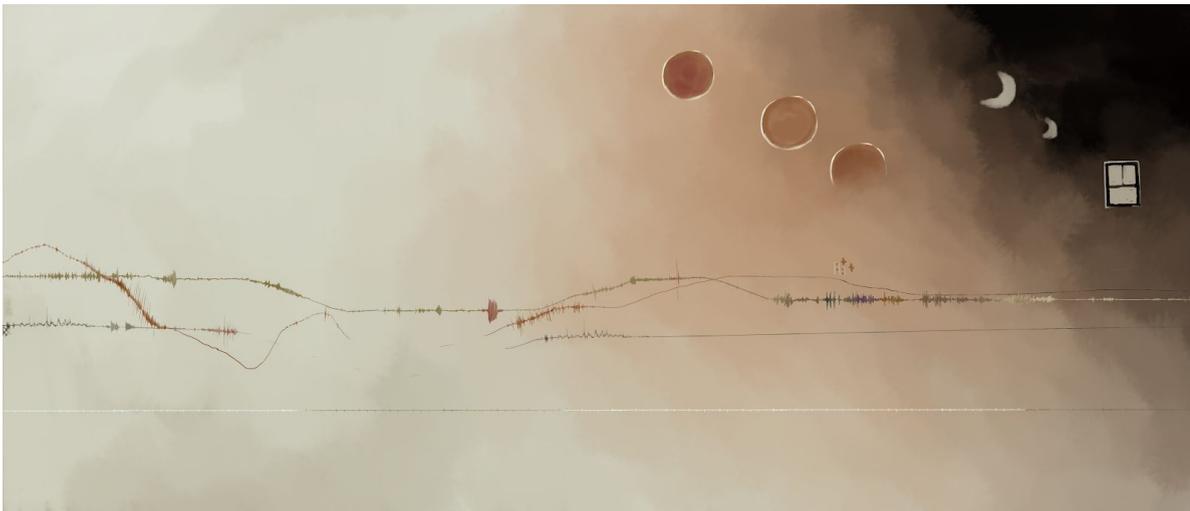
According to this I try to give a draw, to make a pictogram by following the animation in the real time, I only draw about hands and I draw without looking on the paper, trying to just focus on all of the action, one by one, time by time, to show the narrative.

Soundscape may play an important role in animation narrative. In 'The Street', the sounds of the traffic, bicycles passing with horns, dogs barking, children playing, people chatting and violin playing, all these draw us a picture of a street with neighbourhood living in an ordinary life. But the essence of the narrative should be the voice-over. A hot summer with a family trapped in a small flat waiting for the last breath of their dying grandmother, A family with an innocent boy, a competent member, and the unconcerned family members.

The sound lead the story move. Most of the video transition and camera panning are started by an off screen sound, for example, the scene that the boy talking with father. After that an off screen women sound cut in, the boy look to the left, and the frame pan to the left hand side to the boy's mother. Most of the scene are inside the house with blank background. To describe about the

flowing of time, it makes a good use of soundscape such as the clock clicking sound, the radio sound, etc. In the scene describing mother's daily, it starts from an action of making meal and listening to the radio for her whole day houseworks to present the continuous time, the background radio sound keep playing until the end of scene. Another scene without dialogue is the one about dad waiting mom back home with grandma, he opened the window, watching the daily of his neighbours with the clock ticking sound. You can hear the kids yelling and playing around, people practicing piano in their house. The soundscape make the atmosphere seems stuffy, and it also make the time taking long and long but it's happened in a day only. The scene after grandma dead, the soundscape is very different. Noises, muffled chattering illustrate crowded and busy. it described the reaction of different people to her death. Some people talk and laugh. Some people miss grandma and cry. Some people drink wine and talk with others like joining a family meeting. Time feels like run faster after grandma death. When the boy get into grandma's room, you can hear the sound of people doing some religious ceremony with grandma. The atmosphere is lively than grandma living time.

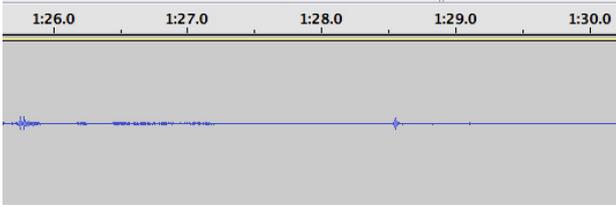
In another scene, the boy's uncle and the family doctor was talking in the terrace. The animator make good use of the sky to present the time, It is the first time we see the sun in this animation but also the last time. They talked until the sun went down, and the transition is good that, the sun changed to a moon. It changed to a night time. Most of the people left, the house return to serenity. Mother put her hands on her face and mourned. Father was tapping his finger and seemed planning of something. The mourning is the past, the planning is the future, 'Symbolism'.



According to this, I created the pictogram by the soundscape. I combined some concept of animation bar sheet. To illustrate the time, the element of sun and moon are also added. To create the same atmosphere, I used the color tone of the animation, the color tone of brown, black and yellow, some dark red and dark green are included. Those are the warm color. As the blur, dirty color can create a sad and old feeling, it feel like looking at the old photo. I used them to be the main color tone of pictogram.



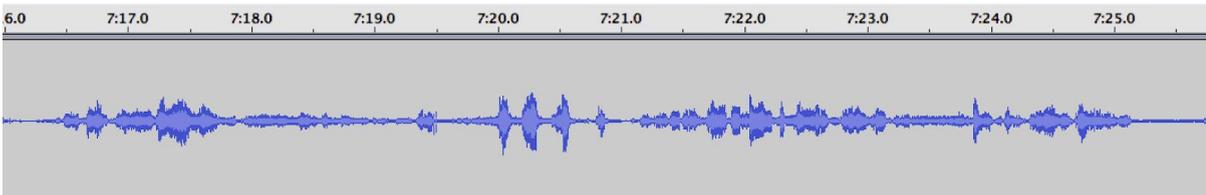
The sound wave of the street.



Grandma breathing sound wave.



First half part is mum making meal, the second half part is mum taking care of grandma.



This is the soundscape of the house after grandma died, full of noise, some people talking, some weeping.

The wave is also presenting the activation. There are four soundwave lines, one is the sound of environment inside or outside the house, I used up and down to present indoor and outdoor.

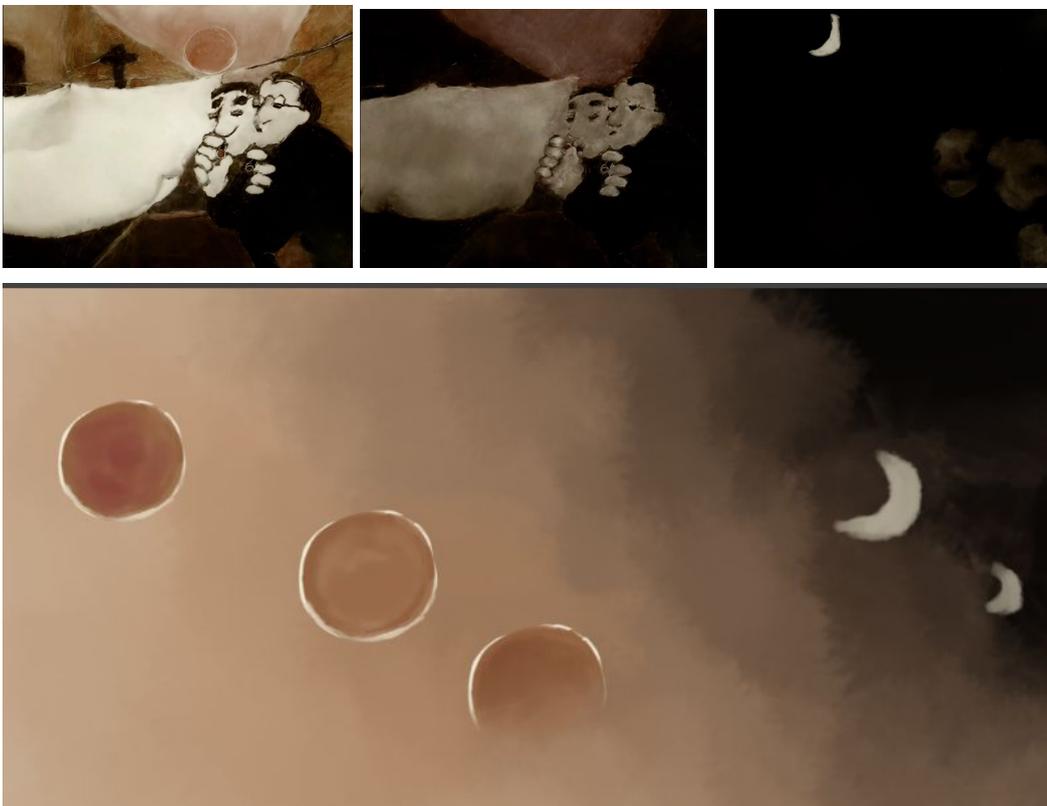


About the color, after grandma died, there was many people, I used different color to present the noise from different people. The red line is presenting mum, because she always stay at home, the sound in the house reflected her daily life in house. One black line is presenting grandma, but in the

middle of the story dad send grandma to the sanatorium, grandma is not inside the house ,so the soundwave of grandma is cropped. The breathing soundwave is refer to the time when grandma is living. And then after she died the line become flat.



The line in the bottom is presenting the clock ticking, this sound usually appear in the soundscape of the house, when mother go out for visit grandma, and dad wait for her at the house, the sound of the clock seems louder, it emphasize the time. so the color is different in this part.



The sun and moon is presenting the end of the story. It also presents grandmother's death. After the sun go down, grandma never wake. The time become difficult.