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Romantic Love and Grief in Bobbie Ann Mason's "Shiloh": A Sketch of a Cognitive Narratological Perspective

Abstract

The article investigates the structure of romance and grief narrative included in Bobbie Ann Mason's "Shiloh," on the basis of Patrick C. Hogan's theory of literary universals and his work on affective narratology. Following Hogan, I argue that emotions are deeply embedded in stories and that stories are typically designed so as to manipulate the affective responses of their readers. I will focus on the way the story depicts prototypical stages of romance and grief and where it deviates from universal narratives involving concerning grief, separation, attachment, and romantic love, arguing that the affective and aesthetic potential of the story lies precisely in where it departs from these prototypical narratives. At the same time, I shall speculate on how discourse organization manipulates the formation of affective schemata and empathic alignment in readers.

In what follows I set out to explore the structure of romance and grief narrative included in Bobbie Ann Mason's celebrated short story, "Shiloh," using Patrick C. Hogan's theory of narrative universals and its offshoot project: affective narratology. Following Hogan, I assume that there is a strong interconnectedness between emotions and stories and that, on the one hand, emotional reactions are deeply embedded in narrative structures, and on the other hand, stories are typically designed and structured so as to manipulate the affective responses of their readers. Specifically, I shall analyse the story tracing both the way it approaches and depicts standard stages of grief and where it deviates from universal stories and motifs concerning grief, separation, attachment and romantic love and I argue that the affective and aesthetic potential of the story lies precisely in where it departs from these prototypical narratives. At the same time, I shall speculate on how discourse organization manipulates the formation of affective schemata in readers. The theory of aesthetic suggestiveness that sees a literary work as a network of associatively linked elements unified along the lines of an emotionally salient theme (in this case: grief over a dead child and marriage disintegration),

developed into a modern cognitive-affective model out of Sanskrit aesthetics by Hogan (2003a, 45–76) will serve as a background to my reading of the story.

This essay will be divided into three sections. First, I will outline the main points of the so called appraisal theory of emotions, as understood by Hogan and Keith Oatley, with special attention paid to emotions of sadness and grief, then I will move on to discussing how this theory might be relevant for understanding the reader's engagement in fiction, and finally I will use those insights to speculate about the possible mechanisms present in the structure of "Shiloh" which might be responsible for the basic reactions to the text, as Mason's work not only centers around one of the most universal, prototype story of grief over a dead child and a decay of relationship, but also because it develops the story and manipulates the reader in its own, aesthetically significant way.

1. Emotions, Empathy and Literature

As Patrick Hogan writes "standard cognitive accounts treat emotion as a form of 'appraisal'" (2003b, 140). Thus, some emotional reactions are triggered as a result of evaluation of the implications of a specific situation for oneself, where one implicitly (outside of focal awareness) weighs the consequence in terms of their likelihood and their degree of positive or negative consequence, and by analogy emotional reaction to past events depends "on evaluations of what has happened in relation to the person's goals and beliefs" (Oatley 144). Emotions are, hence, not the opposite of thought (as we might intuitively suppose), but are "intimately bound up with thought" (Hogan 2003b, 140), as they play an important role in cognition. In Keith Oatley's words: "emotions are part of a solution to problems of organizing knowledge and action in the world that is imperfectly known, and in which we have limited resources" (141), thus, they offer us hard-wired reactions to stimuli that are important for our survival and well-being which typically predate our conscious calculations. This form of appraisal theory emphasizes, then, the relevance of human agency, human aims, and plans to elicit emotions. To give a simple example, fear is the emotion evoked when we feel threatened, or rather, when our basic goal concerning self-preservation is threatened. We feel sad after reckoning a major goal as completely lost, whereas anger is triggered when a currently active plan is frustrated (Hogan 2003b, 145). This is, of course for the sake of space, highly simplified, abstract and pertaining to basic, model of behaviours, as particular reactions might be idiosyncratic and modulated. As Hogan and Oatley noticed, although some of the basic human plans are deeply egocentric, that is, concerned mostly with the individuals' goals of self-preservation, many of them, and indeed, the ones which are most relevant for "Shiloh" involve more complex social, or joint plans which we share with other people. As Hogan puts it "the most intense and consequential instances of most emotions

bear not on individual plans, but on joint plans" (2003b, 146). Perhaps the basic definition of grief as relevant to the aims of this essay, would be in accord with Oatley's considerations on the topic, where he writes: "sadness occurs with a loss of role relationship. In its largest and most obvious social form it is the grief of bereavement or separation in which the loss involves that part of the self that was engaged in joint plans with another" (313). In other words, grief marks a loss of a major (central to survival and well-being) goal involving others.¹

One might say at this point that such account of emotions might be plausible for explaining real-life situations, but it does not seem to have anything to do with engaging in fiction, where no real plans and no real goals are present. But, obviously, human emotional reactions are not limited to those of personal, or even shared, plans and goals. Emotional triggers might be more direct and immediate, as we all know, since we are all capable of recognizing the feelings of others and responding, or sharing their emotional concerns, without being involved in any actual plan. We can mention two sources relevant for studying literature which are responsible for the emergence of human empathy. One would be our Theory of Mind, that is, our natural, as if automatic, tendency to ascribe intentions, mental states and causality not only to actual humans and animals, but also, as Lisa Zunshine persuasively argues in her works, to their fictional representations (3–40). The other source of engaging in fiction would be, as Norman Holland recently pointed out, the functioning of mirror neurons which are activated both in the very moment of performing an action, or while observing that action being performed by others (94–97). So, in fact, emotional preoccupation with fiction does not seem to be removed from our ability to emotionally respond to the events, plans and feelings of others. The seeming paradox of fiction might be resolved by saying that emotional response is simply prior to any rational judgments concerning reality or fictionality that may or may not override the emotional mechanism. Emotionally loaded stories, thus, engage and manipulate our natural empathetic abilities.

Generally, in accord with the above considerations, we might say that what makes stories in general interesting on the basic level of a common reading experience is the development of plans and goals set by the characters, as we all have a tendency to ascribe intentions and mental states not unlike our own to fictional characters, and to share, or imagine, the fictional emotional response to the course of events. On the most fundamental level, stories can be, in fact, conceived of as elaborate developments of goals and plans structured to manipulate the target recipients' emotions. So it follows naturally, as Patrick Hogan and others noticed, that emotional response often depends on the causal sequence of events; that it is always already embedded in complex narrative structures, rather than being related only to an individual event. According to Oatley, if literature is to be emotionally engaging, it has to touch upon specific topics which are of interest to human emotional life, and also the narrative structure should be

able to make the reader imagine, or expect some possible structures that result from a given narrative situation, continually test those structures in the course of reading and make the impression of a progress “in the direction of closure, or more precisely, the preferred final situation,” (Holland 239) or, in other words, towards an emotionally desired outcome.

2. Literary Prototypes

Moving on to “Shiloh,” it would not be too cavalier, taking into consideration what was already said, to claim that the plot of the story obviously centers around plans and goals of the main characters and that it is structured in an emotionally salient way. On the one hand, the story touches upon, as Hogan would have probably put it, a cross-cultural literary universal, that is, grief over a dead child, and coming to terms with an unsuccessful relationship. On the other hand, “Shiloh’s” artistic merit is, obviously among other things, its ability to modify and transform this basic story. Hogan and others have pointed out that in appraisal theories of emotion, apart from evaluation of a plan, the other important factor shaping emotional response is the emotional memory, that is, the conscious and unconscious storage of our memories, previous experiences, familiarity with various narrative structures, and all types of associations that can be activated by specific emotional stimuli. This is directly related to the system of reader’s expectations about the text, e.g. readers who are familiar with literary tradition would have difficulties becoming easily engaged in a work of fiction depicting straightforward, supposedly realistic, linear story of a happy couple who tragically lose their child, then go through a period of grieving and, in the end, manage to overcome their morose problems. This implies that, at least some of the aesthetic values of a given work, might be explained by research in cognitive science and emotional memories, as the more trained readers would require some unique, literary alterations in the simple formula of the story to find it both emotionally interesting, and artistically significant. It is important to mention that such a prototype of a story, the basis for comprehending and judging literary narratives, as an element of the reader’s system of expectations is always infused with, as Norman Holland, argues, the need for a gratification, or pleasure seeking (164–166). That is to say, readers normally hope for a desirable ending that would run according to their sympathies for certain characters which develop during reading. “Proper endings gratify basic human drives,” as Holland claims (164). Thus, if “Shiloh” focuses on the dynamics of a relationship, and the disparate goals and plans of the two characters, it would be only natural to assume that some of these plans (and their expected outcomes) would be more appealing than others to empathetic readers.

In order to fully understand the narrative design of “Shiloh,” and in tune with the theory of narrative universals, it is necessary to recall the prototypical elements

of romantic love story and familial separation story so that it can be demonstrated how Mason's work departs from these traditional structures. Hogan formulated the theory studying early, traditional narratives, looking for cross-cultural patterns that were statistically significant and not explainable in terms of cultural transmission. The history of genre development is, to a large extent, history of alterations of those early narratives (Hogan 2003a). The romantic prototype involves engagement of two basic human emotional conditions of happiness: attachment and sexual desire and would roughly include two people that fall in love and have to struggle against whatever hinders their romantic union, though typically that would be parents or other some superior social authority. The conflict is often reinforced due to lovers belonging to groups forbidden from intermarriage. Moreover, there often is a preferred rival who belongs to an accepted social group. The conflict intensifies as the lovers are separated and either death or death-like imagery accompanies it. Indirect communication is supposed to sustain both hope and the suffering of the lovers. The exiled lover is granted social or spiritual success which allows the romantic union to be finalized and a familial reconciliation takes place (Hogan 2011a, 33–34). The minor prototype of familial separation involves attachment without the sexual desire component. It commonly explores the separation of parents and children, either by accident or choice. It is often the case that many years pass before either party seeks reunion and the search itself is difficult and includes misrecognitions. The actual moment of reunion might prove to be ambivalent with its effects rather unsatisfactory (Hogan 2013, 31).

Prototypical stories serve as points of reference in a number of ways. They set the earliest canonical standards of narrative design which is then challenged and altered creatively by later authors adding to the artistic value of newly produced works. Beyond that, they are an important component of readers' expectations shaped, on the one hand, by exposure to prototypical stories during education and in their various recreations in mass culture and, on the other hand, by quasi-naturalistic factors as the prototypical stories involve both realistic scenarios we encounter in real life and ways of ending them with the most emotionally desired outcomes. Alterations and manipulations in the prototypical structure and, thus, in our expectations indicate both the desire to enhance the story artistically and to modulate our experience of it. In order to demonstrate both I will proceed to outlining the chronological story of "Shiloh" and then to discourse manipulation it involves, indicating the points of departure from the prototypical structure.

3. "Shiloh" and the Prototypical Narratives

The most general sense in which "Shiloh" alters the simple prototypical narratives is that it appears to be a blend of the romantic prototype, as it involves a struggle over a romantic relationship, and of the familial separation prototype, as the couple

lost a child. Moreover, it includes themes from elegiac and other grief-ridden stories, since it explores the condition of the abovementioned relationship after the death of a child, hence forming a complex blend of alterations of romantic and separation prototypes along with elegiac motifs.

To summarize the chronologically understood story of "Shiloh," it involves a couple, Leroy and Norma Jean who got married at the age of eighteen when Norma Jean got pregnant: "Leroy is thirty-four. He married Norma Jean when they were both eighteen, and their child Randy was born a few months later" (6). Four months after his birth, their son dies of sudden infant death syndrome when they "were at the drive-in, watching a double feature (Dr. Strangelove and Lover Come Back), and the baby was sleeping in the back seat. When the first movie ended, the baby was dead" (6). Leroy becomes entirely preoccupied by his truck driving job, doing long hauls and hardly visiting home. Norma Jean becomes a largely solitaire housewife, working at a local drugstore and never complaining about his traveling (4). This state of affairs persists for some fifteen years when Leroy injures his leg in an accident and is forced to stay at home undergoing physical therapy (3). Moreover, he is rather anxious about his return to driving and unsure both what to do next: "he is not sure what to do next. In the meantime, he makes things from craft kits" (4) and what Norma Jean thinks: "he can't tell what she feels about him" (4) and "he wishes she would celebrate his permanent homecoming more happily" (4). Leroy's return marks the end of the petrified lifestyle the couple led and triggers major changes for both. Leroy spends most of his time driving around the rapidly modernizing neighborhood, smoking marijuana and attempting to reunite with his wife. Yet, he acts as if the 15-year separation did not have any bearing on the actual nature of the relationship and starts his attempt at rekindling their affection by a straightforward return to the way they used to lead their life years before: "since he has been home, he has felt unusually tender about his wife and guilty over his long absence" (4). He constructs a miniature log cabin in preparation for a full-scale cabin he once envisaged to build for him and Norma Jean, even though his wife does not seem to be enthusiastic and such housing is now seen as awfully obsolete. As she says: "They won't let you build a log cabin in any of the new subdivisions" (4). He wants his wife to entertain him by playing the organ he bought her, the way she did as a teenager: Leroy likes to lie on the couch and smoke a joint and listen to Norma Jean play 'Can't Take My Eyes Off You' and 'I'll Be Back'" (5). He thinks Norma Jean's professional knowledge of cosmetics points to a deeper connection between them, as he, being a driver, has some knowledge of other substances produced from petroleum (4). Finally, following his mother-in-law advice he takes Norma Jean on a trip to Shiloh National Military Park, as he hopes this visit will be a turning point for the better in their relationship.

Norma Jean's reaction to Leroy's reappearance at home is not as one-sided and she appears to be gradually using her husband's ideas for her own purposes.

She uses his physical therapy equipment for weightlifting and gymnastics (3). She uses the organ to learn the songs she herself likes, such as the aptly called "Who'll Be the Next in Line?" (11) and later stops playing altogether and instead writes an essay entitled "Why Music Is Important to Me" (13). She begins to cook completely new dishes to Leroy's dismay. She takes up body-building course and then community college classes in composition, all of which intimidate her husband. She reluctantly agrees to go to Shiloh battleground: "I'll go to Shiloh with you if you'll stop staring at me" (15) where she tells Leroy she wishes to leave him.

The third crucial character in the story, Norma Jean's mother, Mable, seems to be sympathetic towards Leroy's plans. Her involvement in bringing the teenage couple formally together in matrimony is not specified, but we may speculate she had her share in orchestrating a quick marriage after discovery of her daughter's unplanned pregnancy as she continually tries to force her daughter into submission upon noticing more and more signs of her own independence. She suggests the trip to Shiloh battleground as an ultimate means of curbing Norma Jean's initiative and bringing the couple finally together.

There are numerous alterations of the romantic love and familial separation alterations throughout "Shiloh." The feelings of attachment and love seem to be present only in the brief backstory flashback regarding the couple's early days and end with the death of their child. There were no obstacles in bringing the couple together originally as they come from the same social groups. In fact, it is precisely the parental authority figure that wishes them to be together, whereas prototypically, the authority would be against it. Consequently, there is no rival for the girl's affection that we know of. Leroy is reasonably certain she has been faithful to him" (4). The happy romantic union is the earliest stage of the story, rather than the last, and it is followed by separation of the lovers and their possible definite breakup. The reunion, after the separation sequence, is ambivalent at first and hopeless in the end. The order is, thus, reversed with each element having an affective potential that largely differs from their prototypical functions as the ultimate failure of the couple's reunion indicates means that straightforward happy ending is not to be found. Likewise, the departures from familial separation prototype are highly significant, as the separation is marked with the death of the child, making the actual reunion impossible. In tune with the ambivalent or problematic result of the prototypical attempts at family reunion, the issue of the loss of the child lacks any emotional closure for the characters as they never talk about it or openly assess the nature of their relationship after the tragedy.

Rather than construing a prototypical linear, objective, largely real-time perspective on the narrative, the manipulations of the discourse guide and misguide the readers' anticipation and goal-alignment in largely non-prototypical ways. The story is narrated by a heterodiegetic narrator and has Leroy internally and other characters externally focalized. The discourse begins in *medias res* at the

moment of Leroy's return home, another departure from prototypical structures, when he builds the miniature log cabin and Norma Jean lifts weights. Gradually, we are told about their backstory through minor flashbacks and about Leroy's thoughts and plans. Norma Jean's plans are never directly stated, only mediated by Leroy's quiet speculations. Since the readers are closer to Leroy the whole time, knowing of his reunion plans and his good-hearted nature, this might be seen as a strategy to facilitate reader's alignment with Leroy's plans. After all, it is Norma Jean who does not respond well to attempts at reunion which would mark a universally desired happy ending. She is distant, mysterious, unconcerned and at times haughty. Leroy's actions are the only driving force towards a prototypical happy ending and thus, I hypothesize, readers would be more naturally inclined towards sympathizing with him. This, of course, requires empirical testing of readers' response, but my hypothesis is based on related studies which indicate how individual affective activators in a text naturally guide non-expert readers to construct a stable cognitive schema. As Steven Miall plausibly argued, schemata are formed during reading, not before it, with the guidance of affective response to individual phrases (1989). Affect guides the reader during the first reading, and only later a schema is established, and the affectively significant elements of the story lose their power. After one is familiar with the story, one turns to evaluation, both in terms of significance of the specific element for the story, and the artistic significance. The primary, emotional response to a given element of the story would be self-centered, or as Miall calls it, "self-referential" (1989, 57), as readers evaluate the events and their possible outcomes in relation to themselves. The affect, thus, "acts in an anticipatory manner" (Miall 1988, 260), it is a vehicle for predictions.

In tune with the above, I suppose it is "Shiloh's" deliberate artistic design to make readers' affective alignments initially closer to Leroy, but, in the end and after evaluation of the whole story, to be more sympathetic with Norma Jean, whose declaration at the end of the story is the first-time readers are confident about her plans and, at the same time, it sheds more light on her earlier actions binding them together in a reasonable, justified course of action. After all, the text suggests that it was Leroy's initiative to spend most of his time away from home and, likewise, it is his initiative to stay at home and persuade his wife into his desired lifestyle without ever consulting her. The readers' sympathies and goal-alignments are not clearly suggested from the very beginning, as we could expect in prototypical stories but they only become clear by the end of the story which means discourse manipulation makes the reader not only anxious about the actual ending of the story, but also about who to really sympathize with. We know that the death of their child the couple entered some long-lasting apathetic state (the period of grieving), and it is another tragic accident, Leroy's injury, that triggers some changes and leads to an attempt at recovery and mood repair. The text indicates the opposite approaches that the characters take towards the

recovery, and the tension is gradually built up, as Leroy wishes to build a new house, a real log cabin, to start again their marriage, while Norma Jean becomes more and more independent, weightlifting, taking additional courses in English, rather than staying at home, and abandoning her interest in playing the organ – a gift from her husband. The reader is, thus, presented with two disparate joint plans where both characters envision different future roles for each other.

4. Romance and Grief in "Shiloh"

Finally, I wish to investigate how particular symbols and motifs scattered across the story contribute to its thematic and emotional unity, exploring various affective reactions linked to the central emotions of the story: sexual desire, attachment, and grief. Apart from the changes in cardinal events that make up prototypical romantic tragi-comedy listed earlier, "Shiloh" necessarily departs from the standard emotional behaviors of the characters; it gives us character psychology that alters the prototypical forms. One obvious marker of attachment, sexual desire and romantic love is the need for bodily proximity between the lovers, as well as interest in the physical and emotional well-being of the other person (Hogan 2011b, 199–209). The feeling opposite to sexual desire/attachment is aversion and disgust and it is precisely what Norma Jean shows. Whereas we know that Leroy strives for closeness and intimacy, Norma Jean is "often startled to find Leroy at home" (4), she does not respond well to his advances and they both "feel awkward around each other" (5). All the activities she takes up indicate her distancing from the husband. She openly states she does not "want to live in any log cabin" (9) and she "closes her eyes when they are in bed" (9). She only agrees to go with him to Shiloh if he stops staring at her.

The other crucial indicator of attachment and love is reward dependency (Hogan 2011a, 81–86), the feeling that our well-being depends on the significant other and a related need for reciprocation of feelings which, if satisfied, produces trust and if not, elicits fear. Again, Leroy is clearly reward dependent in their marriage, but his wife is not, and as he senses his wife's feelings are not reciprocated, it triggers fear. Her English education "sounds intimidating" (12) to him. When she tells him that his name means "the king," he anxiously asks whether he still is "king around here" (14). He fears his wife "was happier with [him] gone" (13) and he feels "awkward like a boy on a date with an older girl" (16) while visiting Shiloh. Most importantly, Leroy is afraid to talk to his wife about their estrangement, their troubled past and about their current feelings. He wants to ask her what she thinks about him and tell her how he wants them to be reacquainted but in the end, he avoids the discussion, as if fearing rejection and holding on to an illusion of their relationship. The role of silence and the lack of meaningful conversations between the characters is also essential for the

development of the story. We learn that Norma Jean never complained about her solitary life with Leroy on the road. Leroy never explored nor voiced his thoughts regarding the decision to stay on the road. The couple never talked about the death of their infant son. Leroy avoids speaking openly about their problems and feelings and his mother-in-law tries to covertly manipulate her daughter into submission.

The role of silence in the story makes sense not only in relation to fear, but also in terms of mood repair, common strategies involved in dealing with grief. As stated early in this essay, grief is a response to a major loss of jointly shared plans that were central to one's identity and well-being, which suggests a significant degree of attachment as necessary to trigger the feeling. I should add that the causes of grieving in "Shiloh" are dispersed. First and foremost, it is the death of the child, but as the story progresses we get a sense of grieving over a decaying relationship (on Leroy's side) and over one's lost youth and autonomy (on Norma Jean's side). We should expect that various mechanisms of counteracting the feelings of despair enter to help characters handle it, but we learn little about their role immediately after the death of the child. In fact, Leroy's decision to shift his focus on the work could count as a mood repair mechanism, but since his grief was shared with his wife, the successful overcoming of the feeling and an attempt at continuing their relationship would have to include joint effort. Leroy's turning away resembles a deleterious mechanism of suppression, avoiding a productive mood repair solution of their problems. We never learn about Norma Jean's initial reaction, apart from the fact that she stayed silent. In reality, it is only after Leroy's return that the fifteen-year period of petrification is distorted and the need to end the time of grief and return to life becomes apparent. However, Leroy still proves to be unable to explore their painful past and, moreover, his clumsy attempts of reunion are belated. His fear of confronting both the past and his wife's feelings trigger panic reactions when he becomes blocked and cannot speak his mind, quickly forgetting what he intended to say. Leroy's behavior is suppression through and through. Norma Jean's mother, Mabel, likewise, wishes them to remain silent about the troubled past, trying to elicit feelings of guilt in her daughter and symbolically giving them a dust ruffle, to which Leroy remarks they can "hide things under the bed" (7).

On the other hand, Norma Jean is the only character that speaks honestly about her feelings trying to break from the prison of illusions that her husband and mother try to build around her. She complains to her husband that her mother teases her with stories of children dying of neglect, which he dismisses. She says she is unsure if she would tell Leroy if she were "fooling around with anybody" (14) and at the Shiloh memorial she openly says she wants to leave him. One typical early reaction to a feeling of grief would be turning to another attachment figure for comfort, which probably never happened in Norma Jean's case as we know that her husband avoided it, by staying away from home, and her mother would always blame her for the death of the child accusing her of neglect. There

was no way to initiate productive long-term mood repair before Leroy's return and it appears, just like Leroy, Norma Jean entered an apathetic state of grief suppression. This lack of comforting opportunities for Norma Jean is what possibly contributed to her realization that she feels no attachment towards her husband, which is gradually unveiled in the story. Her method of mood repair, indicating the end of apathetic grief, involves shift of attentional focus from her husband and his idea of their relationship and from her mother and her idea of broader family structures to herself and her own needs and feelings. It is clearly a therapeutic, empowering strategy aimed at restructuring one's identity and recalibration of one's life plans in tune with one's own current needs.

The visit at Shiloh National Military Park is the climax of the story manifesting a desperate strategy of Leroy and Mabel to manipulate Norma Jean into persisting in the illusion of their marriage. Mabel visited this place during her honeymoon and that was the only trip she ever took. Thus, not only does the battlefield represent symbolically, Mabel's vision of historical continuity between her marriage and her daughter's, but it also has further symbolic meaning: the rebel confederate forces were crushed by the union, just as perhaps Mabel imagines the couple's reunion. The army further withdrew to Corinth "where Mama eloped to" (16), what draws another parallel between history, Mabel and Norma Jean. Although Mabel never says it openly, she wishes her daughter to visit the historical site so as to sentimentally and superficially repeat her own story by reuniting with the husband. This is also Leroy's perspective who thinks the trip will be an easy opportunity to joyfully realign with family history. In the end, Leroy learns that honest revisiting of history is not necessarily painless: "it is not what he expected, he thought it would look like a golf course" (15) as if the past was just an empty, pleasant green space, but it appears "monuments are everywhere" (15) constantly reminding of the turbulent past, and there is even a log cabin with bullet holes, depicting an eerie version of Leroy's dream. Norma Jean's declaration to leave him puts Leroy into recognition of the pointlessness and deficiency of his ideas concerning reunion.

Norma Jean is initially reluctant to go to Shiloh, a place full of history, obviously linked to grief via monuments and cemeteries of thousands dead soldiers. She agrees to go there when she probably feels she is strong enough to confront the past on her own terms. Her confrontation with the troubled past is, in fact, a confrontation with the lifestyle model her mother and husband try to impose on her. Norma Jean's journey to liberation gains decisive momentum when her mother tries to trap her in a vicious circle of trauma reenactment which is supposed to place her in a position of a teenage girl again and make her obedient. This is clear when thirty-four-year-old Norma Jean bursts into tears after her mother catches her smoking and then, as if casually, alludes to her son's death by telling a story of a baby killed by a dog due to parents neglect. At this point, however, Norma Jean has already gained some strength and sees through her mother's intentions.

This is evident when immediately after conversing with her, she complains about it to her husband, who dismisses it, and later when during the final conversation at Shiloh battleground she sees the incident as an event that triggered her change (16). It was her moment of realization of the fact that her mother will not leave her alone and will always try to manipulate her into submission by referring to the teenage trauma. Yet, Norma Jean's moment of clarity indicates that she possibly finished her mood repair stage of grief and can start her life anew.

Conclusion

The story ends inconclusively, however, as we see Leroy trying to catch up with his wife, who is standing on the edge of a bluff and makes gestures he cannot clearly understand. This perhaps leaves our expectations for a desired outcome slightly frustrated, as we are prevented from seeing whose goals had been clearly carried out towards the end. In spite of this, I maintain my opinion of the whole discourse of "Shiloh" being more sympathetic towards Norma Jean, though it holds some, especially initial, sympathy towards the husband, skillfully manipulating readers' possible empathetic alignments with character goals. Apart from that, "Shiloh" is a well-devised blend of prototypical stories of romance and separation which introduces significant alterations to the original structures creating both an artistically valuable work and one which produces complex, non-prototypical target affective responses in its readers. Though the elements of the story are unified thematically via the emotions of grief, attachment, and desire, all of which are central to human interests, their exploration in "Shiloh" eschews simple, emotional gratification prototypical stories provide us with. The complexity of the emotional landscape depicted in the story corroborates Patrick C. Hogan's elaboration of appraisal theory of emotions which acknowledges, on the one hand, narrative embeddedness of emotions and, on the other hand, their affective potential that operates via readers' empathizing with characters' goals and their outcomes.

Notes

- 1 I should add that appraisal, although a dominant cognitive approach to emotions, is not a flawless theory. In fact, a substantial amount of emotional reactions appears to emerge on the simple experiential level of sub-cortical arousal that overrides the rational calculations produced in the neocortex. A typical example would be the rather common case of a man that is afraid of flying although he is perfectly aware that statistically, it is one of the safest modes of transportation. On the other hand, whereas fear seems to be easily explained

by the experiential model, more complex emotions, such as grief, are not. Hogan tends to merge the two approaches and, since they need not always be in radical conflict, it will suffice to call the theory I follow here appraisal.

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