

Logical Inference and Cognitive Engagement in Noel Carroll's Theory of Narrative Closure

Majeed U. Jadwe

College of Arts, University of Anbar, Anbar, Iraq

Abdullah Majeed Buraa

Department of Scholarships and Foreign Relation, University of Fallujah, Fallujah, Iraq

Omar AbdulJabbar Ali

Al-Iraqia University, Baghdad, Iraq

Muslih Shwaysh Ahmed

Department of English, College of Education for Humanities, University of Anbar, Anbar, Iraq

Abeer Hadi Salih

Department of English Language, College of Education for Women, Al Iraqia University, Baghdad, Iraq

Firas Abdul Rahman Ahmed Al-Najjar

Department of Arabic Language, College of Education for Humanities, University of Anbar, Iraq

Qais Jalil Karim

Department of Quranic Sciences and Islamic Education, College of Education for Humanities, University of Anbar, Iraq

Mohannad Hamad Shabeeb

Department of Arabic Language, College of Education for Humanities, University of Anbar, Iraq

Fahmi Ahmed Farhan

Department of History, College of Education for Humanities, University of Anbar, Iraq

Imad Hayif Sameer

Department of English, College of Education for Humanities, University of Anbar, Iraq

Abstract—This paper explores the intersection of logic and narratology in Noel Carroll's theory of narrative closure (2007). Grounding his theory in the logic of questions and answers, technically known as inferential erotetic logic, Carroll built his theory on the concept of the erotetic narrative, which employs, according to inferential logic, causal narrative connections to pose questions to the reader as a means to process the narrative cognitively. According to Carroll, narrative closure occurs when these questions are answered, manifesting as a phenomenological feeling experienced by the reader. This paper identifies a critical gap in Carroll's theory, which is the omission of logical inference in achieving narrative closure. By omitting the role of inference, Carroll's theory reduces closure to a purely plot-driven process, overlooking the cognitive mechanisms through which readers generate and resolve questions. This paper argues that the re-institution of inference in Carroll's theory offers a more comprehensive understanding of how narrative closure functions, extending beyond the plot to include the reader's active engagement in question generation and resolution.

Index Terms—narrative closure, erotetic narrative, causality, Noel Carroll

I. INTRODUCTION

Narrative closure is not merely a point at which the conflict in a plot is resolved. It is a complex narrative component that relies upon its effect on the narrative and the reader simultaneously. According to Gerald Prince, narrative closure is “a conclusion giving the feeling that a narrative or a narrative sequence has come to an end and providing it with an ultimate unity and coherence, an end creating in the receiver a feeling of appropriate completion and finality” (Prince, 2003, p. 61). Narratologically, plot conflict builds as tension around suspense and expectations whose escalating intensity builds up inside the text and the reader simultaneously. The resolution of this intensity becomes a cathartic space for the reader and a textual threshold for the imposition of a pattern of meaning on the narrative as a totality.

Narratologists tend to explain the phenomenon of narrative closure either in terms of plot mechanism or in terms of the reader's expectations. Critics like Todorov (1977), Brooks (1984), and Bal (2009) use insights from structural narratology to locate narrative closure as an effect of plot mechanisms. Todorov (1977) perceives narrative closure as an outcome of the resolution of the plot's tensions. Brooks (1984) sees narrative closure as a restoration of plot balance by creating a state of new equilibrium, while for Bal (2009), it lies in the resolution of narrative threads to redeem thematic promises. Other critics, notably Barthes (1974) and Phelan (1996), conceive narrative closure as an outcome of the reading experience. Barthes sees narrative closure as the result of the interplay of the interpretive codes (especially the cultural and genre codes) and the readerly expectations, whereas Phelan sees it happen when narratives employ rhetorical strategies to shape readers' expectations and ethical judgements.

However insightful, such theorizations on narrative closure are rigidly plot-bound and remain vague on the exact textual mechanism that narratives promote to engage the reader in experiencing narrative closure. They never state, for example, whether the reader is the producer or recipient of the effect of narrative closure. Moreover, almost all of these explanations of narrative closure come as a part of the broader studies of fictional prose narratives. There is rarely a critical theorization exclusive to narrative closure. One such focused theorization is introduced by art critic Noel Carroll in his 2007 essay-length study "Narrative Closure," where he outlines a theory of the nature of narrative closure and the specific textual ways it is obtained. This hypothetical theory is a handy and practical one to explain how closure happens in narratives, as it avoids philosophical jargon for the sake of providing a concise description of the processes and conditions involved in the textual production of narrative closure.

Carroll (2007) identifies narrative closure as "the phenomenological feeling of finality that is generated when all the questions saliently posed by the narrative are answered" (p. 1). This entails two aspects. First, this feeling of finality/completeness "occurs as directly experienced phenomena of awareness" (Heavey, 2012, p. 763). Second, it is a "matter of concluding rather than stopping" (Carroll, 2007, p. 2). The two aspects correlate to create a knowledge context that imparts to the recipient a cognitive sense of finality or completeness. It is only at this point that the recipient of the narrative can be said to experience narrative closure.

Carroll's (2007) erotetic theory of narrative closure has evoked several critical responses that have raised questions and concerns over the practical validity and soundness of its philosophical premises. Moreover, various objections and emendations were made to the extent that Carroll had to add a section to the subsequent editions of his essay in which he defended his theory against most of these objections.

Of all Carroll's (2007) critics, however, Frome (2020) is the only one who investigated the inferential erotetic logic foundations of Carroll's theory. He claims that the erotetic theory, as used by Carroll, has numerous ambiguities and "lacks supporting evidence and makes unfalsifiable empirical claims, raising questions about its usefulness" (Frome, 2020, p. 1). He argues that erotetic theory is intuitive but says little about narrative in action because it describes the reader's subjective experience of narratives. Such a personal experience cannot be quantified into a conceptual theory. Frome accuses Carroll's erotetic theory of narrative closure of being "unsupported by evidence and is unfalsifiable" because Carroll failed to "prove his theoretical claims" (Frome, 2020, p. 21).

Indeed, a more succinct analytical examination of this theory's premises and hypotheses is necessary, specifically to assess its workability in terms of classical question logic. This study strongly believes that while Carroll (2007) develops his theory of narrative closure from the premises of classic inferential erotetic logic, he fails to acknowledge the role of inference in bringing about closure in erotetic narratives. This omission of logical inference from his theory reduces his perception of closure to an exclusively plot-bound process that fails to account effectively for how the reader generates and answers questions.

II. NOEL CARROLL'S THEORY OF NARRATIVE CLOSURE

Carroll (2007) uses the works of scholars such as Aristotle, Hume, Barthes, and Forster to theorize narrative closure as the point at which all the questions that make up the plot line of the narrative are satisfactorily answered. This conception of plotting assumes that narratives, at least those aesthetically executed ones, are experienced by the reader as cognitive paradigms, as they motivate the reader to process them as questions and expectations. Authors, as Carroll asserts, work consciously to this end. Furthermore, these questions, he contends, are inherent in the narrative because they "have been planted by the author in a way that makes them practically unavoidable for the intended audience. These questions hold onto our attention as the story moves forward" (Carroll, 2007, p. 4). Narrative closure occurs when the questions the narrative poses are answered to warrant the reader's satisfaction that the narrative sequence is concluded.

Carroll (2007) refers to narratives of networks of questions and answers to sustain closure as "erotetic" (p. 5). Such narratives "come with the promise of outcomes to the courses of events that comprise them" (Carroll, 2007, p. 6). Although the line of development in such narratives is usually unpredictable, the narrative turns and lines of development remain within the reader's horizon of expectations because the reader applies the same logic of real life to the unfolding scenarios of the fictional narrative of the erotetic sort. Carroll cites the reader's emotional response to the narrative to shed further light on how narrative closure happens. The reader would typically feel dissatisfied when the narrative refrains from answering a question it posed saliently. Carroll assumes that since such dissatisfaction is the

“antithesis to the impression of closure,” it is “reasonable to hypothesize that closure is a state that is brought about when the answers are not withheld but communicated” (Carroll, 2007, p. 7).

Erotetic narratives are composed of two levels of questions that work as a network to structure the storyline. Presiding macro-questions that “structure an entire text or, at least, most of it” (Carroll, 2007, p. 5) and micro-questions “whose answer will contribute eventually to answering presiding macro-questions but which does not, on its own, answer the relevant presiding question directly and completely” (Carroll, 2007, p. 6). Carroll highlights that closure “correlates with answering all the presiding macro-questions the story has proposed” (Carroll, 2007, p. 5). However, this is not to say that micro-questions are insignificant for narrative closure. They are as crucial to narrative closure as the presiding macro-questions because in erotetic narratives, there is “a hierarchical relationship between the questions posed by an ongoing narrative. Micro-questions are generally subordinate to the presiding macro-questions. Closure is obtained when all of the presiding macro-questions and all the micro-questions that are relevant to settling the macro-questions have been answered” (Carroll, 2007, p. 6).

To understand why answering self-posed questions in a narrative counts as narrative closure, Carroll (2007) explores the nature of the narrative and its relation to narrative closure. He starts by defining narratives as “characterizations of sequences of events, which are comprised of what I call ‘narrative connections’” (Carroll, 2007, p. 11). He explains that a narrative connection obtains when the discourse consists of at least two events ordered in a forward-looking sequence and concentrates on at least one character. Moreover, this sequence of events must be temporally ordered in a perspicuous way. This temporal ordering presupposes a degree of causation as a “necessary condition for the subsequent occurrence of the events and states of affairs in the chain of events being described or are a contribution thereto” (Carroll, 2007, p. 11). Carroll's approach to narratives highlights causation as a necessary condition of narrativity. Although causation is an *a priori* condition for narratives, not all events in a narrative need to be causally connected, and even when causation exists, it is not that stringent.

Carroll (2007) suggests that “it is primarily the causal inputs in erotetic narratives that raise the presiding macro-questions and the pressing micro-questions whose answers secure closure concerning such stories and histories” (p. 12). According to Carroll, this generative process finds its best incarnation in the motivational states of the central characters in the narrative because such states are part of the causal condition of narrative complication (Carroll, 2007, p. 12). Indeed, the character's desires, dreams, and plans structure the causal context of narrativity by generating problems and obstacles for the given character. The reader translates these problems and obstacles into the state of question-making.

Accordingly, narrativity is realized through the citations of narrative connections or linkages that stratify the events into a unified, connected sequence or narrative line. Once narrativity is actualized, these same narrative connections shape the reader's experience of narrativity into erotetic processing. The reader then hypothesizes the narrative sequence into questions. This is the point at which Carroll provides an insight into why the ensuing closure in such narratives is called narrative:

The sorts of questions that are generated by the causal networks that contribute to connecting the past, present, and future in stories warrant being called narrative questions because of their intimate relation to an essential feature of narrative, and, furthermore, answering said questions provokes the phenomenological condition that deserves to be called narrative closure because the questions at issue have been generated narratively. (Carroll, 2007, p. 13)

Carroll (2007) sums up his argument by stating directly that narrative closure is obtained “when it is the description of the causal nexus or parts thereof that generates the presiding macro-questions and the subordinate micro-questions that rivet our attention and which finally answers them, thereby eliciting a sense of completeness in us” (p. 13).

III. LOGIC AND COGNITIVE ENGAGEMENT IN CARROLL'S THEORY

Carroll's (2007) conception of erotetic narrative is based on the theory of Inferential Erotetic Logic that rose to popularity in the 1990s. This theory explains how erotetic narratives work; that is to say, it demonstrates how they generate questions. Wiśniewski, a major proponent of the theory, postulates that erotetic narratives induce questions by inference. He defines erotetic inferences as the “thought processes in which one arrives at a question on the basis of some previously accepted declarative sentence(s) and a previously posed question” (Wiśniewski, 2021, p. 2). Such inference is not about questions, but it is inference with questions in the sense that the reader makes inferences about the narrative by asking questions. Wiśniewski sums up how the inferential erotetic logic works as follows:

1. Erotetic narrative “proceeds as follows: first, some criteria of validity are proposed, separately for erotetic inferences that involve only declarative premises and for these in which an interrogative premise occurs” (Wiśniewski, 2021, p. 3).
2. As soon as “criteria of validity are set, two semantic relations are defined: evocation of questions by sets of declarative sentences/formulas, and erotetic implication of a question by a question together with a set of declarative sentences/formulas. Validity of erotetic inferences of the consecutive kinds is defined in terms of “question evocation and erotetic implication, respectively” (Wiśniewski, 2021, p. 3).

Carroll (2007) oversimplifies this process of question-raising by omitting all the technical keywords of Wiśniewski's theory. Carroll's erotetic narrative “poses” questions through the salience of “narrative connections.” However, it does not explain how the narrative generates questions in the reader's mind. It seems that Carroll wants to limit the question-

posing to the narrative structure. His use of the word “pose” is meant to de-signify the question-generating process to exclude the reader from this process. Here, the reader becomes a recipient rather than an active agent in producing questions. This is closer to Wiśniewski's (2021) postulation that erotetic narrative is inferential as it works with questions, not about them. Carroll forgoes with validity, evocation, and implication questions to produce vague generalizations. This indicates that Carroll is interested in process rather than mechanism.

Furthermore, Carroll (2007) seems to reduce Wiśniewski's process of raising questions, as elaborated in the second point above, to the single effect of “narrative connections.” Carroll's term is descriptive and does not explain how the narrative generates questions. It is used to emphasize the causal nature of the erotetic narrative. This is lacking on two counts: first, causation works on the level of declarative sentences exclusively, as statements of events are connected within the theory of cause and effect. Wiśniewski emphasizes sequentiality as the potential source of question raising. Causation may underlie sequentiality, but no question can be posed unless the narrative line (plot) goes into a sequence. Carroll failed to recognize the role of sequentiality due to his failure to distinguish between plot and narrative. Plot goes by complication and problematization, whereas narratives progress and are stratified over a plot line. Problematisation is based on causation, while stratification is based on sequencing. In sum, it seems that Carroll misreads consequentiality for sequentiality by failing to distinguish between plot and narrative.

Second, Carroll's narrative connections fail to account for many other cases that involve causation but cannot be called narrative. Susan L. Feagin points out one such case: “Narratives involving and driven by human agency involve a particular type of cause—a psychological connection—that distinguishes them from narratives, or would-be narratives, that do not, and that the presence of psychological connections obviates” (Carroll, 2007, p. 17). In such cases, the narrative connection does not supply the causation as concrete action. The character's psychology may set a story in movement and “pose” questions for the reader. Moreover, as Feagin (2007) suggests, such psychological connections contradict Carroll's (2007) claim that such narratives connect and set the narrative into a “globally forward-looking” (p. 12) movement. This presupposes the linearity of action in the narrative. However, not all narratives move this way. Some narratives might go circular, where closure might be located anywhere but the ending, as in the case of psychological connections. Here, we should remember that sequentiality is a cognitive progression rather than a narrative. Whatever the sequence pattern (linear or cyclical), it is up to the reader to cognitively process the emerging sequence. Causation, in this view, plays little role in this sequential processing of the narrative.

Carroll's (2007) notion of question hierarchy in the erotetic narrative is closely based on Wiśniewski's theory of inferential erotetic logic, but with no acknowledgment. Wiśniewski classifies erotetic inferences into two kinds:

In an erotetic inference of the first kind, we pass from some previously accepted declarative sentence(s) to a question. In an erotetic inference of the second kind, we pass from some previously posed question and possibly some previously accepted declarative sentence(s) to a question. (Wiśniewski, 1995, p. 2)

These two kinds of erotetic inference generate two questions corresponding to Carroll's (2007) presiding macro- and micro-questions. Wiśniewski (1995) is interested in the textual production of these two sets of questions, whereas Carroll is interested in describing the questions regardless of how they come to be generated. Carroll capitalizes on how questions behave to produce a descriptive taxonomy of erotetic narrative as if everything else is taken for granted. Carroll's overlooking of the inferential nature of the erotetic narrative is consequential to his endeavor to internalize narrative closure as an effect of narrative structure. This is reflected in his exclusion of the reader as a passive receptor of the textually produced effects of narrative closure.

However, Carroll (2007) seems to emulate the erotetic inference of the second order, which generates questions from previously generated questions. This is essentially the textual process into which presiding macro-questions operate as a series of micro-questions. Tupkowski (2015) explains that Wiśniewski's erotetic inference of the second order operates through the notion of erotetic implication “where a set of premises consists of a question and possibly some declarative sentence(s) and an agent passes from it to another question” (p. 25). This means that the questions evoked in the first kind of erotetic inference proceed by implicating further questions (micro-questions). However, this process is more interactive than hierarchical and tends to prioritize the generation of questions over any consideration of scope. However, the erotetic implication cannot exist without erotetic evocation because once a question is incepted, it develops by generating further mini-questions. This process underlies Carroll's theory, but he did not figure it out in his argument. Carroll is equally vague on the idea of answers. Although answers to the questions that the erotetic narrative raises are the locus of narrative closure, his hypothetical theory focuses exclusively on questions. There is no mention of whether the degree of completeness of answers can affect the degree of narrative closure. This is due to Carroll's failure to indicate whether narrative closure can occur in degrees. His brand of narrative closure seems to be categorically phenomenal in the sense that it either occurs or does not.

This aspect of Carroll's (2007) narrative closure has been duly criticized in the reception of his theory. Based on the evidence of novels, Klauk et al. (2016) demonstrated that narrative closure is “a gradable predicate” in the sense that “a novel may feature a certain degree of narrative closure, rather than having narrative closure or not” (p. 35). Carroll's failure to grasp this “gradable” nature of narrative closure relates to his failure to understand the nature of answers. Logically, a question can have a variety of possible answers. Pelis (2016) calls this propositional nature of questions “answerhood conditions” (p. 16). This concept proposes that the “meaning of an interrogative resides in its answerhood conditions” (Pelis, 2016, p. 18). This makes the inference of questions reasonable and acceptable to the reader. The

possibilities of answers to the same questions depend on their completeness of answering the question and their relevance to the declarative situation from which the question arises. Carroll, on the other hand, assumes naively that a question raised in an erotetic narrative presupposes one full “formalized” answer, whose presence or withholding decides the existence of narrative closure.

Carroll's (2007) failure to prioritize answerhood conditions in his theory of narrative closure stems from his failure to recognize the contextual relation of questions and answers in that answers are based on prior assumptions of the declarative context from which the question arises. Thus, in Carroll's theory, answers are essential as they project closure rather than how and to what extent they satisfy the questions. Carroll, in short, is more interested in the effect than in the how and what of the answerhood as a condition of erotetic narrativity.

However, what is to be taken against Carroll's hierarchy of questions in the erotetic narrative is the lack of any indication as to whether the micro-questions are constitutive of the larger presiding macro-questions or exist independently from them. Logically, the first scenario is the likeliest one, as questions are said to make up a hierarchy in the erotetic narrative. However, this poses severe problems for narrative closure as answers to these questions. Do the answers to the presiding macro-questions lie in the answers to all the micro-questions? What if all the micro-questions do not find answers? Would this affect narrative closure to materialize, or is a sort of partial closure possible?

As this paper argues, one possible answer to these inquiries is reinstating the reader in Carroll's (2007) theory as the ultimate agent in the erotetic process. Carroll casts the reader in the mandatory role of experiencing the effects of narrative closure. Instead of the narrative posing questions to the reader, the reader should be able to infer questions from the ensuing narrative situations. If the narrative could eventually answer these questions satisfactorily, it would be possible to discuss narrative closure. The reader's “phenomenological feeling of finality” would then be consequential to how satisfactorily the narrative can answer the questions that the reader cognitively infers, rather than a manifestation of closure itself. This accounts for the gradability of narrative closure and makes it the culmination of the reader's experience of narrative flow.

Carroll's (2007) conception of “narrative connections” as the textual source of questions in erotetic narratives seems to emulate Wiśniewski's conception of the “inquiry” minus technical details. According to Wiśniewski, any erotetic narrative consists of inquiries “asking questions and looking for the answers to them” (Wiśniewski, 1995, p. 3). Carroll's “narrative connections” are essentially “inquiries,” but they fail to fulfill Wiśniewski's postulate that in most inquiries:

The questions asked are dependent upon the acquired or hypothetically assumed answers to the previously asked questions, as well as upon some background knowledge: in the light of what has been established or assumed earlier, some questions are admitted, whereas some others are not. Sometimes, however, specific further questions are not only admitted but nearly suggested. (Wiśniewski, 1995, p. 3)

Carroll (2007), however, explains how these narrative connections help pose neither questions nor how they connect to create the signifying paradigm of the erotetic narrative. It is unclear whether these narrative connections are declarative premises from which questions arise, as in the theory of inferential erotetic logic. All that Carroll mentions about them is their potential to organize the narrative in a causal theory. This does not explain how causation relates to the raising of questions. Moreover, Carroll specifies that the salience of these narrative connections is the sole factor in the scope and degree of causality these connections confer on the narrative. This implies that the more causal the narrative logic, the more erotetic it will be. This is logically paradoxical since causality is pertinent to declarative statements where events go by consequentiality. This is inherently an anti-interrogative structure since there is nothing unexplained to inquire about interrogatively.

Carroll (2007) claims that the causality operative in his theory of the erotetic narrative is to be kept to a minimum degree. This should support the above claim that this minimum causality supports consequentiality in creating narrative sequencing. However, as the present paper argues, this is not the result. Instead, this consequentiality is geared to “situationalize” the narrative because questions cannot be inferred unless a narrative situation exists. A narrative situation is envisioned here as a scenario that the narrative establishes to raise expectations in the reader. Ultimately, these expectations give rise to questions as the cognitive form of the reader's transaction with the narrative.

Interestingly, Carroll's (2007) essay provides an unintentional clue to the unstated nature of his “narrative connections.” This clue is found in his citation of Roland Barthes's *S/Z* (1974). Carroll refers to Barthes very briefly on his idea of the narrative enigma. However, Carroll's idea of narrative connection is essential, similar to one of Barthes's five codes that the “author and reader share to make a narrative readable” (Abbott, 2002, p. 57). This is the hermeneutic code that concerns all those units “whose function it is to articulate in various ways a question, its response, and the variety of chance events which can either formulate the question or delay its answer; or even constitute an enigma and lead to its solution” (Barthes, 1974, p. 17).

Like narrative connections, this code is responsible for the textual fashioning of erotetic narrativity by creating a causality theory. However, Barthes's (1974) hermeneutic code far better explains how erotetic narratives work because it incorporates the answerhood condition, which Carroll (2007) almost deletes from his hypothetical theory of narrative closure.

Carroll's (2007) definition of narrative closure as “a phenomenological feeling of finality” aligns closure with the reader, while the argument of the proposed theory locates closure with the narrative structure. It is not clear why Carroll

should describe narrative closure as an effect that the reader feels if it is a plot property. Erotetic logic accords the reader a crucial role in inferring the questions. In contrast, the plot generates the answers that make up the closure to satisfy the inferred questions. In Carroll's hypothetical theory, the role of the reader is equivocal. She merely experiences the effect of a textual phenomenon, which is the conclusion of the action of the plot structure. This poses two serious problems: first, readers as human beings are not equal in their cognitive capabilities. No two readers can have identical experiences of the same narrative, let alone the inference of questions from narrative complication. Second, the word 'finality' is problematic. Does it refer to the inevitable termination of the reading experience or the sense that the action is over?

Carroll's (2007) definition of narrative closure as a phenomenological feeling poses further epistemological problems. Klauk et al. (2016) find dissonance between the narrative closure that the reader forms "online" during the reading process and that which is figured out "ex-post" when the reader puts the book aside (p. 42). This belated feeling of narrative closure ensues from the reader's distancing of themselves from the narrative and processing it from a more stable intellectual stance. The reader's cognitive processing of the narrative is primarily emotional. So, the feeling of a sense of finality is marred by a cathartic feeling. This means that what the reader experiences phenomenologically is a qualitatively different feeling of closure; one is emotional, and the other is intellectual. Carroll, however, seems to highlight the online feeling of closure because, as he implies, it occurs during the reading process. Although this still poses serious problems, it is not altogether unjustifiable. The online feeling of finality is generated by the reader's response to the dramatic structure of the narrative, whereas the ex-post feeling of finality is consequential to the thematic structure of the narrative. It is well known that thematic structures, or thematization, occur after the process of reading, where the reader picks up notions or thoughts from the narrative to rationalize them around a core of values. The ex-post feeling of closure is probably generated by the reader's successful thematization of the narrative.

This, however, poses further problems. Because the online feeling of closure is generated by the narrative's dramatic structure and its phenomenological nature, as Carroll (2007) asserts, the erotetic processing of narrativity is invalid here. Asking questions and making inquiries does not go neatly with the reader's experience of the dramatic development of the narrative. Questions and inquiries, after all, are intellectual activities that require complex cognitive processes. It is safe to assume that such intellectual activities constitute the best possible scenario after reading a narrative, for the reader has time to reflect on the narrative and rationalize its meaning into thought patterns (thematic structures). A more viable scenario that suits the reader's emotional interaction with the ensuing drama of the narrative is the theory of crisis and resolution. This theory keeps the rhythm of the reader's involvement with the narrative through suspense. This is why the online feeling of closure is cathartic. This cathartic quality purges the reader of his emotional response and allows him to reflect rationally on the meaning of what just happened in the narrative. Here, the reader shifts from the emotional to the intellectual and starts asking questions about the narrative's drama. The answers that the narrative may provide are agentive in completing unifying thought patterns (thematic structure). The successful completion of such patterns can bring closure only if this thematization accounts for what happens in the narrative. It is safe to conclude that Carroll's question-and-answer closure theory is more suited to the ex-post closure than the online one.

However, is Carroll's (2007) conception of narrative closure cathartic in nature? Oral and cinematic narratives provide a valuable clue to the answer to this question. It has been noted that these two types of narratives solicit qualitatively different responses and interactions from the reader than the scripted narrative. The audience of oral and cinematic narratives shows more dynamic interaction, bodily and emotional, with the story development than the silent, primarily passive reader of novels and short stories. From listeners of oral folk narratives in primitive societies to filmgoers in a modern cinema, audiences develop a deep, real-time emotional involvement in the story, which leads to the universal experience of eventual cathartic relief. It is no coincidence that this cathartic feeling flows from the story's conclusion into narrative closure. The absence of such a closure generates anger and frustration in the audience. It is possible to assume that whatever cathartic feeling the audience experiences is symptomatic of experiencing a narrative closure. On the other hand, reading scripted narratives is crucially different regarding the reader's response. In this case, the reader transacts cognitively with the narrative in a hermeneutic rather than phenomenological mode. This would inevitably result in a less physical or emotional interaction with the narrative. Consequently, Carroll's failure to address the agency of erotetic narrativity poses severe problems for his theory of narrative closure because his conception of narrative closure is less valid in scripted narratives.

IV. CONCLUSION

Although Carroll (2007) succeeds in using logic to build up a working narratological model of closure, his failure to acknowledge the notion of inference tends to overlook the cognitive engagement of the reader in the production of narrative closure. The reader, in Carroll's theory, does not infer questions while reading, as inferential erotetic logic stipulates. Carroll alternatively casts this narrative generation of questions as a plot-engendered process. This would make the question-generation process less of a cognitive process than a mere textual mechanism that regulates the reading process. This would consequently cancel the role of the reader as an active producer of meaning via interaction with the narrative. Customarily, the reader interacts cognitively with the narrative during the process of reading by raising questions and anticipating the narrative in question to provide or withhold answers to these questions. By making the narrative pose questions to the reader, Carroll cancels the very human drive to raise questions by inference.

However, Carroll contradicts himself when stating that narrative closure manifests itself as a phenomenological feeling of finality rather than a point at which the narrative stops posing questions to the reader. This asserts the centrality of the reader in producing closure via a transactional mode of communication with the narrative. To resolve this contradiction that lies at the core of Carroll's theory, it is advisable to reinstitute inference as the ultimate mode of raising questions by the reader. Then, finally, narrative closure occurs when the narrative answers these questions satisfactorily.

REFERENCES

- [1] Abd Jaber, N., & Karim, Q. (2024). Al-Siraj Al-Wahhaj Fi Qissat Al-Isra Wa Al-Mi'raj by Imam Shihab Al-Din Al-Qalyubi (D. 1069 AH) Study and Editing, From Page [53/B] To [54/A]. *Journal of Ecohumanism*, 3(6), 146–153.
- [2] Bal, M. (2009). *Narratology: Introduction to the theory of narrative* (3rd ed.). University of Toronto Press.
- [3] Barthes, R. (1974). *S/Z* (R. Howard, Trans.). Hill and Wang.
- [4] Brooks, P. (1984). *Reading for the plot: Design and intention in narrative*. Harvard University Press.
- [5] Carroll, N. (2007). Narrative closure. *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition*, 135(1), 1–15. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40208790>
- [6] Farhan, F. (2020). The Iraqi Archive its development and its impact on the historical documenting. *Dirasat: Human and Social Sciences*, 47(2). Retrieved from <https://archives.ju.edu.jo/index.php/hum/article/view/107449>
- [7] Feagin, S. L. (2007). On Noël Carroll on narrative closure. *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition*, 135(1), 17–25. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40208791>
- [8] Frome, J. (2020). Intuition, Evidence, and Carroll's Theory of Narrative. *Projections*, 14(1), 38–57.
- [9] Hassan, N., & Ahmed, F. (2025). The Poet Abu Bakr Ahmad Al-Satali (D. 676 AH): His poetic Purposes and the Tributaries of his Image-An Artistic Study. *Dirasat: Human and Social Sciences*, 52(6), 7845.
- [10] Heavey, C. L., Hurlburt, R. T., & Lefforge, N. L. (2012). Toward a Phenomenology of Feelings. *Emotion*, 12(4), 763–777. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0026905>
- [11] Jabaar, Q., & Ahmed, F. (2025). Thematic Contrast in Pre-Islamic poetry. *Lex Localis - Journal of Local Self-Government*, 23(S6). <https://doi.org/10.52152/sre62x97>
- [12] Jadwe, N. I., Jadwe, M. U., & Ali, S. J. (2026). The interliterary reception of the Arabian Nights in O. Henry's selected short stories. *International Journal of English Language and Literature Studies*, 15(1), 29–39. <https://archive.aessweb.com/index.php/5019/article/view/5793/8600>
- [13] Jadwe, M. U., & Faisal, S. A. S. (2024). The Gendered Politics of Postmodern Parody in Acker's *Great Expectations*. *Jordan Journal of Modern Languages & Literatures*, 16(2), 473–486. <https://doi.org/10.47012/jjml.16.2.11>
- [14] Jadwe, M. U. (2021). A Reading of Philip Roth's *Everyman* as a Postmodern Parody. *IAFOR Journal of Literature & Librarianship*, 10(1). <https://doi.org/10.22492/ijl.10.1.03>
- [15] Jameel, A. A., & Sameer, I. H. (2025). Transitivity as a Model: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Putin's and Zelensky's Speeches on the Russian and Ukrainian War. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 16(6), 1986–1994. <https://doi.org/10.17507/jltr.1606.20>
- [16] Jamil, M., & Karim, Q. (2023). Family Bonds and Womb Ties and Their Contact with Reality for Shaarawy. *Dirasat: Human and Social Sciences*, 50(6), 83–92.
- [17] Khalifa, M., Fayyad, Y., & Khalil, S. (2024). The Strangeness of Artistic Performance in the Islamic Era between Uniqueness and Necessity (An Analytical Study). *Dirasat: Human and Social Sciences*, 51(5).
- [18] Klauk, T., Köppe, T., & Onea, E. (2016). More on Narrative Closure. *Journal of Literary Semantics*, 45(1), 21–48. <https://doi.org/10.1515/jls-2016-0003>
- [19] Kreisel, D. K. (2012). *Economic Woman: Demand, Gender, and Narrative Closure in Eliot and Hardy*. University of Toronto Press.
- [20] Pelis, M. (2016). *Inferences with Ignorance: Logics of Questions Inferential Erotetic Logic & Erotetic Epistemic Logic*. Karolinum Press.
- [21] Phelan, J. (1996). *Narrative as rhetoric: Technique, audiences, ethics, ideology*. Ohio State University Press.
- [22] Prince, G. (2003). *A Dictionary of Narratology*. University of Nebraska Press.
- [23] Sameer, I. H. (2025). Representation of Muslims in Don DeLillo's *Falling Man*: A critical discourse analysis. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 16(4), 1095–1105. <https://doi.org/10.17507/jltr.1604.05>
- [24] Sameer, I. H., & Abd-Razaq, G. M. (2020). The Effect of Context on Understanding Phrasal Verbs and their Avoidance by Students of University of Anbar. *International Journal of Psychosocial Rehabilitation*, 24(2), 2059–2067.
- [25] Sameer, I. H., & Majeed, W. A. (2019). Religious Concepts that generate difficulty in translation from Arabic into English. *Opción: Revista de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales*, (20), 727–740.
- [26] Shabeeb, M. H. (2020). Rhetorical Reasoning in the Book Dalaail AL-Iejaaz of Abdul-Qaher Jurjani. *Dirasat: Human and Social Sciences*, 21(2).
- [27] Todorov, T. (1977). *The poetics of prose* (R. Howard, Trans.). Cornell University Press.
- [28] Tupkowski, P. (2015). *Logic of Questions in the Wild: Inferential Erotetic Logic in Information Seeking Dialogue Theoryling*. College Publications.
- [29] Wisniewski, A. (1995). *The Posing of Questions: Logical Foundations of Erotetic Inferences*. Springer Dordrecht.
- [30] Wisniewski, A. (2021). An Essay on Inferential Erotetic Logic. In M. Cordes (Ed.), *Asking and Answering: Rivalling Approaches to Interrogative Methods* (pp. 105–138). Narr Francke Attempto.



Majeed U. Jadwe is Full Professor of English and Literary Theory at the College of Arts, University of Anbar, Iraq. His academic work focuses on modern and contemporary fiction and critical theory. He teaches undergraduate and postgraduate courses in literature and theory. He has contributed to scholarly research in his field.



Abdullah Majeed Buraa holds a Master's degree in Applied Linguistics from UPM (University Putra Malaysia). He currently works in the Department of Scholarships and Foreign Relations at the University of Fallujah. His academic interests include linguistics, applied linguistics, and discourse analysis, with a particular focus on the intersection between language and social context.



Omar AbdulJabbar Ali holds a Master's degree in Applied Linguistics from UPM (University Putra Malaysia), where he currently serves at Office of the Assistant to the President for Scientific Affairs, Al-Iraqia University Baghdad, Iraq. In addition to his administrative role, he has taught English as a foreign language for five semesters. His academic interests are in linguistics, applied linguistics, discourse analysis and psycholinguistics. He is particularly focused on the practical applications of linguistic theory in real-world contexts.



Muslih Shwaysh Ahmed is a Professor at University of Anbar, Anbar Province, Iraq, and currently serves as a member of the teaching staff. He holds a Ph.D. in Linguistics from University of Baghdad, Iraq. He has extensive experience in academic research and publication, and has held various administrative roles while making significant contributions to the field of linguistics.



Abeer Hadi Salih is a professor of linguistics at the Department of English Language, College of Education for Women, Al Iraqia University. She obtained her B.A. in English Language from the College of Education for Women, University of Baghdad, in 1998, and her M.A. from the same institution in 2006. She has published numerous studies and authored books in her field.



Firas Abdul Rahman Ahmed Al-Najjar, born in 1974, obtained his master's degree from Anbar University, College of Education. His doctorate was from Baghdad University, College of Education, Ibn Rushd. He worked at Anbar University, College of Education for Humanities, as a professor of Abbasid literature. He has published more than 25 research papers. He has supervised 20 theses and 11 doctoral dissertations. His most recent position was the Chair of the Department of Arabic Language.



Qais Jalil Karim, born in Ramadi in 1976, completed his Bachelor's degree at the College of Education for Humanities, University of Anbar, in 1999-2000. He then joined College of Islamic Sciences, Baghdad University, to complete his Master's degree in 2002-2003. He completed his PhD at the College of Arts, Al-Iraqia University, in 2012, specializing in Interpretation and Quranic Sciences. He was promoted to Professor in 2020. He is currently the Head of the Department of Quranic Sciences and Islamic Education at the College of Education for Humanities, University of Anbar.



Mohannad Hamad Shabeeb, Professor of Rhetoric at the College of Education for Humanities, Al-Abdar University. He holds a Master's degree in Rhetoric from Anbar University, Iraq (1999) and a PhD from Anbar University, Iraq (2004). He attained the rank of Professor in 2021.



Fahmi Ahmed Farhan Saud. Department of History / College of Education for Humanities. General Specialization / History

- Specific Specialization / Modern History
- Faculty Member, Department of History / College of Education for Humanities
- Bachelor's Degree, 2000-2001.
- Master's Degree, 2005, University of Anbar / College of Education for Humanities
- Doctorate, 2012, University of Anbar / College of Arts
- Professorship, 2021.



Imad Hayif Sameer is an assistant professor at the University of Anbar, Anbar Province, Iraq, and currently serves as the Coordinator of Higher Studies. He holds a Ph.D. in Linguistics from Alnilain University in Sudan and has extensive experience in academic research and publication, having held various administrative roles and made significant contributions to research in linguistics.