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<b>Abstract:</b>	<p>The centrality of emotion in thought and action is increasingly recognised in the human sciences, though basic questions of definition and scope remain unresolved. Where do emotions begin and end? How should we identify and analyse them? How write about them? Ethnographic fieldwork, as pioneered by Malinowski, offers powerful insights into the place of emotion in social life; but emotions are peculiarly difficult to capture in the generalizing format of case study and ethnographic summary. In this lecture I argue that semantic, structural, and discourse-based approaches tend to miss what is most important - what counts for the persons concerned and therefore what makes the emotion. I review the conceptual and methodological issues and conclude that only a narrative approach can capture both the particularity and the temporal dimension of emotion, restoring verisimilitude and fidelity to experience.</p>
<b>Section/Category:</b>	Social Anthropology
<b>Author Comments:</b>	<p>Dear Editor</p> <p>Following your emails of 17 and 18 December, I have made the additions advised, in sentences and footnotes at various places: pp.9, 12, 20, 26, n1, n 6. I found I couldn't do all this in a single paragraph, so it made sense to allocate the points at relevant places. I hope this now supplies enough information "situating this argument in relation to your other published and forthcoming work on emotion". The additions are all highlighted in yellow. I have made a few cosmetic cuts to allow space for these additions. The total word count, including Abstract, is 10,594: just under the 10,600 you kindly permitted me.</p> <p>best,</p> <p>Andrew Beatty</p>

## Anthropology and Emotion

Emotion researchers, it is often said, irresistibly call to mind the fable of the blind men and the elephant, each right in his own way, none getting the whole beast (Russell 2003: 145). Where does emotion begin and end? Is it a matter of interpretation, feeling, category, situation, response, expression, or some or all of these? Perhaps there is no beast to capture and the ‘whole’ is a chimera: not an elephant but a unicorn. Yet the lack of palpable substance or enclosing skin, far from casting doubt on the enterprise, has spurred ever-greater efforts at definition and synthesis. The problem – the ‘blindness’ – is less in the selectivity than in the partiality that leads so often to the formula (always in protesting italics), ‘*X is the emotion*’. For William James (1884), our feeling of bodily change *is* the emotion; for the psychologist Nico Frijda (2004), it’s the “action tendency”; for the philosopher Robert Solomon (1993: 125), the judgment; and so on, through the many formulas – of facial expression, semantic structure, and discourse – that make similar claims of equivalence. The definitional problem can’t be made to go away by putting all the parts together, because the parts may be only contingently related; some parts may be more essential than others (an elephant is still an elephant without its tail); and, of course, there are feelings, judgments, action programmes, scenarios, and facial expressions that aren’t emotional. So how to tell which ones *are*? That very basic question, still lacking a conclusive answer in psychology and philosophy, is interestingly complicated by research in other societies. Away from home, not only do our common-sense judgments about what counts as emotion falter: their uncertainty weakens the conceptual basis of the judgments themselves. So a new difficulty arises: what to do about exceptions. Durkheim liked to argue that one well-founded ethnographic case could prove a general sociological law. More plausibly,

Margaret Mead held that one solid exception was enough to confound a universal claim. Her easygoing Samoans forever altered adolescence; her Tchambuli jumbled gender. The celebrated counter-examples – Tahitians, Ifaluk, Ilongot, and Utku – have all posed challenges of this kind. What becomes of hard-wired emotions if the Tahitians don't feel sad or the Eskimo don't get angry?

As the questions suggest, anthropology's contribution to the understanding of emotion has been both descriptive and critical; in the best cases ethnography and critique are two sides of the same coin. In the work of Levy (1973, 1984), Lutz (1988), White (1994), and Shweder (1994), the comparison implicit in any fieldwork account is raised to a theoretical level, as imported categories are made to confront awkward facts. In different ways, these authors have shown that emotions are inextricable elements of thinking, speaking, and acting; and that we ignore them at our peril.

For most of our discipline's brief history, however, emotion has not been a theoretical focus. Its integrity as a concept has been assumed, its cross-cultural identity taken for granted, its empirical role in social processes either scorned or obscurely acknowledged as fundamental. Not so much 'the blind men and the elephant' – which suggests at least a groping interest – as 'the elephant in the room'. The centrality of emotion in human life is part of its elephant-like invisibility. Imposing but oddly intangible, neither out there nor in here, all-important or totally irrelevant: no wonder we anthropologists have difficulties with our emotions. The difficulties, I shall argue, are conceptual and methodological, and, like many of the most taxing issues in anthropology, they are perennial. So the selective history I begin with is of more than antiquarian interest: it identifies problems and positions that remain starting points for any discussion. I shall be tracing a history of neglect that

runs counter to the progress achieved in other anthropological fields – a story of missed opportunities and roads not taken; all, of course, retraced with the comfort of hindsight. But there's no room for smugness: this is the testament of a repentant sinner.

I shall be addressing two separate but related problems: on the one hand, a patchy *recognition* of emotion, often amounting to neglect; on the other, a failure in *reporting*, a critical lack of detail. One can underrate emotion by ignoring it, or one can underrate it by putting it in the wrong words, letting it slip through the gaps. If the problems are related, so are the solutions. To give emotion its due, to restore the heartbeat to ethnography, we have to think harder about what goes on in the field *and* how best to put experience into words.<sup>1</sup>

Now, as every student knows, the modern tradition of fieldwork-ethnography was more or less founded by Malinowski. In the manifesto-like introduction to *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922), he made a distinction between the collection of data about social organization and the 'imponderabilia of actual life' – the moment-by-moment flow of behaviour which the anthropologist was uniquely able to record. To grasp the imponderabilia, and through them, the 'native point of view', you had to come down off the verandah, the creaking stage of old-style fieldwork interviews, to observe speech in its living context. It was the newly-discovered, or at least newly-theorized, method of participant-observation that revealed to Malinowski the critical contrast between what people do and what they say or think they do. The method emphasized what Roger Sanjek, in a review of fieldwork practices, calls 'situated listening' and 'speech-in-action participant-observation' (1990: 233), as opposed to 'formal interviews with seated informants' (246). We must bear this crucial contrast

in mind in assessing recent studies of emotion. All too often we have forgotten the lesson of the master.

The extraordinarily rich descriptions that Malinowski produced would not have been possible without his clearly articulated discovery of ‘subject, method, and scope’, as his first chapter is entitled. However, what worked for the *kula* did not work quite so well for emotion. Consider a well-known example, cited by his biographer as a prototype of the extended-case method; an example so dear to Malinowski’s heart that he reproduced it with little alteration from his fieldnotes in two separate accounts (Young 2004: 402). This was the story of the expulsion of the chief’s son, Namwana Guya’u, from Omarakana. Namwana had accused his rival, the chief’s sister’s son, of seducing his wife and had reported him to the colonial resident. The outrage that followed the seducer’s imprisonment led to Namwana’s formal denunciation and exile. For village and ethnographer the consequences were momentous: the loss of an influential man and key informant, the chief’s semi-withdrawal from active life, the grief-stricken death of his wife, and a ‘deep rift in the whole social life of Kiriwina’ (Malinowski 1926: 105). Michael Young reads in Malinowski’s account the sympathy of one interloper for another. Both men lacked rights in the village (in the system of matriliney, the chief’s son had rights only in his mother’s natal village) and were dependent on chiefly patronage; both were at the mercy of colonial power, Malinowski as a wartime ‘enemy alien’, Namwana as a native subject. Parallels aside, Malinowski presents the case in *structural* terms as a struggle between mother-right and father love, matrilineal authority and paternal interest (1929: 13). The personal elements that would thicken the meaning – character, dialogue, development – are edited out. You can’t blame him for seizing the opportunity to clinch a decisive sociological point. But the emotions – the

imponderabilia – have been filtered. The back-story is summary; the description sparse. His hero and literary model, Joseph Conrad, would not have approved. It would be good to know what the participants felt: felt in the fullest sense – how they judged the events; how public humiliation affected the imprisoned philanderer and the well-born cuckold; how the longstanding feud between them stoked anger and retribution; how the linking but invisible women – the chief’s sister and the unfaithful wife – judged the unfolding situation and were reconciled with the warring men; and how, emotionally and linguistically, the whole thing was framed by differently positioned parties. The sociological case is nailed, trophy-like, for future admiration; but we learn little from this account about the way emotions are constituted or experienced in an exotic setting. We can see they matter a good deal; but the method of reporting does not let us see how or why they matter.

Nor do we learn much from similar fieldwork cases of Malinowski’s student Raymond Firth, an equally copious ethnographer who limited his coverage of emotion because of a preconception about what might count as psychology. In documenting what he calls family sentiments, Firth warns with a shudder: ‘But the use of the term “sentiment” in this book [*We, the Tikopia*] implies not a psychological reality but a cultural reality; it describes a type of behaviour which can be observed, not a state of mind which must be inferred’ (1936/1957: 160). To be fair, a late essay (Firth 1985), delivered on Malinowski’s centenary, *does* directly address an emotional episode, another case of a chief’s distraught son. But Firth’s analysis, which concerns intelligibility, gets stuck on the binaries of reason and affect, verbal and non-verbal behaviour, rationality and irrationality; it doesn’t tell us much about emotion, or indeed Tikopia emotion. And I say this in spite of Michael Carrithers’ otherwise persuasive appreciation of the case, which he incorporates into a powerful argument –

very much to my taste - for the narrative understanding of behaviour (Carrithers 1992: 159-160).<sup>2</sup> By and large, emotions were just too imponderable for functionalist methodology; they escaped the subject, method and scope.

On the other theoretical wing, one foot on the verandah, Radcliffe-Brown and his followers also shied away from a fuller exploration of naturally-occurring emotions, preferring what they termed social sentiments, the culturally standard dispositions appropriate to a son or daughter, chief, rival, or ally. These sentiments were cast in simple terms as solidarity, hostility, affection, and respect unmixed with idiosyncrasy, temperament, or curriculum vitae. The structural functionalists followed Durkheim in their ruthless purging of individual psychology. 'Psychological facts' had no bearing on 'social facts', which were the sole concern of sociology and anthropology.

French structuralism took up a different strand of the legacy but kept the taboo. Lévi-Strauss went even further than Durkheim in rejecting *any* explanatory role for emotions. 'Actually, impulses and emotions explain nothing: they are always results, either of the power of the body or of the impotence of the mind. In both cases they are consequences, never causes. The latter can be sought only in the organism, which is the exclusive concern of biology, or in the intellect, which is the sole way offered to psychology, and to anthropology as well' (1962: 71). A strict Cartesian dualism prevented him from seeing emotions as having any cognitive content, or, to put it slightly differently, intellect as embodied (1981: 667-8); which meant omitting the motivations, judgments, tactics, and expressions that comprise emotions and animate social life. For Lévi-Strauss, emotions are mere effects. Yet in the flow of events, effects are causes of further effects. Emotions, moreover, have motivational value: we seek pleasure,

avoid pain. Even granted a narrow view of emotions as sentiments, Lévi-Strauss cut out much of what the ethnographer can observe. Since he relied mainly on published texts rather than fieldnotes, his examples are doubly depleted. It was only a small step from the functionalist schemas he drew upon to an algebraic notation of dispositions, with positive and negative values. This was kinship drained of human significance. In a generation, anthropology had passed from Malinowski's exuberant realism, in which people and their emotions were highly visible, if not a focus in themselves, to a plane of abstraction which left them far behind.

As the home of what became psychological anthropology, America was more hospitable to emotion. Built on the massive corpus of Boasian descriptive ethnography, American anthropology made culture, not society or the individual, its cornerstone. Boas himself was keen to distinguish culture as a historical product from individual thought and feeling. Above an assumed 'psychic unity of mankind', what varied across cultures was the content of cognitions, not the faculties or forms of experience (Shore 1996: 22). Boas would not have agreed with his distant heirs that 'emotional experience is not *precultural* but *preeminently cultural*' (Lutz 1988:5), that the passions, quite simply, are 'cultural' (Geertz 1980: 124). Although his students – the Culture and Personality pioneers – saw emotion as a key variable in a design for living, they took for granted the conception of emotion and its objective status as a natural kind. Their concern was not with what emotions *were* but what they *did*; how they were shaped by everyday routines; how they moulded the ethos.

The attempt to pin feelings to forms was most explicit in Bateson's *Naven* (1958), an ambitious synthesis of British structural and American cultural

approaches. Bateson analyzed stereotyped sequences in Iatmul encounters, coining the term *schismogenesis* for the competitive escalation and breakdown between partners. Schismogenesis, he proposed, was a widespread form of interaction evident in marital squabbles, class war, even the arms race. Curiously, in Bali where he later worked, it was lacking. Instead, a tendency to excite then dissipate emotion - an 'absence of climax' - led to what he and Mead (1942) called a schizoid personality. On almost every measure Bali was different (in emotion studies it's the perennial exception, the view from Mars); but no less than in the Sepik, Balinese emotions, daily routines, and cultural values were tightly interlinked in a functional circuit.

All this clarity came at a cost. A focus on patterns and processes destroyed the specificity of emotion episodes, winnowing out the passionate individual, turning the love and anger of real people into the synthetic passions of generic Balinese, Papuans, and Samoans: culture-specific, not person-specific, emotions. Despite its gossipy tone and one's memory of it as rich in emotions, Mead's Samoa book contains not a single description of an emotional sequence witnessed by the author. The technique is one of ethnographic generalization - 'Cases of passionate jealousy do occur, but they are matters for extended comment and amazement' (1972:131) - or summary: 'The rage of Lola was unbounded and she took an immediate revenge, publicly accusing her rival of being a thief and setting the whole village by the ears' (145). The manner - discursive, undramatic in the strict sense - sacrifices verisimilitude for presentational coherence.

*Naven*, one of anthropology's Great Books, illustrates the gains and losses of pigeonholing emotions. I cite it here because the balance sheet is still relevant

and because Bateson was unusually - obsessively - reflexive in his approach and knew very well what he had to leave out. Here we find, more starkly formulated, the peculiar relation between reporting, circumstance and summary that Malinowski had developed and that generations of anthropologists came to adopt – at a price - as ethnographic method. In his introduction Bateson asks how the ethnographer can capture scientifically what literature conveys by ‘impressionistic’ techniques. ‘The emotional background,’ he writes, ‘is causally active within a culture, and no functional study can ever be reasonably complete unless it links up the structure and pragmatic working of the culture with its emotional tone or ethos’ (1958:2). But his focus is on formalized behavior and sentiments; and his argument, frustrating and dazzling by turns, succeeds only to the extent that he can persuade us such sentiments do indeed dominate Iatmul life. From the evidence, we cannot know. *Naven* is famously theory-driven, with Bateson a kind of anti-Malinowski, herding the facts like docile sheep from one hypothetical fold to another. But among the confining frames there are glimpses of stray facts, unformulated emotions – the feelings *behind* the ‘emotional background’, one might say. Bateson witnesses a funeral and puzzles over the half-hearted sobbing of the men and their relieved lapse into competitive boasting. ‘They escaped entirely from a situation which was embarrassing,’ he writes, ‘because it seemed to demand a sincere expression of personal loss, an expression which their pride could scarcely brook’ (154). Ethos triumphs over inchoate feeling. But the psychic cost, like the peculiar ambivalence Bateson found in Iatmul sexual antagonism, remains unexplored. How are unauthorized emotions experienced? What subterranean life do they lead? How does the personal trauma of initiation get transformed into the ‘pride of the male ethos’?

Legitimate anthropological questions: but they could not be asked when the object of enquiry was 'culturally standardized behavior'.

Emotion's multidimensionality makes it a casualty of any 'systems' approach. Subordinate a feeling to a system and you lose the interplay between contexts - cultural, social, and biographical - that gives emotions their resonance, their practical significance. In fact, the more analytical one's approach, the sharper the definitions, the vaguer the emotion concept. Which suggests we are either victims of a category mistake or of false precision (Averill 1994: 145).

Functionalism and structuralism reduced emotions to dispositions, shadows of structure. In Talcott Parsons' mid-century rethinking of the social sciences, emotion was even more elusive. Parsons' maxim was the irreducibility of psychological, sociological, and cultural phenomena, each 'level' having its own characteristics (Kuper 1999: chap. 2). In the division of labour, anthropologists were assigned 'culture', sociologists 'society', and psychologists 'personality'. But where did emotion belong? Each scholarly tribe could claim emotion as its own only by losing two of the dimensions. For the anthropologists, it had to be cultural or nothing. But what was emotion torn from its psychological moorings?

The answer came in a different conception of emotion, one that better fitted the cultural mould. If human beings were cultural beings, as Parsons' chief anthropological exponent argued, so must their emotions be cultural. 'Not only ideas, but emotions too, are cultural artifacts', wrote Clifford Geertz in 1962 (1973: 81). This was a radical claim, far from the dilute Freudianism that had cramped the Culture and Personality school. But in its strong sense it was not picked up for many years, not even by Geertz himself. In this early essay, Geertz was moving towards the idea of culture as a tissue of symbols. He later gave

philosophical ballast to the conception by appeal to Wittgenstein's strenuously public concept of meaning, for which the axiom 'an "inner process" stands in need of outward criteria' (1958: 153) might serve as banner. In the Bali essays of the 1960s and 70s, however, emotions appear as manipulable *entities*, psychological ready-mades rather than cultural artifacts. Here's an example. 'What the cockfight says it says in a vocabulary of sentiment – the thrill of risk, the despair of loss, the pleasure of triumph.... Attending cockfights and participating in them is, for the Balinese, a kind of sentimental education' (1973: 449). This is not very different from Bateson and Mead on Bali. Culture shapes what nature provides. What's new is the text analogy, the idea that the parade of emotions forms a social commentary, a native sociology.

We are a long way from the thrusting individuals of *Argonauts* or *Crime and custom*, far removed from real imponderable emotions. Which is no doubt what Geertz intends. His Balinese are constructed, faceless, generic. But so the culture had made them: they lacked individuated personalities, were scarcely differentiated by name, and existed in 'a motionless present, a vectorless now' (404). In a Platonic inversion of ethnographic perception, he writes (in a later essay): 'It is *dramatis personae*, not actors, that endure: indeed it is *dramatis personae*, not actors, that in the proper sense really exist' (1983: 62). Emptied of subjectivity and history, Balinese fulfilled the interpretive ideal, epitomizing texts, acting out categories, valorizing the method. No need for narrative context or even ordinary off-the-verandah observation. In their thoughts and emotions, Balinese were as symbol-bound, as suspended in webs of meaning, as Radcliffe-Brown's mother's brother had been functional in his. Reality fitted theory hand in glove.

Geertz's bracketing of the biographical, his focus on the public forms of knowledge, on cultural framing rather than subjective qualia, set the course for a generation. Anything outside this programme amounted to mind-reading. Interpretivism inspired many fine-grained accounts of the person that enriched the literature but left out actual persons. It was as if the symbols and models had the experiences on the actor's behalf. What was left over when texts had been interpreted and symbols logged was private sensation, amenable to neither observation nor analysis. In this perspective, individuality was equated with privacy (in the philosophical sense), an anthropological no-man's-land.

Such was the orthodoxy as constructionism took hold from the 1980s, heralded twenty years earlier by Geertz's claim that emotions were cultural artifacts. Contrary voices arguing for transcultural factors lingered here and there. Renato Rosaldo (1989) and Unni Wikan (1994) argued from common experience (an approach treated sceptically in Beatty 2005a, 2010).

Phenomenological anthropologists continued to assert the primacy of the body, the experiencing self, or other avatars of consciousness. But the dominant modes remained the summary report, the case study fitted to a thesis, the colourful vignette, and the generalizing, comparative statement.

Despite a century of progress on other fronts, a tendency toward the generic – the death of emotion – has persisted practically unchanged up to the present. I will come to the exceptions, but among several objections two are paramount, and it is worth spelling them out at this half-way mark. The first objection to generic reporting or explanation goes as follows. Emotions might be third-person *constructions*, a collective product, but they are *first-person experiences*

and not reducible to any of their ingredients. Their particularity is to do with their subjectivity, their *me*-focus (Barrett *et al.* 2007; Goldie 2000; Roberts 1988; Solomon 1993). Unlike most other things that are in some sense culturally constructed - norms, values, cultural models - their *sine qua non* is their personal reference. You feel anger because it is you who is insulted; sad because the loss is yours. Others may read the situation in similar terms, recognizing the loss or insult, but they don't experience the emotion. Emotions are particular or they are nothing. As psychologists have long recognized, an adequate account of emotion has to reckon with this primary fact. It is the first objection to a generalizing format.

The second is that emotions are biographical: primed by evolution, to be sure; shaped by culture; constrained by subject position; but given personal relevance and intensity by individual history. Psychoanalysts have long made this claim; but it finds powerful new support in cognitive psychology and neuroscience. To quote one recent study, 'an emotion experience is a conceptual structure stored in memory whose conditions include current perceptions, cognitions, actions, and core affect. A specific emotion conceptualization (e.g., a context-specific conceptualization of anger) ... reinstates how these conditions have been experienced in the past' (Barrett *et al.* 2007: 386). Clearly, a view that opens the way to a narrative account of the sort I want to promote here. This *biographical* kind of particularity is not quite the same as the first, the quality of reflexivity or self-reference. It has to do with the fact that nobody else can lead my life: my biography, memories, and psychological formation are my own. These personal circumstances, built over time, sedimented in character and temperament, affect - not to say determine - emotional experience and the

course of relations between people. A psychoanalyst would say as much. But for the anthropologist this biographical story is not purely internal or individual, much less isolable from the living context. What counts here is the embedding of emotion in interwoven lives, not its remembrance in the bubble of an interview.

These two sorts of particularity, the egocentric and the biographical (both of them resistant to a generalizing format), pose different implications for the ethnographer. They represent the inner and outer dimensions of experience: consciousness, on the one hand; lives and histories on the other. They are filtered out by any systems approach that fails to connect the cultural, social, and psychological, and that removes emotion from the stream of history. By this measure, an account framed in terms of cultural categories, scripts, social tensions, emotion display rules, or any other synchronic or schematic analysis will fall short.

An example might be Lutz's *Unnatural emotions* (1988), which depends on the analysis of emotion terms excerpted from minimally contextualised episodes, interviews, and word-sorting tests. The vast irregular hinterland of meaning that inheres in past experiences, personal confrontations, non-linguistic behaviour, and unvoiced reflection is hidden in a method that prioritises and isolates verbal performance and stereotypical script-definition. Like Mead's Samoa book, *Unnatural emotions* lacks detailed descriptions of emotion episodes; the ethnographer's advantage sacrificed for argument's sake. One could say the same of another landmark discourse study, Michelle Rosaldo's *Knowledge and Passion* (1980), whose first sixty or so pages avoid extended examples - except for a single brilliant fieldwork anecdote (33-4) that upsets the argument by placing ethnographer and subjects within a layered story. Instead of naturalistic

episodes illustrating Ilongot emotions, Rosaldo strings together sayings and usages put to her as Ilongot (in a telling formula) 'explain themselves' (36). Thick commentary rather than thick description. Only thus can she claim that 'Their talk of hearts has less to do with histories that give reasons than with the fact that hearts that stand apart are "moved", "turn in upon themselves", "itch",' etc. (1980:43), the vocabulary comprising a static folk psychology, not a history of persons. How could it be otherwise when the method precludes 'histories' and emphasizes instead the alienness of Ilongot emotions?

One test of any anthropological account is a simple but seldom asked question: If I were *that* person or belonged to that set of people, would the analysis include what seems most significant to me?<sup>3</sup> Is my anger fully explained by my structural position as a slighted Mother's Brother, or by its place within a contrast set of emotion categories, or by its expression as a human universal? None of the above. Positioning, expression, strategy, and circumstances frame the context and possibilities; but what gives the context resonance – in effect, what produces the emotion as a self-referring, biographical event - is its location in time among figures with similarly distinctive but interlaced histories. This is what ethnography has to reckon with.

The analogy with drama is suggestive. The significance of a Hamlet soliloquy depends not only on semantic meaning but on the orientation of characters, the state of the plot, and the possibilities ahead: half the speeches are about action or inaction. An ethnographer in Elsinore had better not rely on semi-structured interviews ('Hamlet, what makes you depressed?') or word-sorting tasks ('Claudius, list synonyms for guilt.');

or, having convened a friendly focus group beneath the battlements, hypothetical scenarios ('Let's talk about

our mothers'). Confronted with the standard instruments of emotion research, do our informants, like Hamlet, feel a little out of joint? They gamely answer, but what are their answers worth? At some abstract level we might learn something about how people think about emotions *in interviews*, but not how they think or feel in practice; much less how emotions occur, are subjectively experienced, how they filter, frame or direct sequences of action.

We have identified the problem – a failure either to recognize or adequately report emotion – but are no nearer a solution. A parallel with a classical discussion points the way. For Aristotle the chief device by which the drama elicits emotions is plot. It is through the unfolding of action that emotion is not simply represented but produced. The audience undergoes the fear and pity of tragedy by witnessing the events on stage. (Aristotle [2001: 96] singles out reversal of fortune and recognition as the most emotive plot elements.) But plot is only one dimension. In a well-constructed drama, plot is the revelation of characters in interaction. What befalls the tragic hero is a function of his flawed make-up. For Henry James (1884/1972: 37) this equation is the engine of fiction. 'What is character but the determination of incident? What is incident but the illustration of character?'

In the looser weave of ordinary life extraneous factors intervene. Stuff happens. The procession of events doesn't run on the rails of character but expresses the vast complexity of the world, of which we know only our own little corner. Most realist fiction - James notwithstanding - is a compromise between the poetic compression of the stage and the ungraspable complexity of offstage reality. Narrative plausibility depends entirely on the plot-character mechanism, so that what people say and do follows from the past without being entirely

predictable. But plausibility isn't verisimilitude. (A melodrama may be plausible within generic conventions but lack verisimilitude.) What makes a fiction seem *true*, rather than merely plausible, is its representativeness, the reader's sense of its fidelity to experience of the external world.

In most ethnography, plausibility and verisimilitude are differently constructed. Lacking a narrative perspective, you don't ask yourself, 'Would this person do that, given what we know about her?' but 'Would she do that given the cultural premises?' Ethnographic plausibility is about logical consistency. Verisimilitude is harder to specify. When Levy (1973: 304) tells us of a Tahitian man, abandoned by his wife, who felt not *sad* but sluggish and ill, the account is plausible, given the premises (no explicit concept of sadness, a resistance to negative emotions), but without narrative background it remains, to me at least, mysterious. Levy (1984), whose background is psychoanalytical and who staged psychodynamic interviews in the field, sees such cases as culturally shaped misrecognition, so that a loss that *we* should associate with sadness is experienced as fatigue. Misrecognizing emotion is a common enough event. But the fatigue following loss of a spouse is surely unlike the fatigue following a day digging taro. Levy's account requires the Tahitian to misconstrue not only his sadness but also his tiredness. It may be that Tahitians don't *mentalise* the bodily feelings that accompany an appraisal of loss; that they don't dwell on the loss. Or to use Shweder's (1994) term, they don't *emotionalise* the feeling. But only an account with time-depth and biographical density could justify such a claim.

If plausibility depends on internal consistency, one of the ways in which verisimilitude – especially in the reporting of emotions – is enhanced is through *inconsistency*, the out-of-character lapse, the capacity to do things that surprise.

Real human beings surprise us not just because we are fallible observers but because we don't have access to all the facts: the secret histories and evolutions of motive that underlie behaviour. This hidden aspect is especially significant in emotion because of its reflexivity and partial privacy; and the point holds even in societies where the individual soul is not a matter of much interest. I think back to an event during my fieldwork in Nias, an island in Indonesia. After a thirty-year reign, the chief of my host village had died - a prolonged, public passing that was welcomed - and regretted - as the end of an era. In the hall of the great house that was the hub of village life he lay in his coffin, surrounded by relatives, dressed for eternity. As clansmen gathered to pay their respects and air their grievances, the seniors rose one by one to make speeches. The chief's great rival, his deputy, who had awaited this moment for half a life, got up to speak. He was the leading orator, a master of staged emotion: people watched his face and hung on his voice, expecting him to put their feelings into words. But how to strike the right note: magnanimous but not triumphant, compassionate but gently critical - as form required, since the spirit's path to the otherworld is blocked by unvoiced resentment? And how would he conceal a lifetime of envy beneath the grudging admiration? He hailed the crowd and began, then - seconds into his speech - his chin dropped and the words choked. Instead of the usual passionate flow, a strangled cry. Stranger still was the effect of his appearance. There was something different about him that I only twigged when I noticed the chief's older brother, another grizzled veteran. Using a homemade concoction of boot polish and turps, both men, overnight, had dyed their hair jet black; both uncannily rejuvenated by the chief's death. I cannot separate the peculiar emotional tone of this transformation from its symbolism and the situation that

evoked it. The occasion demanded sorrow, and half found it in the deputy's stifled sob; but the checked words and the youthful appearance suggested liberation, perhaps even elation in his rival's passing. The black hair was a personal symbol; one that the audience registered but whose meaning could not be spelled out. The disturbing transformation was repeated a year later when, hours after a murderous clash between his lineage mates (both rivals for his land), the same deputy marched through the village in *tennis shorts*. It would be trivializing to call it a fashion statement; but the deputy's white shorts and pale unsunned legs had a startling effect on the villagers who had only ever seen him in sombre sarong or trousers. Everyone knew he had been the intended victim; everyone could see he had profited from the murder. But why the parade? With one rival killed and another led away to justice, what was he playing at? I saw it as a gesture of defiance, a triumph not only over his enemy, but over death; for his enemy – like the grim reaper - had been stalking him, dagger in hand, for days.

A narrative of the fieldwork would have to make something of these oddities – the black hair and the white shorts - precisely because they fall outside ethnographic stereotype. Closer to parapaxis than praxis, they tell us nothing general; but therein lies their significance. They remind us that the occasion, expression, and meaning of emotion are personal and particular (there being no such thing as a general emotion); and that emotions focus a range of concerns, which is why they are anthropologically interesting. In fact, no synthetic example or capsule summary could tell us half so much about power and status in Nias as emotion-laden incidents of this kind. To make proper sense of them I'd have to unravel a history of reversals and humiliations. I'd spool back twenty years to

the deputy's wedding day, when the chief had barred the door of the great house to him, turning him away with a foul oath. I'd recover the tale – scarcely mentionable – of how his mother had been abducted on a headhunting raid and had married into the chief's lineage, a slave become a bride. I'd retrace the stories of how he had subsidized the bridewealth of his nephew, the future murderer; and of the resentment that had grown between them until the day fate had placed the wrong victim in the way. I might not come away with a hypothesis, but I'd have a better understanding of the play of emotion, the twisting together of envy, resentment, and revenge; and of how the little, half-intended details mean everything. This would not be a psychoanalytic history; instead it would return to the broad context which has a powerful transpersonal reality: perspectival, but not purely egocentric, historical but not stratigraphic in the Freudian manner; a story embedded in other stories.

It's the pressure of the past – the traces of previous encounters in memory, dispositions, expectations, and grey hairs – that make for what E. M. Forster (1962) called round characters: individuals with depth, agency, and the capacity to surprise. And it's the time-dimension provided by narrative that conveys reality.

If the aim is to be true to life – and what else is there to be true to? - most of us can probably think of ethnographic examples that have the right qualities.

(Unfortunately, narrative ethnography, prolix by definition, is not susceptible to capsule summary.) My own list would include Abu-Lughod (1993), Jackson (2004), Read (1965), Scheper-Hughes (1992), Stoller and Olkes (1989), Vitebsky (2005), and Wikan (1990); with Briggs (1970) especially impressive on emotion. But I want to cite a fictional example because it brings out all of the elements of

emotion that only an omniscient narrator can capture but from which nevertheless ethnographers can learn. Here we have the elephant from trunk to tail: the eliciting situation and perception; the social framework and self-interested involvement; the values that frame judgment; the dialectic of interpretation and affect; the layered time perspective; the bodily arousal and facial expression (spontaneous, managed); the elusive relation between experience and emotion category; and the implications for action. (Let anyone who thinks emotions are no more than feelings ponder that list.) In the episode, which I can only sample here, all these elements are anatomized; but what's most compelling is the careful sequencing of perception, interpretation, arousal, reflection, expression and action. Nothing is taken for granted.

The episode, loosely based on a real event, is from Tolstoy's novel, *Resurrection* (1899/1962). A nobleman, the wealthy Prince Nekhluyov, is summoned as a juror. In court he unexpectedly confronts in the dock a woman whom he had seduced as a youth ten years earlier and whose life he has thoughtlessly ruined. Once an innocent domestic servant, now a prostitute, Maslova is on trial for killing one of her clients. Nekhluyov recognizes her, and his thoughts race back to their earlier affair. But she seems not to know him. We follow the prince's thoughts in silent commentary on proceedings, but the narrator doesn't name his emotions, noting only that he has difficulty breathing. When the examination begins, Nekhluyov 'stared at Maslova, while a complex, painful process took place in his soul' (57). Then she turns her eyes on him from the prisoners' bench.

'Is it possible she recognized me?' thought Nekhluyov in terror, feeling the blood rushing to his face; but Maslova immediately turned away, without

distinguishing him from the others, and again fixed her eyes anxiously on the assistant prosecutor.' (64)

When the court goes into recess, Tolstoy tells in flashback the story of the seduction, and 25 pages later we re-enter court, privy to Nekhluyov's knowledge and agonized conscience. As part of that 'complex, painful process' alluded to, Nekhluyov's moral discomfort has given way to something more urgent, compounding 'terror' with an acute self-consciousness. The terror is of exposure, of the nobleman recognized by his degraded victim, the high at the mercy of the low. The emotion succeeding the initial unmixed 'terror' is not named. Instead, Tolstoy presents the prince's consciousness of evolving bodily reactions. The context suggests both guilt and shame (Nekhluyov feels bad about what he has done but also fears for his reputation), or rather the *precursors* to these emotions, as well as the named terror. In the philosopher Robert Solomon's (1993) terms, Nekhluyov's reaction is a rapid judgment of his own responsibility for the woman's fate and of the effect on him of the thought that others may come to know this. But with his customary penetration, Tolstoy emphasizes the priority of self-preservation over moral reflection, the endangered self over the endangered soul. The terror and the rush of blood are the urgent self-perception, not yet elaborated or consciously felt as shame and guilt.

The compressed power of the courtroom scene is slowly released in the action of the next 500 pages, so it matters to get it right. Tolstoy achieves his effect through narrative layering and minute observation of unfolding emotions. As readers, and perhaps as writers of non-fiction, we admire and despair. But the humble ethnographer can extract some encouragement. The lesson is to integrate emotion with action in sufficient narrative depth to capture those two

key aspects: its me-focus and its biographical import, the particularity of which makes emotion what it is and accounts for its social repercussions.

If we are interested in giving emotions their due, we have to work into our ethnography, as the best examples do, the confrontation between the teeming complexity of the world and the first-person perspective that reorders it: the capacity of emotions, as Solomon puts it, to constitute a world (1995: 41). Call it frame and focus or panoply and perspective: emotions seize what pertains to us; they respond to what external reality casts up in the way of frustration, loss, and opportunity; and they do so according to our dispositions, training, and history. Yet I want to insist that neither a phenomenological account nor a psychoanalytic one tells the whole story. For if, as Solomon has argued, an emotion is a judgment, an assessment of the circumstances affecting *me*, it's also an action in a world made by others: a response – of pleasure, fear, or anger - to what lies beyond our control, to what disturbs our equilibrium, our goals and desires: the terrible figure in the witness box. And this tension between inner and outer imperatives – to overstate an opposition – must be at the heart of a fully anthropological account and can only be captured in narrative. The dialectic of provocation, judgment, response, and re-evaluation, however swift, is not the work of a moment. Life is a movie, not a snapshot.

In her book, *Upheavals of Thought*, the philosopher Martha Nussbaum has argued the case for a cognitive view of emotions, as opposed to (William) Jamesian theories, which make cognition secondary to visceral response. She differs from certain other cognitivists in rejecting a synchronic explanation that would 'sever emotions from their past and depict them as fully and reliably determined by present input about one's current situation' (2001: 177).<sup>4</sup> But her

point is equally applicable to constructionist accounts that ignore or compress the temporal dimension, which Nussbaum – as I do – takes to be essential. ‘In a deep sense,’ she writes, ‘all human emotions are in part about the past, and bear traces of a history that is at once commonly human, socially constructed, and idiosyncratic’ (*ibid.*). Those three time-bound properties have been taken up in different kinds of inquiry: the commonly human in developmental psychology, the socially constructed in anthropology, and the idiosyncratic in fiction. In my view, all three belong in ethnography. Recall my deputy headman and his dynastic struggles. What history issued in that stifled speech of tribute and that puzzling rejuvenation? The *common human factors* are thwarted ambition, sibling (or, rather, cousin) rivalry, personal offence, loss, and survival; factors which no doubt echo deeper childhood experiences. These ingredients of emotion are what psychologist Richard Lazarus (1994) calls ‘core relational themes’: the abstract scenarios that frame appraisals of situations and motivate emotions. Each of them in itself is a capsule story, a story basic to the human condition.

The *socially constructed elements* would include the record of feasting and ceremonial exchange that organize status competition among big men; but also ongoing tensions in the lineage cycle, such that cousins farming different tracts of shared land begin to assert individual control at the expense of rivals: a ready motive for murderous conflict.

The *idiosyncratic history* would be the dark memories of raiding and abduction, the repressed past out of which the dynastic struggle is spun. This history casts the deputy as Edmund to the chief’s Edgar, the natural talent against the legitimate heir, the man of words against the man of authority.<sup>5</sup> As a

personal history, not a bare record of fact, it would include the hallmarks of character that shaped their rivalry for a generation: the chief's wooden correctness, his booming certitude and simple piety; the deputy's subtlety and resentment, his restless scepticism, and his capacity to surprise: the black hair and the white shorts.

Pan-human, culturally specific, idiosyncratic: I can tease apart the factors, but no account of the emotions at the deathbed scene could justly privilege one set over another. Take away one dimension and the whole thing collapses.

With this hefty preamble, let me now specify in theoretical form how emotions implicate narrative, and vice versa; how they are made for each other.<sup>6</sup>

In the cognitivist view emotions are 'intentional' (Solomon 1980). One is not just angry, but angry *at* someone or *about* some state of affairs. (Objectless affects are *moods*.) Dissolve the object, alter the cognition, and the emotion vanishes. As Roberts (1988: 208) puts it, emotions are 'concern-based construals of ourselves, others, and our situations'.<sup>7</sup>

A mere cognition does not necessarily imply much of a narrative. Simple emotions have simple objects. One is angry at having one's rattle removed. One fears the wolf. But most emotions – and especially those with moral content like pride and regret – have a more complex structure. Shweder (1994: 37) and Goldie (2000:92) call it a narrative structure; psychologists refer to appraisals and relational themes. The linguist Anna Wierzbicka (1999) presents scripts for emotion words, showing how near-synonyms like 'anger' and 'indignation' can be differentiated by their underlying scenarios. None of these authors (Goldie apart) allows much time-depth to the situational interpretation – of loss, danger,

or opportunity. The cognitive package is small. For my purposes, however, it is enough to recognize that in the cognition one grasps a meaningful temporal sequence; and that, in the interesting cases, the sequence links persons in moral frames and reverberates with prior encounters and stories; that the swift narrative of contextual interpretation draws from deeper currents, stories within stories.<sup>8</sup>

A second sense in which emotion implicates narrative is that people refer to shame, guilt, and hope to explain past and predict future behaviour. 'He hung his head in shame.' 'She felt gratitude for the gift.' 'Clear up the mess, your father will be angry!' An attributed emotion is like a chapter heading: we know, roughly what follows. This is not only because emotion words encode scripts but because, as Frijda (2004) has taught us, emotions comprise action tendencies.

A third connection points to the discursive role of emotion. Anthropologists have done most to show how emotions are manipulated in speech, performed for audiences, and used to persuade, evade, and dominate. Research in Pacific societies has shown how emotion talk provides an idiom for political activity, both as a tool of negotiation and as a reflection on political processes (Lutz and Abu-Lughod 1990, White and Kirkpatrick 1985). In looking at oratory in Nias, I found that heart idioms – hearts that were 'scorched', 'squeezed', or 'heavy' – function as tactical levers in debate, winning concessions and fending off demands. Cardiac idioms make up a rhetoric of moral suasion rather than a folk psychology or theory of the person (Beatty 2012). Whether that disqualifies them as emotion words is another question. They are certainly enacted with passion; they provoke an emotional response; and they imply action tendencies, which is why they have rhetorical force. All of these tactical **and performative**

uses of passion imply story-like structures and call, in turn, for narrative treatment.

A fourth connection derives from the patterning of social life. Michael Carrithers (1992: 159-170) has eloquently shown how our capacity to operate across cultural boundaries, or indeed, within them, depends on our skill at reading situations, grasping the plot, and recognizing – or constructing in turn – the narratives that give shape to events. Emotions would qualify as a special, highly developed, instance of the capacity to construe form, motive, backstory, personal relevance, and consequence: whether in the snap judgment of a jealous glance or the more deeply pondered apprehensions of hatred, love, and regret. Due to their constitutive particularity, however, emotions are especially liable to misconstruction by outsiders, and for this detailed narrative is the only remedy. For the same reasons, by filling the gaps that synchronic analysis leaves as mysteries, narrative supplies a defence against the more extravagant claims of cultural relativism - the outlandish emotions that could exist in some parallel universe but in practice don't.

Fifth, as thinkers going back to Aristotle have pointed out, narratives are mostly about emotion-eliciting situations, reversals of fortune (Bruner 1990).

Finally, and most importantly, emotions, I have argued, have a time-depth and a biographical resonance that elude synchronic analysis. A grasp of the narrative structure of emotion illuminates not only the tangle of pressures and constraints (those specific to individual characters, those that go with role) but also the possibilities inherent in the situation that the person feeling emotion registers and weighs. A narrative account allows for the subjective experience of

free will – however we want to qualify it - and the possibility of reflexive moral action.

Several arguments can be made against a narrative approach to emotion. I shall deal with them briefly. First, and most radical, is the claim that there is no valid cross-cultural category of emotion in the first place – therefore nothing to narrate (Beatty 2013, Shweder 1994, Wierzbicka 1999, Wilce 2009: 36-8).<sup>9</sup> There are feelings, thoughts, interpretations, and responses; but only in Western thought do they cohere as the package we call emotion. Most languages lack a superordinate emotion category. English words like ‘anger’ and ‘sadness’ find no exact matches. As Wierzbicka (1999:3) puts it, English doesn’t carve nature at its joints. Yet, as she shows, descriptive definition, if not word-for-word translation, is always possible. And this possibility depends on deeper affinities that undercut linguistic relativism: for the elements of appraisal, feeling, and response do, in practice, hang together, suggesting that emotions are fuzzy categories with real world correlates. The French concept of *sentiment* or the Javanese *rasa* – different in shape but overlapping in substance – could equally serve as starting points for cross-cultural comparison. We can come at the problem from different angles. Nature’s joints, as it turns out, are quite flexible.

But I would go further and assert that – whatever their ontological status as cultural inventions, biological states, or constructed social roles – emotions are unified *experiences*; and this subjective unity, which bears heavily on social processes, is due to their conceptual or narrative structure as construals of personal situations (Goldie 2012, Roberts 1988, Shweder 1994, Solomon 1993). We can leave the neuroscientists to quarrel over the milliseconds separating appraisal, visceral feedback and action-readiness, and the order in which they

occur, rather as we marvel at physicists arguing over the moments following the Big Bang. Our job is to get the experience right and to work out its significance in the stream of life - to recover the imponderabilia.

A second objection to a narrative approach might depend on a rejection of *narrative* rather than emotion. On this view, it would be ethnocentric to apply one to the other because some people – like the Yolmo of Nepal – favour imagistic accounts of experience; or because, like Mead’s Samoans, they avoid psychological explanations of behaviour; or, like certain other Pacific groups, affirm the ‘opacity of other minds’ (Desjarlais 1992, Hollan and Throop 2011, Mead 1972). This objection strictly applies to interpretive genres; it doesn’t alter the fact that people everywhere link characters and events in plots to comment, explain, predict, and blame. This is true whether cause and effect apply to *ego* and *id*, partible persons, the stars, humours, or vengeful gods. And it remains true, whether narrative looms large as epic, small as anecdote, or hides in accusations and excuses. For, as Bruner (1990) and Carrithers (1992) have shown, narrative is integral to sociality. So too, of course, is emotion; and so is each to the other, since anger, hope, and regret are forms of explaining, predicting, and judging. Whether we think in pictures or stories, resist or relish mind-reading, speak as *we* or *I*, love or loathe anecdotes, we are all narrators because we all have emotions; and emotions tell their own story. As ethnographers we should never forget the fact.

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<sup>1</sup> Emotion leaves few areas untouched: this essay is necessarily selective. Questions of epistemology, reflexivity, affect theory, human development, and political economy in emotion research are considered in Beatty 2005a, 2005b, 2010, 2012, 2013, forthcoming.

<sup>2</sup> Firth (1985: 35) identifies 'areas of similar basic experience of the external world' as a key to the intelligibility of his example. Carrithers (1992: 159-161) refers to our grasp of a 'universal pattern' in 'the basic idea' that Rangifuri was 'upset' and in 'distress' (166). I want to ask, what *kind* of distress? How was his

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acting *teke* ('angry', 'objecting') conceived, felt, shared, resisted, or ignored? Only a fuller narrative could tell us why or whether Rangifuri's father didn't share his grief; how, given the apparent depth of feeling, Rangifuri and the chief could be so swiftly reconciled; and what were the chief's own sentiments towards the dead youth, his ultimate heir. To these ethnographic questions basic patterns provide no answers. Firth's account is too laconic and schematic to dispel the mysteries or illuminate the nature of *teke*. While I follow Carrithers in endorsing narrative as an ethnographic tool, when it comes to emotion I place less trust in 'consensible patterns' or the common ground of experience (Beatty 2005a, 2010). My argument will be that such common denominators – by definition – give small insight into the specificity and diversity of emotion.

<sup>3</sup> Cohen (1994: 16) puts it well: 'My objection to the kind of generalization in which we indulged is that it has little or no authenticity in *our* own experience. Therefore I do not see how we can be content with it as an account of *other* people.' In similar vein, Abu-Lughod (1991: 157) advocates (and exemplifies) 'narrative ethnographies of the particular', which would reflect the fact that 'particulars, which are always present (as we know from our own personal experiences), are also always crucial to the constitution of experience'. For a recent discussion see Rapport 2010.

<sup>4</sup> Among her targets is Solomon, though his position *does* take past occurrences into account (and in a way I find congenial): 'Every emotion is a judgment that presupposes the entire body of previous emotional judgments to supply its context and its history as well as "paradigm cases" for it to consider if not follow' (Solomon 1993: 137).

<sup>5</sup> Idiosyncratic, but also culturally shaped and, in Carrithers' (1992) term, cross-culturally 'consensible'.

<sup>6</sup> It will be clear that I am not just talking about narrative as *text*, but the narrative structure of emotions as construals of events. This is not the place for a discussion of narratology. In Beatty 2010 I consider the historians' debates on narrative and cognition with reference to emotion.

<sup>7</sup> The insight goes back to Magda Arnold, fifty years ago, and ultimately to Aristotle. 'To arouse an emotion, the object must be appraised as affecting me in some way, affecting me personally as an individual with my particular experience and my particular aims' (Arnold, cited in Parkinson 1994: 6). It gained anthropological formulation in Rosaldo's (1984) conception of emotions as 'embodied thoughts', and ethnographic illustration in claims, for example, that Balinese and Ifaluk people make no distinction between feeling and thinking (Wikan 1990: 35-37; Lutz 1988: 92) – a translation confusion, according to Wierzbicka (1999: 278-9). In fact the notion that thought and feeling are indistinct in non-Western traditions is an exoticizing version of the view now widely held in philosophy and cognitive psychology that feeling and thinking are closely interwoven, for example, in moral reasoning and in the subjective experience of emotion (Barrett *et al.* 2007: 390).

<sup>8</sup> Time-depth varies between emotions (surprise, love) - and between theorists. For Ekman, emotions happen over seconds or minutes (1994:16). Goldie sees emotions not as events but processes that may unfold over years (conceptually distinct from briefer component *episodes*) (2000:12-14; 69; 2012: 61-4). I would

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prefer to distinguish between *dispositions* (e.g. to love someone) and *occurrent emotions* (to experience a surge of love) (Ben Ze'ev 2010: 55).

<sup>9</sup> The psychological and philosophical literature on this question is extensive. For overviews, see Russell 1991, Goldie 2010. For current debates, see the interdisciplinary journal *Emotion Review*.

Following the editor's emails of 17 and 18 December, I have made the additions advised, in sentences and footnotes at various places: pp. 9, 12, 20, 26, endnotes 1 & 6. I found I couldn't do all this in a single paragraph, so it made sense to allocate the points at relevant places. I hope this now supplies enough information "situating this argument in relation to your other published and forthcoming work on emotion". The additions also signal other people's work and topics not considered in the article but reviewed by me elsewhere. All additions are highlighted in yellow. I have made a few cosmetic cuts to allow space for these additions. The total word count, including Abstract, is 10,594: just under the 10,600 you kindly permitted me.