

A PASSION FOR PLOT:
PROLEGOMENA TO AFFECTIVE NARRATOLOGY

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Human beings have a passion for plots. Narratives are shared in every society, in every age, and in every social context, from intimate personal interactions to impersonal social gatherings. This passion for plots is bound up with the passion of plots, the ways in which stories manifest feelings on the part of authors and characters, as well as the passion from plots, the ways stories provoke feelings in readers or listeners. Passion is also inseparable from the structure of stories and even from the definition of the constituents of stories. In short, emotions make stories.

Over the last two decades, there has been an enormous increase in attention to emotion as a crucial aspect of human thought and action. This attention has spanned a range of disciplines, prominently including the fields gathered together under the rubric of *cognitive science*--thus parts of psychology, neuroscience, philosophy, anthropology, and so on. Narratology has perhaps been the area of literary study most closely connected with cognitive science. However, relatively little research on emotion has made its way into theoretical treatments of narrative. Of course, everyone recognizes that emotion is important in stories, and theorists of narrative usually have some place for emotion in their work. However, narratological treatments of emotion have on the whole been relatively undeveloped, particularly in comparison with other aspects of narrative theory.

Given recent advances in research on emotion, it seems clear that any theory of narrative would benefit from a more fully elaborated treatment of emotion based on this research. Indeed, I would go further, and argue that narrative is fundamentally shaped

and oriented by our emotion systems. (I have partially argued this already in *The Mind and Its Stories*.) Of course, other neurocognitive systems play a role in the production and reception of narrative--perceptual systems, long-term and working memory systems, language systems. But, in my view, the distinctive aspects of narrative--or, more properly, the distinctive aspects of stories--are to a great extent the product of emotion systems. Thus, in order to formulate a systematic theoretical account of stories, we should turn first of all to affective neuroscience and related fields of study. I cannot make an argument for this claim in a short paper. However, I would like to establish some of the groundwork for such an argument, particularly in relation to the current state of narratology.

Emotion and Narratology

From what I have just said, it should be clear that an emphasis on emotion in narrative is somewhat unusual. In fact, it is more than unusual. Consider, for example, the recent *Cambridge Companion to Narrative* (edited by David Herman)--a lucid, highly informative, scholarly volume that is representative of the best current theoretical approaches to narrative. The index entry under "emotion" includes no page numbers, but rather four cross-references--to "cognitive approaches," "consciousness," "narrative," and "storyworld." (Similarly, the related entry for "empathy" gives only "focalization" and "identity.") The substantive treatment of emotion in this 300-page book amounts to one page in David Herman's essay. This page draws a distinction between "naturalist" and "social constructionist" approaches to emotion. It goes on to note the importance of understanding character emotions for understanding a story. Herman observes in particular that "what the characters say and do can be sorted into classes of behaviors in which one is likely to engage when motivated by happiness, resentment, fear, sadness, etc." ("Cognition" 255). The distinction between social constructionist and naturalist is a simplification, but a useful one for orienting the reader initially. The

comments on character motivation are unexceptionable. But it should be clear that this hardly goes beyond commonsense--unlike Herman's insightful and nuanced discussion of consciousness. Again, this discrepancy is not by any means unique to Herman. Indeed, Herman is the only one in the volume to give emotion any substantive consideration at all.

Why might this be? In order to get a better sense of the place--or rather absence--of emotion in narratology, it is useful to consider some aspects of the history and organization of the field.

The standard narrative of narrative theory distinguishes between "classical" and "post-classical" narratology. Classical narratology, which continues to be widely practiced, comprises the fundamental works of Structuralist narrative theory. Its main figures--Genette, Greimas, Barthes, Todorov--were setting out to use Saussurean linguistics to understand narrative structure, just as Lévi-Strauss was using Saussurean linguistics to treat kinship and myth, Lacan was using Saussurean linguistics to rethink Psychoanalysis, and so forth. Though this work was enormously valuable, it was embedded in linguistic theories that had nothing to say about emotion. In and of itself, this is not necessarily a problem. However, it tended to orient research programs in narratology toward issues and explanations that had little to do with emotion.

Consider, for example, the study of time in narratology. I have argued that narrative time is fundamentally organized by emotion (see "Before"). For example, our isolation of something as an event and our attribution of a cause to that event are both crucially a function of emotional response, even if other systems are necessarily involved as well. However, as Brian Richardson points out, "The starting-point for most theories of time in narrative is Genette's account of the categories of order, duration, and frequency" (147). In keeping with the prevalent linguistic model, this division is closely related to distinctions of tense (thus order) and aspect (thus duration and repetition). This is not to dismiss or belittle Genette's ideas. His three categories

certainly correspond to real properties of narrative. However, they are not the only ways in which we might understand narrative time. Nor, I have argued, are they the most important.

Seymour Chatman's enormously (and rightly) influential *Story and Discourse* is a case in point. Chatman devotes an entire chapter to "Story: Events." He expertly treats order, duration, and frequency. However, his account of events as such barely goes beyond our intuitive understanding that events are "actions (acts) or happenings" or, more generally, "changes of state" (44). His first point about the connections among events in stories is that they are often causal. He goes on to distinguish different sorts of causal relations. However, he does not ask just how our minds select, segment, and structure temporal units (i.e., events--or sub-event incidents, or supra-event episodes). Nor does he consider how our minds select, segment, and structure causal relations (relations that are, in real life, highly complex and multiple—much more so than the stories we tell about them). But a good case can be made that both event formation and causal attribution are largely a function of our emotion systems (on the latter, see chapter four of my *Understanding*). If this is correct, it is unsurprising that Chatman did not explore these issues. Indeed, his linguistic model may have particularly occluded these problems.

In principle, post-classical narratology broadened the sources for narrative theorization. Specifically, it incorporated work by a range of "Post-Structuralists," such as Derrida, Foucault, and later Lacan. However, due to the nature of the new theories, particularly Deconstruction, it tended to limit the range of sources actually taken up in research. Derrida himself was deeply concerned with exploring the writings of pre-Deconstructive philosophers (whatever one thinks of the ways in which he undertook this exploration). Despite this, however, many of his followers took the putative phallocentrism of pre- and non-Deconstructive theories as a reason to dismiss a wide range of insightful work. Even more importantly, Deconstruction too tended to rely on a

version of Saussurean linguistics. Moreover, the highly linguicentric¹ approach of Deconstruction did not open a place for emotion--still less for emotion as treated in scientific research that seemed dangerously tainted by the metaphysics of presence.

One problem with the standard division into classical and post-classical narratology is that it involves an implicit "telic narrative" (see my *Politics* 47-49) of the sort used by many post-structuralists. It tends to suggest a division between the old fashioned and inferior way people used to do things in the past and the sophisticated, superior way people do things now. Personally, I do not share that evaluation. It seems to me that there was misguided work and work of continuing value in the past and that there is misguided work and work of continuing value in the present. Moreover, it is hardly the case that everyone studying narrative has shifted over from "classical" to "post-classical." In addition, this division joins together diverse tendencies. I have given a somewhat reduced account of what theories belong in each category. Chomskyan models of narrative and perhaps even Aristotelian accounts would seem to fall into the "classical" category, while "post-classicism" would presumably lump cognitive theories together with Deconstruction.

Another way of framing the varieties of narrative theory may be more clarifying--both for the history of narratology and for the place of emotion in narratology. In this revised schema, I would first distinguish the Aristotelian tradition. Anyone familiar with Aristotle will know that he did indeed stress emotion in his treatment of stories. That emphasis is diminished, but not entirely absent in the work of his modern followers. We may divide these into two main groups. The first comprises the Chicago School and their descendants (R. S. Crane, Wayne Booth, James Phelan, and others). We may refer to these theorists as the "rhetorical" school, due to their emphasis on the rhetorical function of narrative (for an outline of this approach, see Phelan). This approach does have a place for emotion. Indeed, writers in this school frequently mention emotion.

¹ That is, language-centered. I borrow the term from Spolsky (ix).

However, the terms of discussion in rhetorical narratology were set relatively early, before emotion became more tractable through cognitive and neuroscientific analysis. As a result, the work of these theorists has tended to rely on fairly commonsensical views of emotion.

The other major school of Aristotelianism is that of Northrop Frye. However, it makes sense to expand this category beyond Frye to all writers who have adopted an empirical approach to story structure (or form, thus the term “formalist”). Theorists in this “empirical/formalist” category range from Vladimir Propp to Joseph Campbell and beyond. This work too has tended to leave aside emotion. However, like rhetorical narratology, it invites the incorporation of emotion research into its explanatory apparatus. Indeed, there have been three weaknesses in the research of these writers. The first concerns the theorists’ approach to empirical study—for example, the degree to which their sampling of data is adequate. Problems in this area are very consequential. But they are nonetheless the least serious, as they are the most readily corrected. The second, more serious weakness concerns the organization of the data and the precise derivation of narrative patterns. Finally, the most significant weakness concerns explanation. Accounts of story patterns by these narratologists are notoriously thin in explanatory principles.²

² Consider, for example, Scholes and Kellogg’s work on story structures, which is roughly of this general sort. Scholes and Kellogg seek to organize their account of plot structures by reference to “the annual cycle of vegetative life” (220). As Frye also noticed, there are some parallels between literary structure and seasons. Scholes and Kellogg see these parallels as mediated by rituals (220). It not entirely implausible to think that at least some sorts of literature have an historical relation with ritual. But it is not clear why story structures would continue to manifest the structures they do, once they become disconnected from ritual. Indeed, it is not even clear that ritual came before stories--or that it even could come before stories, since rituals themselves involve stories. I take it that a more plausible account would be something along the following lines. Insofar as there are parallels among verbal art, ritual, and ideas about the seasons, these all derive from underlying emotion systems, in their interaction with other neurocognitive systems, such as long term and working memory. Moreover, verbal art, ritual, cosmology, agriculture, and other discourses and practices interact with one another in various ways at different times and in different social circumstances. That interaction is allowed by the shared emotional (and cognitive) substrate.

To some extent, my own work falls into this category, particularly *The Mind and Its Stories*. I follow Propp, Frye, and others, in seeking to isolate story patterns. However, in order to respond to the problems of data collection and organization, I use the study of language universals as a model. Linguistics has been the discipline in which cross-cultural patterns have been explored most rigorously and most fruitfully. Linguistic theorists have therefore dealt with many of the problems facing researchers who wish to treat cross-cultural patterns in other areas.

Of course, neither Propp nor Frye made universal claims for the structures they isolated. However, I believe that the narrow focus of their research leads them to partially misunderstand the key structural components found in their own corpora. This leads us to the second problem, bearing on the organization of the data and the derivation of narrative patterns. Here, too, we might think of linguistics as a model. In order to formulate an adequate grammar of English, French, or Russian, we are well advised to understand what grammatical categories seem to recur cross-culturally. There are different ways of formulating the grammars of individual languages. It makes most sense to, for example, class lexical items in ways that appear to recur across languages rather than arbitrarily choosing a different organizational system for each language.

Finally, and most importantly, I differ from the empirical formalist narratologists in my explanatory framework. In order to account for cross-cultural patterns in stories, I turn to emotion research. (Thus, unlike many writers, I do not turn to linguistics here. I will consider the explanatory use of linguistics in narrative theory below.) The process here is not simply unidirectional. The research on emotion helps to organize the data and the resulting narrative patterns themselves affect the ways in which we might formulate and develop specific emotion theories. In short, the isolation of story patterns should be integrated with emotion research in order to produce both a more adequate

description of the patterns and a psychologically plausible and well-supported explanation of those patterns.

In formulating this emotion-based account, I have drawn on another tradition of narrative theory. Like the Aristotelian tradition, this too extends back to the pre-modern period, in this case to India, rather than to Greece. Sanskrit dramatic theory, like Aristotelian theory, stressed emotion. Moreover, it stressed a much wider range of emotions and connected these with a more character-centered treatment of stories. This tradition was more or less absent from modern narrative theory until it was, in effect, re-invented by the cognitive psychologist, Keith Oatley. Oatley's *Best Laid Schemes* is almost unique in giving a rigorous, theoretical account of the relation between narrative and emotion. However, initially at least, Oatley set out to understand emotion, not narrative. His treatment of novels was designed, first of all, to develop and illustrate points about emotion, not to develop an account of narrative. This is not true of all his work. Some of Oatley's writings do focus on literature as such. Indeed, some of this sets out the relation between his work and that of the Sanskrit theorists. But I believe it is fair to say that the center of Oatley's work has been emotion, not narrative.

Most forms of narratology appear to privilege some component of narrative. Rhetorical narratologists may be viewed as stressing the author, along with the reader as the target of the author's rhetorical appeal. Formalist narratologists tend to stress the events of the story. The early South Asian narratologists as well as Oatley may be seen as stressing the other main component of stories--the characters.³ On the other hand, they tend not to stress the personality of characters so much as their aspirations and the actions those aspirations inspire. I might therefore refer to this group as "character action" narratologists.

³ Other, largely non-narratological Sanskrit theories placed greater stress on the emotional effect of the work, thus (roughly) the audience or reader.

Readers may have been struck by the fact that none of the theories treated in the first or standard account of narratology has yet reappeared here. That is because they all fall into a third large category. We might say that a broad range of theorists have seen narrative not primarily as a rhetorical appeal by an author to a reader and not primarily as a series of events or character actions. Rather, they have viewed narrative, first of all, as a linguistic operation. This was part of the “linguistic turn” manifest not only in French Structuralism (and Post-Structuralism), but in a range of developments in the Anglo-American world and elsewhere as well. These various trends had a profound impact in narratology.

The first and undoubtedly largest group of linguistic narratologists (as we might call them) were the Saussureans. These are the writers mentioned above in the context of the “standard narrative” of narratology and may be divided, as is commonly done, into “Structuralist” and “Post-Structuralist.” As I have already noted, none of this work was particularly hospitable to emotion research. The use of Saussurean linguistics as a basis for studying meaning, communication, narrative, etc., is also highly problematic for linguistic reasons. (On some of the problems, see my *Politics* 28-95 and *Philosophical* 244-52.)

The single major post-Saussurean linguist is Noam Chomsky. Some of Chomsky’s very early work inspired a “generativist” approach to narrative in the theories of Gerald Prince and others. Given Chomsky’s stress on the autonomy of syntax, it seems clear that this approach is unlikely to invite emotional analysis--since emotion would be modularly separated from syntax and thus the formal aspects of narrative treated by the theory. This approach too was problematic in itself. First, the syntactic theory on which it drew was tentative and quickly replaced within generativism. Second, there is no particular reason to believe that narrative structure is based on or follows the same principles as syntactic structure anyway.

The influence of Chomskyan linguistics on literary theory has not been absent in recent years (see, for example, Frederick Aldama's recent work). However, at least in some cases, the use of this work has been much broader, drawing on general patterns of cognitive processing suggested by Chomskyan linguistics, rather than specific theories. For instance, parts of my own work are broadly generativist, particularly my treatment of "idiolectal" patterns in the work of individual authors (see "Narrative Universals, Heroic Tragi-Comedy")--patterns that are, in this case, inseparable from emotion systems.

A third set of language-based approaches (after Saussurean and Generativist narratologies) derives from Cognitive Linguistics, thus the work of George Lakoff, Ronald Langacker, and others. Cognitive linguistics is very popular among cognitively oriented literary theorists. However, most of this popularity relates to the cognitive linguistic treatment of metaphor. There has certainly been cognitive linguistic work on narrative that has gone beyond metaphor. However, this work has been somewhat limited. Moreover, it is not always clear that it goes beyond rephrasing commonplace observations in a technical terminology. Such a project is by no means valueless. It serves to indicate the compatibility of cognitive linguistics with well-established views in narrative study. However, it does not necessarily advance or develop narratology itself. In any case, here, as elsewhere, the linguistic focus has probably contributed to the relative absence of emotion from narratological analyses. For example, in a standard and very valuable collection of essays on "cognitive poetics" (Gavins and Steen), only the essay by Oatley ("Writing and reading") includes any significant treatment of emotion--and, of course, Oatley is not following cognitive linguistics. On the other hand, there is no necessary incompatibility between cognitive linguistics and emotion theories, so work on emotion could certainly be integrated into this approach.

Perhaps the most salutary development out of the linguistic turn has been the use of discourse linguistics to study narrative. This is unsurprising, since narrative is

already one of the main concerns of discourse linguistics. William Labov's early treatment on the structure of personal experience stories is rightly considered an exemplary model of narrative analysis. But here too the bias of the approach is clear. Labov does bring in some emotional concerns. Indeed, discourse linguistic narratology makes reference to emotional concerns in much the same manner and degree that we find in rhetorical narratology, to which it bears some similarities. Nonetheless, its focus remains linguistic. As a result, it tends to defer attention from non-linguistic systems, such as emotion.⁴

Consider, for example, a recent instance of this general sort. David Herman's synthesis of discourse analytic narratology, *Story Logic* is, to my mind, one of the finest books of narrative theory around. Along with lucid theoretical framing of the issues, broad scholarship, and rigorous argumentation, it includes many insightful innovations. In one of these, Herman stresses the value of studying narrative in relation to thematic roles. As Heidi Harley explains, "Verbs describe a situation involving one or more entities, or arguments. Running, for example, necessarily involves one argument (*Mary ran*) A *thematic role* is a general characterization of an argument's role in the situation described by the verb." Kroeger gives the following partial list of thematic roles: agent, experiencer, recipient, beneficiary, instrument, theme (entity that "undergoes a change of location or possession"), patient, stimulus, location, accompaniment (9; Herman's list is slightly different). This aspect of linguistic research promises to be a rich source of insight in narrative study. As Herman shows, it greatly enriches the

⁴ This tends to be true even in psychological, reader-oriented narratology, such as the "psychonarratology" of Bortolussi and Dixon, where one might have expected emotion to be a central concern. As they explain their project, "in psychonarratology we attempt to draw together the insights and analytical tools of narratology and related branches of literary studies together with empirical techniques used to investigate cognitive processes found in discourse processing." They go on to stress "linguistic concepts," such as "conversational cooperation," which allow them "to generate a rich set of hypotheses concerning how readers process narrative" (33). My point is not to diminish the value of this approach, for Bortolussi and Dixon's empirical and cognitive work constitutes a substantial contribution to narrative study. However, if I am right about the importance of emotion in narrative, such approaches not only leave out something, they leave out something crucial.

minimal list of character positions set out by Greimas and commonly taken up in narratology.

However, one might argue that we do not fully understand thematic roles or their relation to narrative if we treat them in a purely linguistic manner, rather than relating them to emotion systems. Thematic roles are bound up with the interests and interactions of agents, the sorts of things discussed by, for example, Oatley. As Oatley's work indicates, we understand those interests and interactions--whether in fiction or in real life--crucially through empathy or the simulation of emotions.

Take, for instance, Othello's murder of Desdemona. Suppose, first, that we are simply considering the sentence, "Othello murdered Desdemona." In this case, Othello is merely the agent. But when a character takes up a thematic role in a larger story (that is, not just a sentence), he or she does so in a more complex and multivalent way. When we think of a character as fulfilling a thematic role, we cannot think of the role in the same way that we do when treating grammar alone. Indeed, part of the tragedy of *Othello* derives from our sense that Othello increasingly loses his agency in the course of the play. While he would be a grammatical *agent* in any legal judgment, we sense how much he is reduced to an *instrument* in the hands of Iago. If we have any empathy with him at all, we recognize that he is an *experiencier* of the scene as well, and that the experience is deeply tragic for him, as it is for us. We are also aware of the degree to which his blackness has served as a *stimulus* for others in the play, prominently Iago and Desdemona's father. Of course, Desdemona too is complex, ambivalent, and deeply tragic in her roles. She is not merely the *patient*, but also an *agent* whose specific agency of speech is literally stifled by Othello suffocating her. We recognize this precisely insofar as we empathically share her desperate desire to set things right, to say what is true in the face of this grotesque misunderstanding. She too is an *experiencier*--not only of her own death, but of this terrible incomprehension from the man she loves, thus the person with whom she would most wish to share thoughts,

experiences, and feelings. In short, as they operate to organize character actions and relations in narrative, thematic roles are inseparable from emotion.

Obviously, it was not Herman's goal to say everything there is to say about thematic roles and narrative. Moreover, the fact that he could not cover every possible topic does not in any way diminish the great value of those analyses he presents. However, it seems clear that a full account of thematic roles does ultimately and crucially require an understanding of the operation of emotion--at least when the treatment of those roles leaves the narrow realm of grammar and turns to characterization in stories. Again, there is no problem with Herman's book not taking up this task. (No book does, should, or could treat everything.) The problem is that this absence of a connection with emotion is characteristic of the entire field.⁵

The apparent exception to what I am claiming comes with psychoanalytic narratology. Drawing on the Structuralist and Post-Structuralist ideas of Jacques Lacan, a great deal of this work is linguicentric also in its focus on metaphor and metonymy as the organizing tropes of the unconscious (understood as structured like a language), its emphasis on the "signifier," and so forth. But this is not all there is to psychoanalytic or even Lacanian narratology. The most influential psychoanalytic narratologist is probably Peter Brooks. Brooks articulates an account of plot as an active structuring of experience driven by desire. At a general level, Brooks is no doubt correct. We begin to engage in something like emplotment as soon as we are faced with human agents engaged in activities that we consider significant. In keeping with this, Brooks is right to

⁵ Indeed, when mainstream narratologists treat emotion, they have a tendency to treat it almost as a linguistic phenomenon. For example, in her important overview of narrative theory, Mieke Bal discusses a passage from Couperus' *Of Old People* that involves "emotive language use" (43). The fact that the focus is already language use shows the relative narrowness of the attention to emotion here. On the other hand, there are many aspects of emotive language use that a narratologist might explore. Here, too, however, Bal's attention is drawn to narrowly linguistic aspects. Specifically, she is particularly concerned with "the emotive phrase" as "a linguistic act" (44). There is, of course, nothing at all wrong with this. Bal's discussion is, as always, insightful and illuminating. But it is also obviously quite limited.

emphasize that this engagement is an ongoing process, not a fixed product. Moreover, this account of plot leads Brooks to insightful interpretations of individual literary works.

Yet this is not an account of plot in terms of complex, multiple, well studied emotion systems. Drawing on psychoanalytic theory, Brooks sometimes speaks as if desire is predominantly sexual or, rather, libidinal (thus sexual in origin if not in manifestation). At other times, he takes up Freud's much broader concept of Eros. At other times, "desire" seems to refer to any sort of motivation whatsoever.

The problems with the third usage are obvious. It is trivial to say that we--authors, readers, characters--act on the basis of motivation. For Brooks's interpretive purposes, further analysis of motivation systems may not be necessary. But, without that further analysis, his treatment of motivation will tend to remain at a pre-theoretical, intuitive level.

The problem with the notion of Eros is different. There is simply no reason to believe that there is a neural system corresponding to this putative drive. In other words, there is no reason to believe that there is such a thing as Eros in Freud's sense. Of course, some systems--most obviously, sexual desire and attachment--share characteristics with Freud's idea of Eros. But they remain distinct systems with their own particular conditions, outcomes, and so forth. Moreover, there is no reason to believe that the features abstracted in the idea of Eros have narrative or other consequences. Finally, even if they had such consequences, we would need to understand those consequences in terms of the emotion systems, not in terms of a relatively arbitrary abstraction from them.

This leaves the sexual use. The advantage of the sexual use of the term "desire" is that there is a sexual motivation system. There are two disadvantages to this usage. First, it is not at all clear that the sexual system plays a fundamental and distinctive role in narrative structure generally, though there are of course specific genres where it is motivationally important. Second, the current understanding of sexual desire is rather

different from Freud's understanding. For example, a great deal of Freud's work on early parent/child relations would now be seen as bearing on attachment (a separate system), rather than sexuality. Moreover, the Lacanian formulation of desire in relation to metonymy and the place of castration in the psychoanalytic account--both of which are important to Brooks's account--seem improbable (to say the least) in light of more recent research.

In short, even the theories of narrative that seem closest to an affective narratology, ultimately have little to do with emotion, particularly as emotion systems are currently understood in light of neurocognitive and related research.

Emotion and Discourse

Stories are, of course, what involve character interests and aspirations. Thus the story is the most obvious place where emotion would be crucial to narrative. However, this does not mean that emotions are unimportant for studying discourse. As I have discussed emotion and stories elsewhere (e.g., in *The Mind*), it may be worth considering a brief example of how emotion can bear productively on our understanding of discourse as well.

As is well known, Gérard Genette distinguished narrators from focalizers. The narrator is the "agent who produces a narrative" (Herman "Glossary" 280). Focalization "is the submission of (potentially limitless) narrative information to a perspectival filter" (Jahn 94). Narrators sometimes confine their narration to what a particular character experiences or thinks. Suppose a story includes the following lines, "Jones was feeling apprehensive. He looked up at Smith. Smith seemed preoccupied. Jones walked out of the office, worried about what Smith might be thinking." Jones is not the narrator. But the perspective of the narrative is at least quite close to that of Jones. The narrator reports what Jones sees, thinks, and feels. The narrator does not report what Smith

sees, thinks, and feels--except insofar as these are inferred by Jones. Jones is, then, the focalizer.

Genette distinguished three types of focalization. The first is "zero-focalization." In this case, there is no focalizer. The narrator relates events and scenes without any filter from a character in the story. The second is "internal focalization," which restricts the narrator to the experiences (perceptual, imaginative, etc.) of one or more characters. The third is "external focalization" where the narrator does not have access to inner thoughts, but reports only objective facts about the story world.

Mieke Bal and others have criticized this distinction, arguing, for example, that "even typical 'non-focalized' passages are rarely entirely free of point of view" (Jahn 101). Jahn cites an example from James Michener's *Hawaii* as an example. The passage begins, "Across a million years, down more than ten million years [the island] existed silently in the unknown sea" (qtd. in Jahn 97). Jahn's point is that even this small piece of narration involves selection, attitude. It is not simply a part of a statement of everything. Thus it is focalized.

But this seems problematic. If "focalization" becomes so broad that it encompasses all forms of selection, then one wonders if it has ceased to serve its initial theoretical functions, both explanatory and descriptive. Perhaps this is a point where it is valuable to return to an older distinction, that between omniscient and limited narration. It is true that focalization is not identical with limited narration and that the isolation of focalization is an important advance in narrative theory. However, that does not mean that the omniscient/limited distinction should simply be discarded. It addresses something different from focalization--and perhaps, when adequately refined, it may help clarify focalization and the issue of zero focalization. In fact, as will become clear in a moment, I do not believe that the omniscient/limited distinction as such is crucial to rethinking focalization. However, I do believe that it points us toward a way of

thinking about narrators that may be clarifying and theoretically productive--a way that, in the end, leads us to emotion.

When we speak of a narrator, we suggest that we are speaking, not of a mechanism or an abstract principle, but something human or human-like. That human-like agent should have certain properties. The properties do not have to be precisely the same as those that characterize real humans. But they should presumably be of the same general sort. Humans gain information about the world through sensory perception--thus without direct access to other minds. Moreover, our perception is limited spatially and temporally. If we take a narrator to be human-like, we may assume that he or she has some way of gaining knowledge about the world. That way may be limited to sensory perception or it may not. If limited to perception, it may or may not be spatially or temporally limited.

This already begins to solve some of our problems. We could use the phrase "internal focalization" to refer to cases where the narrator's knowledge of the story world is not confined to sensory perception, but is focalized by one or more characters. We may use the phrase "external focalization" to refer to cases where the narrator's knowledge is confined to sensory perception, and is also focalized by one or more characters. Cases of the latter sort are fairly common in film. For example, a romantic comedy may involve dozens of characters. But it may show us only scenes where one of the lovers is present. If we are given no internal thoughts of these characters (e.g., through voice-overs), then we are probably dealing with an external focalization.

But what about "zero focalization"? That does not seem to be a matter of knowledge. Indeed, that is presumably why Genette's distinction has intuitive appeal. On the other hand, it seems clear that, even if some narrators know everything, no narrators *say* everything. In this way, there is some limitation. Of course, if we define every form of limitation as a form of focalization, then this means there is focalization. However, if we wish to keep the sharpness of the concept, we are likely to wish to

confine our use of the term “focalization” to characters (or character-like components) in a story. In that case, it seems clear that passages such as Michener’s are not focalized. But how then do we describe their limitation?

This is where emotion comes in. Again, if we think of narrators as human-like, we think of their minds as having the same sorts of structures that human minds have. Human minds include not only knowledge--perception, memory, language, inferential capacities, and so on (thus the omniscient/limited distinction). They also include emotion. Indeed, without emotion, human minds would never lead human bodies to do anything. Without the systems of emotion and motivation, we would not speak or listen, direct our attention to one thing rather than another, select some information as being of interest and ignore other information as being of no interest. The point is actually fairly ordinary. Research in emotion in recent decades has shown that we would not successfully engage in reasoning processes without emotion. (The most famous work on this is Damasio’s.) Put differently--Mr. Spock is impossible. In part due to the stress on linguistic models of narrative, and in part due to an historically long-standing distrust of emotion, we have tended to treat narrators as Spock-like. But a Spock-like narrator would not narrate. Put in the most basic way--if it talks, it feels. Narrators necessarily have emotions.

Zero-focalization, then, is a situation in which there is a narrator with emotions--emotions that lead him or her to select certain facts of the story world and not others--but whose reports are not focalized to any character in the story.⁶

This analysis has a number of further implications. For example, it suggests the possibility that focalization may come in two varieties. Given that narrators select according to interest and preference, it may be that focalization--internal or external--is

⁶ I should note that Jahn allowed that a narrator might have an “emotional stance” (101). But, for Jahn, that was only one of many possibilities. The suggestion of the preceding analysis is that, if we take the notion of a narrator seriously, we must *always* attribute emotion to the narrator--not sometimes as one possibility among many.

not always a matter of limitation in knowledge. It may equally be a matter of limitation in interest. In other words, we may distinguish between epistemic and affective focalization.

This analysis also raises questions. For instance, it is presumably more difficult to distinguish the narrator from the implied author in cases where there is zero focalization and the emotion of the narrator is minimized. In connection with this, we might begin to wonder about the relation between narrator emotion and the perception of irony.

I will not go into these issues here. My point is merely to indicate that seriously and thoroughly integrating the study of emotion into narratology opens a wealth of possibilities, with respect to stories (as we should have known already) and even with respect to discourse. Indeed, the converse point holds as well, for stories affect and help to explain our emotions. Most or all aspects of our emotions--eliciting conditions, actional outcomes, and so on--may be affected by stories. Stories may even be a necessary part of the development of our emotional lives. We are undoubtedly born with emotional propensities. But those propensities are realized and inflected by experience. It may be that stories are a key part of that realization and inflection. If so, the point only reveals once again the profound inter-connection of emotions and stories.

In sum, a research program in emotion and narrative promises to contribute much to our understanding of stories and the human mind. The history of narratology has oriented the field away from such a program. The development of narratology has produced enormous advances, so there is no reason to regret that orientation. Nonetheless, the exponential growth of emotion research in recent decades and the centrality of emotion to our interest in and experience of stories suggests that it is now time to re-orient narrative study. This does not at all mean leaving aside the discoveries of the past. But it does mean recognizing the limited nature of past approaches and returning emotion to the center of our research and theorization.

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