

CHAPTER 9

Foregrounding and feeling in response to narrative

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This chapter provides a framework for considering some of the determinants and implications of readers' feelings in response to a story by Katherine Mansfield, previously featured in an empirical study of foregrounding (Miall & Kuiken 1994). In additional analyses I focus on feelings that distinguish the story's episodic structure, its narrative perspective, and phonetic patterns, and consider their effectiveness in post-predicting readers' data from the 1994 study. Finally, I examine those processes of feeling that may be distinctive to literary response (Miall & Kuiken 2001), and situate the discussion in relation to a theory of readers' feelings offered by Oatley (2002).

Keywords: foregrounding, laws of emotion, narrative, episodes, perspective, phonetics

1. Response to fiction: Generalizing the model

A modernist short story, such as those by Katherine Mansfield, typically focuses on a single consciousness and leads to a culminating insight. In our study of foregrounding (Miall & Kuiken 1994) that focused in part on Mansfield's "The Wrong House" (Mansfield 1945/1919), we introduced a theoretical approach based on the premises of Romantic theory, Russian Formalism, the Czech critic Mukařovský, & van Peer's (1986) groundbreaking empirical study, in which stylistic features are thought to defamiliarize the reader. We were able to show that passages high in foregrounding not only were found striking, but took relatively longer to read compared with low-foregrounded passages, and also evoked feeling. We were not concerned in that study with the larger, experiential aspects of the story, such as where insight is generated or how readers might construe it. In turning to consider the issue of readers' understanding of the story as a whole, however, I ask a more

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problematic question: what aspects of a text evoke reader's attention and interest, and how do they interact with the psychological processes required to reach an understanding of it?

In discussing the modernist period, Clare Hanson (1985) has shown the presence of two classes of short story, one based around a particular situation or short narrative episode, the second largely devoid of plot and focusing on a moment of truth in experience, what James Joyce termed an "epiphany" (6–7). Mansfield's "The Wrong House," like much of her other short fiction, seems predominantly to belong in the second category.¹ As Hanson also points out, this kind of story in the hands of writers such as Woolf, Joyce, and Mansfield, is notable for the development of free indirect discourse where, in Hanson's phrase, "the voice of the narrator is modulated so that it appears to merge with that of a character of the fiction" (56). The modernist story is thus inclined to philosophical relativism and "best able to express a fragmented sensibility" (57). Thus, in "The Wrong House," the most striking parts of the story are mediated through the consciousness of the old woman, and the culminating moment of the story appears to be an epiphany on her part – a markedly negative one (Joyce, however, did not require an epiphany to be a positive experience: cf. the endings of "Araby," or "A Painful Case"). In describing her state of shock as the undertakers depart – "she thought of nothing; she did not even think of what had happened" – Mansfield portrays a fragmented consciousness, but also conveys obliquely the old woman's horror at this sudden intrusion of death. For the reader, is the insight offered by the story specific to that character at that particular moment, or does it have a general symbolic power?

In considering how readers construe a literary text, one place to focus is the episode. We have recently begun to consider empirical evidence for the reality of episodes as a unit for the analysis of readers' responses (Miall 2006: Chapter 8). In the case of Mansfield's story some support is available from our earlier analysis of the "phases" of response, as we have called them (Miall & Kuiken 2001). In our conception of the phase, we suggested that a peak in foregrounding would be defamiliarizing for readers. Since existing schemata are inadequate for understanding at such moments, feeling arising from the moment of foregrounding would become the vehicle for seeking a new understanding; this might take some time to come into place. If this hypothesis is correct, then near the beginning of such a phase, stronger feeling in a given segment would be marked by a lengthened reading time, since feeling here would signal greater uncertainty and the search for meaning. At the end of the phase, on the other hand, feeling is the vehicle for new understanding, thus segments with stronger feeling would direct reading, making

1. The text of Mansfield's story is available at: <http://www.ualberta.ca/~dmiall/reading/Mansfield.htm>.

it more certain; here, stronger feeling should be marked by a shorter reading time. To investigate this possibility, we examined correlations of feeling ratings per segment and reading times within a moving window of 6 segments using data derived from our 1994 study (where the story was divided into 84 segments, roughly equivalent to a sentence). For all three stories in that study, a pattern of alternating positive and negative correlations emerged, corresponding to the opening and closing of successive phases.

Phases in the Mansfield story are shown in Figure 1 (the curve has been smoothed by averaging each data point with its neighbor). The curve for the time/feeling correlations provides some support for the reality of the episodic structure of the story. In episode 1 (segments 1–12) the curve remains low, suggesting that the scene portrayed is readily identifiable by readers, since stronger feeling correlates with shorter reading times. Near the beginning of the second episode (13–27), however, the atmosphere of the dusk around line 20, “dusk came floating into the room,” corresponds to a peak in positive correlations, which is followed by a drop back to the negative as this information is assimilated. Similarly, episode 3 (28–64) shows an early positive peak as the funeral appears, dropping as the old woman judges the undertakers and assumes they are passing by; then, with the knock on the door the curve rises markedly again to the positive and remains high until the end of the episode (this longer episode, although united by action, space, and time, could be divided into two parts, given the marked shift in focus at segment 40). The last episode also shows an early positive peak followed by a fall to

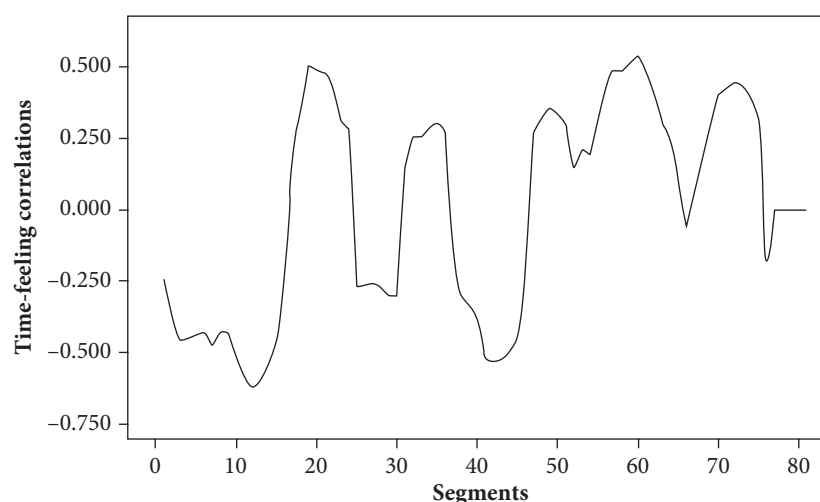


Figure 1. Correlations of reading time and feeling ratings within a moving window of 6 segments.

the negative. Thus, apart from the first episode, we see each episode characterized by an early positive peak in time/affect correlations, indicating readers' need to understand and assimilate new information; as shown by negative correlations, this understanding then comes into place towards the end of the episode, except for the third climactic episode, where the old woman's response to the funeral creates a crisis of understanding, not only for the woman but perhaps also for the reader.

In developing the notion of phases, we chiefly had in mind the role of foregrounding in creating uncertainty in the reader, which would be followed by a positive peak in the time/feeling correlation. In the light of the present analysis, however, this now seems to constitute only one influence on the constructive role of readers' feelings and their variable reflection in reading times. The second influence is the extra processing requirements involved in instantiating a new episode. It seems likely that the feeling evoked by foregrounding will play a role in this process, but other influences deriving from narrative features must also play a role. In the next section some additional indicators for the analysis of both narrative and stylistic features are outlined.

2. Characterizing narrative segments

In our earlier work on narrative aspects of response (Miall & Kuiken 2001), we examined the situation model theory of Zwaan et al. (1995), and concluded that two other aspects of narrative specific to literary texts should be addressed if we were to predict more effectively the processing time required during reading. First, segments should be indexed for foregrounding (Miall & Kuiken 1999); second, proximity to the inner world of the main character should be indexed (cf. van Peer & Pander Maat 1996). The more the narrative invites the reader to experience the internal thoughts or feelings of the main character, the longer the processing time required of the reader. Thus we developed a four-point perspective scale (see Miall & Kuiken 2001: Table 1), which was found to have some value in predicting reading times in a regression analysis that also included situation model factors and foregrounding.

For the present study, however, I re-examined the perspective scale and noticed that it conflated two different components, perspective and feeling. Thus I created two separate indices that capture potentially different aspects of readers' responses to a main character. A revised Perspective scale indicates the degree to which the view of a character is external or internal, and within this how far the reader is enabled to share the character's own perceptions and motives. A segment by segment score on a scale of 0 to 4 is based on these criteria:

0. No reference to character, or reference by a third person only.
1. Character's situation or appearance is described from an external, observer perspective, including affectively neutral indirect discourse.
2. Direct discourse or behavior of the character, where this seems unmarked by explicit feeling.
3. Character's cognitions: perceptions, thoughts, etc., where feeling is at a low level; direct discourse that invites the reader's involvement in character's perspective.
4. Feelings of character, where these appear to raise motivational issues for character; motives and emotions; most passages of free indirect discourse; direct discourse only if it enables the reader to share character's emotions or motives.

It will be noticed that a character's feeling is now only one of the possible components contributing to perspective. For example, free indirect discourse creates perhaps the most intimate proximity to a character. Thus, segment 19, "Only three? It seemed dusk already," is rated a 4, although it implies little in the way of feeling. Segment 35, "What horrible-looking men, too! laughing and joking," is strongly marked by feeling, but is also free indirect discourse. The segments are equivalent, however, in providing the most direct representation possible of the character's consciousness. A segment that reports perception or thought rather than representing it in free indirect discourse is rated a 3, such as segment 47, "She saw the man withdraw a step, and again – that puzzled glance at the blinds."

The Perspective scale can be considered a predictor of readers' responses obtained during the 1994 study. It appears to be factor in the judgments readers made in their ratings for feeling and strikingness. A regression analysis with segment position, length of segment, foregrounding, and perspective as predictors of mean feeling ratings is significant overall, $F(4,81) = 7.691$, and shows each of the predictor variables except segment position to be significant. The same analysis with strikingness ratings as the dependent variable is also significant, $F(4,81) = 12.177$. On the other hand, perspective has no significant relation to mean reading times per segment. However, an important component of Perspective appears to be foregrounding, since the two indexes correlate highly, $r(84) = .302$, $p < .01$. The primary component in this relation is the subindex for grammatical foregrounding, $r(84) = .298$, $p < .01$.

The second index is for feeling. This scale seeks to capture the state of feeling in the main character in each segment, as follows:

0. No reference to main character.
1. Character's situation, actions, or appearance are described, but from an external perspective; no feeling.

2. Through action, discourse, or appearance an underlying feeling or mood of the character is implicitly represented or connoted.
3. Through action, discourse, or appearance an emotion is represented or connoted.
4. Feeling of character is described explicitly, or shown by free indirect discourse, or strongly indicated by character's expression.

As the description for the highest score shows, free indirect discourse is one possible marker of strong feeling. However, direct discourse or description can also indicate strong feeling, as in segment 44, "No!" she groaned." A less strong moment of feeling may also be connoted by free indirect discourse, as at segment 19: "Only three? It seemed dusk already," which is scored a 3. However, more general moods without immediate implications for the story are scored a 2, such as segment 10, "Nothing. It was a habit. She was always sighing."

Again, the scale appears to have predictive value. A regression analysis, now with the feeling scale along with segment position, segment length, and foregrounding, show all to be significant predictors of readers' feeling ratings, $F(4,84) = 8.339$; a similar analysis with strikingness ratings is also significant, $F(4,84) = 12.611$. Again, there is no relationship with reading times. As with perspective, significant correlations occur with grammatical foregrounding, $r(84) = .283$, $p = .01$, and with overall foregrounding, $r(84) = .312$, $p < .01$.

Thus, while the predicted relationship between the two scales and reading times did not occur, it is evident that at the segment level an important role in readers' judgments of the effect of the story was played by shifts in perspective and variations in access to the feelings of the main character.

A third method for characterizing the story is to consider it at the level of sound. It is evident from Mansfield's own comments on her writing that she considered this level of major importance for her craft as a writer. In a letter to Richard Murry dated January 17, 1921 writing about "Miss Brill," a story published two years before "The Wrong House," she said:

It's a very queer thing how *craft* comes into writing. I mean down to details. Par example. In Miss Brill I chose not only the length of every sentence – I chose the rise and fall of every paragraph to fit her – and to fit her on that day at that very moment. After I'd written it I read it aloud – numbers of times – just as one would *play over* a musical composition, trying to get it nearer and nearer to the expression of Miss Brill – until it fitted her. (Mansfield 1984: IV, 165)

Mansfield is probably referring here to several components of sound, including the rhythm of each sentence and the choice of words and word patterns based on their phonetic coloration. For "The Wrong House" I carried out an analysis of phonemic patterns, enabling each segment of the story to be characterized in

terms of its overall pattern of vowels and consonants. This analysis depends first on producing a transcript of the words of the story into phonemes, based on the 20 vowels and 24 consonants in standard English. The vowels are then each given a numeric weight according to two dispositions, a front-back ordering (based on the position at which the vowel is produced in the oral tract) and a high-low ordering. The consonants are weighted similarly according to a high-low and a soft-hard ordering (see Miall 2001). A story segment can then be given an overall weighting on each measure by cumulating the weights for individual phonemes. In addition, two other phonetic measures are provided for each segment: vowel shift (the vowel lengthening that occurs before voiced stops and fricatives), and absolute vowel length, that allows for diphthongs.

The phonetic measures were then tested as predictors of the data provided by readers in our 1994 study. A series of regression analyses was carried out that included the six phonetic measures and the number of syllables per segment as predictor variables. The overall regression model was very significant in the case of reading times, $F(7, 78) = 34.45$, $p < .0001$; not significant for mean feeling ratings, $F(7, 78) = 1.66$; but significant for strikingness ratings, $F(7, 78) = 4.21$, $p < .001$. Each variable was then examined separately (excluding the feeling ratings model). The partial correlations with the dependent variables are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Phonetic variables in Mansfield's story as a predictor of reading variables

Predictor variable	Reading time	Strikingness
Syllables	.595**	.022
Vowel shift	.022	.306*
Vowel length	.113	.148
Vowels: front-back	-.297*	-.305*
Vowels: high-low	-.011	-.015
Consonants: soft-hard	-.283*	.033
Consonants: front back	.135	.055

* $p < .01$, ** $p < .001$ (two-tailed).

These findings show that reading times were strongly influenced overall by phonetic variations: the longer reading times are associated with back vowels and hard consonants. For example, the lowest weighted line showing a preponderance of back vowels is 30, "Good gracious! It was a funeral." One of the lowest-weighted segments for hard consonants is 54, "She was shutting the door again when he fished out of the tail of his coat a black, brass-bound notebook and swiftly opened it" (this is due particularly to the numerous plosives, /t/, /d/, and /b/). In addition, the segments found to be the most striking are those with the larger proportion of back vowels.

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Shifts in phonetic tone are also apparent in the story as a whole. The mean weights of the phonetic measures for each episode show a marked shift: most notably, the soft-hard consonant weights in the crucial third episode shift from relatively soft in the first part of the episode to predominantly hard in the second part. These differences also seem consistent with the tenor of the story, and in keeping with Mansfield's declared effort to discriminate the phases of her characters' experience at the level of sound.

3. The modifying power of feeling

In this last Section I offer a sketch of the reading process overall, based on the premise that feeling is the primary vehicle by which a reader comes to understand Mansfield's story. In Miall & Kuiken (2002) different types of feeling are examined, including such feelings as suspense or curiosity, empathy with a character, or pleasure in the effectiveness of a metaphor. But we proposed that literary texts are distinctive for going beyond such contributory feelings, important though these are. In particular, a text evokes the reader's feelings in order to modify both understanding and feelings themselves. I will demonstrate this with examples from my own reading of Mansfield's story.

The second segment of the story provides an example of the feelings evoked as I read the story: "Like an old song, like a song that she had sung so often that only to breathe was to sing it, she murmured the knitting pattern." The ritualized, unthinking repetition of the knitting pattern here is situated for me in a similar experience, that of repeating the liturgy in the church I attended as a child, where, like the compacted phrase "wool in front of the needle," I also sang words that had run together and had become devoid of meaning. The feeling thus brings together two apparently unrelated domains, knitting and church services. The feeling is self-referential, bringing to mind an extensive set of memories from childhood (their relevance to understanding this story, however, ranges from the highly apt to the irrelevant), but perhaps, more important, a stance of the self towards language that seems familiar and still a potential source of meaning (as I hear political slogans, for example). The feeling can also be considered anticipatory, since it is now one perspective on the old woman that I will hold in place in order to assess subsequent information. In the next few segments, for example, it suggests to me that the motive for the vests being knitted has long since become vestigial, and if there was a time when "a photograph of repulsive little black objects" aroused her compassion, that time has long passed. More generally, the feeling (for me) points to the episode further on in the story when the funeral appears, and I sense the routine nature of the undertakers' activity, suggested in the description of them "laughing and joking."

The feeling associated with a ritual that has become almost devoid of meaning, which is probably distinctive to my reading, has created an *ad hoc* category, in the terms of Glucksberg & Keysar (1990). This serves to organize other features of my response to the story, an organization that is both hierarchical and horizontal. Hierarchically, the feeling helps to place the old woman for me in a particularized social setting with carefully maintained class divisions (she has a maid; she has the leisure to knit vests for charity), with a history that is intimated, “She was always sighing,” and with limitations that her murmur and her sighing intimate. Horizontally, the feeling enables me to discriminate (rapidly and largely unconsciously, until I stop to consider it here) the various types of evidence for the old woman’s position. The feeling seems to indicate that her murmur and sighing are more indicative evidence of what she represents than the mission vests she is knitting, and that in her world the vests are more important than the “little black objects” for whom they are intended.

Another process attributed to feeling (Miall & Kuiken 2002) is catharsis. In our reinterpretation of this concept, we proposed that the modification of *hubris* by pity and fear (the classical example originating with Aristotle’s discussion of *Oedipus Rex*) is one particular form of a more general pattern of response, in which one feeling modifies or recontextualizes another. In the case of *Oedipus*, we suggested, close attention to the play will show that fear first modifies *hubris*; fear is then itself modified by pity. A comparable process, albeit on a less universal scale, is apparent in “The Wrong House.” The succession of major feelings evoked by the story (at least in my reading) is significant in part because on several occasions a new feeling modifies an existing one. This can be seen as a special case of class inclusion. I will briefly describe two examples.

In the second episode, time appears as a significant factor in the old woman’s consciousness: “Only three? It seemed dusk already.” This begins (for me) to recontextualize in a minor way the effect of ritual put in place at segment 2: the murmuring and sighing now seems to be a way of rendering time itself devoid of meaning. Why, I wonder, would the old woman be concerned about time, when her life seems devoted solely to passing time in a ritual, unthinking manner? It is the next segment, however, that places the ritual in a new perspective: “dusk came floating into the room, heavy, powdery dusk settling on the furniture, filming over the mirror.” Here, probably like many readers before me, I read *dusk* but also think of *dust*. The “powdery dusk” settling on everything is an evocative symbol for death, suggesting both the traditional view of dying as the valley of shadow, and the funeral service that speaks of “dust to dust.” Now the feeling of ritual, which was at first little more than a half-forgotten memory of childhood church services, suddenly takes on a sharper focus, giving to those embedded in such ritual an odor of imminent death. Ritual is recontextualized by the feelings of dusk/dust. For the first time I have a sense of something ominous to which her ritual behavior

has made her vulnerable. The sense of catharsis, then, occurs when a new feeling recontextualizes an existing feeling.

A major turning point in feeling, however, occurs as the old woman hears the knock on the door. My sensibilities, such as they are, enable me to see the old woman as little more than a comic figure as she realizes the funeral procession has stopped outside. Even her excessive fright seems comic: “Her old heart leaped like a fish.” My indifference to her predicament is halted abruptly, however, at segment 45. She knows the undertaker is about to knock, and she groans “No.” Then we read, “But yes, the blow fell, and for the moment it struck her down.” Suddenly, the prospect of the funeral strikes home: I feel the blank terror on her behalf. This is because Mansfield does not mention the knock on the door: rather, she renders its effect subjectively as “the blow”; and subjectively this is far worse than a mere knocking could be. In it echoes the tradition of the fatal knock on the door, from Macbeth, guilty over the murder of Duncan, to Don Giovanni hearing the arrival of the stone guest. Moreover, this blow “struck her down,” a phrase that (in my reading) is clearly not a literal falling, but a much worse one, a moral defeat; the blow that renders helpless. Feeling here, then, undertakes a sudden reversal: my indifference to the old woman’s fear of the funeral procession stopped outside her door is changed to a feeling that comes much closer to my own sense of mortality. In the language of catharsis, we might say that my previous indifference is a form of *hubris* that is unexpectedly recontextualized by fear.

It would be appropriate to consider, finally, what status these feelings might have. I have argued specifically for several forms of modification due to feeling, from generalization, through class-inclusion, to catharsis, and I have suggested that these processes of feeling may be distinctive to the literary domain. The account of emotions in literature offered by Oatley (2002) focuses principally on emotion as a simulation (continuing a theme developed by Oatley in several previous publications), but adds to this some proposals drawn from ancient Indian poetics. It seems worth indicating how far the proposals discussed here overlap with those of Oatley and to what extent they differ.

In introducing the topic of emotional response to literature, it seems clear that Oatley has in mind a modifying process comparable to the one I have presented here. As we read about the vicissitudes of characters’ lives we identify with them, he remarks, and experience emotions in sympathy – moments captured by higher scores on the perspective or feeling index, or both; and as our correlation analysis showed, this points to the role of foregrounding in evoking them, and readers’ experience of strikingness as they read such passages.

For Oatley, to read fiction is to run “a kind of simulation, one that runs on minds rather than on computers.” While the simulation is running, emotions enable “identification with a protagonist, sympathy for story characters, and activation of emotional autobiographical memories that resonate with story themes” (41).

In Oatley's view, this is what Aristotle meant by mimesis: not copying or imitating, but simulating in the sense that the reader creates a model of the fictional events that runs in parallel to the real world (48). Thus Oatley prefers to say that as readers we enact or perform our reading of fiction (50).

This account suggests that our concepts and feelings do not remain unchanged during reading, and Oatley points to this possibility. During reading, "our emotions may be transformed by having them deepened or understood better, and they may be extended towards people of kinds for whom we might previously have felt nothing" (43). Similarly, reading recruits emotions and memories, and these "start trains of thought that readers would not otherwise have had . . . They prompt new connections within the self, and they elaborate meanings, which can be built into our mental structure as parts of ourselves" (55). In discussing my responses to the Mansfield story, I indicated similar moments of transformation: the *ad hoc* category of ritualized behaviors is a new train of thought; the feeling associated with ritual behaviors is then itself altered by its recontextualization when dusk/dust begins to settle heavily within the old woman's room, with its connotations of death. My account attempts to provide a detailed mechanism for how such modifications are effected: through the response to foregrounding, generalization, *ad hoc* categories, and a new model of catharsis.

The principal difficulty in Oatley's account is that the status of the emotions aroused by fiction is left ambiguous. Do they really help to illuminate the self (cf. van Peer 1997: 220)? Are the emotions of fiction as real as those of daily life? Oatley's appeal to Goffman seems to propose this, by suggesting that transformations during fiction are comparable to the transformative encounters with other people that Goffman has described (cited 42). On the other hand, by appealing to the Indian concept of *rasas* (52) – emotions unique to the aesthetic experience, according to Indian poetic theory, such as Delight, Anger, or Heroism – Oatley accepts that a fictional emotion is not the same as a real emotion. He adds that in fiction we have an element of choice over whether to engage with the offered emotion; and for modification to be possible both a certain distance from the emotion and space for reflection are necessary (64). Oatley attempts to bridge these two views by suggesting that they constitute two phases of the response process:

We cannot always be moved and think about something in an observational way at the same time. What we can more often do is to move in and out along the continuum of emotional distance, be fully engaged emotionally at one moment, and then in the glow of that emotion, think about the experience in a more distanced way (64).

This view challenges, appropriately I believe, the notion that our usual mode of fictional reading is that of complete absorption, or a trance-like state (e.g., Nell 1988; Birkerts 1994), and it begins to suggest an answer to the problem we have

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inherited from Coleridge over whether reading requires the “willing suspension of disbelief” (Coleridge 1983: II, 6; cf. Gerrig 1993: 17). However, there is a residual problem, which Oatley does not entirely resolve, that stems from overlooking a central property of feeling.

In brief, a feeling considered in itself contains no information about whether its cause is fictional or real. Nor is a feeling temporally marked: as Coleridge put it, “All intense passions have faith in their own eternity” (Coleridge 1957–2002: III, 4056). In emotion theory, these aspects of feeling are indicated the most clearly in several of Frijda’s (2007) “laws of emotion.” First, the Law of Apparent Reality proposes that emotion is only elicited by what is taken to be real; second, the pre-occupation of the mind by a given emotion is expressed by the Law of Closure – an emotion takes over the action system, hence the apparently involuntary nature of emotion; third, the Law of Conservation of Emotional Momentum states that unless counteracted, an emotional event retains the power to evoke emotion indefinitely. It is these aspects of emotion that the Indian concept of *rasa* also suggests in its own way: as an aesthetic emotion, a *rasa* has no relation to time but constitutes a perception of an eternal state of being. At the same time, a *rasa* is also considered separate from everyday emotion, being an emotion that is experienced only in the context of art (Gnoli 1968). However, when experienced it is felt to be real in a way that makes ordinary life seem illusory, thus *rasa* does not involve suspension of disbelief so much as suspension of what we take to be reality; thus whether a *rasa* is real or not is not in question.

The reading of fiction depends upon both feelings and cognitions. It is a dialectical process, bringing into play both states of feeling that are indifferent to time and reality, and transient details of plot, character, situation, time, and space. However, the powers we have attributed to feeling – generalization through cross-domain, anticipatory, and self-referential processes, the creation of *ad hoc* categories with distinctive hierarchical and horizontal properties, and the recontextualization of one feeling by another in catharsis – each seems to call on the Laws of Emotion, i.e., the indifference of emotion to time or reality, while literary fiction is unique in challenging emotion on precisely these grounds. Thus, while my sense of ritual in the opening scene of Mansfield’s story is augmented as an *ad hoc* category of some power, with a reality of its own and a value that transcends time, a subsequent episode of the story alerts me to its limitations: the invasion of the dusk/dust shows me that the feeling renders me liable to a misreading of the evidence, not only in the story itself but potentially in my own experience. The heaviness of the dusk and its relation to the time of day has modified my earlier understanding, and at this point a sense of something like a *rasa* has come into place, perhaps the *rasa* of Fear. Now, too, I can retrospectively see this larger feeling underlying the evidence for the old woman’s behavior as she knits and sighs, leading me to modify my

understanding of what this means (for me as reader, that is, not yet for the old woman herself – that lies a little further off as the funeral pauses outside her door). This new feeling itself, the *rasa* of Fear, is timeless and indifferent to reality, and this power has enabled it to recontextualize and modify the earlier feeling. This one, though, will be modified in turn by others that occur later in the story.

In this way, while a particular feeling does not give up its timelessness and indifference to reality, as a reader the fiction places me in a dialectical relation to it, able to be aware simultaneously of its intrinsic or prototypical nature and of its limitations as an evaluation of the situation now evolving in the story. The concept of *rasa* captures the first aspect, and points to its pervasive nature as it comes to imbue and color all aspects of a given fiction (hence Frijda's Laws); but it fails to account for the dynamic process by which the *rasa* emerges, that is, how feelings gain their generalizing power, and the power to recontextualize and modify other feelings. The reading of fiction remains a paradoxical experience, half in our real world of everyday life and half outside it. But this paradox seems due directly to the double role of feelings, being in themselves timeless and indifferent to reality, yet within a literary context capable of being the focus of critical awareness and subject to the modifying power of new feelings.

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