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Narrative Explanation

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The Problem of Narrative Explanation

A story does more than recount events; it recounts events in a way that renders them intelligible, thus conveying not just information but also understanding. We might therefore be tempted to describe narrative as a genre of explanation.[1] When the police invite a suspect to "tell his story," they are asking him to explain the blood on his shirt or his absence from home on the night of the murder; and whether he is judged to have a "good story" will depend on its adequacy as an explanation. Can we account for the explanatory force of narrative with the models of explanation available in the philosophy of science? Or does narrative convey a different kind of understanding, which requires a different model and perhaps even a term other than 'explanation'?

This question arises for various disciplines in which narrative comes into play. For historians, it is the question whether narrating historical events conveys understanding over and above that conveyed by subsuming the same events under the generalizations of economics, political science, or sociology. For clinical psychologists, it is the question whether fitting symptomatic behaviors into a life-story adds to the understanding gained by fitting them into diagnostic categories. Even the police or the jury must ask themselves what sort of explanatory value there is in a suspect's giving his alibi in the form of a story.

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As I have suggested, the question how storytelling conveys understanding is inseparable from the question what makes for a good story. Of course, a good story can be good in many accidental respects, ranging from the elegance of its diction to the personal attractions of its characters. But what makes a story good specifically as a story—what makes it a good example of storytelling, or narrative—is its excellence at a particular way of organizing events into an intelligible whole.

According to Aristotle, what makes a portrayal of events hang together in this way is a plot, or *muthos,* which requires the portrayed events to follow one another "by necessity or probability." The necessities and probabilities that Aristotle has in mind appear to be of the kind that could be revealed instead by a scientific explanation:

> Plots are either simple or complex. … The action, proceeding in the way defined, as one continuous whole, I call simple, when the change in the hero's fortunes takes place without Peripety [Reversal] or Discovery; and complex, when it involves one or the other, or both. These should each of them arise out of the structure of the Plot itself, so as to be the consequence, necessary or probable, of the antecedents. There is a great difference between a thing happening *propter hoc* and *post hoc*.[2]

If Aristotle is right, then a plot must convey understanding in the same way that it qualifies as a plot, to begin with—namely, by providing each event with antecedents from which to follow as a necessary or probable consequence. And the understanding conveyed by a plot, in that case, would be no different from that conveyed by other genres of explanation.

This view is implicit in famous remarks by E.M. Forster on the plotting of a novel:

> "The king died and then the queen died," is a story. "The king died and then the queen died of grief" is a plot. … Consider the death of the queen. If it is in a story we say "and then?" If it is in a plot we ask "why?" That is the fundamental difference between these two aspects of the novel.[3]

An answer to the question "why?" is of course an explanation. Hence Forster conceives of a plot as a form of explanation, and he seems to have causal explanation in mind, since the element that makes for a plot, in his example, is the queen's grief, which is a causal link between her death and the king's.

This view of narative has recently been elaborated by Noël Carroll, in a paper entitled "On the Narrative Connection." Following Morton White, Carroll distinguishes among three modes of discourse for recounting events: *annals*, which represent events as temporally ordered; *chronicles*, which represent temporally ordered events pertaining to a single subject; and *narrative*, which requires some additional connection among the events:

> If I say, "I woke up; later I dressed; still later I went to class," I suspect that most people would agree that this falls short of a full-fledged narrative, although the events cited might be turned into ingredients of a narrative. But why isn't it a narrative properly so called? To put it vaguely—because the connection among the events alluded to by it is not tight enough.[4]

The connection that is "tight enough" to transform a chronicle into a narrative, according to Carroll, is the connection between causes and the effects for which they were, in the circumstances, necessary

(though perhaps not sufficient). Carroll illustrates the need for such "narrative connections" by means of the following example:

> Consider this putative narrative: "Aristarchus hypothesized the heliocentric theory thereby anticipating Copernicus' discovery by many centuries." [...] If there is no line of influence stretching from Aristarchus' discovery to Copernicus', I, at least, find it strained to think that this is narrative. It is an interesting series of events. Indeed, mention of the second event in this series retrospectively reveals something of the significance of the earlier event, and ... retrospective significance is a frequently occurring feature of narrative. However, where the events bear no sort of causal relation to each other, they seem more of the order of coincidence than of narrative.[5]
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> [R]etrospective significance, though a typically recurring and explicable feature of narrative, should not be mistaken as the mark of narrative. For the temporally ordered discourse "Aristarchus hypothesized the heliocentric system and then centuries later Copernicus discovered it again" affords the apprehension of retrospective significance—it indicates the point of mentioning Aristarchus' discovery in light of Copernicus'—but it is not, as I have argued, a narrative proper inasmuch as it lacks a narrative connection."[6]

In Carroll's terminology, the discoveries of Aristarchus and Copernicus are ingredients for a chronicle but not a narrative, because they are successive events pertaining to a common topic but are causally unrelated. Carroll thinks that the successive events in a narrative must occur not just post hoc but also propter hoc. Carroll goes on to suggest that the causal content of a narrative underlies its explanatory potential:

> Perhaps a related consideration in favor of my view of narrative is that narrative is a common form of explanation. In ordinary speech, we use narratives to explain how things happened and why certain standing conditions were important. Narrative is capable of performing this role because it tracks causal networks. ... Thus, insofar as what we call narratives are explanatory, it seems advisable to regard narrative properly so called as connected to causation and not merely temporal succession.[7]

Here Carroll states the null hypothesis of my inquiry, that the explanatory force of a narrative is due to information that would be equally explanatory if recast in non-narrative form. I want to consider whether there might not, after all, be some explanatory force peculiar to the narrative form itself.

Rejecting what I have called the null hypothesis of my inquiry will not entail denying that a narrative typically organizes events into chains

of cause and effect. Nor will it entail denying that the absence of causality or probability from a narrative can render it internally incoherent and thus powerless to convey understanding. What counts as a single event in the summary of a plot—birth, death, marriage, separation, reunion—is invariably a complex of many events causally related. Without such clumps of causality, there would be nothing but a soup of physical occurrences, out of which no plot could ever precipitate. Hence the idea of a plot without causality is absurd.

In order to reject my null hypothesis, however, it will be sufficient to show that something other than causality or probability serves the function of differentiating narrative from other genres and endowing it with its peculiar explanatory force. A narrative may require many things without which it would make no sense—decipherable spelling or pronunciation, for example. But spelling and pronunciation aren't the distinguishing characteristics of narrative or the source of its distinctive power to convey understanding. If the same is true of causality and probability, then Carroll's conception of "the narrative connection" will have to be rejected.

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Before going further, I should regiment the miscellaneous terms that I have inherited from Aristotle, Forster, and Carroll. I like Forster's term 'plot', and Aristotle's *muthos,* for the principle of organization by which narrative confers intelligibility on narrated events. I also like the terms 'annals' and 'chronicles' for ways of recounting events without giving them a plot. But I don't like Forster's use of 'story' for the genus of which annals and chronicles are plotless species. To my ear, the term 'story' implies the presence of a plot. Maybe the larger genus should be labeled "tales," which encompasses anything that's *told.* Anyway, that's how I propose to use the terms, reserving both 'story' and 'narrative' for tales that have a plot and may therefore have whatever explanatory force is peculiar to narrative.

One last preliminary remark, about the terms 'explanation' and 'explanatory force'. I have already hinted that the mode of understanding characteristically produced by narrative may turn out to be so different from that produced by ordinary explanations as to call for a different term. In my experience, linguistic intuitions vary widely on this issue. By the time I have offered my account of how narrative conveys understanding, some readers will think that I have shown how narrative explains, and others will think that I have shown, if anything, that narrative is not at all explanatory. I regard this disagreement as merely

terminological and hence as resolvable by stipulation. I use the term 'explanatory force' for the power of narrative to convey understanding of some kind or other. Whether that power is best described as explanatory is a question that won't concern me.

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My skepticism about Carroll's conception of the narrative connection is aroused, to begin with, by his example of a non-story. I agree with Carroll that he doesn't really tell a story when he says, "Aristarchus hypothesized the heliocentric theory thereby anticipating Copernicus' discovery by many centuries." Yet this sentence may fall short of being a story, not because it describes events that are causally unrelated, but because it merely alludes to the second event by way of characterizing the first, without ever asserting that the second occurred. Even the shortest story must recount more than one event.

This account of Carroll's failure to tell a story does not apply to his second attempt, which goes like this: "Aristarchus hypothesized the heliocentric system and then centuries later Copernicus discovered it again." Here Carroll recounts two events, one after the other, and yet he claims that he still hasn't told a story. I don't know whether to accept this claim, but it is in any case considerably weaker than what Carroll is committed to claiming. He is committed to claiming, not just that he hasn't told a story about Aristarchus and Copernicus, but that there is no true story to be told about them, given their mutual isolation in the web of causality. I am not convinced: I am fairly certain that one could tell a story about these events, and without inventing a causal connection that wasn't there.

Consider Aristotle's example of a disjointed story:

> Tragedy, however, is an imitation not only of a complete action, but also of incidents arousing pity and fear. Such incidents have the very greatest effect on the mind when they occur unexpectedly and at the same time in consequence of one another; there is more of the marvelous in them then than if they happened of themselves or by mere chance. Even matters of chance seem most marvelous if there is an appearance of design as it were in them; as for instance the statue of Mitys at Argos killed the author of Mitys' death by falling down on him when a looker-on at a public spectacle; for incidents like that we think to be not without a meaning.[8]

Here Aristotle is trying to reconcile the requirement that plotted events follow "by necessity or probability," on the one hand, with the requirement that they arouse fear and pity, one the other, given that

these emotions are enhanced by the element of surprise. The usual way to reconcile these requirements, according to Aristotle, is to have the plotted events "occur unexpectedly and at the same time in consequence of one another." Another way of obtaining the same effect, however, is for causally unrelated events to have what Aristotle calls "an appearance of design," as when a murderer is accidentally killed by a statue of his victim.

Surely, the death of Mitys' murderer makes for a good story. We might interpret Aristotle as claiming that the "appearance of design" in this story is actually an appearance of causality or probability, because the audience is led to imagine an avenging spirit, or some other force of cosmic justice, behind the falling statue. But I think that the story holds up even under an absurdist reading, which takes the murderer's death for an accident. On this reading, the murder of Mitys and the death of his murderer are no more connected than the discoveries of Aristarchus and Copernicus. Even so, the one pair of disjointed events seems like more of a story than the other. Something is present in Aristotle's pair of events that's missing from Carroll's, and it needn't be an imagined causal connection. What is it?

The crucial difference between these examples, I think, is that in Aristotle's the sequence of events completes an emotional cadence in the audience. When a murder is followed by a fitting comeuppance, we feel indignation gratified. Although these events follow no causal sequence, they provide an emotional resolution, and so they have a meaning for the audience, despite lacking any causal or probabilistic connection. No similar emotional cadence is resolved by Copernicus' rediscovery of what Aristarchus had previously discovered—not, at least, in Carroll's telling. The possibility in principle of fashioning these discoveries into a story is due to the possibility of finding something that they might mean to an audience in emotional terms.

Any sequence of events, no matter how improbable, can provide material for storytelling if it completes an emotional cadence. Twins separated at birth are ideal protagonists for a story even if their eventual reunion is a fluke. A discovery due to serendipity, a tragedy narrowly averted by dumb luck, a mundane act that unforeseeably becomes the last in a life accidentally cut short—these are the stuff not only of literary storytelling but of legend, gossip, and other forms of everyday narrative. Whether a winning lottery ticket or a fatal housefire makes enough of a story to be featured on the local news depends, not on whether its causes can be told, but rather on whether the sur-

rounding circumstances will call up feelings that can be brought to some resolution by this inexplicable stroke of good or bad fortune. So long as we feel an anxiety relieved or a hope dashed, we have the sense of hearing a story, even if we have no idea why events took the relevant turn. Similarly in Forster's example, the king's death need not have contributed to the queen's in order to provide materials for a story. Let the queen laugh at the king's death and later slip on a fatal banana peel: the audience will experience the resolution characteristic of a plot.

It is no coincidence, I think, that in transforming Forster's non-story into a story, I have made it sound like a joke. Joke telling is one genre of storytelling. Attempts to generalize about the internal logic of jokes are notoriously ill conceived: there is no particular way that a stretch of discourse or its subject matter must be constructed in order for it to qualify as a joke. What makes a stretch of discourse into a joke is that it reliably brings the audience to the resolution of laughter, by means of whatever internal logic or illogic it can. In my view, a stretch of discourse can qualify as a story, more generally, by reliably producing in the audience some emotional resolution, of which laughter is just one example.

Of course, my talk of resolving emotional cadences is vague and metaphorical. Offering a clear and literal account of this phenomenon will be my primary task for the remainder of this paper.

Scenarios

An alternative to Carroll's view of narrative explanation can be found in Roger Schank's *Tell Me a Story,* which elaborates on work by Schank and others in artificial intelligence. According to Schank, "storytelling and understanding are functionally the same thing";[9] and yet Schank does not require that stories convey causal or probabilistic information.

In Schank's view, we understand things by assimilating them to what is familiar; and so we understand new experiences, for example, by assimilating them to past experiences stored in memory.[10] The most memorable experiences, according to Schank, are the ones that we have stored in the form of stories. We put these experiences into words, by telling ourselves about them, and then remember them "as told to" ourselves, a form that is richly indexed with keywords and hence readily accessible for purposes of understanding future experi-

ences. When other people tell us a story, we understand it by assimilating it to stories of our own, retrieved from memory. And what we can then assimilate to a story of ours includes, not only their story, but also whatever their story is about, so that we end up understanding their subject matter and not just their discourse about it. That's why people can explain something to us by telling us a story about it: their story helps us to assimilate the thing to what's familiar, by assimilating it to our own stories.

Unfortunately, Schank has nothing to say about which descriptions of events amount to stories. For all that Schank says, "The king died and then the queen died" can be a perfectly good story, especially if we remember a prior story to which it can be assimilated—say, "The duke died and then the duchess died." Having learned of the ducal deaths and remembered them "as told to" ourselves, we ought to find the royal deaths intelligible, according to Schank, because we can assimilate them to a known story. But surely the one pair of deaths won't help us to understand the other simply by virtue of being remembered in discursive form.[11]

The End

A more promising avenue of inquiry is suggested by Louis Mink's philosophy of history.[12] Dissatisfied with the suggestion that historical narratives render events intelligible by revealing their causes,[13] Mink characterized narrative understanding as comprehension in the literal sense of a "grasping together"—"a characteristic kind of understanding which consists in thinking together in a single act … the complicated relationships of parts which can be experienced only *seriatim*."[14] When history is presented in a coherent narrative, Mink argued, "actions and events, although represented as occurring in the order of time, can be surveyed as it were in a single glance as bound together in an order of significance, a representation of a *totum simul*."[15]

Mink presented this account of historical understanding as a variation on the views of W. B. Gallie, which he summarized as follows:

> In following a story, as in being a spectator at a [cricket] match, there must be a quickly established sense of a promised although unpredictable outcome: the county team will win, lose, or draw, the separated lovers will be reunited or will not. Surprises and contingencies are the stuff of stories, as of games, yet by virtue of the promised yet open outcome we are enabled to follow a series of events across their contingent relations and

> to understand them as leading to an as yet unrevealed conclusion without however necessitating that conclusion.[16]

Mink did not share Gallie's concern with unpredictability and its role in drawing us along through a story; indeed, he was not interested in how we follow a story when reading or hearing it for the first time, since historians often tell us stories whose outcomes we already know. Rather, Mink was interested in how the characterization of events in terms of their relations to an outcome enables us to comprehend them as a completed whole after the story is finished.

Consider, for example, the story of *Treasure Island,* whose very title already hints at the "promised although unpredictable outcome" in light of which the story's various episodes are to be comprehended. Every major event in the story has some intrinsic description of its own, but it also has some description in relation to the outcome in question. Each major event can be regarded as either motivating or furthering or hindering or somehow bearing on the pursuit of Flint's treasure. And within the story, other promised outcomes serve a similar organizing role. As soon as the word 'mutiny' is uttered in the confrontation between the Captain and the Squire, subsequent events can be comprehended as revelations of, responses to, actions upon, or deviations from the sailors' efforts to sieze control, which can themselves be comprehended as an obstacle to recovering the treasure. The mutiny and the recovery of the treasure are thus common points of reference towards which we can orient our conception of the other events in the story; and having thus aligned our conception of the events, we can grasp them together rather than merely review them in succession.[17]

Although we thereby gain comprehension, which might be called a kind of understanding, this mode of understanding doesn't necessarily rest on an explanation of the events understood. Of course, the narrators of *Treasure Island* offer explanations of many events, but these explanations are self-contained digressions from the narrative and do not contribute to the sort of comprehension that interests Gallie or Mink. Again, many of the events that are comprehensible by virtue of their relation to the mutiny, or to the recovery of the treasure, are related to these outcomes as individually necessary or jointly sufficient conditions for them, and so they provide a partial explanation of why the mutiny occurred or why the treasure was recovered. But equally many events may be comprehensible by virtue of being related to these outcomes as hindrances, inhibitions, or obstacles; and the comprehensibility of the story does not depend on its making clear why the favor-

able conditions won out over the unfavorable. In short, how comprehensible the story is, in Mink's sense of the term, does not depend on how well it explains why the treasure was found.[18] Rather, it depends on how well the events in the story can be grasped together as bearing on this outcome in some way or other, favorably or unfavorably.[19]

Mink's view may appear to differ from Schank's in taking us to understand events by subsuming them under outcome-oriented concepts such as "treasure-hunt" or "mutiny" rather than by assimilating them to entire scenarios. Yet the two theories may be more similar than they first appear. On the one hand, Schank emphasizes the importance of "story skeletons," which are general schemas into which many particular stories can fit: 'treasure-hunt' and 'mutiny' could easily be the names for such schemas. On the other hand, Mink's theory raises a question about the concepts involved in narrative comprehension. How do we know what a mutiny is, for example, if not by knowing the general scenario for a mutiny? Our concept of a mutiny may thus involve a story-skeleton or the memory of a paradigm case. When we comprehend a sequence of events under the concept of a mutiny, as envisioned by Mink's theory, we may well be assimilating those events to a story-skeleton or a particular remembered story, as envisioned by Schank's.

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What Mink and Gallie add to this view is the idea that the organizing principle of a story is the "promised although unpredictable outcome"—that is, the ending. A narrative must move forward not only in the sense of telling one event after another but also in the sense of approaching or at least seeming to approach some conclusion to those events, some terminus, finish, or closure.

Here I should elaborate on a point at which I merely hinted earlier, about the difference between narrative and the artistic genres that employ it. A novel or a theater piece need not reach a conclusion or even seem to approach one. But a novel or a theatre piece need not be a work of narrative, either; it may be a work of narrative only in parts, or it may be "of" narrative only in the sense of commenting on the requirements of narrative by pointedly defying them. A bad story can make for a great novel (though perhaps not the sort of great novel that one likes to read). The necessity of an ending is not inherent in the aesthetics of the novel or play but in the nature of storytelling, a form of discourse that a novel or play need not employ.

Note that for the sake of providing an ending, causality (or probability) is both unnecessary and insufficient. An outcome can provide a conclusion to events whether or not it is their effect or likely sequel, whereas causes and effects can succeed one another *ad infinitum* without ever reaching a conclusion. A subsequent event can put an end to prior events only if those antecedents have shown some potential that it manages to discharge, some void that it manages to fill, some cadence that it manages to resolve.

And now I have returned to the vague and metaphorical terms of my introductory remarks, about cadences being resolved, to which I have only added more vague and metaphorical talk. I therefore turn to the task of replacing these metaphors with a clear and literal description of at least one phenomenon that they represent.

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The idea that stories are structured by their endings has long been familiar among literary critics. Frank Kermode gives a vivid illustration of the idea in his lectures entitled *The Sense of an Ending*:

> Let us take a very simple example, the ticking of a clock. We ask what it says: and we agree that it says *tick-tock*. By this fiction we humanize it, make it take our language. Of course, it is we who provide the fictional difference between the two sounds; *tick* is our word for a physical beginning, *tock* our word for an end. … It can be shown by experiment that subjects who listen to rhythmic structures such as *tick-tock*, repeated identically, "can reproduce the intervals within the structure accurately, but they cannot grasp spontaneously the interval between the rhythmic groups," that is, between *tock* and *tick,* even when this remains constant.[[20]] The first interval is organized and limited, the second not. … The fact that we call the second of the two related sounds *tock* is evidence that we use fictions to enable the end to confer organization and form on the temporal structure. The interval between the two sounds is now charged with significant duration. The clock's *tick-tock* I take to be a model of what we call a plot, an organization that humanizes time by giving it form; and the interval between *tock* and *tick* represents purely successive, disorganized time of the sort that we need to humanize.[21]

Kermode has much to say about why we need to "humanize" time by creatively hearing some of its tickings as *tock*s. The topic lends itself to lofty speculation, about our inability to keep our balance without horizons; or our desire for endings that we can outlive; or for endings that we can't, which save us from what Bernard Williams calls "the tedium of immortality."[22] Yet my topic is not why we need endings but what endings are—what gives an event, or the description of an event, the power

to organize its antecedents in the way that's distinctive of an ending. Why is *tock* the ending and *tick* the beginning, rather than vice versa, or neither?

A critic who has attempted this question is Peter Brooks, who likens the cadence of a narrative to the vicissitudes of an instinct in Freudian theory.[23] The beginning of a story, according to Brooks, is like the stimulus that prompts the search for stimulus-reduction, the itch that demands scratching; the middle is like the postponement of stimulus-reduction by obstacles and misdirected efforts; and the end is like the satisfying discharge that pacifies, if only temporarily. I think that Brooks is right to look for the nature of endings in the nature of human affect, but I also think that his focus on Freud's theory of instinct is unduly narrow and controversial. Freudian theory is not needed to support the simple observation that human affect follows a cycle of provocation, complication, and resolution.

Ronald de Sousa has proposed what might seem like the inverse of Brooks's analysis: whereas Brooks analyzes narrative in terms of affect, de Sousa analyzes affect in terms of narrative, hypothesizing that each human emotion has a "paradigm scenario" similar to the stories posited by Schank:

> We are made familiar with the vocabulary of emotion by association with *paradigm scenarios*. These are drawn first from our daily life as small children and later reinforced by the stories, art, and culture to which we are exposed. Later still, in literate cultures, they are supplemented and refined by literature. Paradigm scenarios involve two aspects: first, a situation type …, and second, a set of characteristic or "normal" *responses* to the situation, where normality is first a biological matter and then very quickly becomes a cultural one.[24]

Like Schank, de Sousa envisions that these scenarios are stored in memory and retrieved as a means of understanding what we experience: they are "not so much stories up for interpretation as stories *in terms of which* other stories and situations are themselves interpreted."[25] When brought to bear on a situation, paradigm scenarios determine what we focus on, what we tend to notice, and how we are disposed to respond: "When a paradigm scenario suggests itself as an interpretation of a current situation, it arranges or rearranges our perceptual, cognitive, and inferential dispositions."[26]

I want to borrow from Brooks and de Sousa, first, the idea that the earliest stories in our lives are about the vicissitudes of our emotions; and second, the idea that the shape of those stories is determined, in

the first instance, by the nature of human affect, although it may subsequently be modified by cultural influences. The cadence that makes for a story is that of the arousal and resolution of affect, a pattern that is biologically programmed. Hence we understand stories viscerally, with our bodies.

The notion of visceral understanding is illustrated by Kermode's case of a ticking clock.[27] For I suggest that we understand the cadence of *tick-tock* with the muscles of our face and mouth, which are tensed for the first syllable and relaxed for the second. (For other examples of this phenomenon, see note 28.) The cycle of tension and relaxation is built in to the very nature of muscle, and it's what leads us to perceive *tick* as the beginning and *tock* as the end. In much the same way, we understand the cadence of a story with the natural cycles of our emotional sensibility.

Emotion and Time

The idea that emotions are essentially diachronic—that their nature consists in how they unfold over time—is supported by empirical research, which has recently been summarized by Craig DeLancey in a book entitled *Passionate Engines.*[29] Drawing on the work of psychobiologists and neuropsychologists, DeLancey defends an *affect program* theory of the emotions, according to which they involve coordinated suites of physiological, phenomenological, and behavioral routines that are triggered by conditions of particular kinds.

The first episode in the natural history of an emotion is its arousal by characteristic conditions. In this respect, emotions differ from some other motivational attitudes, such as desires. It is not in the nature of most desires to be elicited by conditions of any particular kind. From the fact that someone wants something, we cannot ordinarily infer how he came to want it; but from the fact that he is afraid, we can draw some plausible inferences about how he came to be in that state. The second episode in the history of an emotion is often a sequence of physiological symptoms, such as perspiration or accelerated heartbeat, often accompanied by distinctive feelings as well—a lump in the throat, a knot in the stomach, a tingling at the base of the spine. Then there are purely reflexive behavioral symptoms, including facial expressions, such as smiling or scowling; bodily postures, such as cringing; and various programmed behaviors, such as laughing, crying, or gagging. Equally reflexive are the associated patterns of attention and interpre-

tation of the sort mentioned by de Sousa: a heightened awareness of danger, for example, or greater sensitivity to physical beauty. Next come motivational dispositions toward behaviors that can be performed in the form of deliberate actions, though they may also issue impulsively under the force of an overwhelming urge: gamboling, fleeing, attacking, caressing, and so on. Finally, each emotion has a characteristic pattern of decay and extinction, involving conditions that characteristically dispel it, and the mental states that characteristically remain in its wake.

The diachronic nature of emotion figures prominently in Aristotle's *Poetics*—specifically, in his requirement that that the drama must elicit fear and pity and then bring them to an appropriate *katharsis*.[30] Yet Aristotle draws no explicit connection between the emotional vicissitudes of a tragedy and the structure of its *muthos*, or plot, which Aristotle analyzes into the elements of beginning, middle, and end. Brooks's thesis, which I am seeking to generalize, is that the diachronic nature of emotion underlies Aristotle's analysis of plot, because beginning, middle, and end must ultimately be defined in terms of the arousal and resolution of emotion.

Aristotle's own elaboration on this analysis, which at first may seem tautologous, is in fact simply false. He says:

> A beginning is that which does not itself follow necessarily from something else, but after which a further event or process naturally occurs. An end, by contrast, is that which itself naturally occurs, whether necessarily or usually, after a preceding event, but need not be followed by anything else. A middle is that which both follows a preceding event and has further consequences.[31]

Yes, of course—but, on second thought, no. The beginning of a story always has sufficient antecedents, causally or probabilistically speaking, and the ending is always sufficient for further consequences. There are no beginnings or endings in the flow of events. The sense in which nothing precedes the beginning or follows the ending of a story is emotional. The story begins with the circumstances that initiate some affect, or sequence of affects, and it ends when that emotional sequence is in some way brought to a close.

This process needn't be confined to the arousal and resolution of a single emotion. One emotion often gives way to another: puzzlement to curiosity, curiosity to foreboding, foreboding to horror, horror to grief—or perhaps instead to anger, which gives way to resentment, and so on. Unlike a chain of causation, however, a sequence of emotions

has beginnings and endings, because emotions naturally sort themselves into *ticks* and *tocks*. That's why a sequence of motions can produce what I have called a cadence. Emotions naturally qualify as initiatory or conclusory in virtue of various features, of which I shall mention only a few.

Some emotions are aroused by circumstances independently of the subject's prior emotional state, whereas others register the impact of events on a prior emotion. Fear and anger, for example, can be elicited out of the blue, by danger and injury, respectively; whereas disappointment, gratification, and grief must develop out of some antecedent attitude that can be disappointed, gratified, or aggrieved. The intentional contents of the latter emotions often include their emotional antecedents. Disappointment conceives of its object as *having been hoped-for,* grief conceives of its object as *having been loved,* and so on; hope, fear, and anger need not conceive of their objects in terms of any prior affect.

Emotions like hope, fear, and anger are by nature unstable, because they motivate behavior, or are elicited by circumstances, that ultimately lead to their extinction. Thus, fear motivates flight, which leads to the alleviation of fear; and hope is aroused by future prospects, which either materialize or not, turning hope into gratification or disappointment. By contrast, grief and gratification are stable, because their eliciting conditions and resulting behaviors are not conducive to change. Grief is a response to permanent loss, gratification a response to decisive gain, and neither emotion motivates efforts to alter its causes. Hence grief and gratification, although they tend to fade with time, neither lead to nor result from a process that replaces them with other emotions.

These differences among emotions allow for some broad generalizations. Fear can initiate or continue an emotional sequence but it cannot resolve one; grief can resolve an emotional sequence but it rarely initiates one. The reason is that fear can be aroused out of the blue and then motivates behavior that leads to further emotional developments, whereas grief develops out of prior attitudes, and alludes to them, but tends not to be an engine of emotional change.

Suppose, then, that the emotion of pity, as it figures in Aristotle's account of tragedy, is the audience's compassionate response to a character's grief. In that case, Aristotle's requirement that a tragedy arouse fear and pity would amount to the requirement that it lead its audience through a complete emotional cadence, from an essentially initiatory

emotion to an essentially conclusory one—from an emotional *tick* to an emotional *tock*. The emotions of fear and pity, in Aristotle's account of tragedic emotion, would therefore correspond to the beginning and ending in his account of tragedic plot.

Consider another genre that is typically defined in emotional terms. Puzzlement is typically aroused out of the blue—indeed, as a response to out-of-the-blueness—and it tends to motivate behavior designed to resolve it into the emotions associated with discovery. The latter include horror, which is a temporarily paralyzing emotion that is therefore static and self-sustaining at first; yet horror eventually gives way to fear, which motivates behavior designed to resolve it into relief. Thus, horror is by its nature an emotional complication, temporarily delaying a sequence initiated by puzzlement and concluding in the relief of fear. Horror is an emotional middle, to which puzzlement stands as the beginning and relief as the end. And in carrying the audience through this emotional cadence, a tale displays the structure of what is known as a horror story.

An Exception and a Qualification

Before considering how this conception of narrative accounts for its explanatory force, I want to consider an apparent counterexample to the conception itself. This counterexample serves as a reminder of a qualification that I issued earlier, and in so doing it actually reinforces the account, in my view.

The example comes from Walter Benjamin's essay "The Storyteller":

> The first storyteller of the Greeks was Herodotus. In the fourteenth chapter of the third book of his *Histories* there is a story from which much can be learned. It deals with Psammenitus.
>
> When the Egyptian king Psammenitus had been beaten and captured by the Persian king Cambyses, Cambyses was bent on humbling his prisoner. He gave orders to place Psammenitus on the road along which the Persian triumphal procession was to pass. And he further arranged that the prisoner should see his daughter pass by as a maid going to the well with her pitcher. While all the Egyptians were lamenting and bewailing this spectacle, Psammenitus stood alone, mute and motionless, his eyes fixed on the ground; and when presently he saw his son, who was being taken along in the procession to be executed, he likewise remained unmoved. But when afterwards he recognized one of his servants, an old, impoverished man, in the ranks of the prisoners, he beat his fists against his head and gave all the signs of deepest mourning.
>
> From this story it may be seen what the nature of true storytelling is. … A story … does not expend itself. It preserves and concentrates its

> strength and is capable of releasing it even after a long time. Thus Montaigne referred to this Egyptian king and asked himself why he mourned only when he caught sight of his servant. Montaigne answers: "Since he was already overfull of grief, it took only the smallest increase for it to burst through its dams." Thus Montaigne. But one could also say: The king is not moved by the fate of those of royal blood, for it is his own fate. Or: We are moved by much on the stage that does not move us in real life; to the king, this servant is only an actor. Or: Great grief is pent up and breaks forth only with relaxation. Seeing this servant was the relaxation. Herodotus offers no explanations. His report is the driest. That is why this story from ancient Egypt is still capable after thousands of years of arousing astonishment and thoughtfulness.[32]

As Benjamin's commentary makes clear, the tale of Psammenitus leaves open all the questions that a story might be expected to answer, according to any theory of narrative explanation. It doesn't tell us why Psammenitus wept at the sight of his captive servant after having stood unmoved by that of his captive children, and it consequently fails to guide us toward any emotional resolution. Are we seeing royal pride brought low, toward which we might feel a touch of *Schadenfreude*? Are we seeing shared humanity affirmed, toward which we might feel a somber awe? Or are we simply seeing, as Montaigne suggests, a case of "the last straw," which we might recognize with sorrowful empathy?

Because the tale of Psammenitus doesn't arrive at any emotional conclusion, it doesn't qualify as a story according to my account, strictly applied. If my account were meant to be applied strictly, the tale of Psammenitus would constitute a decisive counterexample. But as I mentioned earlier, many genres are based on narrative without employing it straightforwardly, and they tend to be described as genres of narrative by extension. My account of narrative is meant to explain why these cases are called stories, although it doesn't include them in the core extension of the term.

In the present case, the storyteller, Herodotus, is clearly inviting us, the audience, to read a story into the events that he has recounted. These events can be interpreted to yield an indefinite number of stories, as they are interpreted to describe different arcs of emotion.[33] The invitation to take an active part in completing the story is what makes the tale of Psammenitus so stimulating. And the fact that Herodotus has left part of the storytelling to us does not prevent us from saying that he has told a story.

Of course, this example does not clearly distinguish between my account of narrative and Aristotle's, since its lack of an emotional res-

olution is due to the absence of a causal or probabilistic explanation for the protagonist's behavior. Note, however, that not just any telling of an unexplained event would have left us with the sense of a story awaiting completion. Any number of unexplained developments might have ensued upon Psammenitus' attendance at the triumphal procession, and he might have done or said any number of unexplained things, most of which, if placed at the close of Herodotus' tale, would have turned it into a surreal fragment of prose rather than a protean story. ("Immediately following Psammenitus' son in the procession came a man walking on his hands. Psammenitus turned to Cambyses and remarked, 'You have helmet-hair.'" And so on.) Herodotus' tale amounts to a protean story only because it closes with what must be Psammenitus' conclusory emotion about his defeat, which clearly calls for a conclusory emotion on our part, which remains to be determined by our interpretation of the events.

Emotional Understanding

I have now put forward two premises of an inference. The first premise is that the understanding provided by narrative should be attributable to the nature of narrative itself—to that in virtue of which a recounting of events qualifies as a story. The second premise is that a description of events qualifies as a story in virtue of its power to initiate and resolve an emotional cadence in the audience. What follows from these premises is that the power to initiate and resolve an emotional cadence ought to endow narrative with its power to render events intelligible. But how?

For the answer to this question, I return to Mink's suggestion that a story explains by providing comprehension, in the sense of "actions and events … surveyed as it were in a single glance as bound together in an order of significance."[34] As I argued earlier, this suggestion bears some resemblance to Schank's hypothesis that we understand events by assimilating them to familiar scenarios. The difference is that Mink focuses on scenarios for which we have summary concepts, such as "treasure-hunt" and "mutiny," which summarize the scenarios in terms of their "promised although unpredictable outcome"—that is, in terms of their ending. When events are grasped under such a concept, "the complicated relationships of parts which can be experienced only *seriatim*" are subsumed under "a representation of a *totum simul*."

What Mink is trying to express in these remarks can be expressed more clearly, I think, in terms of a story's emotional structure. To begin with, the sequence of emotions through which a story leads its audience is typically a familiar sequence, such as the sequence that I outlined above, from puzzlement to curiosity to foreboding to dismay to grief (a sequence that underlies, for example, the plot of *Oedipus Rex).*[35] A story therefore enables its audience to assimilate events, not to familiar patterns of *how things happen,* but rather to familiar patterns of *how things feel.* These patterns are not themselves stored in discursive form, as scenarios or stories: they are stored rather in experiential, proprioceptive, and kinesthetic memory—as we might say, in the muscle-memory of the heart.[36] Although the audience may have no discursive memory of events such as those of the story, it nevertheless has an experience of *déja senti,* because its emotional sensibility naturally follows the ups and downs of the story, just as a muscle naturally follows the cycle of tension and release.

What's more, the emotion that resolves a narrative cadence tends to subsume the emotions that preceded it: the triumph felt at a happy ending is the triumph of ambitions realized and anxieties allayed; the grief felt at a tragic ending is the grief of hopes dashed or loves denied. Hence the conclusory emotion in a narrative cadence embodies not just how the audience feels about the ending; it embodies how the audience feels, at the ending, about the whole story. Having passed through the emotional ups and downs of the story, as one event succeeded another, the audience comes to rest in a stable attitude about the series of events in its entirety.

Thus, the audience of a story understands the narrated events, first, because it *knows how they feel,* in the sense that it experiences them as leading it through a natural emotional sequence; and second, because it *knows how it feels about them,* in the sense that it arrives at a stable attitude toward them overall. That's how the "parts experienced *seriatim*" are "bound together in an order of significance." The audience may or may not understand how the narrated events came about, but it understands what they mean—what they mean, that is, to the audience itself, in emotional terms.

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This account of narrative explanation sheds light on various debates about the epistemological role of narrative. Consider, for example, the arguments of Hayden White to the effect that narrative history is unavoidably fictional, because it projects story-forms onto events that

are not in themselves "storied."[37] Noël Carroll has written an admirable refutation of White, showing in particular that he relies on an unrealistic and indeed incoherent conception of what a genuinely nonfictional mode of history would be.[38] White criticizes narrative history for falling short of a complete and perspectiveless reproduction of the past, as if such a thing were possible or even desirable. As Carroll points out, narrative history is not untrue simply by virtue of being selective or taking a point-of-view.

If I am right about the nature of narrative, however, then there is a kernel of truth in the midst of White's confusions. Insofar as historical discourse conveys understanding by organizing the past into stories, what it conveys is not an objective understanding of how historical events came about but a subjective understanding of how to feel about them. The historian fashions the past into stories by deploying some episodes to set off an emotional *tick* to which subsequent episodes can provide the answering *tock*—or, as White puts it, by dividing the past into beginnings and endings. The storytelling historian thus brings his audience to some emotional closure about a course of events viewed in retrospect. This effect of narrative history is not in itself an illusion or projection—not, at least, unless all emotion involves an illusion or projection of a significance that events do not really have. Even if we reject an error theory of emotion, however, we must recognize that the audience of narrative history is subject to a projective error. Having made subjective sense of historical events, by arriving at a stable attitude toward them, the audience is liable to feel that it has made objective sense of them, by understanding how they came about. Having sorted out its feelings toward events, the audience mistakenly feels that it has sorted out the events themselves: it mistakes emotional closure for intellectual closure.

There is a temptation to describe this error as a projection of narrative form onto reality. The subjective understanding enjoyed by the audience is one and the same as the emotional closure in virtue of which the historian's discourse achieves an ending and hence the form of a story. We may therefore be tempted to say that the error committed by the audience is to project the form of an ending onto the narrated course of events. Yet what would the audience be thinking if it literally committed the error so described? Would it be thinking that historical events came to an end, in the sense of having no sequel? Such an error would be unlikely, to say the least. The error that's likely in response to narrative history—and that might be misdiagnosed as

the projection of an ending onto events—is rather the error of mistaking subjective for objective understanding. The audience mistakes the resolution of its feelings about the events for a resolution of other questions about them.

Of course, this error is not unavoidable, and so it does not vindicate White's contention that narrative history is unavoidably false. But it is an error to which narrative is at least conducive, and against which the audience of narrative must be on its guard.

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This projective error is especially dangerous in light of our tendency to take explanatory force as probative. If offered two incompatible accounts of what happened on some occasion, we tend to credit the account that has more explanatory coherence. We are more inclined to believe that things happened as described in the account that better explains how they came to happen that way. This inclination is rational, provided that the explanation offered is indeed an explanation of how things came about—what I have called an objective explanation. In response to a subjective explanation of the sort provided by narrative, the same inclination is irrational.

Consider again the story of Mitys' murderer, who was killed by the statue of his victim. For us, who do not believe in avenging spirits, the story ought to be utterly implausible. What are the chances of such a bizarre coincidence? Yet I suspect that if you examine your attitude toward this story, you will find yourself lending it more credence than it deserves. "Killed by the statue of his victim?" you think: "Aha! Of course."

Admittedly, this effect might be due to wishful thinking in the present case: you'd like to believe that malefactors are punished, if only by random chance. But the same effect occurs in cases where wishful thinking is not at work. Why isn't the story of Oedipus a mere absurdity to those of us who don't believe in fate? The answer is that it resonates with a familiar emotional pattern, of desperately fleeing from disaster only to find, with horror, that we have been rushing toward it instead. "Undone by his own efforts?" we think: "Aha! Of course." Now, for Oedipus to be undone by his own efforts required a chain of prior coincidences that are breathtaking in their implausibility. But we know the feeling of being undone by our own efforts, and so the story makes sense to us in emotional terms. We don't know why it happened, but we know how it feels. Not knowing why it happened, we ought to question whether it really did happen that way; but knowing how it feels, we

have a sense of understanding, and we mistakenly allow our skepticism to be allayed.

If I am right about the projective error on which these stories depend for their plausibility, then philosophers of law should think twice before celebrating the role of narrative in legal argumentation. Storytelling is indeed an effective strategy for persuading judges and juries, but it may owe its effectiveness to the error that I have been examining, the confusion between emotional and intellectual instances of "Aha!" Encouraging a lawyer to make his case with a story may be like encouraging a politician to make his point with a joke—good strategy, but not conducive to the social ends of rationality and truth. Telling a story is often a means to being believed for no good reason.

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Notes

Ten years ago I was awarded a year-long fellowship at the Humanities Institute of the University of Michigan to pursue research into narrative and its relevance to the value of a good life. I began reading the vast literature on narrative, and by the end of the first semester I was utterly lost. I decided to work on a different project, so as to have something to show for the year. This paper is an effort to make good on the project that the Institute funded; I have no illusions of its having been worth the wait. The paper was presented to the Aesthetics Reading Group led by Ken Walton; as one of the Jerome Simon Lectures at the University of Toronto; to the Philosophy Department of Colby College; and to the Society of Fellows at the University of Michigan. It was the target of a paper by Henning Trüper, delivered to the Göttinger Philosophisches Kolloquium in January 2003, where much helpful discussion ensued.

[1] In his *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), Peter Brooks puts it like this: "Plot, let us say in preliminary definition, is the logic and dynamic of narrative, and narrative itself a form of understanding and explanation" (10). I shall eventually question whether the term 'explanation' should in fact be defined so as to encompass narrative.

[2] Aristotle, *Poetics,* trans. Ingram Bywater, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle,* ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941), 10.1465.

[3] *Aspects of the Novel* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1927), 130. As I shall explain below, I have been using the term 'story' as extensionally equivalent to Forster's term 'plot'. What Forster here calls a "story," I would prefer to call a "tale."

[4] In *Beyond Aesthetics: Philosophical Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 118–33, at 119–20.

[5] Ibid., 125.

[6] Ibid., 127.

[7] Ibid., 128. See also Carl G. Hempel, "The Function of General Laws in History," in *Aspects of Scientific Explanation and other Essays in the Philosophy of Science* (New York: The Free Press, 1965), 231–43.

[8] *Poetics* 9.1452.

[9] Roger Schank, *Tell Me a Story: A New Look at Real and Artificial Memory* (New York:

Scribner's, 1990), 24.

[10] Unfortunately, Schank's presentation lacks the philosophical clarity that would allow me to report his view with confidence. What follows is a reconstruction.

[11] A similar gap appears in Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale*, 2d ed.(Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968), which also traces our understanding of a story to our knowledge of familiar scenarios. Propp offers a list of thirty-one generic episodes, called "functions," out of which, he claims, all fairytales are constructed. Functions range from the pure and simple—for example, "THE HERO LEAVES HOME" or "THE VILLAIN MAKES AN ATTEMPT AT RECONNAISANCE"—to some fairly complex, disjunctive episode-types, such as "THE HERO IS TESTED, INTERROGATED, ATTACKED, ETC., WHICH PREPARES THE WAY FOR HIS RECEIVING EITHER A MAGICAL AGENT OR HELPER." Propp declares: "The stability of construction of fairy tales permits a hypothetical *definition* of them which may be stated in the following way: a fairy tale is a story built upon the proper alternation of the above-cited functions in various forms, with some of them absent from each story and with others repeated" (99).

At first glance, this definition may seem to imply that one can construct a fairytale by stringing together episodes from any of the familiar types, as if the audience's familiarity with those types would guarantee its understanding the results as a coherent story. Notice, however, that Propp stipulates a "proper alternation" of the episodes. He describes this proper alternation as follows:

> Morphologically, a tale (*skázka*) may be termed any development proceeding from villainy (A) or a lack (*a*), through intermediary functions to marriage (W*), or to other functions employed as dénouement. Terminal functions are at times a reward (F), a gain or in general the liquidation of misfortune (K), an escape from pursuit (R), etc. This type of development is termed by us a *move* (*xod*). Each new act of villainy, each new lack creates a new move. (92)

Here Propp acknowledges that a story must be more than a fistful of familiar scenarios: the scenarios must be arranged so as to pose a problem and then present its resolution, in the form of "marriage (W*) or … other functions employed as a dénouement." Unfortunately, Propp's attention is almost entirely occupied by the task of cataloging the standard functions that are the atoms of fairy stories; he has little to say about the organizational principles that make for the chemistry. His theory is therefore uninformative about the difference between fairy stories and fairy annals or fairy chronicles.

[12] The first four paragraphs of this section were previously published as part of "The Story of Rational Action," *Philosophical Topics* 21 (1993): 229–54; reprinted in *The Possibility of Practical Reason* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 144–69.

[13] See Mink's critique of Morton White's *Foundations of Historical Knowledge,* in "Philosophical Analysis and Historical Understanding," *Historical Understanding,* ed. Brian Fay, Eugene O. Golob, and Richard T. Vann (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 118–46. For another review of philosophical work in this area, see W. H. Dray, "On the Nature and Role of Narrative in Historiography," *History and Theory* 10 (1971): 153–71.

[14] "History and Fiction as Modes of Comprehension," in Fay, Golob, and Vann, *Historical Understanding,* 50.

[15] Ibid., 56.

[16] Ibid., 46. The view being summarized here is set forth by Gallie in *Philosophy and the Historical Understanding* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1964).

[17] These retrospective characterizations of events are what Arthur C. Danto calls "narrative sentences" (*Narration and Knowledge* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), chap. 15).

[18] As Walter Benjamin remarks, "it is half the art of storytelling to keep a story free from explanation" ("The Storyteller," in *Illuminations,* ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 83–109, 89). Note, however, that Benjamin

regards the chronicler, rather than the historian, as the true storyteller, precisely because he offers no explanations (96). Then again, Benjamin emphasizes that the chroniclers of the Middle Ages "bas[ed] their historical tales on a divine plan of salvation," thus taking an "eschatological orientation." He thus has in mind chronicles that were organized around an ending—which are more than mere chronicles, in my view.

[19] Conversely, the complete explanation of an outcome may convey more than an understanding of its explanandum, since it may also convey comprehension of the events mentioned in its explanans. An historical explanation of why the Civil War occurred, for example, may help us not only to understand the outbreak of the Civil War but also to grasp together many otherwise disparate conditions and events, by unifying them under the concept "causes of the Civil War."

[20] Here Kermode is quoting Paul Fraisse, *The Psychology of Time*, ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1963).

[21] *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 44–45.

[22] "The Makropulos Case: Reflections on the Tedium of Immortality," in *Problems of the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 82–100.

[23] *Reading for the Plot,* chap. 4, "Freud's Masterplot: A Model for Narrative."

[24] *The Rationality of Emotion* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987), 182. See also "Emotions, Education and Time," *Metaphilosophy* 21 (1990): 434–46. De Sousa refers to Schank's collaborator Robert Abelson at 72–73 of *The Rationality of Emotion.*

[25] "Emotions, Education and Time," 438.

[26] *The Rationality of Emotion,* 201.

[27] See also Andrew Mead's "Bodily Hearing: Physiological Metaphors and Musical Understanding," *Journal of Music Theory* 43 (1999): 1–18, together with Kendall L. Walton, "Style and the Products and Processes of Art," in *The Concept of Style,* ed. Beryl Lang (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 72–103. Mead explains the metaphor of "high" and "low" pitches in terms of the muscular effort involved in their production.

[28] Many oscillating processes have onomatopoetic names with the same feature: "ding-dong," "sing-song," "flip-flop," "clip-clop," "ping-pong," "splish-splash," "pitter-patter," "zig-zag," "chit chat," "clickety-clack," "see-saw," "teeter-totter." Steven Pinker discusses this phenomenon in *The Language Instinct* (New York: William Morrow, 1994), 166–69. (Thanks to John Steele for this reference.) Shelley Velleman has provided the following examples from other languages: "caceec-cacaac" (Khmer: to chatter, twitter); "toteh-totah" (Khmer: to toddle); "rojiing rojoong" and "roneeng ronoong" (Khmer: to sway, dangle); "bolak-bolik" (Indonesian: to and fro); "nplij-nploj" (Hmong: the popping sound of chewing-gum); "kippadi-koppadi" (Estonian: clip-clop); "kill-koll" (Estonian: ding-dong); "killadi-kolladi" (Estonian: things clanging together); "killaki-kollaki" (Estonian: hammering sound); "kribu-krabu" (Estonian: scribbling); "ligadi-logadi" (Estonian: rickety).

[29] Craig DeLancy, *Passionate Engines: What Emotions Reveal About Mind and Artificial Intelligence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

[30] *Poetics*, 6.1449b.

[31] Ibid., 7.1450b.

[32] In *Illuminations,* ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 89–90.

[33] There is one story that Herodotus has told completely —a story whose emotional arc ends in bemused mystification. Only some listeners (among them, many philosophers) will regard bemused mystification as a *tock*-ish emotion. Others will insist on interpreting the story to yield a different resolution.

[34] Quoted above at 8.

[35] Here I am disagreeing with those who regard stories as providing our initial

acquaintance with emotions and emotional processes. For example, Martha Nussbaum writes:

> [S]ince we are all tellers of stories, and since one of the child's most pervasive and powerful ways of learning its society's values and structures is through the stories it hears and learns to tell, stories will be a major source of any culture's emotional life. What fear or love *is* will be, for a child … a construct out of stories, the intersection, the somewhat confused amalgam of those stories. Stories first construct and then evoke (and strengthen) the experience of feeling. ("Narrative Emotions: Beckett's Genealogy of Love," *Ethics* 98 (1988): 225–54, at 233-34)
>
> [I]f stories are … primary vehicles of emotion teaching, then we might say that to have an emotion will be (or centrally involve) the acceptance of a certain sort of story. (235)

I do not agree that stories construct what fear or love is for a child. Fear, certainly, and possibly also love are basic emotions whose nature is largely determined antecedently to acculturation. I do believe that basic emotions are subject to cultural elaboration, which may be accomplished by stories, among other means. Although anger is a pre-cultural endowment of all human beings, road-rage is not; although jealousy may be a basic emotion, it's unclear whether envy is, and it's likely that Schadenfreude is not. No doubt, someone could learn Schadenfreude from stories, but I see no reason to suppose that storytelling is essential to learning it.

[36] Here I take a decisive departure from Schank and de Sousa.

[37] Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973); *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987); *The Content of Form* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987).

[38] "Interpretation, History and Narrative," in *Beyond Aesthetics,* 134–66.