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AFFECTIVE EXPERIENTIALITY IN RICHARD FORD'S *CANADA*: A COGNITIVE NARRATOLOGICAL READING

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Abstract

This article aims to explore the affective structure of the narrative universe in Richard Ford's *Canada* (2012) through the lens of Patrick Colm Hogan's affective narratology. We look into the affective responses provoked through the story-discourse distinction by virtue of Dell Parson' experientiality, both functioning as the narrating self (the narrator) and the experiencing self (the focalizer) in the novel. By way of considering the story(world) of the novel (what is told) with deliberate emphasis on the characters and the setting, we will also examine the discourse as the reconstruction of the story (how it is told) which crucially comprises the plot or emplotment and narration. The objective is to shed light on the importance of the emotional affordances of experience as reflected in Ford's novel.

Keywords: Richard Ford's *Canada*; Patrick C. Hogan, Affective Studies, Experientiality; Cognitive Narratology

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Introduction

Emotions, Keith Oatley maintains, "are important in fiction for the same reason that they are important in our everyday lives. They signal changes to the world in which we are engaged. They are the bases of our values" (126). The study of narrative, Patrick C. Hogan, an American theorist, points out, is inseparable from the study of affects or emotions (*Literature and Emotion* 4). Prose fiction, in particular, Bartosz Stopel maintains, offers insights into "complex social worlds and character minds, which both provide us with a wide array of emotional responses" (395). It affords readers ample opportunity to "attach to characters and to witness their actions […] to simulate real human behavior and social worlds in ways that may not be accessible in real life" (395). This is associated with the concept of experientiality derived from "natural" narratology which Monika Fludernik describes as "the quasi-mimetic evocation of real-life experience" (12). Considering the narrative universe to be tellable, the story-teller's/experiencer's accounts, Fludernik observes, resort to reader's familiarity with experience through the activation of "natural" cognitive parameters, particularly "the embodiment of cognitive faculties, the understanding of intentional action, the perception of temporality, and the emotional evaluation of experience" (Caracciolo). This occurs when the storyteller recounts or reflects on a past experience by conveying his or her own "embodied and emotional appraisal of temporally unfolding actions" (Caracciolo) wherein the natural narrative features the coincidence of the storyteller (the narrating self) and the experiencer (the experiencing self) or the internal focalizer.

Among the cognitive parameters, Fludernik considers embodiment as being of paramount importance, since it incorporates all other categories. Embodiment "evokes all the parameters of a real-life schema of existence which always has to be situated in a specific time and space frame, and the motivational and experiential aspects of human actionality likewise relate to the knowledge about one's physical presence in the world" (30). Also, intentionality is the other parameter propounded by Fludernik that pertains to the goal and motivations in human actions (23). Fludernik further explains that with respect to human temporality as a dynamic pattern, experientiality "*includes* this sense of moving with time, of the *now* of experience, but this almost static level of temporal experience is supplemented by more dynamic and evaluative factors" (29; emphasis in original). Finally, concerning the emotional evaluation of the experience, "all experience is therefore stored as emotionally charged remembrance, and it is reproduced in narrative form because it was memorable, funny, scary, or exciting" (29).

The story-discourse distinction is centrally important in Ford's *Canada* (2012). This is a narratological aspect which uncannily demonstrates the seminal importance of emotional affordances of experience in Ford's novel. This aspect is amply theorized by Patrick Hogan who throws into high relief the experiential thrust of emotions, hence our focus on his theories. Against this background, our argument in this article gravitates towards the affective worlds or emotional

episodes transported through the personal experiences of Dell Parson, the protagonist, within the frame of the first-person narration/internal focalization. In this internally focalized narrative, the reader experiences a storyworld through the consciousness of a character and, as Mario Caracciolo points out, develops "a feeling of 'closeness' to that character" ("Phenomenological", 61).

Dell's retrospective narrative delineates traumatic experiences; it affectively activates primed memories as the objects of focal attention on the ground of momentous consequences of his life viewed as eliciting conditions in his (post) traumatic experience towards his maturation: his parents' bank robbery – and its consequences: the parents' imprisonment and the later suicide of the mother; Berner's going away and her life of wandering; Dell's escape into Canada – and his witnessing of Arthur Remlinger's murderous act in Canada. As for the reader, Hogan observes, these primed memories "help orient our self-conscious processes, pointing our thought and action in certain directions, affecting our inferences and judgments of likelihood, coloring our emotional responses, and so on" (*How Authors' Minds*, xii).

In what follows, after briefly outlining Hogan's views about affects and emotions, we will explore affective experientiality in Ford's *Canada* apropos of story-discourse distinction. By way of considering the story(world) of the novel (what is told) with deliberate emphasis on the characters and the setting, we will also examine discourse as the reconstruction of the story (how it is told) which crucially comprises the plot or emplotment (the making of a story into a plot) and narration. The manipulation of the story though discourse drives the central idea of Dell's agonistic struggle to make sense of his family's past as well as his journey north to Canada. Thus, the novel's plot hinges on the gap between the 15-year-old Dell as the experiencing self, or the focalizer, and the 65-year-old Dell as the narrating self or the voice. Now that he is past middle age, he is better able to see why his parents behaved as they did and how they had felt under the circumstances. Moreover, he revisits his experience of a 6-week stay with Arthur Remlinger in Canada that paved the way towards his adulthood.

Affects and Emotion Episodes

Patrick Hogan deploys Nico Frijda and Klaus Scherer's explanation of the term "affect[1]" in a general sense in affective science: "a class or category of mental states that includes emotions, moods, attitudes, interpersonal stances, and affect dispositions" (qtd. in *Literature and Emotion*, 39). Affects, as Hogan proceeds, are foremost potentially comprehended as either "*emotion episodes themselves*, *or subjective motivational tendencies that guide the onset, continuation, or alteration of emotion episodes*" (*Literature and Emotion*, 39; emphasis in original). Mood is the affective state that stands out as much more enduring than an emotion episode since it enhances the likelihood of an emotion episode consistent with the mood. According to Frijda, the crucial feature of moods is that they "render one susceptible to emotion arousal by a large range of events that match the

mood's affective tone" and this is dubbed "mood-congruent processing" (qtd. in Hogan, *Literature and Emotion*, 39). Mood congruent processing is one's "tendency to recall memories, construe present experiences, and infer future conditions in ways that are affectively consistent with [one's] current feeling state" (Hogan. *Ulysses*, 69-70). For example, when we are happy, we remember happy memories or even unravel ambiguous events favorably and expect satisfactory outcome. The other type of affect is attitude. It refers to one's evaluation of any object such as oneself, other people, possessions, abstract concepts, places, and so on (*Literature and Emotion*, 40). Likewise, interpersonal stance is the subject's "emotional orientation toward another person or persons in a particular situation" which is almost consistent with mood or with attitude (*Literature and Emotion*, 41). According to Hogan, one's belligerent attitude along with an unruly mood give rise to an aggressively confrontational and provocative stance toward others (41). Finally, affect dispositions, sometimes called "trait affectivity" or "trait emotionality," are similar to moods, yet the most enduring affect type in emotion episodes that "dispose one toward a particular sort of emotion"; someone, Hogan exemplifies, who is dispositionally anxious is likely to respond with anxiety to mildly threatening possibilities ("Affect Studies").

As mentioned earlier, emotion is also categorized as affect. Hogan defines emotion as "motivation system that prototypically has a set of specifiable, recurring features" (*Literature and Moral*, 150). Concerning prototypicality, Hogan believes that all emotions are prototypical-based, since the author produces stories form his/her "narrative idiolects [that] include prototypes that define classes of stories"; hence, he also calls them "proto-stories" ("How", 158-9). These prototypes or proto-stories are complexes of cognitive and affective structures that lead the reader to interpret both the actual and fictional worlds as "past and ongoing events, our expectations of future events, and our simulations of hypothetical or counterfactual events, as well as our emotional response to those events" ("How", 159). Likewise, through the mention of the motivation system, Hogan adopts systems approach[2] which considers "different emotions as different systems" (*Literature and Moral*, 150). In effect, particular emotions are the amalgamation of different systems, for example, romantic love entails at least the attachment, sexual desire, and reward systems.

Hogan opines that emotion is elicited by perceptual causes or triggers as concrete experiences, memories, and imaginations, not (say) statistical probabilities commonly indicated in appraisal theories of emotion offered by Keith Oatley and Martha Nussbaum, among others. To give a somewhat over-simplified example, if the idea of an airplane ride is associated in one's mind with images of terrible suffering, then one is likely to be afraid of flying in an airplane, even if well aware that, statistically, flying in an airplane is far safer than, say, riding in a car (which does not cause me fear). Conversely, if one does not have concrete memories, etc., associated with some actually high-risk activity, such as going to a crowded restaurant during a pandemic, then one is unlikely to experience fear of that activity. Nussbaum, Oatley, and others writing on

emotion as "appraisal," do insist that the evaluation of consequences need not be conscious, but it seems that they still assume that it is (roughly) statistical. That seems to Hogan wrong. Statistical evaluations do sometimes give rise to emotions, but, in his account, that is only because, when we calculate statistical likelihood, we sometimes activate concrete memories, and so on; it is those concrete memories, etc., not the statistical likelihood, that elicits the emotion. Put differently, "inferences do not produce emotions without concrete perceptual experiences, whereas concrete perceptual experiences do produce emotions even when opposed to inferences" (Hogan, *What Literature*, 47). However, this does not mean that inferences have no function in emotion; contrariwise, in the unraveling of emotion episodes, "working memory", inclusive of "paraemotional processes," in particular, inference, imagination, attend to "*sustain* an emotion or […]to *inhibit* an emotion, once the relevant system has been aroused" (Hogan, *What Literature*, 48; emphasis added). Hogan holds that without these processes, emotional responses would be "too brief, too erratic, and too contingent on external or somatosensory stimuli to motivate the sorts of long-term social projects that characterize human behavior" (*What Literature*, 48).

By and large, an emotion episode has several components. First and foremost, it begins with some mood state concerning a subject as well as some *eliciting conditions* while encountering a target/object of an emotion. These elicitors have three important sources: first, all have some innate sensitivities (internal/receptive elicitors) in our bodies that, in Antonio Damasio's words, respond emotionally to the perception of certain features of stimuli in the world such as size, large span, type of motion, and certain sounds (qtd. in Hogan, *What Literature*, 48-9). These also include innate responses to the expressive outcomes of the other people's emotional episodes (e.g., other people's facial expressions, such as when someone smiles, it activates the other person's emotional system to respond with a smile, too). These responses lead to critical period experiences, the second source, which is central in our analysis. Critical period, as Hogan describes it, is "a developmental period when some cognitive or affective system undergoes initial organization, with systemic consequences that are difficult or impossible to alter later on" (*Literature and Emotion*, 178). It refers to early events in our childhood when we learn how to feel through our direct experiences and the emotion expressions of others. Hogan refers to emotions of disgust, fear and attachment as dominant ones the child experiences through encounter with his/her parents/caregiver in critical period development such as insecure or secure attachment bonding (*What Literature*, 51). Finally, there are the emotional memories that "upon activation, revive the initial emotion itself (as when the recollection of an automobile accident revives the sense of panic that accompanied the past experience)" (Hogan, "Affect Studies"). These eliciting conditions evoke a feeling or phenomenological tone as the second component, and, next, this feeling in turn precipitates other components including action, physiological and expressive-communicative outcome (i.e., physiological manifestations of the emotion). This

outcome, then, establishes our attentional focus (*Cognitive Science*, 169-70). In our analysis, we will also discuss the relevant concepts in each component.

Story(world) Affects in *Canada*

Richard Ford's fiction is suffused with wide range of emotions. In Morris Dickstein's words, Ford's stories come across with "the buried feelings, mysterious losses, and aching transitions that mark the destinies of ordinary individuals" (164). The narrative in Ford's fiction usually hinges on a recurring pattern: the marginalized and isolated characters, suffering from great losses, undergo traumatic experiences and typically find themselves "standing alongside the edge of an emotional abyss, alone and isolated, looking back at an often uncontrollable life" (Guagliardo 5). What is more, these stories almost always feature a man, usually in his fifties or sixties, that serves as the character-narrator with retrospective experientiality that taps into the turning point of his life as his critical period, particularly the marriage and family breakdown when "death or violence, sexual waywardness or simple misunderstanding came between them, and he himself, though young and confused, was initiated into the mysteries of the adult world" (Dickstein 265). Also, the father figure, in Ford's stories, more often than not partakes of "violent impulses, thoughtless behavior, and irretrievable effects" (266).

Ford's fiction, at the height of postmodern era in 1970s and 1980s, is affiliated with the new wave of realism, or neo-realism. Antirealist critics, such as Fredric Jameson, in Ian McGuire's account, have ignored the contemporary realism as "naively representationalist" (*Ends*, xviii) and examples of realism's "shrivelled posterity" (Jameson, qtd. in *Ends*, xvi). Nevertheless, Ford's realism fits well into Fludernik's model of the realist text which is distinct from the restricted generic definition of nineteenth-century realist novel. It is not just hooked on the meticulous external occurrences, "the psychological realm" turns out to be crucial; in fact, this model "closely corresponds to a mimetic representation of individual experience that cognitively and epistemically relies on real-world knowledge" (Fludernik 28). At stake here is the reproduction of real-world parameters, building fictional worlds, identical to Ford's, that are about human beings who go through the experiences that could happen to us, to affect and be affected by emotions that we could feel or be aroused by, and, settings that exist in the actual world. In tandem with this, McGuire identifies Ford's practice in his fiction as "pragmatic realism," that is,

> the traditional realist claims to represent or grasp reality are maintained and indeed developed but are also carefully tempered by a pragmatic, antifoundationalist awareness that any *reality* that the realist grasps is only ever *temporary* and that any act of grasping is only ever *partial*. Ford's realism is in this sense inherently modest in its claims, but it is also inveterately hopeful — there is a *truth*, it suggests, a truth that exists and can be usefully distinguished from error, even if that truth does not have timeless metaphysical foundations. (*Ends*, xvii-xviii, emphases added)

Stylistically, Ford's realism is geared toward impressionism wherein the "reality" transmitted is epistemologically fragmentary and provisional, yet, conceived thematically. There is the idea of *mystery* at the heart of his fiction appropriated from Hemingway:

> for anyone, at any time, some things that matter can't be told, either because they're too important or too hard to bring to words, and these things can be the subject of stories. I think I learned that first and best reading Hemingway, learned the manners and codes and protocols a story observes when it comes round something it thinks is a consequential mystery. (Ford, "The Three Kings," 285)

Coming to terms with emotion systems, mystery is akin to one's feeling of emotional state that cannot be expressed accurately.

Canada recounts the fifty years of Dell Parsons' personal experiences. The initial section of the novel is set in Great Falls. The town's name hints at the catastrophe the family faces. Dell tells the reader about his "just regular" parents who robbed a bank in 1960 (1). Because of his father, Capt. Beverly Parsons, being an Air Force man and a war veteran, they have lived on air bases in Mississippi, California and Texas. Now during the four years settlement in Great Falls, his father, after twenty years of service for the US Air Force, is dismissed because he is involved in a scheme on stealing meat and selling it to the officers' club. The father is an Alabama man with Southern accent, "big, plank shouldered" and extrovert; he is "talkative, funny, forever wanting to please anybody who came in range" (6). He is also described as thoughtless, irresponsible, adventurous and too optimistic, full of hope for success. Conversely, the mother, Neeva Kamper lives in a completely different world. She is a teacher and an "ethical agnostic" despite being a Jew (45). She is described as introvert and paranoid-like, "alienated, inward, shy [and] artistic"; physically, she is "tiny (barely five feet), pretty only when she smiled and witty only when she felt completely comfortable" (6).

The father regularly changes jobs such as buying and selling new and used cars, selling farms and ranch lands.[3] The crucial event takes place when one afternoon he comes home "in a rising jolly humor" to inform the mother that he has started "an independent business partnership with 'people on the railroad'," that is, in effect, another illegal job (23). He is supposed to act as "a middle man" because it makes "him *feel* and look *competent*" (34; emphases added); he buys stolen meat from the Indians and delivers it to Spencer Digby Negro, the waitress on the train. The father's scheme acts as an eliciting condition for the mother; she fearfully "opposed it, and had right away begun feeling a 'terrible tension'" (23). For a while, things seem to run smoothly and the father feels elated. However, as Hogan says, "any actional outcomes are likely to aim at preserving rather than altering the situation" (*What Literature*, 144). The father's elation does not last long. Digby runs away with the money and the father has to deal with his debt to Indians who have threatened to kill him and his family. The father, Dell says,

> wasn't a man accustomed to being threatened. He was accustomed to getting along well with people, amusing them, being admired for his looks, his nice manners, his southern accent, and for his valiant bombardier's service in the war. Being threatened with murder exerted a big impact on him. He immediately began to brood and fester about how he could get the money, and quickly came to the extraordinary idea of finding a bank to rob. (53)

Here, the father feels the danger that triggers fear and results in diffuse anxiety. Dell in one of his memories recounts a day his father took him to the movies. On seeing the criminals' car parked for sale, the father says:

> "[W]ould you become a bank robber, Dell? It'd be exciting. Wouldn't that surprise your mother?"
> "I wouldn't," I said, looking speculatingly up at the gleaming holes and all the country yokels peeping in the car windows and yowling and grinning.
> "Are you sure?" he said. "I could give it a try. I'd be smarter than these two [the criminals], though. You don't use your noggin, you end up a piece of Swiss cheese. Your mother'd take this wrong, of course. You don't need to relate it to her." (83)

Apart from his debt to the Indians, it appears that he had been thinking of robbing a bank as an achievement of his motivational goal in life which is, above all, an absurd male fantasy. As a young boy, Dell "didn't put those things together then" (83); after many years, he infers: "It was a thing he'd [his father] always wanted to do. Some people want to be bank presidents. Other people want to rob banks" (63).

Thus, the father's "unburdened frame of mind" ultimately fosters the mother's anxiety about an uncertain future, one of "a new strange state of mind" (61, 65). For both of them the bank robbery is a kind of desperate remedy to save the family. The father's plan, somewhat identical to the movies he had used to watch, is as naïve as himself. He "wanted robbing a bank to be congenial" and "never gave any specific thought to being caught—because he was too clever"; he "felt that robbing a 'national bank' was 'a crime without any victims'" (61). He naively assumes: "he looked like no one who'd ever rob a bank. So he could rob one without even resorting to a mask or a disguise. He would do it quickly, then drive back into the baked, engulfing landscape and be back to Great Falls by evening. No one would be the wiser" (61).

The parents' decision to rob the bank causes the aversive emotions of self-blame – shame, guilt, and regret – and grief. In this regard, two emotionally salient episodes figure prominently in the novel. The first is when they are arrested at home in front of Dell and Berner. The police, referring to the parents, say "you two don't seem like bank robbers" (156). This overwhelmingly affects the children. Dell does not look at his sister and tries to go through this emotional crisis or traumatic experience on his own; the experience, however, affects him even physiologically: "I couldn't get breath in my lungs for a moment then. My mouth went open to speak. But words didn't come out. I closed my mouth and tried to breathe a complete breath. I didn't want to look at Berner […] My heart

had begun slamming in my chest. I wanted her [my mother] to announce that no one here was a bank robber" (156, 157). However, the mother shows no resistance and is arrested. The scene is indelibly stamped on Dell's memory:

> Bishop produced a pair of silver handcuffs, and he and the bald policeman moved around the dining room table and put their hands on my mother's shoulders. […] The two policemen on either side raised her by her arms and turned them back and pulled her hands together behind her. She didn't resist, but her hands had been trembling, and she kept blinking behind her glasses, then looking upward. The big policeman took the handcuffs and clicked them carefully onto my mother's wrists. (157-8)

The mother, Dell remembers, also goes through an emotional crisis; her hands are trembling and her eyes are blinking a state of helplessness, a sort of panic mingled with shame and guilt. Dell records the affective registers of the scene meticulously though it cannot be determined whether in this episode the father feels the same or not. Considering his personality, we might assume that he feels regret, though not as much as his constitutionally tense wife, which also involves fear and anxiety for the prudential consequences of his action. Shame and guilt could accompany each other but, in Hogan's theorization, there are some nuances that should be taken into consideration. Shame incorporates "a sense that one has failed relative to prior expectations" and the intensity of failure and disappointment in our performance is in compliance with the activation of another emotion system, that is, disgust; as a feeling about self, shame is remarkably concomitant to identity (*What Literature*, 96). Guilt, in contrast, is an other-oriented or emphatic emotion of responsibility one has for the infliction of pain with regard to victims of one's past acts which is also bound up with compassion (95). Given that it is the father's failure as a provider that leads to the catastrophic robbery, assumingly he should feel guilt and shame more intensely. However, it is the mother who experiences these emotions more intensely, leading to self-disgust and eventually suicide. Though it should be noted that, as we glean through her prison diaries and Dell's reflections, she seems to have always regretted the decision of marrying the father, one which had blasted her dreams.

Before we proceed to further unpack the emotional/affective charge of some crucial passages in the novel, we should point out that excepting Dell, all the members of the family use different strategies of avoidance in the face of the traumatic events. The mother, with her reclusive and alienated/alienating personality mingled with a sense of superiority, opts for suicide as a way out. The father tries to stay afloat resorting to a defensive mechanism known as "dissociative disorders" which separate the unity of the consciousness by dissociating persons from the painful thoughts, feelings and memories related to traumatic events.[4] Berner also faces an identity crisis associated with dissociation. According to Krause-Utz, dissociation "involves disruptions of usually integrated functions of consciousness, perception, memory, identity, and affect (e.g., depersonalization, derealization, numbing, amnesia, and analgesia)" (1). Berner leaves her brother

and goes on a life of drifting. She even changes her name which she associates with her past. It is only Dell who faces his traumatic past. Telling the story of his life is a way of doing this. As Lorrie Moore puts it, "what he really learns is passive resilience with a chess player's field awareness, something that his mother, who kills herself in jail, turns out not to have as much of as her twin children" (318)

Another salient episode is Dell and Berner seeing the picture of their parents in the local newspaper: "two separate ones, side by side — taken in jail. They were each holding a white card that said 'Cascade County Jail,' with a number underneath it" (186). This is the pivotal eliciting condition in the novel that orients the attention of both the children and the reader toward the evocation of the emotion system of grief. Hogan explains that grief stems from the loss of an attachment relation that involves an augmented sense of loneliness and anxiety. The anxiety relates to the loss of the loved one's care and the security that goes along with that care. It also raises a sense that one's home (with the loved one) has been lost, and that what was home is now an alien place (*What Literature*, 140). In this case, the children have lost the family attachment and this increasingly brings about their isolation and anxiety regarding their uncertain future. Likewise, despite the fact that Dell develops a kind of attachment with Great Falls (impatiently longed for school to begin, or his interest in going to the chess club and so on), his place attachment is "evolutionarily" connected with person attachment (Panksepp, qtd. in Hogan, *Literature and Emotion*, 136-7). When Dell and Berner go to the jail to visit their parents, the father says: "She's not speaking to me,". […] "I don't blame her." He shook his head. "I didn't hold up my end very well" (194). On the bar of the mother's cell, there has been hung a white metal sign "SUICIDE, painted in red block letters" (196). Seeing her mother, Berner's grief is intense and physically manifest: her tears "draining onto her cheeks, her mouth pressed closed, her chin quivering" which is the expressive outcome of the activation of the emotion of grief (198). The question Dell asks his mother about where they are supposed to go betokens that place attachment and does not operate emotionally without person attachment and love. The mother has already arranged for her children to be taken to Canada with Mildred Remlinger and answers Dell this way: "You'll see. It'll be a surprise. It'll be wonderful." Our mother smiled through the bars and nodded. "I'm saving you two. Mildred's coming" (198). This is another desperate remedy, one meant to partly remedy the dire consequences of the bank robbery.

The second part of the novel starts with a new life for both Dell and his twin sister Berner. Berner runs away but Dell and Mildred drive across the Canadian border to a small town where he temporarily stays with Arthur Remlinger to avoid being institutionalized by Montana's department of social services. Arthur who has a mysterious past plays the role of a sort of surrogate father for Dell. Facing the consequences of his own beliefs and actions, Arthur has escaped to Canada and has become a Canadian. Dell describes Arthur as "the most inconsistent person … One time, he would be friendly and enthusiastic, as if he'd been waiting to tell me something — but never did. Another time, he'd be reserved and awkward and

seem to want to get away from me. And still other times he was stiff and superior acting" (309). Arthur's peculiar traits are related to his traumatic past, his act of terrorism motivated by the hatred harbored against the workers union he takes responsible for his father's ruin. Ironically, this traumatized person is supposed to take care of the traumatized Dell. But he causes Dell to go through another traumatizing event; Dell sees the scene of Arthur murdering the two Americans who have been pursuing him in connection with his act of terrorism in the past.

Dell recollects from his emotional memory:

> the look on Arthur Remlinger's face, talking to the dead men—the look of reproval—and then *the look he gave me through the door* to *where I was watching, purely astonished*. It was a look (I believed then) that meant he would kill me, too, if the spirit moved him, and I should know that. *Murder was written on his face*, the look that Jepps and Crosley had been seeking, but only saw in their last moments. (*Canada*, 385; emphases added)

Surprise and fear transfix Dell whose emotion system based on his ethical reactions are altered from compassion and attachment to hatred and disgust. The emotionally charged scene epiphanically makes Dell see that Arthur is a selfish man constantly inhibiting his empathy for others who are "for the most part dead to him" (383). Arthur and, to some extent, Dell's father figure the traditional representation of violence as a test of manhood. Dell's affective experientiality is suffused with violence, "the aggressiveness and stubbornness of the traditional male role, which, as he sees it, leads to nothing but cruelty and, finally, separation and family dissolution" (Armengol 138). Through "all these memorable events," Dell says, "normal life was what I was seeking to preserve for myself" (386). In this sense, Dell "from a very early age, opt[s] instead for a new, alternative, nonviolent model of manhood" (Armengol 139).

In the third part of the novel, Dell, now a 65-year-old retired teacher, talks about his meeting with Berner who now suffers from cancer and will die in two months. The meeting is disturbing as it triggers the memories of the traumatic past. Berner, after leaving Great Falls, lives a bohemian life consisting of a series of failures:

> Berner had had at least three husbands and unfortunately seemed able to please herself only on the margins of conventional life. I lost track of most of it. She was a hippie until that played out. Then the wife of a policeman, who treated her badly. Then a failed late-in-life college student. Then a waitress in a casino. Then a waitress in a restaurant. Then a nurse's assistant in a hospice. Another husband was a motorcycle mechanic in Grass Valley, California. No children were involved. And there was more that made her life seem not a good one, though she never said that. (*Canada*, 401)

The novel ends when Berner hands Dell their mother's diary written when she was in jail which includes her own version of the bank robbery, some poems and

her thought on the father and the life that led her to commit suicide. This greatly helps Dell better understand her mother and the events of the past.

Furthermore, Canada, as the setting and notably the title of the novel, as Robert H. Brinkmeyer Jr. notes, looms large in Ford's fiction and is associated with Ford's interest in "borders and border crossing" (71). Actually, Ford's exploration of "the dynamics of cross-cultural displacement and reassessment" is related to how emotional geography affects character and fosters mood. Of significance in this regard is the stark contrast between Dell's journey north to Canada and Berner's escape to San Francisco (71). "Rather than seeking to cut himself off from his past and to enter into a world of infinite possibility," Brinkmeyer Jr. explains, "Dell seeks a place where he can take stock of what has happened to him and his family and to figure out what he should now do with his life" (77); unlike Berner, Dell does not escape from his past, but moves towards comprehending it by virtue of maturity and responsibility (77). The vast prairies and wilderness in Canada are affectively evocative of freedom and infinite possibilities.

Thus, the affective dimensions in the exploitation of nature depicted in the novel are to be noted in this regard too. Dell feels a profound sense of disturbance as he describes the oil pumpers up in the prairie: "The oil pumper was humming away out in the windy wheat field, not far off, its lever arm smoothly sinking and rising — *the only unnatural noise* in the air. I'd almost stopped hearing it at night, though I went to sleep listening for it" (*Canada*, 294; emphases added). Additionally, scenes of hunting as sport and entertainment are frequent in Ford's fiction and *Canada* is no exception. Dell tells us that the sports were mostly Americans; after their shooting, "the ground was littered with dead and dying geese" (*Canada*, 254).

Canada, like all literary works, partakes of cross-cultural universals and literary prototypes. The prototypical story presents a character pursuing some goal inclined towards a desire for happiness delineated by emotion systems. Therefore, the key types of goal pursuit are characterized by the key types of satisfaction of emotion systems that partake of attachment, sexual desire, shame, anger, hunger, disgust, wonder or admiration, and guilt (Hogan, *Literature and Emotion*, 146). In this sense, the basic trajectory in the universal narrative structure is "tragi-comedy." Hogan illustrates: "the overall aim of a protagonist's goal pursuit is comic. Heroes do not set out to be defeated; the tragic separation of lovers is made tragic by the comic vision of their (now impossible) union" (*Literature and Emotion*, 148). Romantic tragicomedy is one of the main prototypical narratives in Ford's novel, particularly in the first part. Traditionally, the romantic prototype contains the combination of two basic human emotional conditions of happiness: attachment and sexual desire; it would roughly include two people that fall in love and have to deal with whatever obstructs their romantic union. In this regard, as Dell's descriptions indicate, his parents "couldn't have been more unsuited and different" (*Canada*, 4). Dell cannot understand why they were attracted to each other or whether they truly fell in love. One possibility is that after their first meeting in a party, the mother became pregnant and they had to

get married immediately. Also, based on this genre, the lovers may encounter obstacles, in this case the parental interference. The parents of Dell's mother do not approve of Dell's father and lose contact with their daughter, another instance of disconnection, traumatizing in its own right and partly accounting for Dell's mother's being emotionally incommunicative, a case maybe even bordering on a kind of emotional autism. Incorporating a pattern endemic to twentieth century American fiction, the novel portrays a couple maintaining an unsteady relationship and incompetency in connection, partly going through the minor prototype of familial separation that encompasses attachment without sexual desire. The final episode in this hapless trajectory is of course the bank robbery. So it is that the predominantly disturbing and/or traumatizing affects flow through the novel like an undercurrent indicating how significantly affect bears on the novel's plot (on which more is presented next).

Discourse Affects in *Canada*

In this section we will briefly address the affective dimensions of discourse in Ford's *Canada* to explore how the storyworld of the novel is presented through emplotment and narration. As a preliminary note, a literary work, apart from fictionality (storyworld), is an artifact meticulously designed, selected, and organized (Stopel, "Prose", 397). In this sense, a great deal of the reader's response depends on emplotment. Meir Sternberg and David Bordwell, among others, postulate three key emotions of emplotment: surprise, suspense and curiosity; "suspense involves our attitude toward unknown information about what will happen in the future, whereas curiosity involves our attitude toward what has happened in the past. […] Surprise […] involves the violation of our expectations" (Hogan, *Literature and Emotion*, 155). Hogan believes that these definitions are problematic, since the difference between suspense and curiosity is not "a matter of temporal direction, but of perception of potential outcomes" (Stopel. "Prose", 401). Suspense seems to be provoked when a story offers an outcome that we would not prefer is likely, while curiosity has less to do with preferred outcomes, yet, with a general interest as to what or why something takes place (Hogan, *Literature and Emotion*, 157). Ford's *Canada*, though a realist work, contains some features of the modernist style in its emplotment as well, particularly that of metafictionality. In the first paragraph, Dell provides the epitome of the novel: "First, I'll tell about the robbery our parents committed. Then about the murders. The robbery is the more important part since it served to set my and my sister's lives on the courses they eventually followed. Nothing would make complete sense without that being told first" (*Canada*, 3). Here, right at the beginning, we partially find out what we are supposed to read, so, there is a sense of curiosity to know the details of the robbery that change the course of Dell's and his sister's lives. Regarding the feeling of suspense, the novel, in a complex and original way, lets us know of the events in the forthcoming chapters in advance, hence nullifying our sense of suspense. Another instance to be considered is that at the

end of the novel Berner gives Dell their mother's chronicle of the robbery, filling in many of the gaps in his narrative.

Besides, *Canada* is laden with plots of counterfactuals involving the narrating self, rather than the experiencing self. As Dannenberg puts it, counterfactuals "involve the remapping of the life trajectories of characters to create altered outcomes and often dramatically transformed life stories" (1). This kind of plot "fuels the reader's *cognitive desire* to be in possession of the second aspect of plot" (13; emphases in original). McMullen, Markman, and Gavanski divide counterfactuals into upward ones that make a better consequent and downward ones that construct a worse outcome (qtd. in Dannenberg 119). The counterfactualizing agent, Dell, in Ford's *Canada* is self-focused, that is, one who "responds subjectively, and often emotionally, to events in his own life" and he is more attached and involved with the counterfactual emotions (Dannenberg 119). The emotion of satisfaction usually is provoked through downward counterfactuals while the emotion of regret is aroused by means of upward counterfactuals. Dannenberg offers the notion of "wistful regret" for long-term counterfactual retrospectives (120).

Dell continually projects an alternative world where his father is no longer present and he lives only with his mother and sister, though in few instances he says he loves his father. This could be marked as a downward counterfactual resulting in satisfaction for Dell, a kind of ideal life for him. Later, in one of his reflections on experientiality in life, Dell, again, in a counterfactual, evaluates his own experiencing self as a young boy:

> I was only fifteen then, and used to believing what people told me—sometimes more than I believed what was in my heart. If I'd been older, if I'd been seventeen and just that much more experienced, *if I'd had more than uncreated ideas about the world*, *I might've known that the feelings I was experiencing*—being drawn to Remlinger, allowing my feelings for my parents to go below the waves of my thinking—that these feelings signified bad things coming to me as well. (*Canada*, 317; emphasis added)

For Dell this serves as an upward counterfactual which results in the feeling of wistful regret. Actually, in his childhood, when all the traumatic events occurred, he lacked adequate imaginative capacity and was incompetent to "create ideas" about the world unlike what Dell, the narrating self, constantly does in the novel.

Conclusion

Richard Ford's realism is immensely character-oriented; he desires to explore and render what he terms "lived life" (Guagliardo, 54) of his characters – what could be equivalent to experientiality. In this article we considered how Dell Parsons as a fictional character orients the reader's attention towards the affective dimensions and emotional engagement of his experientiality through his empathy-driven narrative. In his critical period, after enduring two significant

"physical events" as the eliciting conditions and their outcomes, familial separation and displacement, he is initiated into a journey that changes the course of his life (*Canada*, 366). Regarding the storyworld of the novel as simulations of social worlds, human behaviors and adequate sources of emotional experientiality, we examined the way mostly traumatic events affect the characters. We also looked into the setting and the way it fosters mood and feeling in the characters as well as the readers. As for the discourse, we took note of how the narrator-character of Ford's novel through selecting and ordering the events longs for providing an appraisal of what he experienced as a focalizer.

The "fundamental insight of affect theory," in Stephen Ahern's words, is "that no embodied being is independent, but rather is affected by and affects other bodies, profoundly and perpetually as a condition of being in the world" (4-5). The theme of connection/disconnection, central in Ford's fiction generally, has a heightened resonance in *Canada*. The very title intimates how the displaced narrator-character as an embodied being is affected by the new environment he inhabits as well as how he is affected by and affects the new people he meets there, but also how the past experiences of separation in his American past continue to affect him. Finally, the very narrative structure of the novel hinges on the narrator-character's attempt to make sense of and affectively remap/repair the mostly disruptive experience of his American past.

Notes

1. Hogan's approach is grounded on the general definition of "affect" which is roughly synonymous with "emotion" and "feeling", and is different from affective poststructuralism of Gilles Deleuze, Derrida, Brian Massumi, and others. See chapter 2 of Hogan's Literature and Emotion. New York, NY: Routledge, 2018.
2. Hogan contrasts systems approach with dimensions approach since, he maintains, the latter is much more limited and is only grounded on a small number of dimensions. He adds that there are commonly two dimensions: "valence" and "arousal." He continues: "Valence is the degree to which an emotion is positive or negative, thus (usually) leading to approach or avoidance. Arousal is the degree of intensity. 'Bliss' and 'happiness' are positively valenced emotions that differ in intensity" (Literature and Moral, 150).
3. ignificantly, he is mostly a salesman, selling things – cars and estate – that are closely associated with the sense of freedom and bliss promised in the American Dream.
4. "Dissociation during traumatic events," writes Krause-Utz, "can be considered an adaptive defense mechanism to cope with overwhelming threat that cannot be prevented or escaped" (2).

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