

Comparatismi 8 2023

ISSN 2531-7547

<http://dx.doi.org/10.14672/20232275>

Stimulation of Anger in the Narrative about Social Conflicts and Violence: The Case of *Gomorra*

Toni Marino

Abstract • Anger is the emotion that undermined the bipolar models of analysis (Carver, White, 1994), based on valence as a distinction for the differentiation between homogeneous groups of basic emotions, favoring models with discrete emotions or their fusion (Nabi, 1999; 2010. Dillard, Peck, 2001). Anger, despite being a negative emotion, which should therefore activate “the behavioral inhibition system” (BIS), instead generates an active reaction, that is, it stimulates the “behavioral approach system” (BAS). This already appeared clear in the pioneering study conducted by Greimas on anger (Greimas, [1983] 1987), placed within the work dedicated to the modalizations of the subject. From the modal point of view, in fact, anger can be defined as the coexistence of the modalization of wanting-to-do and not-being-able-to-do which generates a state of frustration, in turn followed by active behavior.

The process that provides for (i) realistic narration of social degradation, (ii) stimulation of the state of frustration in the reader, (iii) activation of behaviors and practices of social reaction to the state of degradation, therefore, is the basis of all those cultural policies which are based on the dissemination of social-themed narratives with the aim of raising public awareness. This narrative should favor, together with the process of empathic identification, the understanding of phenomena of social degradation, and the formulation of moral judgments in line with the perspective of an active reaction to such phenomena as a collective problem. This paper presents a case study conducted on Roberto Saviano’s book *Gomorra*, which inaugurated the narrative current of the “New Italian Realism” and which is historically connected to a tradition of realism that originated in the post-war period. Saviano’s nonfiction novel, which has favored a reaction to phenomena of social degradation connected to organized crime, is an interesting persuasive model for the study of narrative strategies that support the involvement of public opinion.

This paper also presents the results of an experimental study of an exploratory nature, aimed to research basic knowledge on narrative strategies for the stimulation of anger as a factor in raising awareness of public opinion. The experiment is conducted in within mode on a small group of university students, randomly selected based on their willingness to participate. The experimental setting is a biometrics laboratory made up of Tobii Spectrum 300 desk stations, where the subjects read in desk mode, using the Tobii Pro Lab software, the story from the book *Gomorra* called Hollywood, and watch the film version of the same story made by Matteo Garrone. During reading and video reading, eye tracking data is collected and facial reaction is processed with the Noldus Face Reader software. At the end of the reading, a Narrative Transportation Scale (Green, Brock, 2000; 2002) is administered which evaluates identification and emotional involvement of the reader, and a focus group is created on the

emotional reaction by analyzing the parameters (phenomenological, physiological, expressions, behaviors and emotional motivations) of Roseman's model (2001). The aim of the study is to identify which narrative and discursive structures are more closely connected to the activation of the emotional state of anger, and if there are substantial differences between the verbal and visual code in the activation of anger, starting from the same basic narrative structure and thematic content.

Keywords • Narrative Transportation; Anger; Emotions; Literature; Cinema.

Ledizioni 

Stimulation of Anger in the Narrative about Social Conflicts and Violence: The Case of *Gomorra*

Toni Marino

I. Emotions and narration: state of the art

I.1 Semiotics of passions

The semiotic approach to the study of passion, developed within the framework of A.J. Greimas' generative theory, evolved along two directions: the construction of a theoretical and analytical framework; its concrete application to texts, including analyses of literary and non-literary texts. This approach is based on the concept that passions are effects of meaning inscribed in language or more generally in the codes used to create textual content. In fact, the entire theoretical framework of Greimas has evolved as a coherent system based on simple foundational hypotheses in line with structuralist thought, while simultaneously being equipped with a set of synthetic analytical categories capable of generating insights from the analysis of various types of texts.

This flexibility of the model has led to the development of multiple semiotic analyses of textual reality, including narrative and specifically literary production. Greimas himself, for instance, used his own model to analyze Guy de Maupassant's short story *Deux Amis*. According to this approach, passion can be analyzed in texts at various levels. The first level is the one that inseparably links passion to action and relates the study of passions to the study of subject's modalization, connected to the basic action processes of "conjunction" and "disjunction" of a subject from an object of value. According to this model, a conjoint subject is one endowed with positive-valence passions, while a disjoint subject possesses negative-valence passions. Furthermore, the study of modes of conjunction and disjunction provides a more detailed understanding of the subject's emotional or passionate states. A subject who wants to obtain an object of value and can achieve it is happy; a subject who is forced to do something and does not want to do it is frustrated, and so on. Therefore, the modalization of the subjects inscribe them into a basic passionate system that is determined by either conjunction/disjunction with the object of desire.

The underlying assumption of this reasoning is the existence of a profound level that Greimas defines as "thymic level", which signifies the fundamental emotional predisposition of everyone. This predisposition is structured within the semiotic framework, generating four core categories: the euphoric connotation (experiencing positively-valenced passions), dysphoric connotation (experiencing negatively-valenced passions), euphoric + dysphoric connotation (experiencing both positive and negative passions), and neutral connotation or absence of emotions. The thymic level is the fundamental emotional predisposition of individuals, their sense of being and how they connect with their environment, and predispositions establishes the orientation as a prerequisite for the development of passions associated with actions. These passions are linked to the narrative agendas of individuals, characterized by their tension-filled nature and temporal duration. Furthermore, they can be characterized by the way they manifest, namely their aspectualization, actorialization and semantization in languages. All passions are analyzed based on the cultural context they are situated within, where connotative taxonomies exist that define the value

of a passion. Greimas refers to this final aspect of the analytical model as “moralization”, which entails an analysis of passions linked to collective judgment.

Building upon this theoretical framework, Greimas constructs the “canonical passion schema”, mirroring the phases of the “canonical narrative schema”. The schema encompasses an initial phase of “disposition” or predisposition to experience a particular passion, a secondary phase of “sensitization”, in which the subject engages in actions that support the development of a specific passion, the phase of “emotion”, during which the subject experiences and prolongs the passionate state,¹ and finally the moralization phase, which involves the moral judgment of a specific passion.

In its essential form, Greimas’ model provides a useful analytical tool for examining all forms of textual expression, particularly literary texts. In many cases, literary texts showcase the development or tension-filled progression of passionate states in characters (often portrayed as thematic roles defined by distinctive passionate states) and subject them to the moral judgment of the reader, often presupposing it.

1.2 The analysis of emotions in research on persuasion

The initial approaches to the study of emotions have led to what is called “bipolar or dual model”, which somewhat reflects the concept of “thymic level” proposed by Greimas and represents a more concise schematization of it. In dual models, emotions are categorized based on their positive or negative valence.

In these models, it is believed that positive and negative emotions are manifestations of two underlying physiological systems whose purpose is to guide behavior: the Behavioral Approach System (BAS) and the Behavioral Inhibition System (BIS). The BAS is sensitive to cues of reward, non-punishment, and escape from punishment. Its function is to initiate goal-directed behaviors. On the other hand, the BIS provides aversive motivations that inhibit all behaviors associated with punishment, absence of reward, and novelty. Its purpose is to inhibit actions that may lead to undesirable outcomes. These two systems are measured in various ways. Biometrics are commonly used today but there are also more traditional measurement scales, such as the one developed by Carver and White (1994), which have shown good reliability. One of the central premises of most dual theories of emotions is that affects have evolved to structure behavior. Therefore, each emotion is associated with an action tendency that aligns with the function of that emotion. However, in dual models, all action tendencies are categorized as forms of engagement and withdrawal, while different emotions exhibit specificities that cannot be captured through this taxonomy. Happiness and anger, for instance, promote very different types of engagement. Sadness and fear, even though they can both be considered withdrawal emotions, have significantly different behavioral manifestations: sadness is characterized by lethargy, while tension is typical of fear.

To overcome these limitations of dual models, scholars have proposed more specific models, such as the Valence plus Arousal models as Pleasure + Arousal model (PA). In this model, emotions are categorized based on their capacity to generate arousal. This model identifies emotions that can generate excitement and others that induce sluggishness or apathy.

Both types of models, dual and discrete emotions, have been used to analyze the effects of messages on the audience, both by assessing the persuasive effects of emotions represented in messages (measuring standard parameters of reading reactions such as attitude,

¹ In this phase, what Greimas terms “patemization”, the bodily manifestation of the passion emerges.

beliefs, transportation, identification, message evaluation and behavior), and by evaluating the emotions elicited from the consumption of messages. Clearly, discrete emotions models yield more precise and intricate results.

In studies of the first type, concerning the persuasion of emotional messages, it has been possible to observe message construction parameters. Parameters associated with content dimensions and parameters linked to expressive aspects and style have been observed. It is important to emphasize that persuasion is not solely driven by content, such as in research on scenarios of loss vs scenarios of victory. Elements like rhythm, editing, verbal style and others can also be associated with specific emotions and produce persuasive effects (see Zillman, 1999; 2006).

Finally, some scholars have investigated the effect that specific emotions of the audience can have on the cognitive and emotional interpretation of messages. This effect can involve both preexisting emotions of the audience and emotions elicited by the context in which the message is contained, or more generally, by the message context (see Chang, 2011).

1.3 Anger appeals as fear appeals?

One of the early studies on anger is that of Greimas, published in the work “Du sens II”, on subject modalizations. In this study, Greimas presents a semantic analysis conducted from a study of a semantic network, linking the concept of anger to various lemmas extracted from the French language dictionary. In this analysis at least three aspects are relevant, which will recur in experimental studies conducted in the field of social sciences and content analysis. The first aspect concerns the cultural context and the semantic presuppositions determinable from the observation of a state of anger in a subject. Greimas starts from the semantic sequence /frustration/ – /discontent/ – /aggressiveness/. Based on the definition of this sequence, Greimas deduces the existence of a semantic presupposition implicit in the state of frustration: the deprivation (or disjunction) of an object of value that was desired by the subject, possession of which the subject deems legitimate. The second aspect is the distinction between the subject of state and the subject of doing: for Greimas, frustration and then anger are a “state” of the subject determined by an action, that is, by the fact that the subject has been deprived of something. The third aspect, finally, is the connection between the state of aggressiveness or anger and the transformation of the subject from a subject of state to an agent (or subject of doing), that is, into a subject who acts to modify the state of anger. Greimas links anger with vengeance, which is an action determined by the state of anger. In conclusion, according to Greimas, anger is a state of waiting, determined by an action of deprivation, which in turn triggers an action of vengeance.

We find this same framework in the field of social sciences and persuasion studies. Within these studies, anger is categorized, along with happiness, as an emotion to approach, meaning it’s an emotional state that not only motivates persons to change their attitudes and beliefs but also to act. It activates the behavioral approach system, unlike emotions like fear, for example, which activate the avoidance system. Anger can be classified as a kind of action-oriented passion, producing reactions that aim to resolve what Greimas calls a “state of frustration”, which is essentially deprivation of something. For instance, Iyer, Schmader, and Lickel (2007) examined the associations of anger, guilt, and shame with intentions to engage in political actions in the USA. They discovered that both anger and shame predicted intentions to support the withdrawal from Iraq, while the association with

guilt was not significant. These results are instructive because they illustrate how two negative emotions can independently influence the same intention.

The fact that certain emotions can predict specific beliefs or behaviors depends on the alignment between emotions and coherent beliefs. For this reason, particular beliefs can be elicited in the audience and even amplified by evoking the associated emotions. An example is the so-called “hate campaign” that aims to strengthen the connection between certain beliefs and an emotion (the belief that “immigration is a risk” is often associated with “anger against immigrants”). For instance, Turner (2007) reports the results of an experiment demonstrating the correspondence between provoking anger in the audience and specific political actions such as signing a petition or expressing their opinion in public. On the other hand, Nan (2009) presents results that show how anger towards public service announcements (PSAs) is counter-persuasive, while guilt appears to generate agreement with the message.

Anger is also associated with Nabi’s (1999) Functional Approach to Media Attitude Change (CFM). Despite being classifiable as an emotional state, anger maintains very close connections with action and thus with the preceding cognitive evaluation. The CFM predicts that anger triggers greater attention to the content of messages in the audience, indicating an approach that involves the central, or rational, route, following the well-known model by Petty & Cacioppo (1986), while stylistic aspects would only be relevant for the peripheral route.

In general, a large portion of these studies tends to establish a strong association between anger and psychological reactance (Dillard, Shen, 2005; Dillard, Meijnders, 2002; Nabi, 2002;). Psychological reactance is defined as a state of frustration elicited by the limitation of one’s freedom or the perception of a risk of restriction. This state induces a reaction towards messages that appear constraining, like the reaction induced by anger. In more detail, Quick (2007) demonstrated that anger is an emotional variable associated with negative cognition in message evaluation, and together with the latter, it can intensify the emergence of psychological reactance. This knowledge can be utilized directly to avoid creating messages that elicit anger in the audience and indirectly by leveraging the audience’s anger and reactance to induce specific attitudes and beliefs. Indeed, Quick, Quinlan, and Bates (2009) demonstrated that eliciting anger against cigarette smoking can be useful in spreading and bolstering support for environmental policies regarding clean indoor air in enclosed spaces or laws related to smoking restrictions.

At this point, an association is justified that draws inspiration from social communication, particularly from Public Social Announcements (PSAs). Just as fear represents an emotional lever used in social design processes and individual education to promote the dissemination of best practices, anger can also serve as an emotional lever in communication processes with the same goals. However, unlike fear, anger appears to be a more challenging emotional lever to manage. While frightened publics may not raise concerns, the idea of social groups incited towards a state of anger seems more dangerous due to its direct connection with action. This becomes especially evident in political discourse, where anger is fueled by political minorities often oriented towards protest rather than governance.

Nonetheless, as numerous studies have demonstrated, anger proves highly valuable in defining, discussing, and evaluating social values, as well as in transforming them into concrete actions and political choices. It is legitimate to wonder: is it possible to identify specific communication processes capable of harnessing the stimulation of anger without the risk of triggering subversive and dangerous actions?

1.4 Anger, literature and narrative persuasion

One of the primary functions of literature is its pedagogical capacity, its utility in processes of education and the construction of individual and collective identity, fostering engagement with cultural communities, creating social cohesion, and facilitating intercultural dialogue. This persuasive function, as well-known, depends not only on content but also on style and strategic communication choices, both work itself (and its authors) and the larger literary system.

Today, with greater precision, we understand that a significant portion of its persuasive potential is linked to narrative production and the narrative configuration of its works. This awareness, as is well-known, has given rise to numerous studies aimed at defining the basic characteristics of a narrative text, each of which has resulted in various models, some more like each other and others less so. In summary, we can consider the narrative text as a symbolic representation of events characterized by: events distributed along a chronological axis, emotional involvement, and the emotional impact of events on characters. The narrative text is a textual object realized through the cognitive and emotional activity of the reader. It is the reader who, literally, transforming the plot into a coherent narrative. This process, as mentioned, is not neutral but involves a certain transformation of the reader, her/his belief system, attitudes, and behaviors. Such transformation can be intentionally induced. When intentionally induced, that is, through conscious action, we can speak of narrative persuasion, which refers to the use of narrative form for the purpose of manipulating readers. This is possible because structuring information narratively offers persuasive advantages. The first of these advantages is the reduction of information surveillance, a phenomenon also known as suspension of disbelief. Specifically, narration inhibits both superficial levels of scrutiny, such as heightened control or distrust of messages perceived as persuasive, and psychological reactance. This occurs because the narrative text, culturally, is perceived as having low persuasive intent.² Furthermore, the narrative text involves parasocial interaction with empathetic characters that make the persuasive message seem less authoritative, less controlling, and more acceptable. This is facilitated by the reader's identification with a character in the story. This identification leads the reader to experience vicarious learning, consuming the narrative information from the character's perspective rather than their own. The empathetic function of the character plays a crucial role in narrative transportation and the cognitive advantage that the reader attributes to participating in decoding the plot. Consciously, the reader acquires new information about viewpoints like or different from their own and benefits from it.

During the reading of a story, the dominant process for the reader is narrative transportation, which involves placing one's own existence within the fictional world of the story. Transportation enables identification with characters and emotional engagement, leading to the activation of the plot-unveiling game, consisting of decoding, mnemonic retrieval, causal associations, inferential hypotheses, and much more. This "game" consumes a significant amount of cognitive energy that is diverted from the evaluative activity of the persuasive message.

In her Transportation-Imagery Model, Melany Green has demonstrated that narrative transportation alters readers' belief states and behavior. Furthermore, her research has

² Contradicting this stance, Moyer-Gusé and Nabi (2010) discovered that the perception of persuasive intent was linked positively to reactance among individuals exposed to a dramatic narrative. Thus, distinct variations in perceived persuasive intent emerged, despite the presentation of a singular narrative message. These discrepancies aligned directly with reactance.

definitively shown that the propensity for transportation is a characteristic of the reader but is also influenced by the narrative structure of the text. Various plot construction strategies promote transportation and identification, reducing the threshold for attention and rational evaluation of content. Among these, the most well-known include stimulating the reader's personal memories, perceived realism of events, and emotional shifts of characters.

Moreover, it's important to emphasize that the reader's narrative processing activity, i.e., decoding, even when attentive to the persuasive logic of the messages, is contextualized within the narrative world of the story itself and focused on the characters' fate. This broader and more general processing makes it less focused on the arguments of the persuasive message.

The outlined framework helps delineate certain characteristics that make the use of literary texts advantageous for stimulating anger in readers. The most important of these characteristics is the reader's control capacity. When reading, the reader is mentally transported into a narrative world where they simulate a new existence by engaging in the simulation game. However, the reading experience has an entry point and an exit from the fictional world, making the emotional stimulation of anger more controllable. Anger is thus experienced by the reader through vicarious learning, meaning it's an emotional experience shared with a character solely during the reading time. At the end of the reading, it can leave a trace in terms of changing belief states and behavior related to a topic but not in terms of actual alteration of the subject's emotional state.

Another control mechanism is provided by the narrative and semantic richness of literary stories, which structurally translates into a wealth of viewpoints. This presence of multiple perspectives acts as an internal barrier to the dominance of one over the others and becomes a control tool even for the perspective that generates anger, favoring open discussion on a topic rather than rigidly assuming a position. Lastly, literature offers a mediational advantage tied to the code of writing. Unlike visual narratives, writing makes the process of narrative transportation and identification gradual and less jarring, as well as making the realism of events less traumatic. To put it in McLuhan's terms, literature uses a cool medium – the book – which explicitly relies on the reader's participation.

2. The anger strategy in Hollywood (*Gomorra*): a comparative narratological analysis of the nonfiction novel and the film

2.1 Aims of analysis

This study aims to examine the utilization of the anger strategy in both literary and cinematic mediums, specifically focusing on the nonfiction novel *Gomorra* and its film adaptation. By conducting a comparative analysis, the study seeks to uncover how the emotion of anger is strategically employed to convey themes, engage audiences, and evoke specific responses.

The nonfiction³ novel *Gomorra* written by Roberto Saviano, and its film adaptation directed by Matteo Garrone, both explore themes related to crime, corruption, and the gritty realities of organized crime in Italy. In this analysis, we delve into how the anger strategy is employed in both the written narrative and its visual counterpart to achieve similar or differing effects on the audience. The anger strategy involves deliberately provoking anger in the audience to elicit emotional engagement and, potentially, action. In the context of

³ Saviano's *Gomorra* inaugurated a new phase of literary narrative realism in Italy called "new Italian realism" by Vittorio Spinazzola (2010).

Gomorra this strategy could be employed to highlight the injustice, brutality, and societal issues depicted in the narrative. Through an in-depth examination of specific scenes, characters, and narrative choices, we aim to shed light on how anger is harnessed to intensify the impact of the story.

Additionally, we will explore how the anger strategy is adapted between the two mediums. Does the nonfiction novel rely on detailed descriptions and internal monologues to evoke anger, while the film utilizes visual and auditory cues to achieve the same effect? How do the pacing, editing, and cinematography in the film influence the audience's emotional response compared to the reader's engagement with the nonfiction novel?

Furthermore, we will analyze the implications of the anger strategy on audience interpretation and reception. Does the strategic use of anger foster a deeper connection with the characters and their struggles? Does it encourage the audience to reflect on societal issues or even contemplate potential actions? By comparing the ways in which the anger strategy is executed in both the book and the film, we aim to uncover the strengths and limitations of each medium in effectively conveying the emotional and thematic nuances.

Ultimately, this comparative analysis seeks to contribute to our understanding of how the anger strategy operates in narrative storytelling across different mediums and how its execution impacts audience engagement, interpretation, and potential for social influence. Through this examination, we hope to shed light on the intricate relationship between emotions, storytelling techniques, and the communication of societal themes.

2.2 Narratological analysis

There are underlying assumptions when approaching the nonfiction novel *Gomorra* mostly tied to its genre and the many statements made by the author during the years of its highest dissemination. A first assumption is that what is reported in the plot is true. Over the years, there have been refutations and judicial truths that have contradicted some of the information, but the assumption remains. A second assumption is that truth is narrated, meaning it is conveyed using narrative tools, effectively transforming the novel into what Saviano himself has termed a "narrative investigation", aligning with the genre of the nonfiction novel. This presupposition allows for deviations from strict realism, not so much in terms of information but particularly in terms of emotional realism or, in line with Ricciardi analysis (2011) and Haaland (2016), in terms of a documentary aesthetics or a literature with a strong ethical value (on this topic see Poggi 2011: 227-232 and Benedetti, Petroni, Policastro, Tricomi, 2008). A third assumption is that what is reported is not widely known, and the nonfiction novel serves as a source of discovery. Lastly, perhaps the most significant assumption is that the knowledge and dissemination of the news reported in the book have an impact on reality and bring about change. This is why those who disseminate such news, including its author, are in danger and risk their lives. These same assumptions apply to the viewing of the film, which was made about two years after the book's initial release, directed by Matteo Garrone, a director inclined towards a realistic style that suited the nonfiction genre proposed by Saviano.

The listed assumptions are an integral part of the narrative pact between author and reader, effectively constituting a conditioning for the act of reading. They function as motivational triggers that accelerate the process of narrative transportation and bind the process of identification, often compelling the reader to adopt the perspective of the nonfiction novel's narrator. In the case of the film, these assumptions are also present, but they are not associated with a subjectivizing narrative; instead, they maintain a strictly objective style,

thus exerting less influence on the reader's identification with a particular point of view through which to interpret and morally evaluate the story.

The nonfiction novel is structured as a subjectivizing narrative led by a recognizable character narrator, both formally and through the cognitive and emotional characterization it assumes. From a cognitive standpoint, it is identifiable as an extradiegetic and heterodiegetic narrator, possessing a level of knowledge or awareness surpassing that of the various characters. This is evident not only through the omniscient control of the plot but also through the language employed, which is simple and concise yet rich in cultured references. Emotionally, on the other hand, the narrator is involved, making him intradiegetic and homodiegetic, and his degree of emotional involvement ranges between the poles of anger and compassion (on this topic see Segnini, 2021: 30-32).

Unlike the nonfiction novel, the film doesn't translate the narrative architecture into images but instead limits itself to an objectifying narrative. Both direction and editing, both narrative elements, although evident, are aimed at familiarizing the viewer with the proposed semi-symbolic code. Two types of shots respectively prompt the viewer to observe the events and formulate a moral judgment on them. The close-up shot makes the viewer a direct witness to the events. The camera is positioned to turn the viewer into an invisible character who can observe the scene. It's not a subjective shot but an internal focalization achieved by an unusual proximity of the camera to the characters. This shooting technique transforms the viewer into a witness, placing them within the scene but without any narrative involvement. The viewer is in the scene but maintains an external cognitive perspective on the events. This technique is very similar to that used in mysteries. This shooting technique restricts and safeguards the viewer from any emotional involvement. It creates a space of observation and evaluative space within the scene, protected by a sort of invisibility.

The other type of shot, alternating with the one just described, is the overhead shot or, more generally, the camera's withdrawal. It usually coincides with narrative epilogues and involves a crane movement with an upward withdrawal. This type of shot suggests to the viewer the activation of an evaluative phase and the possibility of expressing a moral judgment, without, however, being constrained by a specific ethical perspective.

Within this framework, we find the episode titled *Hollywood* in the nonfiction novel, which will be the storyline of Marco and Ciro in the film. This episode is particularly interesting in a study of narration as a device for triggering and managing anger. It is structured, at least in the nonfiction novel, according to a model of embedded narrative that highlights the dialogue between the author and the reader, and the use of anger as a stimulator of engagement and moral judgments, observed both from within the narrated fictional world and from the outside.

In the nonfiction novel, the episode opens and closes with a series of stories about the connections between criminals and Hollywood cinema. These connections involve criminals adopting poses and extravagant behaviors inspired by characters from mafia or camorra films. Within these narratives, the story of Giuseppe and Romeo is inserted as a story within a story. These are two very young delinquents who are not part of the organized crime and, due to their exuberance, will be executed by the criminal organization.

In the episode, there can be distinguished a narrative of events and an observational framework of the same represented by the narrator. The narrator, as mentioned, is cognitively external (stating to have learned the story from a journalistic source) but emotionally involved. The character-narrator, who coincides with the writer Saviano, is structured ambiguously. His cognitive detachment from the events is not total because he presents

himself as an informed character due to his knowledge of the territory he narrates. In any case, his proximity to the events, when declared, seems more often emotional.

In the narrative of events, a story of anger is presented. The two protagonists are frustrated characters, in a sense victims of material deprivation carried out by organized crime, which generates anger in them, leading to criminal actions. While recounting the few events, Saviano emphasizes the anger with which the two characters act. After concluding the narrative of events, with the characters' killings, Saviano comments on the scene, also dwelling on some raw and gruesome details related to the murder. He reinterprets the entire narration as a story of anger, in which frustration is presented as the result of a social deprivation—specifically, the withdrawal of innocence by the entire society. In this way, Saviano engages in a dialogue with the reader, presenting the just-told events as a story of social malaise, a story of anger for which also the reader takes some responsibility. The objective of the commentary is to create a distinction between the criminal actions of the two boys and their murder by actual criminals. Starting from this distinction, Saviano aims to generate anger in the reader towards the murder and the causes that make it possible: social degradation, indifference, socioeconomic and cultural inequalities. This anger, in line with the pedagogical and persuasive objective of the narrative, should lead to a change in social beliefs and behaviors in the readers, starting with the formulation of moral judgments that condemn organized crime and pardon juvenile delinquency through the rehabilitation of social groups most exposed to the consequences of crime.

In the film, following the semi-symbolism described above, the viewer is invited to assess what is observed without constraints and to express a moral judgment. The scene that concludes the narrative of the two characters, after their brutal murder, and symbolically concludes the film as well, with a simple rotation of a few degrees, simulating an effect of distancing, frames the vast landscape of sand and sea, against which the crane that collected the bodies of the two boys is silhouetted, moving away in a bleak and mundane tableau. However, in the scenes depicting the events, the director presents a rather explicit narrative where anger, as in the nonfiction novel, is a consequence of frustration and replaces a lack, a subtraction, which is cultural, social, and economic.

In both narratives, the authors pay special attention to anger management strategies, and in both cases, the adopted solution involves the deliberate absence of empathy between the characters of the story and the reader/viewer. This is certainly a consequence of one of the narrative assumptions listed above, namely the substantial social and cultural difference between the target audience of the narratives and their protagonists. As mentioned, the nonfiction novel and the film tell unknown stories and address an audience unfamiliar with them. At the same time, however, reducing empathy is a strategic choice that serves a dual purpose (see Shen, 2010). The first goal is to prevent the reader/viewer from adopting the angry perspective of the character because it is an emotionally uncontrollable and socially unacceptable state. The characters' anger is a kind of understandable yet unjustified anger from which the reader/viewer is diverted. The second goal is to reinforce anger as psychological reactance or counterargument, which should oppose the outcome of the events. The induced anger in the reader/viewer is a just anger that is invoked to promote actions of social justice. This strategy proves particularly effective in a case like this, where the anger stimulated in the reader/viewer should not be directed towards a third party (the criminals responsible for the murder) but should be directed towards the same social group to which the reader/viewer belongs (ingroup directed). What Saviano and Garrone aim to achieve with the narrative of this episode, and more broadly with the nonfiction novel/film, is to instill in the reader/viewer a constructive anger directed towards themselves and their own social group. This anger should prompt a process of assuming responsibility and revising

one's belief system, including moral judgments about criminality, measures taken to combat it, and measures for bridging social, economic, and cultural differences (see Iyer, Lickel, Schmader, 2007).

3. The anger strategy in Hollywood (*Gomorra*): experimental comparative study on reading and watching in media laboratory

3.1 Aims and research questions

The conducted experiment had an exploratory nature, which is why no hypotheses were formulated for testing. Instead, only research questions were posed, in line with the fundamental objectives that we list here: (i) examine the utilization of the anger strategy: the primary goal is to analyze how the anger strategy is employed in both the nonfiction novel *Gomorra* and its film adaptation. This involves identifying specific scenes, characters, and narrative elements that evoke anger in the audience and exploring their intended effects; (ii) compare literary and cinematic anger strategy: the study aims to compare how the anger strategy is executed in the written narrative and the film adaptation. By examining the differences and similarities in techniques, descriptions, visual cues, and auditory elements, the research seeks to determine how each medium leverages anger to engage the audience; (iii) understand emotional engagement: investigate how the anger strategy enhances emotional engagement with the story, characters, and themes. Explore whether the use of anger deepens the audience's connection with the narrative, leading to a stronger sense of empathy and immersion; (iv) assess medium-specific effects: examine how the differences in narrative techniques and mediums affect the impact of the anger strategy. Evaluate whether visual and auditory elements in the film enhance or alter the emotional experience compared to the nonfiction novel's reliance on detailed descriptions and internal monologues; (v) identify strengths and limitations: Investigate the strengths and limitations of using the anger strategy in both literary and cinematic storytelling. Analyze how the effectiveness of evoking anger varies between the two mediums and the implications for conveying themes and eliciting emotional responses; (vi) contribute to narrative studies: contribute to the broader field of narrative studies by examining how emotions like anger can be strategically employed across different mediums to enhance storytelling and audience engagement. Explore how the anger strategy aligns with existing theories of narrative impact and emotional resonance.

3.2 Setting

The experiment did not aim to obtain statistically validated results, so the setup was structured in a way to generate a greater amount of qualitative information, without adhering to a very rigid protocol of actions as a reference. This approach involved continuous interaction with the participants, including information exchange during the data collection process. Although the basic structure of the experiment employed a within-subject design with two independent variables, it was organized to avoid selective data collection. Measures to control for statistical validity were omitted, and the emphasis was on generating a high level of qualitative depth at each step, primarily by engaging participants through questioning and constant dialogue. Nevertheless, the tools used (software and measurement scales) exhibit high face validity in the study of emotions.

For the implementation, university students willing to dedicate enough time to the experiment (approximately 2 hours) were randomly selected. The group consisted of 13 Italian students (8 females and 5 males), aged between 21 and 23, studying communication and marketing. These students were provided with general information about the research objectives of the experiment. They were then randomly divided into pairs, each of which participated on different days during the experiment. The protocol further entailed the communication of specific information to each student pair, primarily aimed at facilitating the execution of the experiment, which involved the use of tools for biometric analysis. In some cases, this information was also utilized to manipulate their involvement in the experiment and enhance the data collection process.

The protocol included, for each pair of students, a desk reading session of the story *Hollywood* using the Tobii Pro Lab software. Prior to the reading, the students were manipulated by informing them that they would later be questioned about the themes and characters covered in the passage. Since it was a textual stimulus, the software had quantitative limitations concerning the portions of text that could be processed in each viewing. As a result, the *Hollywood* story was divided into narratively autonomous text units, loaded as writing stimuli in the designated section. For each text portion, reading times were set, alternating between a timing of 180 seconds associated with longer and more complex parts of the story and a timing of 120 seconds associated with shorter parts. During the desk reading, using the Tobii Pro Lab software, eye movement data was collected to ascertain the text portions that received greater attention during reading. Subsequently, metrics related to areas of interest, corresponding to text portions that recorded a higher fixation count, were observed. Furthermore, with the aid of the Noldus Face Reader software, data regarding participants' facial expressions were collected, automatically linked by the software to their emotional state during reading. Before using the specified software tools, participants were provided with basic information about their functioning, while care was taken not to influence their reading experience. In the case of Tobii Pro Lab, a calibration of the infrared camera was performed for each reading session and participant, corresponding to the recording of the subject's eye movements. For the Noldus Face Reader, the software was never turned off, even during the necessary breaks to prepare for the reading of a new text unit. At the end of the reading session, a Transportation Scale was administered. This administration was carried out through direct questioning and researcher-guided completion. Following that, emotion-related questions were administered, structured according to the Roseman model (2001).

After the sessions related to reading the nonfiction novel, which represented the first independent variable, a brief break was taken, and the sessions related to watching the movie, representing the second independent variable, were initiated. Before the viewing, students were informed about the language spoken by the characters. As these students were unfamiliar with the Neapolitan dialect, basic information about the episode, its relation to the nonfiction novel, and the basic plot were provided to them prior to the viewing. During the movie viewing, only the Noldus Face Reader software was used, as collecting eye fixation data related to images was deemed irrelevant. Following the viewing, using the same methods as after the nonfiction novel reading, a scale for measuring narrative transportation and questions about the emotions experienced during the viewing were administered, like those in the previous session. No considerations were taken regarding the students' literacy about the experiment's aims, nor were exclusion criteria for responses employed.

3.3 Media Lab, stimulus materials and measures

For the execution of the experiment, a Media Lab consisting of two desk stations was utilized. Each station consisted of a Tobii Spectrum 300, equipped with Tobii Pro Lab, a software capable of analyzing eye movements during reading of written texts and/or content viewing, and Noldus Face Reader, a software capable of analyzing facial expressions during reading or viewing, and associating them with six specific emotional states (happy, sad, angry, surprised, scared, disgusted), as well as a neutral emotional condition.

The stimulus materials consisted of the story *Hollywood* extracted from the nonfiction novel *Gomorra* by Roberto Saviano, and the episode featuring the characters *Ciro* and *Marco* extracted from the movie *Gomorra* directed by Matteo Garrone. The narrative from the nonfiction novel was not manipulated. On the other hand, the film episode, which spans approximately 28 minutes and is presented in fragments within the film, underwent a cold manipulation involving cutting and editing, resulting in a runtime of under 20 minutes. The official version of the nonfiction novel was used for the written story, while a revised version available on the Netflix platform was used for the film. This Netflix version lacks subtitles and includes introductory explanatory information overlaying the initial images at the start of each episode.

As measurement tools, in addition to the software, an adapted version of the narrative transportation scale proposed by Green and Brock (2000; 2002) was used. This adaptation contained items for transportation (e.g., While I was reading the narrative, I could easily picture the events in it taking place; While I was reading the narrative, activity going on in the room around me was on my mind (R); I could picture myself in the scene of the events described in the narrative) and items for identification (e.g., While reading the narrative I had a vivid image of Romeo; While reading the narrative I had a vivid image of the killer; While I was watching the movie, I realized that I was thinking like Giuseppe.), followed by a 5-point Likert scale. Additionally, an open-ended question guide was used for a focus group on emotional reactions during reading and viewing. This guide was designed following the settings by Roseman (2001) and contained items like (During the reading, did you feel more anger or sadness? How do you distinguish between anger and sadness? Did you experience any bodily sensations like disgust or a faster heartbeat? After reading story/watching the film, do you still hold the same view about criminality? Do you think it's right to do something to help some of the people involved in this story?). Responses were listened to without being recorded, and relevant points were notated.

3.4 Results, discussion and limitations

During the experimental session on the nonfiction novel, the collected data indicates a strong reader focus on text segments describing violent episodes and evoking gruesome imagery. This finding was easily observable both through the heat maps corresponding to the textual units and through the reconstruction of the gaze plots on each textual unit (see Figures 1 and 2). By designating those same text portions as Areas of Interest (AOI), the metrics confirmed that the number of fixations received by sentences depicting more gruesome scenes exceeded the average fixations on other sentences. However, no specific scientific evidence was gathered using the Noldus Face Reader software regarding emotional states during reading. The result of the analysis, as hypothesized, consistently revealed the presence of emotional neutrality among the participants.

Even from the analysis of the narrative transportation scale results, it is evident that participants experienced a moderate level of narrative transportation, while the

identification process did not yield positive data. Interestingly, during the discussion held in the focus group, a higher level of engagement emerged compared to the collected biometric data and the narrative transportation scale results. Participants even expressed a strong alignment with the author's reading perspective, displaying a clear awareness of the need to address social design factors to alleviate social distress and reduce criminality. However, this participant attitude appears to stem more from personal awareness and logical reasoning rather than emotional involvement.

The results of the first part of the experiment can be discussed by identifying various factors that could have influenced participants' engagement during reading. The first factor pertains to setup difficulties. The segmentation of the story into textual units introduced reading pauses that undoubtedly affected emotional transportation and engagement levels. In this context, the Tobii Spectrum 300, as a desk device, poses a series of limitations all tied to its inability to replicate a normal reading situation. This situation could be better simulated using portable eye trackers, potentially applicable to ebook reading devices.

The second factor relates to the visual potential of Saviano's writing. As emphasized by Green and Brock (2002), narrative writing portions capable of evoking mental imagery increase reader transportation levels. In the case of the *Hollywood* excerpt, Saviano's strategy for evoking imagery in the reader is not primarily lexical or syntactic but is almost exclusively rooted in triggering the reader's cinematic imagination. But what kind of reader? The book was published in 2006, and Saviano's ideal reader possesses a wealth of reading experiences that includes knowledge of mafia and Camorra-related films released in theaters and later on home video in the 1990s. The movie *Il Camorrista*, quoted to introduce the episode of the two young criminals, was released in 1986. The status of a cult movie that these films undoubtedly hold probably belongs to a target group of readers who are older than the age of the students who participated in the experiment.

Examining the results of the second part of the experiment, which focused on Garrone's film, the data collected using the Face Reader is truly remarkable. The software identifies a significant anger arousal rate for each participant, often associated with sadness and rarely with disgust (see Figure 3). Responses to the narrative transportation scale also indicate a higher level of engagement, though it never extends to full identification with the characters. Responses noted in the focus group reveal a general willingness to delve into the topics, offering longer and more detailed answers. These results, while on one hand confirm the visual code's ability to more effectively and immediately impact emotional engagement of spectators, on the other hand prompt us to reflect on the different ways of stimulating anger and managing its evocation in the audience during narrative structure setup.

Garrone's realism is objectifying, devoid of emotional filters or interpretive constraints, thus avoiding the development of psychological reactance in the viewer. Saviano's realism, however, incorporates the emotional and evaluative filter of the narrator. Twice, at the beginning and end of the episode featuring the two protagonists, Saviano underscores their very young age, providing readers with an interpretative key that leads towards viewing the two characters as victims of both criminality and society. There's also a comparison made between the two young criminals, influenced by mafia films, and young Spartan warriors, motivated by Homer's poems, to highlight character unawareness. Moreover, the two characters are only vaguely outlined, and everything known about them is attributed by the narrator. This implies that the psychological trait of unawareness, more than emerging from an objective account of their actions or accessing to the character's thoughts, is communicated by the narrator and because of this, it becomes less credible (see Raap, Gerrig, Prentice, 2001; Gerrig, Allbritton, 1990).

This strategy makes the reader's alignment with Saviano's version less immediate. Evidently, rather than immersing themselves in the narrative universe of the story, readers rationally evaluate Saviano's argument as if it were designed for manipulation and persuasion. It's interesting to note that Saviano's perspective in the nonfiction novel, i.e., the moral absolution of the very young protagonists, contradicts the sentences that participants gave greater visual attention to according to the eye tracker—namely, those related to the beatings, even towards women, in which the two characters become involved.

What's mentioned also prompts a broader reflection on the limitations inherent in strategies that appeal to anger. To evoke anger in the reader/viewer, one must attempt to manipulate their opinions. However, when this manipulation becomes noticeable, it triggers psychological reactance. This applies to both the verbal code in nonfiction novels and the visual code in films. The only viable alternative, which is effectively employed in the publishing and film industry, involves segmenting the audience and sharing pre-established beliefs associated with emotions. Given the shared viewpoints between the narrative and the audience, content producers can leverage specific beliefs to either amplify the feeling of anger or vice versa, without the risk of triggering reactance.

Finally, it's important to highlight an aspect regarding the results obtained through the Face Reader. As mentioned, these results show a percentage of anger in participants during the film viewing, approximately 10%. It's worth noting that the identification of the specific emotional state of anger mostly occurred, among other things, through the observation of brow lowering in the central area between the two eyes (see Figure 4). This facial parameter, however, can also be associated with concentration. Brow lowering is also characteristic of facial expressions exhibited when one is concentrating to better observe or understand a sound, sentence, or scene. In the case of watching the film, the presence of unfamiliar dialects could have slightly distorted the observed percentage of anger. Unfortunately, the unavailability of the Noldus Stimulus Presentation Tool, which would have allowed us to investigate facial expressions associated with specific film scenes, prevented us from confirming this.

In any case, the experiment's results demonstrate a clear distinction between reading and viewing: anger was stimulated during viewing, while it wasn't during reading. Furthermore, the coexistence of anger and sadness during film viewing is noteworthy. As known, these are opposing emotional states: anger being an approach emotion and sadness being an avoidance emotion. Observing the temporal progression of emotions during viewing (see Figure 5), it's evident that anger peaks after a strong stimulation of sadness. In other words, anger arises because of an emotional stress state in the subject characterized by the arousal of sadness.

In Garrone's film, the editing of visuals and sound supports the stimulation of anger because of sadness. Scenes of degradation, depicted with cold colors and absence of sound, are succeeded by action-packed scenes portraying acts of violence. In these scenes, warmer and more intense colors are employed, along with heightened sound levels. In this manner, almost subliminally, the rhythm acts as a sensory stimulator, with the calm alternating with action within the scenes, much like sadness alternates with anger in the viewer. Ultimately, sadness emerges as a precursor to anger.

In contrast, Saviano's nonfiction novel doesn't employ such editing techniques, and instead maintains a relatively uniform narrative rhythm, relying solely on words that trigger imagery through intertextual cultural mediation.

- Chang C. (2011), *The influence of editorial liking and editorial-induced affect on evaluations of subsequent ads*, "Journal of Advertising", 40, pp 45-58.
- Dillard J. P., Meijnders A. (2002), *Persuasion and the structure of affect*, in Dillard J. P., Pfau M. W. (eds.), *The persuasion handbook: Developments in theory and practice*, Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage, pp. 309-328.
- Dillard J. P., Peck E. (2001), *Persuasion and the structure of affect: Dual systems and discrete emotions as complementary models*, "Human Communication Research", 27, pp. 38-68.
- Dillard J. P., Shen L. (2005), *On the nature of reactance and its role in persuasive health communication*, "Communication Monographs", 72, pp. 144-168.
- Gerrig R. J., Allbritton D. W. (1990), *The construction of literary character. A view from cognitive psychology*, "Style", 24, pp. 380-391.
- Green M. C., Brock T. C. (2002), *In the mind's eye: Transportation- imagery model of narrative persuasion*, in Green M. C., Strange J. J., Brock T. C. (eds.), *Narrative impact: Social and cognitive foundations*, Mahwah, Erlbaum, pp. 315-341
- Green M. C., Brock T. C. (2000), *The role of transportation in persuasiveness of public narratives*, "Journal of personality and social psychology", 79, 5, pp. 701-721.
- Greimas A. J. (1987), *On Anger: A Lexical Semantic Study*, in Id., *On meaning selected writings in semiotic theory*, University of Minnesota Press, pp. 148-164.
- Haaland T. (2016), *Le vie verso la ragione. I segni del nuovo realismo in Gomorra*, "Quaderni d'italianistica", 37, 2, pp. 191-209.
- Iyer A., Schmader T., Lickel B. (2007), *Why individuals protest the perceived transgressions of their country: The role of anger, shame, and guilt*, "Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin", 33, pp. 572-587.
- Moyer-Gusé E., Nabi R. L. (2010), *Explaining the effects of narrative in an entertainment television program: Overcoming resistance to persuasion*, "Human Communication Research", 36, pp. 26-52.
- Nabi R. L. (1999), *A cognitive-functional model for the effects of discrete negative emotions on information processing, attitude change, and recall*, "Communication Theory", 9, pp. 292-320.
- Nabi R. L. (2010), *The case for emphasizing discrete emotions in communication research*, "Communication Monographs", 77, pp. 153-159.
- Nabi R. L. (2002), *Discrete emotions and persuasion*, in Dillard J. P., Pfau M. W. (eds.), *The persuasion handbook. Developments in theory and practice*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, pp. 289-308.
- Nan X. (2009), *Emotional responses to televised PSAs and their influence on persuasion: An investigation of the moderating role of faith in intuition*, "Communication Studies", 5, pp. 426-442.
- Petty R. E., Cacioppo J. T. (1986), *Communication and persuasion: Central and peripheral routes to attitude change*, New York, Springer-Verlag.
- Pocci L (2011), *"Io so": a reading of Roberto Saviano's Gomorra*, "MLN", 126, pp. 224-244.

- Quick B. L., Quinlan M. M., Bates B. R. (2009), *The Utility of Anger in Promoting Clean Indoor Air Policies*, "Health Communication", 24, pp. 548-561.
- Quick B. L., Stephenson M. T. (2007), *Further evidence that psychological reactance can be modeled as a combination of anger and negative cognitions*, "Communication Research", 34, pp. 255-276.
- Raap D. N., Gerrig R. J., Prentice D. A. (2001), *Readers' trait-based models of characters in narrative comprehension*, "Journal of Memory and Language", 45, pp. 737-750.
- Ricciardi S. (2011), *Gomorra e l'estetica documentale nel nuovo millennio*, in Boucharenc M., Martens D., Van Nuijs L. (eds.) *Croisées de la fiction. Journalisme et littérature*, "Interférences littéraires/Littéraire interferences", 7, pp. 167-186.
- Roseman I. J. (2001), *A model of appraisal in the emotion system: Integrating theory, research, and applications*, in Scherer K. R., Schorr A., Johnstone T. (eds.), *Appraisal processes in emotion: Theory, methods, research*, New York, Oxford University Press, pp. 68-91.
- Shen L. (2010), *Mitigating psychological reactance: The role of message-induced empathy in persuasion*, "Human Communication Research", 36, pp. 397-422.
- Segnini E. (2021), *From Scampia to Rione Luzzatti: marginality and its language in the age of convergence*, "Comparative Critical Studies", 18, 1, pp. 27-51.
- Spinazzola V. (2010) (ed.), *Tirature 2010. Il new Italian realism*, Milano, Il Saggiatore.
- Turner M. M. (2007), *Using emotion to prevent risky behavior: The anger activism model*, "Public Relations Review", 33, 2, pp. 114-119.
- Zillmann D. (1999), *Exemplification theory: Judging the whole by some of its parts*, "Media Psychology", 1, pp. 69-94.
- Zillmann D. (2006), *Exemplification effects in the promotion of safety and health*, "Journal of Communication", 56, pp. 221-237.