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on the occasion of her sixtieth birthday

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Jan Alber and Greta Olson
Monika Fludernik and the Invitation to Do Things with Narrative

This collection of essays seeks to combine narratological analyses with an investigation of the ideological ramifications of the use of narrative strategies.[1] As the anthology's title indicates, the overarching question asked here is how to do things with narrative.[2] The essays that follow this introduction do not posit any intrinsic or stable connection between narrative techniques, on the one hand, and world views, on the other. Instead, the articles collected here demonstrate that world views are always expressed through specific formal strategies. This insight leads to the question of why these particular techniques (rather than others) are utilized. The contributors to this volume operate on the basis of the "Proteus Principle," which assumes "many-to-many correspondences between linguistic form and representational function[s]" (Sternberg 1982, 112).

All of the essays printed here emphasize the relevance of theoretical concepts that were developed by Monika Fludernik, who has been Professor of English Literature at the University of Freiburg in Germany since 1994. They focus either on her contributions to narrative theory or her books and articles that emphasize the extra-textual and political implications of narrative research. While some contributions deal with Fludernik's notion of experientiality (Caracciolo, Duffield) or the resulting development of a cognitive narratology (Müller, Schmid), others relate to her work on you-narratives and address the uses of the second-person singular pronoun in contemporary television series (Birke and Warhol). In addition, some essays respond to Fludernik's call for a diachronization of narratology and look at specific manifestations of narrative in the Middle Ages (von Contzen), the

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1 For Wolf Schmid, the ideological perspective of a narrative encompasses factors such as "knowledge, way of thinking, evaluative position and intellectual horizon" (2010, 101). In this anthology, we look at what Seymour Chatman would call the "attitudinal function[s]" or "slant[s]" (1986, 197) of Anglophone narratives. The term 'narrative strategies' cuts across the distinction between story (the *what?* of narrative) and discourse (the *how?* of narrative). The contributions all deal with the purpose or 'point' of the interactions between narrative content and narrative form.

2 Subsequent to the editors' conceptualization of this volume, Janine Utell's *Engagements with Narrative* (2016) was published, the introduction to which is entitled "How to do things with narrative." We wish to acknowledge the overlap and also to point out the similarly pragmatic spirit of Utell's work in considering how best to use narrative analysis to interpret textual as well as other forms of human activity.

Marco Caracciolo
Perspectives on Narrative and Mood

1 Introduction

In *Towards a 'Natural' Narratology*, Monika Fludernik defines the experientiality of narrative as "the quasi-mimetic evocation of 'real-life experience'" (1996, 9). The term "evocation" is less clear-cut than 'representation,' and subtly shifts the emphasis from the narrative itself (where "real-life experience" would be represented) to the narrative's effects on its readers (or viewers, listeners, etc.). When something is represented, we know what it is and where to pinpoint it; when something is evoked, it hovers intangibly between the evoker, the evoked object, and the audience of the evocation. That intangibility is one of the defining traits of mood – my topic in this chapter – and a phenomenon that, I will argue, plays a significant role in our encounters with narrative.[1]

Two further features of experientiality, both articulated in the introduction to *Towards a 'Natural' Narratology*, pave the way for the approach to mood that I will offer in the following pages. Experientiality, we read, "*includes* this sense of moving with time, of the *now* of experience, but this almost static level of temporal experience is supplemented by more dynamic and evaluative factors" (1996, 21). The "sense of moving with time" is more than a matter of narrative representation: it arises in the interaction between the text itself and the audience, whose experience is temporally patterned via "dynamic and evaluative factors." Finally, experientiality goes hand in hand with the embodiment of our cognitive makeup: "Embodiedness evokes all the parameters of a real-life schema of existence which always has to be situated in a specific time and space frame, and the motivational and experiential aspects of human actionality likewise relate to the knowledge about one's physical presence in the world" (Fludernik 1996, 22). We have, again, the evocation of the "parameters of a real-life schema of existence," which reflect the inextricable link between human cognition and the physical structure of our bodies.

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1 I discuss mood as a psychological phenomenon and not in the sense of Gérard Genette's category of "narrative mood" (1980, Ch. 4). In broad strokes, I will be defining mood as a relatively stable emotional tone that has no clear-cut intentional object (see below).

That last point about embodiment, in a book from 1996, is a remarkable insight into what would become one of the main areas of research in the mind sciences in the space of a few years (Gibbs 2005; Gallagher 2005). The emphasis on embodiment goes hand in hand with Fludernik's implicit shift away from the notion of representation in her definition of narrative experientiality. That shift contains, in nuce, a wholly new paradigm for research in narrative theory. Surely, narrative represents things: human or anthropomorphic characters, their actions and interactions, and other events such as natural processes. In the sentence 'He stood up and left the room,' for instance, the entities 'he' and 'room' and the actions 'standing up' and 'leaving' are represented insofar as they are picked out from the flux of experience and made clear-cut, almost object-like, in their verbal existence. This is what concepts do, after all: they break down the "buzzing confusion" of our experience – to lift William James's famous characterization of consciousness (1890, 488) – into mental units that can be moved around, replicated, and traded at will. Narrative does the same, but at a higher level: it strings concepts together, using *other* concepts as a glue, mainly concepts of temporal sequentiality (he stood up before leaving the room), causality (he stood up in order to leave the room), and, in some cases, thematic coherence (for instance, if this sentence appears in a story about a man's bad temper). In my work, which builds on Fludernik's account of experientiality, I have called this representational aspect of narrative *abstractive* (Caracciolo 2014b, 200–205). The abstraction has to do with the fact that, in representing things and happenings through concepts, narrative inevitably – and, in most cases, helpfully – abstracts from the details of experience and focuses only on what is felt to be relevant in a given context: surely, the man 'stood up' in a certain way, and had a certain facial expression while doing so, but here we know only that he 'stood up.'

However, narrative is not limited to this conceptual abstraction. This is where Fludernik's evocation comes into play. At the same time as it picks out certain characters and actions, narrative can evoke affective stances that are *not* representational in nature, because they emerge in the audience's experience without having a direct semiotic equivalent in the text. This is the level of narrative that Fludernik's notion of experientiality discloses and allows us to grasp. Crucially, the two features of experientiality discussed above – namely, evaluative dynamics and embodiment – feed into this affective dimension of narrative engagements.

The deep connection between narrative and affect has attracted some attention in postclassical narratology. Meir Sternberg's account of the three *narrative universals* of suspense, curiosity, and surprise is an important precedent: as emo-

tional effects of storytelling, these universals are a manifestation of the evaluative, affective dynamics that underlie narrative engagements (1978, 2001). More recently, Patrick Colm Hogan's (2011) *affective narratology* and a double special issue of *Poetics Today* on narrative and the emotions (Keen 2011) have gone further in that direction. Still, in these contributions, the issue of how narratives can elicit specific moods is never addressed. This is the focus of the present chapter. I single out mood because this affective phenomenon is particularly difficult to theorize from within a representationalist conception of narrative – that is, one that reduces narrative to the abstractive dimension of representation. By contrast, an emphasis on experientiality gives us much more leeway in understanding how stories may trigger feelings at this level.

2 Preliminaries on Mood

Research in psychology and neuroscience often uses narrative – typically in the form of short film clips – to evoke certain moods in participants (Philippot 1993). The mood-inducing or at least mood-affecting power of narrative is thus implicitly acknowledged. But the reasons for this capacity are unclear. Narratives may evoke a wide gamut of moods that are not represented at the diegetic level. For instance, a story does not have to deal with a depressed character to come across as depressing. How is this possible? My approach in this chapter is informed by the contemporary philosophy of mind and, more specifically, by the movement of 'embodied cognition' – though, as we will see, my interest lies more in the phenomenology of narrative than in cognitive processing per se.

I begin by considering the distinction between emotions and moods. Emotions are intentional mental states in the philosophical sense of the word 'intentional': they are directed towards specific objects or situations; as such, they tend to be circumscribed and episodic (Solomon 1993, 112). Being nervous about missing a flight or frustrated after making a careless mistake in chess are examples of emotions, since they are intentionally directed at two states of affair (the missed flight, the chess blunder). Moods, by contrast, are diffuse and tend to lack a distinct intentional object. When I wake up 'in a good mood,' for instance, everything looks somewhat different and I approach my daily tasks with energy and optimism. These feelings are not directed at anything in particular, but they pervade all my thoughts and interactions. One should not draw too sharp a line between emotions and moods, though. We can be dejected or elated about something that happened to us, but when those emotions tinge one's attitude towards life as a whole, they become moods.

The same can happen during audiences' encounters with narrative. In an essay on "Art and Mood" (2003, 539–545), Noël Carroll argues that artworks can evoke moods via emotional responses: an accumulation of emotions can tip our affective balance one way or another, leading to moods. In the following section I will focus on this link between emotional responses and the mood that emerges from a narrative. I will then complicate this account by turning to two additional factors. First, mood is not just a function of narrative contents – the situations and characters represented by a text, and the circumscribed emotions they elicit – but of style and narrative structure as well. Second, I will argue that mood should be theorized in terms of bodily feelings, as a shift in the audience's embodied orientation towards the world. In the last part of this chapter, I will illustrate these claims through a case study. I will discuss a corpus of online reviews of Christopher Nolan's film *Memento* (2000), focusing on how mood and related notions become a vehicle for audiences' interpretive negotiations of the plot. This corpus is a subset of the over 2,000 online reviews published in the "Internet Movie Database" (IMDb) from the film's release in 2000 to March 2015.[2]

3 Mood, Atmosphere, and Emotional Responses

Consider a well-known short story by Ernest Hemingway, "Hills Like White Elephants" (2003 [1927]). The story is based on the dialogue between an American man and a girl at a Spanish railway station: the two characters discuss – without ever mentioning it – the possibility of the girl having an abortion. As we read, we may develop an emotional connection to the characters and their predicament, resulting in emotional responses such as sympathy for the girl, distrust for the man, or curiosity about their past. The exact emotions involved will vary from reader to reader, but these appear particularly likely.

This engagement with the characters may be mediated by what scholars in the field of human geography would call "sense of place" (Foote and Azaryahu 2009). The physical landscape is made palpable and unique by its affective qualities: its barrenness, the whiteness of the sunlit hills (which are compared to "white elephants"), the symbolic nature of the railway junction, which suggests

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2 These reviews were collected on 12 March 2015. The use of online materials as data on readers' (or, in this case, viewers') responses has distinct advantages and disadvantages, which I have discussed extensively elsewhere, see Caracciolo 2016, 26–27. In this context, it will suffice to say that this method should be regarded as a heuristic tool in support of theoretical hypotheses, not as providing 'hard' empirical evidence.

two different directions and, therefore, a choice between keeping the child and having the abortion. These features of the landscape enrich our understanding of the characters' situation by giving rise to a distinctive atmosphere.[3] If the dialogue between Hemingway's characters occurred in a dark motel room and not at a sunlit railroad crossing, the projected atmosphere – and therefore our evaluation of the characters – would be different: less expectant perhaps, and far bleaker. In this way, we have an interaction between three affective phenomena: we respond emotionally to the characters and their situation; we become attuned to the atmosphere evoked by the text through the affective qualities of the spatial setting; and we enter a certain mood as our emotional engagement with both characters and place 'tinge' our overall reading experience. Mood is thus always evaluative insofar as it contains, no matter how implicitly, a global perspective on a story's emotional stakes.

Note how the evoked atmosphere bridges the divide between emotions directed at the represented characters and location and the seemingly more impalpable mood created in the audience. This is because atmosphere is an experiential category that emerges from readers' interests and sensitivities; it is thus closely related to the seemingly more subjective notion of mood. In narrative experientiality, textual features and the audience's responses tend to blend into one another. This in-betweenness is part of the very nature of mood, which pervades our engagement with a story even as it is triggered by responses to specific aspects of the text.

4 Mood and Narrative Patterns

It is not only through representation that narrative may create moods: stylistic strategies and narrative patterns play an equally important role. To understand this point, we need to consider another aspect of Carroll's argument in his essay "Art and Mood" (2003). Instrumental music, Carroll points out, is capable of evoking moods without representing states of affair (such as characters or locations) that may elicit circumscribed emotions. How does this happen? Carroll's answer turns on music's capacity to move our bodies imaginatively:

> Instrumental music, in virtue of changing tempi and volume, can be felt as speeding up and slowing down, rising and falling [...]. These terms, and a variety of others, may not only describe the musical text, but also how the music sounds or feels in our bodies [...]. At the

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3 For more on narrative and sense of place, see Easterlin 2012, Ch. 3 and Caracciolo 2013.

minimum, it seems fair to say that the impression of movement in music, with non-random frequency, engenders feelings that in one way or another *bring to mind* certain kinds of movement. And if this is true, then we have successfully isolated *one* way in which pure instrumental music can, and often does, elicit mood states in listeners. (2003, 548–549)

According to Carroll, pace and rhythm can thus explain the mood-affecting power of instrumental music. Through its non-representational features and patterns, music taps into bodily feelings that are associated with specific moods. For example, a slow, stately piece may create a calm, meditative mood; a fast-paced piece will convey a sense of dynamism; and so on. Hence the questions: can narrative work in a similar way? Can it influence mood not just through the emotional dynamics of characters and situations, but through its overall shape and structure? Intuitively, the answer is yes: an action film or a thriller can be fast-paced, an arthouse film or a novel in the *nouveau roman* tradition can seem to move much more slowly. It is easy to see how these variations in narrative speed, see Hume (2005), translate into different moods – anxious and hectic for the former, contemplative for the latter. Style can have similar effects: in Hemingway's short story, for instance, the clipped dialogue between the two protagonists, with its frequent repetitions and ellipses, contributes to setting the text's rhythm. The characters' rapid and ambivalent back-and-forths play a role in shaping the audience's mood. The same can be said about the story's suspenseful ending, which leaves readers pensive and hesitant about the meaning of the exchange they have just witnessed.

In other instances, as my case study will illustrate, it is not so much the pace or style of narrative, but the discrepancy between story and discourse that becomes associated with a certain mood. The suggestion is that narrative may possess a sense of rhythmicity not unlike that of music; narrative and music may even have shared underpinnings in evolutionary history and psychological development, as scholars have argued, see Dissanayake (2011); Walsh (2011). This rhythm depends on the 'how' of narrative – that is, on the way in which its events and existents are arranged in a formal pattern of discourse, which offers variations on the "sense of moving with time" that defines Fludernik's experientiality (1996, 22). To the specifically somatic nature of this sense of movement we turn in the next section.

5 Mood and Bodily Feelings

In *Feelings of Being* (2008), Matthew Ratcliffe explores the question of mood from the perspective of an embodied phenomenology. Ratcliffe prefers the term 'existential feelings' over 'mood' because the affective phenomenon he wants to theorize is broader than the everyday usage of 'mood' would suggest. Here I will keep the term 'mood' while capitalizing on two important aspects of Ratcliffe's account of existential feelings. First, mood is something that involves us in the sense that it is a matter of existential orientation; from the perspective of Martin Heidegger's phenomenology of being, moods "are spaces of possibility, which determine the various ways in which things can be experienced" (Ratcliffe 2008, 38). When narrative evokes certain kinds of moods, it invites the audience to try on a whole evaluative and existential outlook at this deep level. Second, Ratcliffe persuasively argues that existential feelings are grounded in the body. He draws a parallel between mood and touch, suggesting that in moods we experience bodily sensations that are not just sensations *of* the body but a certain way of relating ourselves to the world. Put otherwise: in moods as in tactile experience, the distinction between subjective and objective, inner and outer, breaks down.

This idea about the centrality of the body in mood ties in with Carroll's approach: as we have seen above, the sensation of our bodies moving (actually or imaginatively) in response to an instrumental piece favors the creation of a certain mood in the audience. Likewise, one may hypothesize that the rhythm and pace of narrative can give rise to bodily feelings, which are responsible for the shifts in mood brought about by narrative engagements. It is because our bodies respond in certain ways to stylistic and narrative patterns that stories may encourage us to temporarily change our existential orientation. Obviously, this hypothesis would have to be evaluated experimentally. I speculate about this possibility in Caracciolo (2014a), where I use Edgar Allan Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart" (1843) and Tom Tykwer's film *Run Lola Run* (1998) as case studies. In both narratives, the audience's engagement is keyed to a rhythmic movement at the diegetic level: the heartbeat in Poe's short story and the protagonist's multiple runs through Berlin in the film. Our experience is further modulated by stylistic qualities, which reflect the affordances of different media (the prosody of Poe's sentences, the editing and soundtrack of Tykwer's film). This combination of diegetic (representational) and stylistic features of the narrative may result in bodily feelings that are imagined and, at least potentially, re-enacted by the audience. These feelings contribute to our absorption in the story and coincide with a palpable mood: dark and sinister in "The Tell-Tale Heart," frenetic and upbeat in

Run Lola Run. Not all narratives are equal in this respect, however: some appear to exploit the link between somatic experience and mood in particularly salient ways.

6 Narrative Strategies, Mood, and Psychiatric Illness in *Memento*

One of the arguments advanced by Ratcliffe in *Feelings of Being* is that changes in existential feelings are at the heart of the experience of psychiatric illness. This idea appears particularly relevant to Christopher Nolan's *Memento* (2000) – a film whose protagonist, Leonard, suffers from anterograde amnesia: he remembers his past up to the moment when he received a severe blow to the head, but he has been unable to form new memories ever since. The last thing he recalls is the violent rape and murder of his wife. Avenging that murder is Leonard's obsession, but his quest is complicated by the fact that he cannot keep track of any progress he makes in the investigation: unless he writes things down, he is bound to forget everything. Leonard's psychological condition is conveyed to the viewer through an elaborate narrative structure, which has been taken as a prototypical example of narrative complexity in contemporary film, see Buckland (2009); Kiss and Willemsen (2017). Leonard's story is broken down into two parts, which are interwoven rather than shown chronologically; further, one of the two parts – in black and white – follows the chronology, whereas the other is displayed in color and unfolds in reverse order.

This complexity gives rise to a distinctive mood, which is often remarked upon by reviewers in the Internet Movie Database. What emerges is a sense of mystery and suspense as the spectators try to reconstruct the film's story. This is shown by the high frequency of words like 'mystery,' 'confusing,' 'confused,' 'intriguing,' and 'suspense' in the reviews – and by the relatively high frequency of the term 'mood' itself (see Table 1).

Term	In 2,009 reviews of *Memento* (from IMDb)	In reference corpus (COCA)[4]
Mystery	5.82	0.28
Confusing	5.28	0.09
Confused	4.80	0.23
Gimmick	3.57	0.02
Intriguing	2.73	0.09
Suspense	2.49	0.03
Trick	1.20	0.19
Mood	0.58	0.30

Tab. 1: Word frequencies. Ratio per 10,000 words.

Admittedly, these findings are not particularly surprising, but a closer look at the online reviews reveals a few more interesting phenomena. The reviewers are split between those who find Nolan's narrative structure convincing and those who feel cheated, considering the film's scrambled temporality a mere trick: one that flaunts a sense of mystery, but is ultimately shallow and unwarranted. This is confirmed by the unusually high frequency of words like 'gimmick' and 'trick.' Among those who liked Nolan's film, many comment on the match between the feelings evoked by the narrative and the mental state of the protagonist, as if the non-linear presentation of the story yielded insight into Leonard's psychiatric condition. In some cases this interpretation results in an explicit appeal to the notion of mood: "Story and acting are outstanding but a mention also has to go to the cinematography and soundtrack that both helped greatly to create the oppressive mood that pervaded throughout [sic] film and is [sic] essential to generate the sense of fragility that exists in Leonard's connection to the world" (ismay03 2005).

In other cases, the term mood is not used, but the reviewer still comments on global feelings reminiscent of what I have called mood so far: "I don't think I have ever seen a movie do such a good job of making the audience feel like they couldn't remember anything either" (ashleysheffer786 2013). Other reviewers interpret the mood evoked by the film in even more general terms, as an existential feeling that extends beyond psychiatric illness: "At the end of the movie, you may

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4 Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA; http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/). It consists of 520 million words collected from various sources between 1990 and 2015.

feel vulnerable as a human being. You may feel like an imperfect creation of nature and marvel at how flawed you are, or how flawed you can possibly be; an almost helpless feeling" (cinematicvision 2004). The narrative structure of Nolan's film may or may not be associated with the character's psychiatric condition, but in either case it appears to create a distinctive mood in the audience.

The involvement of viewers' bodily experience is more difficult to detect in online reviews, most likely because the embodied nature of mood tends to pass unnoticed if viewers are not explicitly invited to pay attention to it, see Caracciolo (2014a, 60–61). Still, a number of embodied metaphors seem to suggest that the audience's engagement with *Memento* took on somatic qualities. Here are two examples of this figurative language: "Seeing [the story] backwards made me feel as if I were putting a puzzle together without having use of my hands" (mccrew17 2001); "We feel cut loose from our mental moorings and find ourselves adrift in a world bereft of the rules of chronological reasoning" (Zwick 2001). Obviously, these metaphorical scenarios cannot prove anything about the bodily nature of mood; yet – when combined with Ratcliffe's phenomenological arguments – the reviewers' references to embodied gestures such as "putting a puzzle together" and being "cut loose" from a stable position are at least suggestive of an embodied involvement.

7 Conclusion

I have suggested in this chapter that mood is a site of negotiation of narrative's meanings and values: even more than individual emotional responses, the moods evoked by narrative can be viewed as attempts at articulating a story's relevance. In this sense, mood serves as a 'protointerpretation,' an equivalent – in the affective domain – to the more sophisticated interpretations that we produce and exchange through language. Just like interpretation, mood is an overall response that can be shaped both by story-level events and existents and by discursive strategies such as pace (e.g., the fast pace of an action film), style (the clipped dialogue of Hemingway's short story), and non-linear storytelling (the reverse chronology of Nolan's film). As cognitive narratology engages with the embodied dimension of narrative, the seemingly abstract patterns of discourse should not be left on the sidelines, for these patterns are – in themselves – shaped by the embodied schemata that make up Fludernik's experientiality.

Defined, following Ratcliffe, as a shift in existential orientation, mood can also explain the impact of narrative on our lifeworld: in engaging with stories we

open ourselves to affective qualities and patterns that can alter our attitude towards reality. This alteration tends to be only temporary, of course, as is the case with the unease that we may feel after watching *Memento*. More long-term effects are possible, though perhaps also subtler. For instance, narrative may prove valuable in conveying and exploring existential outlooks typical of pathological conditions. Many reviewers of *Memento* find value in the film's approach to amnesia: the mood-inducing power of narrative holds considerable promise as a tool for probing and communicating the experience of mental illness. All of this would deserve being studied more systematically and empirically, as part of a broader effort to understand the real-world, psychological effects of engaging with stories, see, e.g., Kuiken, Miall, and Sikora (2004).

Fludernik's key concept of experientiality helps bring into focus these experiential transactions because of how it opens up narrative theory to non-representational aspects of storytelling – particularly the temporal and evaluative dynamics that underlie the audience's engagement. Ultimately, it may well be the case, as Walsh suggests, that "much of the power of narratives, even very simple ones, to move and persuade is not specific to whatever those narratives are about; it is the affective potential intrinsic in the permutations of narrative form itself" (2011, 63). This shift from the 'aboutness' of narrative (its representational and conceptual dimension) to its 'affective potential' raises exciting possibilities for narrative theory. These possibilities resonate with Fludernik's model insofar as the emotional effects of narrative are shared between conversational storytelling and other narrative practices. Perhaps grasping the analogy between the rhythm of music (or poetry) and narrative can defuse the objections that have been voiced against another aspect of Fludernik's conception of narrative experientiality – namely, its reliance on the notion of mimesis, see Alber et al. (2010). This is another lead worth pursuing in future research in narratology: if one builds a theory of narrative more based on the affective, evaluative, and embodied 'how' than on the 'what' of mimetic representation, then there is less of a need for an alternative model geared towards antimimetic texts.

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