

Narrative Scaffolding and Rhythmic Emotional Dynamics

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From a constructivist perspective, emotions are viewed as semantic categories that help organize a range of feelings, sensations, and thoughts into meaningful terms (Reeve 2024). Neurocognitive psychological theory and semiotics have clarified how the evolutionarily determined functions of emotions contribute to social regulation through attunement and directedness (Damasio 1999). In literary tradition, emotions have been equated with empathy, serving as a foundational model for narrative immersion, absorption, and transportation, fostering the emerging relationship between the narrator and the reader during narrative interpretation (Keen 2014). However, there has been insufficient attention paid to the nature of emotional dynamics and narrative scaffolding as underlying mechanisms and forms of mind extension. This paper aims to address this gap.

Beginning with an exploration of the intersubjective role of emotions in social human communication, I propose a perspective on emotional rhythmic patterns and narrative scaffolding as semiotic phenomena that shape discourse and support the meaning-making dynamics within fictional narratives. I argue that the dynamics and intensity of emotional expression depend on the narrative reconfiguration stage of Mimesis 3 (Ricoeur 1991), alongside "emotional scripts" or "emotional dynamic situations" (Colombetti and Zavala 2019), which enhance the agent's capacity for perspective-taking and emotional interpretation. Scaffolding enables emotional situations to serve as the driving force behind a self-sustaining system. Drawing an analogy with semiotic scaffolding, narrative scaffolding facilitates emotional mimicry, embodying "what it is like" (qualia) through recurring linguistic patterns, which enhances the dynamism of narrative discourse as a complex teleological system. By integrating insights from narrative theory, biosemiotics, and affective neuroscience, this presentation will investigate emotional dynamics in a way that offers new insights into the meaning-making processes within narrative discourse.

References

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ENN8 Conference: "Causal and Emotional Understanding of Narratives" (Wuppertal, 2025)