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Why Literary Devices Matter

Abstract

This paper investigates the emotional import of literary devices deployed in fiction. Reflecting on the often-favored approach in the analytic tradition that locates fictional characters, events, and narratives as sources of readers' emotions, I attempt to broaden the scope of analysis by accounting for how literary devices trigger non-cognitive emotions. I argue that giving more expansive consideration to literary devices by which authors present content facilitates a better understanding of how fiction engages emotion. In doing so, I also explore the somatic dimension of reading fiction.

Keywords

Affects, Non-cognitive Emotions, Literary Devices, Fiction, *Psycho*

Introduction

"Norman stirred, turned, and then fell into a darkness deeper and more engulfing than the swamp." Thus ends Chapter 5 of Robert Bloch's *Psycho*, in which Norman has a bad dream about Mother after he buries Mary. Upon reading the chapter, I felt a strange sense of fatigue: my body felt weighed down, and my breathing became heavier. The experience of bodily feelings such as these when engaging with literary fiction is not uncommon. Verily, people often notice that literary fiction can evoke bodily responses in them. For example, Susan Feagin (2010) remarks that the line "So it goes" in Kurt Vonnegut's work of science fiction *Slaughterhouse-five* caused her to shiver. Contemporary critics of horror often comment that a work of literary horror "makes your flesh creep" or "sends chills down your spine."

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However, how does reading fiction in silence, a "rather bodiless activity," stir readers somatically? An intuitive explanatory answer is through emotion. As for how a work engages readers' emotions, an approach often favored by analytical philosophy turns to the plot and narrative, and fictional characters and events, for an explanation while leaving literary devices and stylistic elements underinvestigated. In other words, this approach tends to foreground content independent of how the content is presented, i.e., the style of a work.[1] I call this the "content-based approach." The approach makes sense to the extent that fiction, as Nick Zangwill sees it, "involves content first and foremost" (cited in Kivy 2011, 37). Zangwill's claim is true, especially for philosophers who take literary fiction as a vehicle for philosophical themes or ethical inquiry.[2] What merits more philosophical interest is, therefore, the propositional content. A related view motivating this approach is that our emotional responses to a work are products of propositional, cognitive states—be they "fictional truths," "thought-content," or "perceptual beliefs"—that the reader can garner from the work's content. This paper intends to make a case for the inclusion of literary devices as a proper object of study in the analytic framework of fiction and emotion. I first take a brief critical look at a content-based approach, namely, Noël Carroll's criterial prefocusing model, which accounts for how fiction engages emotions. After showing its limitations, I turn to an alternative model proposed by Jenefer Robinson (2005). Based on Robinson's model, I account for how literary devices deployed in fiction trigger non-cognitive emotion and contribute to our emotional engagement. I flesh out my account using passages taken from *The Reef* and *Psycho*.

1. A Content-Based Approach

Carroll's criterial prefocusing model leans toward cognitive emotions. The cognitive theory of emotion—in which a propositional, cognitive state is necessary for emotion—informed his choice of focus. Despite his recent concession that emotions are more often non-cognitive, affective responses,

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[1] Some examples of philosophers who lean towards this approach are Kendall Walton (1990) in his *Mimesis as Make-Believe*, Martha Nussbaum (1995), and Noël Carroll, whose works will be discussed shortly.

[2] For example Nussbaum (1992, 23-29) approaches literary texts as indispensable components in ethical inquiry. Carroll's (2001) clarification view also purports that narrative fiction can clarify our moral understanding and emotions.

he insists that our emotional responses to literature are cognitive because "they must be engaged imaginatively and understood" and "they are not reducible to perceptual responses" (2020, 9).

Carroll (2001) explains that cognitive emotions occur when cognition subsumes an event or object under a specific criterion or category. For example, anger occurs when one's cognition subsumes an event in the category of a "wrong done to me or mine," which is a criterion appropriate to the emotion anger. Similarly, in reading fiction, cognitive emotion occurs when readers subsume fictional events under a specific category. One of his favorite illustrative examples is *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, in which the author confronts readers with scenes of black families being separated and emphasizes the innocence and decency of the slaves "whose family ties are being sundered, and the cruelty and callousness with which it is being done" (2001, 226). So, the author prompts readers to "perceive the scenes under the category of injustice," which elicits in the readers "the affect of indignation" (2001, 226).

Carroll (2020) suggests that emotion directs our attention like a searchlight, scanning the environment for features that are subsumable under our reigning emotional state and that are vital to our interests; it "sound[s] bodily alarms that rivet our attention" (10). Meanwhile, unlike everyday situations in which emotionally pertinent features are selected from a massive array of largely unstructured stimuli, the details have usually been structured and made salient by fiction writers. As we have seen, he relies on a salient description of cruelty to explain how *Uncle Tom's Cabin* provokes readers' emotions.[3] We could draw another example from a novel about a zombie apocalypse, in which the writer may "describe in gory adjectival excess the suppurating bodies of the zombies, their decay and fragmentation" to engender the affect of disgust (2020, 11).

One may doubt that salient depiction alone guarantees emotional engagement; salient depictions of battles in a treatise on military tactics, for instance, have little emotion-inducing capacity. Carroll seems to notice this problem when he adds another necessary condition; the narratives should enlist readers' specific concerns, preferences, or pro-attitudes—any attitudes in favor of something. They prompt readers to find out if the protagonists in the previous imagined zombie apocalypse novel survive, or to hope for the rectification of the wrongs done to the black families in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

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[3] Nussbaum (1995, 93-97) likewise focuses on how Richard Wright's *Native Son* recruits white readers' sympathy for the black character Bigger Thomas by "drawing attention to misery", focusing their attention on the individual, and guiding readers to see the world—and the disadvantaged situation he is in—through his eyes .

Still, a problem with this model is that while it may explain how literary fiction engenders standard, garden-variety emotions, it does not accommodate the more complicated, ineffable ones. Carroll's model quite readily sorts emotions into nameable categories. Conversely, critics often say that, for example, Kafka's works can induce a "sensory reaction" and emotions "of some sort" in readers, which can be described only through approximations such as "pain," "awe," or "horror." Robinson (2005) also notes that by reading a significant literary work like Edith Wharton's *The Reef,* some evoked emotions do not involve subsuming a fictional event under a criterion appropriate to a particular nameable emotion. Admittedly, critics and readers often do communicate emotions with others in terms of existing nameable emotions. However, the shades of emotions experienced during reading can be more subtle, complex, and ambivalent, eluding Carrollian categorization.

This limitation, I think, results from applying the "criterion of appropriateness" of real-life emotions to fictional emotions. Undeniably, many fictional emotions do follow similar criteria of appropriateness as these everyday emotions. Nevertheless, writers may also create emotions in a far less formulaic way than those governed by appropriateness criteria. Carroll is rather insistent that the criteria for horror are harmfulness and impurity. However, in literary horror, readers can be horrified by harmless and ordinary objects like the fire hose (Stephen King's *The Shining*) or a withering apple tree (Daphne Du Maurier's *The Apple Tree*). At the same time, Carroll tends to link pro-attitudes and concerns with positive human characters. However, in Robert Bloch's *Psycho*, readers are made to sympathize with Norman Bates, an unlikeable and charmless serial killer who fails to be an appropriate object of pro-attitudes and concerns.

Carroll has submitted different defenses to this line of objection. A recent one is that his criterial prefocusing model is still "the more perspicuous way" to handle these more complicated emotions (2020, 18). He explains that one can adopt "reverse engineering": we may observe that the features of the situation made salient by the author point in different directions (say, "joy" and "sadness"), then work backward to a more appropriate and complicated emotion (say, "bittersweet"). Regarding concerns for unlikeable or evil characters, he opines that "sympathy for the devil" in fiction results from readers' shifting moral assessments of the situation (1990, 142-143). He elsewhere (2013) attributes viewers' tendency to ally with the fictional mobster-boss Tony Soprano to the moral structure of the fictional world,

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in which Tony is the lesser evil and thus the best candidate for the alliance. As such, his approach to more complicated emotions still leans towards cognitive emotions that have their source in the content.

Even so, his model receives other criticisms. Robinson (2005) casts doubt on the mechanism by which Carroll says authors evoke emotions. She notes that authors evoke readers' emotions only after their cognition subsumes fictional characters or events under specific criteria appropriate to emotion in this model. Robinson retorts that readers can also feel emotionally engaged *before* categorizing the fictional characters or events under any criteria appropriate to an emotion—although the emotions involved could be "coarse" or "rough" in their initial stages. To form judgments about the fictional characters or events, readers often reflect on their emotions afterward.

To this objection, Carroll might reply that such categorization does not have to be a conscious operation, "no more than my recognition that an oncoming car is potentially harmful need be accompanied by my saying it" (2001, 27). That is why readers might feel as if they were emotionally engaged *before* they engaged in any categorization. However, even if we accept that categorization may operate below the level of consciousness, the relationship between attention and categorization is still not clear. In this model, an emotion occurs after the appropriate categorization, yet the categorization occurs *after* the reader's attention is drawn to certain emotion-relevant aspects of the fictional character or event. Although Carroll suggests that those emotion-relevant aspects stand out by salient depiction, I cannot help wonder: on what grounds does the salient depiction draw the readers' attention, with the result that the depiction *emotionally* prompts the readers to subsume what they read in the first place? As Robinson also notes, "Although what our attention is drawn to may be 'subsumable' under some emotion category, we do not actually subsume it under a category until after our attention has been fixed upon it" (2005, 183).

The move of supplementing his model with pro-attitudes, concerns, and preferred outcomes invested by the narrative does not help for a similar reason. We can still ask, what makes the narrative so successfully engaging that the readers are invested with pro-attitudes, concerns, and preferred outcomes? The same narrative with the same characters can fail to invest readers with pro-attitudes, *et cetera,* if an unskillful writer handles it. Perhaps the readers' attention has to be drawn to relevant details in the first place and fixed or sustained to become invested with pro-attitudes and preferred outcomes that guarantee emotional responses. In other words, while

Carroll is right that emotion is attention-guiding, his model does not explain what fixes our initial attention on emotion-relevant details and what drives the readers' cognition to subsume what they read emotionally.

2. Robinson's Model

Robinson (2005) constructs an alternative model to Carroll's based on the embodied appraisal theory of emotion. On this theory, an emotional response is, paradigmatically, an "(1) automatic bodily response that (2) makes something salient to the organism (focuses the organism on something), and (3) what it makes salient or focuses on is something registered as significant to its well-being" (2003, 241). This conception of emotion coincides with what psychologists call "quick and dirty feelings" or "affects," whose function is to heighten attention and get ready for action. Since emotions are primarily affective, embodied appraisals, a bodily perturbation without cognitive states and below the subject's conscious awareness can trigger emotions. In other words, as Carroll has also conceded, cognitive states are not necessary for emotion.

Accordingly, Robinson deems that literary fiction can activate readers' affective appraisals before any meaningful content for cognitive categorization is available to them. A narrative can induce what she calls "coarse or rough" emotions. They appraise "in a coarse-grained way: this is good/bad, friend/enemy, strange and threatening/safe and familiar" (2005, 183). Robinson's characterization of "coarse or rough" emotions is reminiscent of the Nietzschean idea of basic affect, which is an inclination or aversion to what is going on.[4] The coarse-grained affective appraisal can seize readers' initial attention, making the emotion-related details of the narrative salient. Focusing on those details in turns prompts readers to appraise in a "more fine-grained way" (Robinson 2005, 183), which typically recruits cognitive assessment of subsequent fictional characters/events, whereby cognitive emotions towards those fictional characters/events occur. When readers become emotionally involved in a narrative, both coarse-grained affective appraisals and the more fine-grained cognitive evaluations provide feedback to readers, which may configure, sustain, intensify or dissipate an emotion towards the characters/events as the narrative progresses. So Robinson remarks that in being emotionally engaged with a sophisticated narrative, "there is a succession of affective and cognitive appraisals going on all the

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[4] See for example Nietzsche (2019), section 34.

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time" (2005, 183). Although readers may not be conscious of every affective and cognitive appraisal in the process, if the experience taken as a whole is rich and intense, it will prompt readers to engage in after-the-fact reflection. Furthermore, usually, it is when readers reflect on the experience that the emotions are cataloged.

The merit of Robinson's model is that it fills in the missing piece in Carroll's model. Recall that Carroll's model does not explain what makes readers' attention "emotionally charged" in the first place. Robinson's model suggests that the quick and dirty, coarse or rough emotions can do the trick. To word it another way, if a piece of literary fiction engages emotion by, for example, investing readers with pro-attitudes, concerns, and preferred outcomes, the emotion is better guaranteed if the text is emotion-laden in the first place so that the engagement directs the readers' attention to relevant details that aim to develop those pro-attitudes, concerns and preferred outcomes. Readers are then prompted to follow the plot and evaluate the fictional characters/events in a more fine-grained way.

As for how literary fiction can be emotion-laden in a way that grabs readers' initial attention, rendering it emotionally-charged, one answer may turn to descriptions of a character's inner states.[5] The psychologists Kneepkens and Zwaan (1994) find that personally-involving details about a character are one type of emotional, "interesting information," which takes less effort and conscious control to attend to and memorize than unemotional (though important) information. Robinson likewise regards "careful description of the emotional states of the characters" as a way to engage readers' emotions, whereby they are "made to focus attention on certain situations and to see them in a certain way" (2005, 158). She instances a passage taken from Edith Wharton's *The Reef*:

> 'Unexpected obstacle. Please don't come till thirtieth. Anna.' All the way from Charing Cross to Dover the train had hammered the words of the telegram into George Darrow's ears, ringing every change of irony on its commonplace syllables: rattling them out like a discharge of musketry, letting them, one by one, drip slowly and coldly into his brain, or shaking, tossing, transposing them like the dice in some game of the gods of malice; and now, as he emerged from his compartment at the pier, and stood facing the wind-swept platform and the angry sea beyond, they leapt out at him as if from the crest of the waves, stung and blinded him with a fresh fury of derision. 'Unexpected obstacle. Please don't come till thirtieth. Anna.' (Cited in Robinson 2005, 161).

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[5] I opt for a pluralistic approach to fictional emotions, so I am only suggesting that description of a character's inner states is just one of a number of effective ways to do this.

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Robinson comments that Wharton realistically describes Darrow's inner states induced by the telegram. The passage dramatizes Darrow's emotional states regarding his interaction with the environment and relation to the world but not in terms of his beliefs or cognitive judgments about Anna or the telegram. The passage features "the sound of the train, the cold unwelcoming sea, the wet gloomy weather" and the crowd on the pier: "they too seem to reject him and to be either hostile or indifferent" (2005, 161). These are the unpleasant qualities in the environment that are made salient in Darrow's perception of it. Also, the passage both begins and ends with the words in Anna's telegram. The repetition expresses Darrow's obsessive focus on the telegram. To Robinson, this passage is an acceptable illustration of how Darrow's emotional responses unfold in ways that approximate her embodied appraisal theory of emotion but not the cognitive theory of emotion.

To me, this passage can also serve as an apt illustration of how literary fiction can secure readers' emotional involvement with a character before any meaningful content for cognitive categorization is available. Clearly, the passage describes a somewhat unpleasant situation: Darrow is upset by Anna's telegram. However, as this is the novel's opening passage, readers do not know anything about Darrow and what happened between him and Anna. It is not likely that readers have any attitudes towards or concerns about him or have subsumed the situation emotionally in the way described by Carroll's model.

Still, one may notice that on my current reading, the emotion aroused in readers may be explained by the propositional state "Darrow is upset." The analysis remains somewhat content-based. So, questions arise: can the passage enlist an even coarser-grained emotion than this, one which the content alone cannot adequately explain? Is Carroll right that our emotions in response to literary fiction are cognitive after all?

3. Why Literary Devices Matter

My answer to the questions raised is that the passage's style by which propositional content is presented plays a role in its emotional impact. *The Reef*'s opening passage enlists non-cognitive emotion of negative valence through its literary devices. The term "literary devices" refers to what Robinson calls "verbal form," i.e., syntactic and rhetorical devices including but not limited to parallelism, asyndeton, rhyme, rhythm, and imagery (2005, 212-213), or what Feagin dubs "verbal features," which encompass "diction, narrative voice, style, sentence structure—in short, anything about the way lan-

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guage is used in the work" (1996, 132). Robinson contends that literary devices function to guide readers' emotional responses, focusing attention and influencing readers' initial affective appraisals and subsequent cognitive evaluation of the content. Feagin likewise maintains that verbal features of language often elicit affective responses. Verbal features can encourage or heighten feelings such as uneasiness, curiosity, eagerness, *et cetera*, all of which facilitate readers' engagement with a fictional scenario.[6]

Although Robinson illustrates her contention using poems and does not discuss how literary devices function in *The Reef's* opening passage, I do not see much difficulty extending her claim to the passage. Let us explore the passage more in-depth in light of her contention by examining its verbal features. It starts with a contrast: a single, lengthy sentence that expresses Darrow's unsettling flux of feelings and perceptions provoked by the words in Anna's telegram follows the short and bluntly formal sentences of Anna's telegram. The use of a lengthy sentence filled with kinesthetic imagery inscribes the processual, on-going shades of feelings and perceptions into this emotional episode, rendering it a fluctuating motion. By calling the words in the telegram "commonplace syllables," it seems that Wharton wants to direct readers' attention to the sonic contrast of the subsequent lines, which indeed feature, for example, a series of adverbial participles ("ringing," "rattling," "shaking," "tossing," "transposing") with trills or fricative sounds. Together with the choppy phrases and clauses, the lengthy line develops a distinct, quavering rhythm.

In this way, the passage is apt to enact a rhythmic but mildly strenuous and bumpy moving experience, and consequently, a mild sense of strain in readers. The line may also get readers to form in their mind a sequence of fleeting, visual images of a variety of movements accompanied by jagged sound imagery, such as a shaking train compartment, discharging musketry, blowing wind and a roaring sea with waves in motion, however faint and transient they are. Indeed, words mediate the imagined perceptual states, but the end-product is more like a collage of images that do not necessarily form propositional content. I venture that the verbal features breed negative, non-cognitive emotion that agitates readers, activating their affective understanding of Darrow's inner emotional state. The negative emotion's sources go beyond the propositional state "Darrow is upset." It secures the readers' initial attention and interest, prompting them to read more about what had

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[6] However, Feagin (1996, 78) holds a cognitive theory of emotion and deems that mere affective responses are not emotions. Following Robinson, my position is that the affective responses under consideration in this section are emotions. This is not to say, however, that all responses elicited by verbal features are emotions.

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happened between Darrow and Anna. It may invest them with the attitude towards Darrow, even though they know very little about him. Recall Carroll's remark that emotional responses to literature are cognitive, provided that they must involve imagination and understanding. Conversely, I am trying to characterize here the kind of understanding and imagination as not necessarily propositional. It involves embodied understanding of movement on the one hand and sensory (or imagistic) imagination—which is typically characterized as a non-propositional use of images—on the other.[7]

To experience the passage in this way involves what Mark Johnson calls "embodied meaning-making." The "embodied meaning" of a passage is to be contrasted with its propositional, linguistic meaning; it "goes beyond words" (2008, 219). Johnson notes that in poetry, various senses, including sight, hearing, smell, and taste, typically develop the non-propositional embodied meanings and richly felt qualities; they are dependent on "the precise rhythm of images, sounds, pauses, and intensifications" (2008, 220) that constitute the style of a work. These sensory qualities resonate with readers in different ways, animating parts of readers' corporeal understanding of the subject matter and the sensations, feelings, or emotions that the content expresses.

Johnson states that the non-propositional embodied meanings and richly felt qualities of poems could often be seen, though admittedly to a lesser degree, in prose language. In *The Stranger*, Johnson instances that Camus's "almost Hemingway-like conciseness and sparseness," or what is called Camus's impersonal, expository, lucid, flat "white style,"[8] expresses Meursault's indifferent attitude to the world. However, the images, sensations, rhythms, and pulsations of some passages in the funeral scenes "carry the reader along by evoking a vast sea of unconscious, or barely conscious, connections and feelings" (2008, 223), activating readers' corporeal understanding of Meursault's subjective, private experiences of his mother's funeral. It occurs to me that in some cases, the impact of the literary devices in prose language is so perceptible that (sensitive) readers are aware of how their sensory qualities resonate with their body. The aesthetician Zhu Guangqian observes that on reading Chinese prose written in a "clanging tone" and "smooth rhythm," the muscles all over his soma undergo similarly rhythmic movements of alternating tension and alleviation, rendering in him the feeling of pleasure; conversely, his muscles feel "constrained and uneasy" when reading prose with inharmonious tones or "flawed" rhythm (1994, 124).

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[7] See Landland-Hassen 2016, 64.
[8] See Susan Sontag 2001, 16.

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Perhaps it can be said that some prose language can appeal to readers' bodies in ways analogical to visual images and music. My surmises do not sound too fanciful if we consider that literary scholars characterize literary devices (e.g., imagery, repetitions, rhythm) as means of engaging readers' bodily sensations (e.g., Steidele 2007; Solander 2013), or how philosophers in the continental tradition write about prose language's musicality (e.g., Deleuze 1997; Wiskus 2014). Specifically, Deleuze remarks that "there is also a painting and a music characteristic of writing, like the effects of colors and sonorities that rise up above words" (Deleuze 1997, lv).

That being said, I am aware that my account is not without challenges. In my analysis of Wharton's passage, one possible source of emotion is the visual and/or aural images excited by the passage filled with imageries, yet Peter Kivy would be dismissive of this view. Kivy rejects that silent reading of fiction excites visual and aural images in readers' minds that are "no less distinct" than the images experienced as if they were initially eye-witnesses (2011, 131). These views are, he argues, based on a faulty Lockean model of language according to which words, "by constant use," readily excite "Ideas" that affect the "Senses" (Locke 1975/1964, 261). The "Ideas" are tokens of the same type as the ideas that would be caused to arise if one saw the object signified by the words (Kivy 2011, 131). Kivy adduces Edmund Burke's remarks that words rarely produce any visual or aural images in readers' minds and that a particular effort of the imagination is required for their occurrence, further suggesting that "our speed of language comprehension far outstrips our ability to form mental images" (2011, 23). Kivy adds that even if readers sometimes entertain vivid mental images, they are far from "talking pictures" that, I take him to mean, carry propositional content. As a proponent of the cognitive theory of emotion, Kivy expectedly disregards mental images as a legitimate source of emotions.

Before submitting responses to this possible challenge, it should be noted that Kivy and I subscribe to different theories of emotion. Following Robinson's embodied appraisal theory of emotion on which cognitive states that carry propositional content are not necessary for an emotion to occur, my account does not require Kivy's "talking pictures" for emotion to occur.

What interests me is Burke's empirical claims, adduced by Kivy, about the frequency and likelihood of forming mental images in silent reading. I suspect that forming mental images varies with the prose language's quality and the readers. It is probably easier to excite visual and aural images in readers, for example, who grow up in a multi-media environment than those who do not, for the former are used to learning stories through (and thus have more

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mental resources connected to) aural and moving visual images. Other lived experiences (e.g., traveling experiences) are likely additional sources of such mental resources. It is not to say that the imagistic imagination is a mere matter of retrieving images from memory. Because our memory is prone to confabulation and that concurrent emotion can color our state of mind, I am inclined to say that the imagination is closer to fabrication.[9]

Next, empirical studies seem to show that the phenomenon of forming mental images while reading is not as unusual as Burke and Kivy think. Recent findings in psychology (e.g., Speer et al. 2009, Foroni et al. 2009) reveal that reading narrative texts often activate brain regions that process experiences of sights, sounds, tastes, and movements and that verbal, emotional stimuli drive muscle activation. Another pertinent phenomenon is hearing inner voices during reading, which the activation of the auditory cortex's voice-selective areas explains (Yao et al., 2011). In this context, it is also worth mentioning that recent neuroscientific studies show that imagining sound has a "measurable effect on areas of the brain directly related to the perception of sound" (Grimshaw & Garner 2014, 1) and that imaginary stimuli can generate emotion via the same causal pathway as real stimuli (1).

As already noted, Kivy admits the occasional occurrence of mental images, though he refuses to see them as a legitimate source of (cognitive) emotion. He also fully acknowledges the phenomenon of hearing inner voices during silent reading. He nevertheless is reluctant to count these perceptual experiences as the aesthetic experience of prose fiction. One reason for this is that readers seldom take the perpetual properties of prose language as the direct object of artistic attention. Another reason is that the perceptual experiences are far less significant when compared to those arising from poetry. The second point, I concede, is true. As a less content-based form of writing, poetry, in general, relies more heavily on verbal features and sound quality than on content for their impact. As Schopenhauer once remarked: "I remember from early childhood that I was delighted for a long time by the pleasant sounds of verse before I discovered that it made sense and contained thoughts as well" and that "even trivial thoughts gain a measure of significance through rhythm and rhyme" (2014, 446).

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[9] As such, the images are not necessarily "token[s] of the same type" as ideas evoked by real objects either. In fact, I opine that different readers probably have different versions of the images. For example, in the image of the discharging musketry that came to my mind when reading Wharton's passage, the musket is pointing right; other readers may imagine it differently.

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With limited space, I do not wish to enter into the debate with Kivy over whether the perceptual experiences arising from prose fiction are sufficiently significant to be qualified under his conception of "aesthetic experience." Instead, my suggestion is that there seems to be no reason to rule out that skillful deployment of verbal features in fiction can have a causal power similar to that identified in poetry by Schopenhauer, albeit to a lesser degree. I hope my discussion thus far is convincing enough to make a case for it. It remains probable that even if readers are occupied mainly by the content and seldom take prose language as the direct object of artistic attention, as Kivy asserts, their affective appraisals can be simultaneously triggered, often subliminally, by the verbal features of the passages. Taken together, even if our emotional responses to fiction are not reducible to non-cognitive, perceptual responses, as Carroll holds, this does not rule out their occurrence. The non-cognitive, affective responses can still be contributory to the emotional experience. Indeed, in my analysis, Wharton's passage can enlist both our cognitive and non-cognitive responses, and both the verbal features and the content combine to create the passage's full-blown emotional effect.[10]

Thus I agree with Feagin (1992) that affective responses to fiction are not merely mediated by thoughts generated from the content but are often manifestations of sensitivities to the style of the work and its verbal features.[11] This view, Feagin insightfully adds, "provides impetus for the view that there are special sorts of "aesthetic experiences" offered by literary fiction whose qualitatively distinctive character is unlike ordinary, everyday experience" (1996, 135). It also sheds light on how a work configures the more complicated emotions mentioned in section II, say, "sympathy for the devil." In what follows, I illustrate my view with the case of *Psycho*, the novel with which my paper begins.

As already noted, Bloch's *Psycho* manages to get readers to sympathize with the unlikeable Norman. In the film adaptation, Hitchcock gets viewers to side with him by detailing Norman's silent concealment of Mary's murder, making the viewers feel "an uncanny profound satisfaction of a job properly done" (Žižek 2004). In the novel, Bloch did this by spending the whole of

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[10] Derek Matravers (1998) similarly argues that the non-propositional properties of literature matter for a full explanation of our emotional reactions to it. He brings up literary devices such as tone of voice, imagery, repetition, sibilance, *et cetera* (91, 97). In this paper, I go one step further to explore their somatic effects.

[11] That probably explains why the impact of a literary fiction can be weakened by reading an (unskillful) translated version.

Chapter 5 (51-63) using alternating verbal features when describing Norman's actions and his inner states about concealing Mary's murder.[12] For example, on the third page of Chapter 5, Norman ponders,

> The girl had driven in alone, said she'd been on the road all day. That meant she wasn't visiting *en route*. And she didn't seem to know where Fairvale was, didn't mention any other towns nearby, so the chances were she had no intention of seeing anyone around here. Whoever expected her—if anyone *was* expecting her—must live some distance further North.
>
> Of course this was all supposition, but it seemed logical enough. And he'd have to take a chance on being right.
>
> She had signed the register, of course, but that meant nothing. If anybody ever asked, he'd say that she had spent the night and driven on.
>
> All he had to do was get rid of the body and the car and make sure that everything was cleaned up afterward.
>
> That part would be easy. He knew just how to do it. It wouldn't be pleasant, but it wouldn't be difficult either.
>
> And it would save him from going to the police. It would save Mother.
>
> Oh, he still intended to have things out with her—he wasn't backing down on that part of it, not this time—but this could wait until afterward.
>
> The big thing now was to dispose of the evidence. The *corpus delicti* (53).

From the second paragraph on, this passage stands out for its noticeably short, consecutive paragraphs, within which the sentences are syntactically simple, and wordings are straightforward. It can be read with the pleasure of lucidity. They run as if Norman was thinking aloud to himself (e.g., 'Oh'). The passage orders Norman's flow of thoughts in a distinct "step-by-step" rhythm, which registers the logical reckoning of Norman's plan. If the verbal features are a bit too conspicuous, they mark Norman's conscious, controlled effort to structure his thoughts and focus of attention. They qualitatively mimic Norman's thought process and encourage readers to follow the rhythm of Norman's thoughts, working to "synchronize" the readers' thoughts with Norman's. The passage aims to get readers to "think along" with Norman, despite being guised in the third person mode.

> Shortly afterwards Norman resolved in carrying out his plan. He first had to look for a container for the *corpus delicti*.
>
> Norman went down to the basement and opened the door of the old fruit cellar. He found what he was looking for – a discarded clothes hamper with a sprung cover. It was large enough and it would do nicely.

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[12] I am aware that other content-related factors, such as Mary's death and Norman's voyeuristic behavior, can also prompt or hinder a reader's alliance with Norman.

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Nicely—God, how can you think like that about what you're proposing to do?

He winced at the realization, and took a deep breath. This was no time to be self-conscious or self-critical. One had to be practical. Very practical, very careful, very calm.

Calmly, he tossed his clothes into the hamper. Calmly, he took an old oilcloth from the table near the cellar stairs. Calmly, he went back upstairs, snapped off the kitchen light, snapped off the hall light, and let himself out of the house in darkness, carrying the hamper with the oilcloth on top (54).

This passage contains a brief moment of tension when Norman cognitively monitors his positive reaction to the hamper. It triggers the cognitive emotions of guilt and shame in him. For readers who still refuse to side with Norman, this self-reproach works to gain their sympathy.[13] For readers who already do so, or who even are slightly delighted by the hamper as Norman was, Norman's sudden thought (expressed by the sentence in italics) may function like a vague alarm that distances them from Norman. Nevertheless, immediately the tension dissipates as Bloch gets Norman to pull himself together by the reassuring line ending in diminishing syllables, "Very practical, very careful, very calm." The line descends towards the succeeding paragraph featuring the repetitive use of "Calmly," in which the use of a similar form of the sentences' grammatical construction, parallelism, strikes a sense of regularity and steadiness in readers. A sense of rhythm recurs, and this time it registers Norman's actions. As the sentences become lengthier, a vague sense of gradual restoration of stability is felt. It ends in a moment of "ease." The passage continues,

It was harder to be calm here in the dark. Harder not to think about a hundred and one things that might go wrong.

Mother had wandered off—where? Was she out on the highway, ready to be picked up by anyone who might come driving by? Was she still suffering a hysterical reaction, would the shock of what she had done caused her to blurt out the truth to whoever came along and found her? Had she run away, or was she merely in a daze? Maybe she'd gone down past the woods back of the house, along the narrow ten-acre strip of their land which stretched off into the swamp. Wouldn't it be better to search for her first?

Norman sighed and shook his head. He couldn't afford the risk. [...] (54-55).

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[13] Self-reproach is a rhetoric strategy for inducing sympathy for problematic characters. See Wayne Booth's (1983) *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. Relieving anxiety is another, which is also used in this passage.

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Here the instability of Norman's emotions and wondering thoughts are inscribed in a lengthier paragraph containing a mixture of structurally different sentences of irregular lengths. Unlike the previous passages, this paragraph does not course forward in a noticeable rhythm but progresses in an untethered rush. Moreover, note how the third-person mode gradually fades away. It fades so smoothly that readers are now, with or without their awareness of it, made to read the lines as if Norman were addressing them directly, hammering his floods of worries and doubts into their head. Readers are tugged out from Norman's thoughts as the third person mode resumes, just before Bloch confronts them again with Norman's recurring self-doubts, torrents of emotions, and bodily sensations accompanying his actions as the chapter proceeds.

Perhaps it can be said that the author designs verbal features to gradually break down the readers' psychological resistance to Norman (if there is any), gently sliding them into Norman's frame of mind. They work to facilitate readers' affective understanding of, and spontaneous engagement with, Norman's labor and inner turmoil, paving the way for their eventual sympathy for Norman. Regardless of the extent to which readers are transported to Norman's frame of mind, the ebb and flow of changes in the passages sustain readers' interest in, and attention to, what Norman is going through. As a qualitative whole, the changes are sometimes felt like a particular coursing forward or inward, other times a pulling away; sometimes there is a sense of strain, other times one of ease. Consequently, reading the passages as a whole induces the experience of effort. When it comes to the end of the chapter, readers may even have a mild sense of fatigue, aligning with Norman's exhaustion.

Concluding remarks

I hope I have presented a compelling case for taking literary devices as proper objects in a philosophical investigation of fiction and emotion. I offer a framework that synthesizes philosophical inquiry with other academic disciplines in understanding the somatic dimension of reading fiction in silence. I hope that the synthesis can enrich and advance debates on fiction and emotion. Specifically, I have shown how a passage's verbal features can induce moving experiences and sensory images, identified as two possible triggers of non-cognitive embodied appraisals. The two related mechanisms involved in the reading experience are the embodied understanding of movement and non-propositional, sensory imagination. However, given

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the variety of styles and content that fiction offers, I do not wish to claim that either of these two mechanisms is necessary in all cases, though I believe that they are the more dominant ones. As said, my framework is not exhaustive. There seems to be no formulaic rule for the two mechanisms to operate in different cases either. As shown in my reading of *Psycho*, the passages activate readers' corporeal understanding of Norman's movements of thoughts and his body, so the embodied understanding of movement is probably the dominating mechanism, though not necessarily to the exclusion of sensory imagination. The somatic experience may draw more on readers' embodied understanding of movement, and less on imagistic imagination, than Wharton's imagery-packed passage depicting how the environment appears to Darrow.

Despite this, by broadening the spotlight to illuminate the content and literary devices by which the content is presented, we are armed with more conceptual tools to appreciate literary passages' expressive value. Doing so offers a fuller picture than the content-based approach of how a passage (such as the example in Wharton's *The Reef*) can focus readers' initial attention in a way that prompts their emotional engagement even before any meaningful content for cognitive judgments is available to them. It also sheds light on how a work configures the more complicated emotion of sympathy for the devil, one in which readers' cognitive judgments and emotions probably come apart. Recall Carroll's view that sympathy for the devil can result from readers shifting their moral assessment of the situation. If this is plausible, then my reading of *Psycho* explains such a shift. It shows how literary devices can be deployed to shape our moral assessments through influencing our initial affective appraisals and subsequent cognitive evaluation. They are typically not our object of attention, yet they enlist various non-cognitive, emotional, perceptual, or embodied states. We may not be aware of how such devices resonate with our body, nor are we conscious of the occurrence of the "lower" bodily states—but they nevertheless imperceptibly shape our "higher" cognitive evaluation. This understanding also prompts us to ponder the extent to which Nietzsche was right in claiming that "our moral judgments and evaluations are only images and fantasies based on a physiological process unknown to us" and that "moralities are a Sign-language of affects."[14]

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[14] Nietzsche 2019, Section 119; 2012, Section 187.

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