Perspectives in Imaginative Engagement with Fiction[*]

I take up three puzzles about emotional and evaluative responses to fiction: how it is possible to have genuine emotions toward fiction (the puzzle of *fictional emotions*), how readers' responses to fiction can differ from those they would have if they encountered the same situation in real life (the puzzle of *disparate response*), and why readers are sometimes unwilling or unable to respond as the author suggests (the puzzle of *imaginative resistance*). I argue that a consistent solution to all three puzzles requires appealing to a "perspective" on the fictional world. Perspectives are tools for structuring thought, and guide emotion and evaluation. Trying on a perspective requires actually, albeit temporarily, organizing one's thoughts in a new way, and can produce lingering cognitive effects.

§1: Introduction

Three puzzles about our imaginative engagement with fiction have recently received a fair

amount of philosophical attention, though rarely at the same time. The first problem is how we can have

emotional responses to fiction at all, given our awareness that the depicted characters and events don't

exist. Many philosophers believe that emotions are essentially connected to belief, desire, and action; as

Kendall Walton (1978, 21, fn. 15) says, "it is plausible that…pity, worry about, hate, and envy are such

that one cannot have them without believing that their objects exist, just as one cannot fear something

without believing that it threatens them." Likewise, it might seem that I cannot genuinely hate or fear

something unless I'm disposed to act in certain ways toward it. But these connections to belief and action

are absent in fiction. This is the puzzle of *fictional emotions*.[1]

One solution to this puzzle, advocated most prominently by Walton, is that we merely imagine

having emotional responses to fictional characters and events. But if that is right, it begins to look strange

that we would ever refuse to play along with the author's instructions to imagine having certain emotions.

The same question arises for normative evaluations: why should we be unwilling or unable to even

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[1] Cf. e.g. Walton 1978, Levinson 1997.

imagine that certain claims about what is right, beautiful, or funny are true, given that we happily play

along in imagining many other highly implausible, even impossible, things? This is the puzzle of

imaginative resistance.[2]

It's natural to respond that the second puzzle arises only if we solve the first by relocating our

emotional and evaluative attitudes to fiction within the scope of what is imagined. Many people find this

solution absurd; they think it is obvious that a full engagement with fiction requires having genuine

emotional and evaluative responses to the characters and events it depicts. And that's not the sort of thing

readers can choose to do willy-nilly, in response to an author's demands (Moran 1994). But if that's

right, then we confront a third puzzle: our responses to characters and events in fiction often differ

significantly from those we would have if we confronted them in real life. I find it funny rather than cruel

that the Three Stooges bop each other over the head with heavy implements. I find the events in a

Stephen King novel thrilling rather than disgusting. I root for Scarlett O'Hara to get her man and her

mansion rather than to emancipate her slaves. This is the puzzle of *disparate response*.[3] So *something*

imaginative must be going on here; and this makes it look like our emotional responses to fiction can't

really be genuine after all. And this seems to send us right back where we started.

To explain our engagement with fiction in a way that handles all three puzzles, we need a richer

account of the imaginative projects that authors of fiction propose for their readers, and of the resources

readers bring to bear in engaging with them. I will argue that among the most central and neglected of

these resources are the *perspectives* we cultivate on fictional worlds. A perspective requires more than

just imagining that a set of propositions is true, or even imagining experiencing something. Rather, it

involves structuring one's thinking in certain ways, so that certain sorts of properties stick out as

especially surprising, notable, or explanatorily central. Adding perspectives to our explanatory toolkit,

and recognizing the nuanced ways in which authors manipulate perspectives within fiction, makes it less

puzzling both that fictions trigger robust emotional and evaluative responses, and that those responses

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[2] See especially Hume 1757/1985 and Gendler 2000.

[3] Shaun Nichols (2006, 464) discusses what he calls the problem of "disparate affect," which is one
species of the puzzle of disparate response. Currie 1997 calls it the "problem of personality."

differ from those we would have toward analogous situations in real world. This in turn suggests that imaginative resistance is both less pervasive and less mysterious than philosophers have recently claimed.

The intuition that perspectives play an important role in our engagement with fiction is not new. Richard Moran is particularly explicit in this regard:

> Imagination with respect to the cruel, the embarrassing, or the arousing involves something more like a point of view, a total perspective on the situation, rather than just the truth of a specifiable proposition. And imagining along these lines involves something more like genuine rehearsal, "trying on" the point of view, trying to determine what it is like to inhabit it (1994, 105).

Similarly, Tamar Szabó Gendler claims that the puzzle of imaginative resistance reveals that "imagining involves something in between belief, on the one hand, and mere supposition, on the other" (2000, 56), which she calls a "point of view" or a "way of looking." Walton (1994, 1997), Currie (1997, 2010), Dadlez (1997), Carroll (2001), Goldie (2003), Gaut (2007), and others make at least some appeal to perspectives, outlooks, frames, orientations, or seeing-as in explaining our emotional and evaluative responses to fiction. However, these appeals to perspectives have not fully infiltrated the mainstream discussions of the three puzzles mentioned above. The reason, I believe, is that it's not obvious what a perspective is, or what it might mean to try one on. Perspectives are messy and amorphous—arguably the aspect of our mental lives that most eludes specification in clear-cut, propositional terms. Unless we can articulate a sufficiently precise view of perspectives, talk of "trying on perspectives" will seem like an illegitimate dodge into obscurity. By contrast, most discussions of the three puzzles analyze imagination as the propositional or experiential representation of a content as if it were real. This analysis is familiar, admirably clear, and demonstrably powerful; the problem is that the features that make it so clear also prevent it from accounting for the full complexities of literary imagination.

According to the standard model, the mind is primarily composed of attitudes, like belief and desire, directed toward propositional contents; these mental states interact in virtue of inferential and heuristic relations among their contents to produce new attitudes and ultimately action. Belief and desire are distinguished from each other by their 'direction of fit': the function of a belief is to represent a way the world is, while the function of a desire is to motivate the agent to change the world to satisfy it.

Imagination can be straightforwardly integrated into this model by treating it as an additional propositional attitude. One general advantage of this approach is a unified analysis in terms of a "single code" (Nichols and Stich 2000, Nichols 2004, Pylyshyn 2003). A more specific payoff is that it allows us to bring the resources of philosophy of mind to the analysis of fiction, by establishing a strong parallel between belief about the real world and imagination about fiction. Walton sums up the analogy thus:

> Principles of generation…constitute conditional prescriptions about what is to be imagined in what circumstances. And the propositions that are to be imagined are fictional. Fictionality has turned out to be analogous to truth… Imagining aims at the fictional as belief aims at the true. What is true is to be believed; what is fictional is to be imagined (1990, 41).

Philosophers like Walton, David Lewis (1978) and Alex Byrne (1993) have investigated the principles of generation by which readers amplify explicit prescriptions about what is fictional into a coherent, well-rounded world. The standard model proposes that these are basically the same inferential and heuristic principles employed in making sense of reality, insofar as imagination is merely the "off-line" simulation of our ordinary cognitive mechanisms.

The simplest principle for generating implicit fictional truths is what Walton calls the "Reality Principle," on which fictional worlds are "as much like the real one as the core of primary [i.e. explicitly stipulated] fictional truths permits" (1990, 144).[4] As both Walton and Lewis point out, the Reality Principle does not govern fiction in general: we don't 'import' as many of our contemporary beliefs about geography or biology as possible into the *Odyssey* or *The Lord of The Rings*. Rather, because we realize that Homer had very different beliefs than we do, and that Tolkein intended to create a fantastical realm, we bracket many of our ordinary beliefs, relying on implicit clues within the fiction plus general knowledge of how beliefs cluster together, to generate fictional worlds far removed from reality.

Nonetheless, it has become common to claim that a version of the Reality Principle does obtain for certain classes of higher-order propositions in fiction, or for certain relations between base-level and

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[4] Walton (1990, 145) offers the following as a "working formulation" of the Reality Principle: "If $p_1,..., p_n$ are the propositions whose fictionality a representation generates directly, another proposition, q, is fictional in it if, and only if, were it the case that $p_1,..., p_n$, it would be the case that q."

higher-order propositions. Brian Weatherson (2004, 22) articulates the core assumption in especially

forthright terms:

> The fact that it's the author's story, not the reader's, means that the author gets to say what the underlying facts are. But that still leaves the possibility for differences of opinion about [which higher-order concepts to apply to those facts], and on that question the author's opinion is just another opinion. Authorial authority extends as far as saying which world is fictional in the story; it does not extend as far as saying which concepts are instantiated there.

If we combine this with the assumption that the operative opinions about which higher-order concepts

apply are readers' own default opinions, then we get a very strong form of the Reality Principle, which we

might call the "Fixed Reality Principle": the view that authors lack the ability to make the fictional world

different from the real one in certain ways: say, to make it fictional that infanticide is moral, or that

nutmeg is the *summum bonum*.[5] A direct consequence is that imaginative resistance should arise when

authors attempt to postulate fictions that differ from the real world in those ways. As Steve Yablo (2002,

485) puts it:

> It's a feature of [the relevant class of higher-order concepts] that their extension in a situation depends on how the situation does or would strike us. 'Does or would strike us' *as we are*: how we are represented as reacting, or invited to react, has nothing to do with it. Resistance is the natural consequence. If we insist on judging the extension ourselves, it stands to reason that any seeming intelligence coming from elsewhere is automatically suspect.

Despite its current philosophical popularity, one of my main claims will be that the Fixed Reality

Principle is false. Imaginative resistance is both less pervasive, and more complex in its etiology, than the

Principle predicts. Readers are often willing and able to imagine fictional worlds that differ dramatically

from how they take the real world to be, including in moral and other evaluative respects; disparate

response is at least as common as imaginative resistance.

The formulation and motivation of the Fixed Reality Principle is heavily focused on propositions.

It is natural to think, though, that a purely propositional model of fictional engagement is too restrictive.

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[5] Thus, Walton (1994, 37) says that in contrast to more objective subjects, "when it comes to moral matters…I am more inclined to stick to my guns…I judge characters by the moral standards I myself use in real life…I don't easily give up the Reality Principle, as far as moral judgments (moral principles) are concerned." Weatherson is slightly more cautious, but says that "there is a strong default assumption" that the standard 'in virtue of' relations are imported into stories, and "it is not easy to overcome this assumption" (2004, 17).

Many philosophers, including Walton, have emphasized that participation in a fiction involves "not just imagining *that* such and such is true of ourselves," but "imagining *doing* things, *experiencing* things, *feeling* in certain ways" (1997, 38). Because dramatic rehearsal is vivid and engaged, with much of the phenomenal immediacy of perception, it plausibly plays a crucial role in triggering the physiological responses involved in readers' (quasi-)emotions toward fiction—thus helping to solve, or at least dissolve, the puzzle of fictional emotions. Further, because dramatic rehearsal often includes what Gregory Currie (1995, 256) calls the "empathetic re-enactment" of imagined scenes "through the eyes of characters within them," it has a natural explanation for disparate response: imagining being some other person requires imagining having their emotional and evaluative responses, which may differ from those I would have myself. Finally, dramatic rehearsal also appears to explain imaginative resistance: readers balk at imagining being characters who are too different from themselves.

I agree that an exclusively propositional model is overly restrictive. But I will also argue that dramatic rehearsal alone does not solve the puzzles. The fundamental problem is that both propositional and dramatic imagination are individuated in terms of content: of *what* is represented in imagination, either in an abstract, quasi-sentential form or in a concrete, quasi-perceptual one. As a result, standard models of fictional response lack the resources to explain the ways in which authors ask their readers to manipulate *how* they represent a given content. And this in turn prevents them from explaining why mere imagination has genuine, persisting cognitive effects, and why differences in presentation produce similar emotional and evaluative variation in response to real situations as they to do fiction. Finally, such models make predictions about when imaginative resistance should arise that are not borne out by most readers' actual responses. To see the limitations of exclusively content-based models, and what difference this makes for the puzzles, we need a more detailed account of perspectives.

§2: From Characterizations to Perspectives

2.1: Literal and Metaphorical Perspectives

It might seem that once we supplement the propositional model with dramatic imagination, an account of perspectives, outlooks, or frames follows naturally. Thus, Currie (1995, 1997) proposes treating talk of "adopting a perspective" quite literally, in terms of Richard Wollheim's (1984, 74) notion of iconic, central imagining, in which I rehearse a sequence of events by placing myself at some location within the scene.[6] This suggestion is supported by empirical evidence that reading narratives activates experiential representations (Tettamanti et al 2005, Speer et al 2009),[7] and that readers often process information from the spatio-temporal, cognitive, and emotional point of view of narrative protagonists. Thus, for instance, subjects are quicker both at reporting the locations of objects which are close to or in front of the protagonist (Rinck et al 1996) and at interpreting sentences reporting emotions which match those implicitly felt by the protagonist (Gernsbacher et al 1992).[8]

However, an adequate account of perspectives must appeal to more than an agent's literal spatio-temporal and psychological point of view on an imagined scene, for at least three reasons. First, a reader's emotional and interpretive responses are not simply a function of the focal character's mental state: they also depend upon his beliefs about the fictional world as a whole, including facts of which that character is ignorant.[9] Thus, I fear for the heroine fixing a late-night cup of hot chocolate because I know, as she doesn't, that a burglar is hidden in the pantry, or that there will be a horrible gas explosion. Second, in reading fiction I don't only locate myself imaginatively inside each successive scene. In addition, I

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[6] Currie's 2010 view is considerably closer to mine; see fn. 21 below.

[7] However, there is considerable variability in how much visual imagery subjects report experiencing: at one extreme, William James (1890/1981, 708) reports that he "can seldom call to mind even a single letter of the alphabet in purely retinal terms." At the other end, Elaine Scarry (1999) reports extremely vivid, complex, and sustained mental imagery, and construes fiction-making in general in heavily imagistic terms. See e.g. McKelvie 1995 for self-reports of experiential imagining; see Schwitzgebel 2008 for philosophical discussion of the unreliability of introspection and experiential self-report.

[8] See Lang 1984, Bourg 1996, and Harris 2000 for reviews of evidence for affective and experiential activation in reading; see Coplan 2004 for useful philosophical discussion of empirical evidence and a defense of empathy in fictional engagement.

[9] Cf. Moran 1994, 91; Carroll 2001, Goldie 2003. Further, as Tamar Gendler (p.c.) points out, I can learn such things through a wide range of cues: most obviously, non-linearity and foreshadowing in narrative, but also music in film, violations of genre expectations, and so on.

often also adopt an acentral and external perspective on the fictional world as a whole.[10] As a result, even as I rehearse a scene through the eyes of a specific character, my responses are modulated by how sympathetically the author[11] presents that character—that is, by the degree to which the author 'deputizes' them as someone whose perspective is to be adopted.[12] For instance, I am likely to experience dread rather than exultation as I read the scheming Casanova's description of seducing the ingénue if the author has emphasized the societal importance of social class and presented the seducer as an unfeeling rake, but not if she has presented him as a Dionysian sexual liberator.

Finally, and most importantly, an adequate account of perspectives must explain how a perspective can apply to multiple situations or even multiple worlds. Many theorists (e.g. Nussbaum 1992) have argued that we read fiction to acquaint ourselves with new perspectives on the real world; Gendler argues that imaginative resistance arises "because in trying to make that world fictional, [the author] is providing us with a way of looking at *this* world which we prefer not to embrace" (2000, 79). To make sense of these claims, we need to analyze perspectives in a way that allows them to be extracted from particular scenes. But because dramatic rehearsal, and especially iconic central imagining, are so intimately tied up with the particular scene being imagined, they cannot accommodate this.

I believe we can get a clearer understanding of the relevant sense of perspective by considering other uses of the imagination which also invite non-literal talk of perspectives. Thus, consider the following sequence of ways in which I might present a thought to you. Suppose I tell you that our mutual

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[10] Cf. Goldie 2003, 57; Currie 2010, 49. Film may differ from verbal fiction in how much viewers adopt external perspectives. There also appear to be significant differences across individuals in the degree to which they cultivate an internal engagement.

[11] Throughout, unless otherwise noted, by 'author' I mean the implied author, who is constructed or postulated as the creator of this fiction, and whose intentions may diverge from those of the actual historical writer; for discussion, see e.g. Booth 1961, Nehamas 1987, Eco 1992. Currie (2010, ch. 4) argues that there is no useful distinction between implied authors and external narrators, while Goldie (2003) focuses on external narrators without discussing authors. Although I think there can be important differences between real authors, implied authors, and external (and internal) narrators, for current purposes the distinction is largely moot.

[12] Goldie (2003) uses this point in criticizing Currie (1997) for assuming that emotional response is guided entirely by empathetic engagement with characters. Carroll (2001) and others also emphasize that my emotional responses are often complementary rather than identical to the character's: I feel pity for the protagonist undone by fate, not his despair.

acquaintance Bill was a high school quarterback who dated the captain of the cheerleading team. I might

tell you this with several possible aims. Minimally, I might just want to give you some information about

Bill: to add to your stock of beliefs about him. More robustly, though, I might want you to take this fact

to be especially typical or revealing of him—to treat it as a "telling detail." If that is my intent, then I

might introduce it by saying: "Here's what you need to know about Bill," or "Bill's just the sort of guy

who…" Indeed, I might present this same story, in the same revelatory spirit, while adding a crucial

disclaimer: "Actually, Bill never really was a quarterback. But he might as well have been—that's

exactly the kind of guy he is." With that addition, we've moved from fact to fiction: the telling detail has

become a "just-so story." This change has important ramifications for what factual information you

should take away from my story, but it doesn't affect my basic communicative purpose, which is to give

you an overall sense of what kind of person he is. Finally, we can move from fiction to metaphor: by

telling you "Bill is the quarterback of our department," I might inform you that he plays the sort of role in

our department that quarterbacks play in football.[13]

In all three of the latter cases, I'm asking you to use your way of thinking about quarterbacks to

organize your overall thinking about Bill. In order to have a non-metaphorical term for thought in which

one mental representation structures another, I'll refer to it as *aspectual thought*. And in order to have a

theory-neutral term for the 'ways of thinking' on which aspectual thought operates, I'll call them

characterizations.[14] As a first pass, we can say that a characterization is a stereotype or schema, and that

a perspective assimilates one's thinking about a particular subject (e.g. Bill) to a more general stereotype

(e.g. of quarterbacks).[15] But that's just a rough approximation, and in particular one that leaves the role of

perspectives in fiction mysterious. A more adequate story requires a more nuanced account of

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[13] Gendler (2006) also identifies a parallel between metaphoric perspectives and perspectives in fiction.
In Camp 2008, I contrast the way perspectives are deployed when we present a sentence as a parable, as a
true telling detail, and as a metaphor; in Camp 2009, I contrast the way perspectives are deployed when
we present a sentence as a false but revealing just-so story and as a metaphor.
[14] For a fuller account of aspectual thought and its application to metaphor, see Camp 2003.
[15] This is roughly how Glucksberg and Keysar (1990) claim that metaphors work. I offer some criticisms
of their view in Camp 2006a.

characterizations, aspects, and perspectives. I sketch such an account in the remainder of this section, and apply it to fiction in §3 and to the puzzles in §4 through §6.

2.2: Characterizations, Aspects, and Perspectives

In this section I present a model of characterizations, focusing on three features important for addressing our puzzles: their content, the sort of endorsement they require, and their structure. The content of a characterization, like that of a concept or a stereotype, is the collection of properties or other values it applies to a subject. For instance, my personal characterization of quarterbacks includes their being natural leaders, affable, and a bit shallow. In addition to such general traits, characterizations can also include more specific, experientially-represented properties: thus, I think of quarterbacks as having a certain sort of square, clean-shaven jaw, gleaming teeth, and a ready smile. Some such properties, like certain ways of walking or talking, are so specific that we may lack established expressions for them, and can only refer to them demonstratively or metaphorically.[16] These include affectively-laden properties concerning how the subject tends to or should make one feel, such as terror at encountering a stern professor in the hallway, or awe at walking into a sunlit cathedral.

So far, none of this distinguishes characterizations in principle from either stereotypes or concepts. But where stereotypes are usually ways of thinking about *types*, characterizations can also represent individual persons, objects, and events, such as George W. Bush, Notre Dame Cathedral, or the March on Washington. Although it makes an enormous difference for other cognitive purposes, the sort and specificity of the entity that a characterization represents needn't affect the characterization's internal structure and constituents. Further, where stereotypes are communally-shared ways of thinking, characterizations can be quite idiosyncratic: my characterization of a romantic afternoon excursion may not match yours, and I might have a characterization of something the rest of the community doesn't notice, such as my route to work. Thus, stereotypes should be seen as a special case of characterizations.

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[16] I argue that metaphors sometimes provide our only access to such properties in Camp 2006b.

The second major feature of characterizations, which strongly differentiates them from concepts (but not stereotypes), is that they don't always require commitment to their subjects actually possessing the properties ascribed to them.[17] Thus, I'm under no illusion that quarterbacks are really more likely to have gleaming teeth or square jaws. Still, there is a species of commitment involved in my characterizing quarterbacks in this way: I take those features to be *fitting* for them. If I were casting a quarterback in a movie, for instance, I would look for an actor with those features. So too, some features attributed in my characterizations of individuals might be 'just-so' or apocryphal facts which I take to be fitting even though false in actuality. Conversely, I may acknowledge that a subject actually possesses certain features which I marginalize as not fitting: for instance, I might tend to forget or otherwise dismiss the fact that Bill once attended seminary, because I take it not to fit with his sporty, carefree manner.

When assessments of fittingness do come apart from how we take a subject to actually be, it's often because we believe that an individual is exceptional or aberrant for its type. (In particular, the generic force of stereotypes allows us to maintain them in the face of exceptions.) However, intuitions of fittingness also have a normative, aesthetic basis. Arthur Danto (1981, 207) invokes the relevant notion of 'fit' in connection with style:

> The structure of a style is like the structure of a personality…This concept of consistency has little to do with formal consistency. It is the consistency rather of the sort we invoke when we say that a rug does not fit with the other furnishings of the room, or a dish does not fit with the structure of a meal, or a man does not fit with his own crowd. It is the fit of taste which is involved, and this cannot be reduced to formula. It is an activity governed by reasons, no doubt, but reasons that will be persuasive only to someone who has judgment or taste already.

If we were more fully rational, we would sharply distinguish what we take to be fitting from we believe to be actual or even probable. But in fact, we often allow intuitions grounded in stereotypes to drive our beliefs about probability and actuality, with highly problematic results: one reason prejudices are so

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[17] Many philosophers have argued that concepts differ prototypes—or more generally, from what psychologists typically call 'concepts'—not least because prototypicality doesn't determine category membership. The point is even clearer for stereotypes. See e.g. Rey 1983, Fodor and Lepore 1996, and Laurence and Margolis 2000.

difficult to eradicate is that our stereotypes bias our grasp of the actual statistics.[18] In fiction, where the

concern is more with aesthetic satisfaction than factual accuracy, fittingness plays an even more

pervasive, and less obviously insidious, role.[19]

The third major feature of characterizations, which will shoulder the bulk of the explanatory

burden to come, is that characterizations don't merely consist in collections of properties, but structure

those properties in a complex pattern that varies along at least two distinct dimensions of psychological

importance. Along the first dimension, some features are more *prominent* than others. Prominence is

roughly equivalent to what Amos Tversky (1977) calls *salience*, which he in turn defines as a function of

intensity and *diagnosticity*. A feature is intense to the extent that it has a high signal-to-noise ratio: it

sticks out relative to the background, like a bright light or a hugely bulbous nose. A feature is diagnostic

to the extent that it is useful for classifying objects as belonging to a certain category, like the number of

stripes on a soldier's uniform. Both intensity and diagnosticity are highly context-sensitive: in a room full

of bulbous noses, or on a heavily scarred face, an ordinary bulbous nose will not stand out; and in such a

room, knowing that the man I'm looking for has a bulbous nose won't help me to identify him.

Along the second dimension, some features are more *central* than others, insofar as one treats

them as causing, motivating, or otherwise explaining many of the subject's other features (Thagard 1989,

Sloman et al 1998, Murphy and Medin 1985). For instance, I take a quarterback's being a natural leader

to explain more of his other features—why he's popular and confident, why he smiles so readily, indeed

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[18] For instance, Ryan et al (1996) found that those who judged members of a group (e.g. sorority members) to display less variability were more likely to assign stereotypical properties to individual members of that group, and to have high confidence in their assignments. Nelson et al (1996) found that subjects were unable to repress stereotypical judgments in judging probable career goals of both gender-typical and -atypical strangers, even after those stereotypes had been discredited. Diekman et al (2002) found that subjects consistently underestimated male support for female-stereotypic positions on social and political issues. See Judd and Park (1993) for discussion and review of stereotype accuracy.

[19] D'Arms and Jacobsen (2000a) invoke a notion of fittingness, but understood as "a relation analogous to that between a true belief and the world" (2000a, 68) tailored specifically for emotion: an emotion is fitting insofar as it has the right 'shape' and 'size' for its object, independent of broader, moral or prudential concerns. Their notion is important, both in general and in the current context. However, I think we also need to recognize the role of fitting as Danto, I, and others construe it.

why he's a quarterback at all—than his having a square jaw does. A good measure of centrality is how much else about the subject one thinks would change if that feature were removed.

Assignments of prominence and centrality are highly intuitive and holistic, in a way that the oft-cited analogy with seeing-as makes vivid. Contrast the two ways of seeing Figure 1 below. On either way of seeing it, the role that each constituent element plays depends on the roles played by many other elements. When I switch between ways of seeing, the relative prominence and centrality of those elements shift dramatically. And in turn, this causes the elements to represent different things: the same set of pixels comes to be seen as a nose, say, or as a wart.

Figure 1: The Old Crone/Young Lady

Much the same effect applies to characterizations: the same property can take on different significances—especially, different emotional and evaluative valences—depending on the larger structure in which it's embedded. Thus, if I take Bill to be at root a sociable guy, then his teasing remarks are likely to seem like harmless attempts at bonding; while if I take him to be motivated primarily by a need for control, those same remarks will appear malicious and manipulative.

Armed with this sketch of characterizations, we can now turn to aspects and perspectives. In place of the earlier rough description of aspects as assimilations to a stereotype, I can now say that aspectual thought involves using one characterization to *structure* another: for example, using your characterization of quarterbacks to structure your characterization of Bill, or your characterization of Napoleon to structure your characterization of George W. Bush. Very briefly, I think this restructuring

works by taking the most prominent and central features in the framing characterization (e.g., of quarterbacks), seeking matches for them within the subject characterization (e.g., of Bill), and then raising the prominence and centrality of those matched features of the subject's.[20] Like characterizations themselves, the process of restructuring one characterization in light of another is holistic, intuitive, and often largely unreflective: we come to 'see' Bill as a quarterback without knowing quite how we did it. When we do think of something under an aspect, our thinking gains an overall coherence it previously lacked. This brings significant cognitive benefits, including ease of navigation among constituent features and an increased ability to predict further features and future behavior. But it can also have important disadvantages, such as causing us to ignore properties that are in fact causally efficacious or diagnostically relevant but that don't find salient matches.

Finally, perspectives. Recall from §2.1 that an account of perspectives must explain their applicability across multiple scenes and worlds. Perspectives thus need to be understood as open-ended modes of interpretation, not tied to any particular subject. This mode of interpretation may include some stable assignments of prominence, centrality, fittingness, and evaluation to general features or principles, such as "random acts of kindness" or "looking out for number one." Fundamentally, though, it is a standing disposition to form certain sorts of characterizations of whatever particular entities one encounters—to notice certain sorts of features, and so to treat them as prominent while ignoring others; to seek certain sorts of explanations, and so to assign certain structures of centrality and evaluation; and to find certain combinations of features especially fitting.[21]

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[20] This is roughly the way Gentner (1983, 2001) claims we understand analogies; see Camp 2003 and 2006a for discussion. Note that because the restructuring depends on both characterizations, the same framing characterization produces different effects when applied to different subjects: for instance, if we think of Juliet or of Louis XIV under the aspect of the sun. And because characterizations are highly context-dependent, both in their constituents and in their structure, the same pair of characterizations can produce quite different effects in different cognitive contexts.

[21] Although the theorists I cited above as invoking perspectives and frames don't specify what they mean by them, what they do say is compatible with my account. Thus, Gendler (2000, 69) describes "ways of seeing things" as "ways that focus on some elements of the situation while ignoring others," and says that "framing things in certain ways activates certain behavioral dispositions and affective propensities" (2006, 151), with stereotypes constituting one instance. Walton (1994, 33) describes an "orientation," which is "distinct from one's beliefs and can vary independently of them," as having "a lot to do with the

The effects of perspective are perhaps most familiarly illustrated by differences in political orientation. A hard-right conservative may watch Fox, be especially alert to situations where a non-Christian immigrant has deprived a Christian, native-born American of a job or other resource, explain this in terms of a widespread tendency for liberal elites to favor outsiders in order to undermine tradition, and diagnose the proposal to build a mosque at Ground Zero as a fitting exemplar of the encroaching dangers. By contrast, a dyed-in-the-wool liberal might listen to NPR, be especially alert to situations where brown-skinned immigrants are abused by uneducated white Americans, explain this in terms of a widespread fear of diversity among those whites, and hold up as a fitting illustration of this mindset the latest politician who advocates for laws supporting a traditional definition of marriage but turns out to be homosexual or unfaithful. With respect to any particular situation, these two people may eventually come to agree about the basic facts. But their different perspectives will lead them to interpret these facts quite differently, by locating them within distinct nexuses of further facts, possibilities, and values. In this sense, pervasive differences in perspective can lead us to feel that two people inhabit fundamentally different worlds.

2.3: Perspectives and Propositions

How do characterizations, aspects, and perspectives provide an alternative to the standard content-oriented analysis of imagination discussed in §1? The sense in which characterizations are non-

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organization, salience, and accessibility of what one believes." Moran (1994, 100) says that "There are more ways of changing someone's mind than changing his or her beliefs… much of what [philosophy and literature] aim at is not on the level of specifically altered beliefs but rather…changes in the associations and comparisons one makes, differences in the vivid or 'felt' appreciation of something already known, or changes in one's habits of attention and sense of the important and the trifling." Finally, in his (2010), Currie develops a notion of narrative 'point of view' which is more abstract than the model in his earlier (1995, 1997) work, and which is largely compatible with my view. However, he retains his earlier perceptual model insofar as he defines narrative point of view in terms of an agent's *limitations* in awareness, conceptual resources, and capacities for action (2010, 89). More specifically, he claims that "if [two people's] points of view are distinct, then there must be at least one thing which one of them could see or hear or tell or do which the other could not" (2010, 90). As such, his model cannot account for the crucial fact that perspectives are the sorts of things we can actively embrace and advocate to one another, and about which we can differ even given agreement on the base-level facts.

propositional depends, not on their representational content, but on their role in thought.[22] We rarely

explicitly entertain higher-order propositions about fittingness, prominence, and centrality—for instance,

the proposition that Bill's bonhomie is more prominent, or causally explanatory, than his being a

philosopher. But even when we do, entertaining or believing such a proposition still isn't equivalent to

characterizing Bill in the relevant way. Characterizing requires actually structuring one's thinking so that

the relevant features play an appropriately prominent or central role in one's thinking. In perception,

there is a phenomenologically striking and practically efficacious difference between "seeing-as" and

"looking plus thinking" (Wittgenstein 1958, 197): for instance, I might know *that* a particular element *x*

in Figure 1 represents the old crone's nose, and that *y* represents a wart, and so on, without successfully

seeing the figure *as* (a picture of) an old crone. So too with characterizing in thought. Suppose John tells

me, in explicit detail, about his characterization of Bill: which features he takes to be especially

important, the explanatory relations among them, and so on. I might endorse all of these propositions,

because I trust John's judgment, without ever managing to 'get' his characterization, because the relevant

features don't intuitively stick out as prominent or central in my own mind. Further, just as with literal

seeing-as, getting the relevant propositions to play the relevant organizational role in thought is partly but

not entirely under one's willful control: I can make it easier to see or characterize something in a certain

way by directing my (or your) active attention toward some features and away from others, but ultimately

the 'click' of holistic understanding is something that just happens—or doesn't.

This basic point extends with added force to aspects and perspectives. Aspects are crucially

concerned with propositions—for instance, the proposition *that Bill is a quarterback*—but explicitly

entertaining that proposition is neither necessary nor sufficient for applying the aspect. Rather, one must

[22] At least three of their crucial features can be captured propositionally. First, although some theorists (e.g. Novitz 1987, 120) describe beliefs that require experiential acquaintance with a direct object as 'non-propositional', it is relatively uncontroversial that demonstrative concepts can bring direct objects within the scope of propositional attitudes and inference. More people might be inclined to argue that assessments of fittingness are non-propositional in virtue of their normative character (e.g. Blackburn 1984). However, it seems clear that normative concepts, including fittingness, need to be treated propositionally to capture their roles in thought, logic and conversation (cf. Schroeder 2008). Finally, assignments of prominence and centrality can be modeled as higher-order, context-dependent relations between individuals or kinds and (fitting) properties, further relativized to cognitive goals.

use the characterization associated with the framing topic (quarterbacks) to structure one's overall thoughts about the subject (Bill). An aspect is thus more aptly described as a *tool* for thinking than as a thought itself: rather than adding a new belief, it gives us a new way to organize and manipulate beliefs we already had. Applying an aspect may lead us to entertain or endorse new propositions, about the fittingness, prominence, and centrality of known features, about other high-level concepts like causality and morality, or even about new base-level features. But it might also just enable us to navigate more efficiently among our existing beliefs. Finally, where an aspect is at least a way of using the characterizations associated with a proposition to structure one's thinking,[23] a perspective is even more open-ended and amorphous, insofar as it applies to indefinitely many subjects, and need not be associated with any particular proposition at all.[24]

It is this non-propositional quality that strongly differentiates characterizations, aspects, and perspectives from both propositional attitudes and dramatic rehearsal. Perspectives are not contents, because they do not themselves have or determine truth-conditions. Nor is trying on a perspective a matter of imagining a certain content; rather, it requires actually configuring one's patterns of thought about an open-ended collection of topics in certain ways. Nonetheless, characterizations and perspectives are still representational, insofar as they are intentionally-directed ways of interpreting the world. Further, I will argue, it is our ability to manipulate *how* we engage with certain contents that explains the robustness and disparateness of our emotional and evaluative responses to fiction.

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[23] At least in simple cases; in others, one entire proposition may be used to frame another. See White 1996 and Camp 2003 for discussion in the context of metaphor.

[24] As we will see, despite their non-propositionality, we can still endorse and argue about characterizations and perspectives: they are not just idiosyncratic associations, on a par with thunderclaps and bumps to the head in merely *causing* us to entertain certain propositions, as Donald Davidson (1978) and Richard Rorty (1987) claim about seeing-as in metaphor. Endorsing a characterization involves accepting that its assignments of fittingness, prominence, and centrality are consistent with the objective distribution of properties in the world (modulo discrepancies introduced by fittingness) and conducive to achieving one's current cognitive goals. Endorsing an aspect involves accepting that it produces a useful, insightful characterization of its subject. And endorsing a perspective involves committing oneself to cultivating an ongoing disposition to structuring one's thoughts in a certain way.

§3: Factors in Full Imaginative Engagement

In this section, I apply my model of perspectives to fiction, arguing that the imaginative projects proposed by most authors encompass more than prescriptions to imagine contents: they also involve cultivating certain characterizations and an overarching perspective, which interact in intimate ways with dramatic and propositional imagination to influence emotional and evaluative response.[25]

The most basic thing an author does, as Walton and Lewis say, is prescribe a set of propositions as to be imagined. But those propositions cannot be scattered and disconnected: they must cohere into a representation of a robust, integrated state of affairs. Many theorists have noted that this coherence is not just (or even) logical or metaphysical consistency. I suggest that the relevant species of consistency is that of fitting together into a structured collection of intuitive characterizations, so that any inconsistent propositions are low in prominence and segregated in centrality. More specifically, these 'base-level' propositions must together specify a cluster of events about a group of individuals, which are connected together into a narrative. Although causal connections among these events are important (Carroll 2001), continuous causal connections are neither necessary nor sufficient for a coherent narrative; rather, the events need to be tied together by overlapping strands of centrality, where this includes other, non-causal forms of motivation and explanation besides causality, including especially what David Velleman (2003), following Frank Kermode (2000), calls the "tick-tock" of an emotional cadence drawing to a fitting close.

Second, in order to enable readers to form intuitive expectations about what is (and is not) likely to happen, the author must locate the explicitly stipulated base-level facts and events against a global background, including a stable statistical distribution of properties and patterns of causation. A fictional world is a place inhabited by certain sorts of people and objects, who tend to possess certain sorts of properties and are governed by certain sorts of causes and motivations. Actions and qualities that would be shocking or impossible in a Jane Austen novel, say, are unremarkable in the world of Philip Roth—and vice versa. However, these patterns of property distribution and causation are themselves so complex and

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[25] Contemporary high fiction often disrupts the typical relationship between author, reader, and fictional world. But to understand either intentional or unintentional disruptions in imaginative engagement, we first need a grip on the canonical case.

multi-dimensional that they cannot all be specified explicitly. Nor, as I mentioned in §1, can they simply be imported from one's assumptions about the real world. Even relative to a given time and place, and even for a realistic novel, people's views about the actual distributions of properties and causal patterns vary too widely for either author or reader to assume they are mutually shared.

Third, in addition to prescribing objective local and global facts which can be characterized in an intuitively comprehensible way, authors must offer their readers some compelling reason to invest their time and cognitive energy in imagining these facts. These reasons vary widely: from curiosity about the plot, to the vicarious pleasures of seeing virtue triumph or of reveling in vice, to celebrating the kaleidoscopic diversity of humanity or nature. Almost always, though, readers are intended to empathize with some characters, and to feel concordant emotions (say, pity at their despair) as a result. Finally, these cognitive interests and emotional responses are typically bound up with correlative evaluations: we are supposed to take the corporate lawyer to be villainous, say, or the young couple's marriage to be blessed, or the orgiastic bacchanalia to be liberating.

As this quick sketch brings out, actual fictions are so complex that only a small proportion of their propositions, experiences, characterizations, and responses can be specified explicitly. Further, the principles of generation from which these rich materials are extrapolated are also largely implicit. Identify a fiction's operative principles of generation and characterization requires readers to be keenly sensitive to information about genre and style. Stylistic expression in particular can determine implicit principles of generation on several levels. Many words—'hussy', 'cop', 'brigand', 'debonair', 'reckless'—are conventionally associated with at least coarse-grained characterizations, in the form of connotations or Fregean 'coloring', and thus contribute these as well as their semantic values to what is to be imagined. Similarly, figurative tropes and allusions construct novel characterizations. And literal spatio-temporal and psychological point of view are often indicated implicitly through grammatical features like choice of pronouns and anaphors, word order, and aspect for tense.

Beyond these implicit representational contributions, though, an author's mode of expression also manifests a more general way of engaging with the world. In real life, we expect a person's

representational perspective to fit together with their non-representational style: a strong handshake, tucked-in button-down shirt, and clipped speech and hair all fit, for instance, with a concern for objectivity, focus on essential details, and practical interest in getting the job done. In this way, representational perspective and non-representational style combine to form an overall personality, or what Iris Murdoch (1956, 39) calls a "texture of being."[26] In fiction, we lack access to the author's physical style or mode of presentation; instead, we are given a continuous stream of carefully cultivated verbal expression.[27] Because we know how style and perspective fit together in real life, though, in reading fiction we can exploit non-representational verbal style as an implicit guide to the fiction's operative perspective, which can in turn provide us with important clues to what is true in that world.

To get a taste for how this works, contrast the opening paragraphs of Jane Austen's *Emma*:

Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition, seemed to unite some of the best blessings of existence; and had lived nearly twenty-one years in the world with very little to distress or vex her.

She was the youngest of the two daughters of a most affectionate, indulgent father; and had, in consequence of her sister's marriage, been mistress of his house from a very early period. Her mother had died too long ago for her to have more than an indistinct remembrance of her caresses; and her place had been supplied by an excellent woman as governess, who had fallen little short of a mother in affection.

Sixteen years had Miss Taylor been in Mr. Woodhouse's family, less as a governess than a friend, very fond of both daughters, but particularly of Emma. Between them it was more the intimacy of sisters. Even before Miss Taylor had ceased to hold the nominal office of governess, the mildness of her temper had hardly allowed her to impose any restraint; and the shadow of authority being now long passed away, they had been living together as friend and friend very mutually attached, and Emma doing just what she liked; highly esteeming Miss Taylor's judgment, but directed chiefly by her own.

The real evils, indeed, of Emma's situation were the power of having rather too much her own way, and a disposition to think a little too well of herself; these were the disadvantages which threatened alloy to her many enjoyments. The danger, however, was at present so unperceived, that they did not by any means rank as misfortunes with her.

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[26] As Murdoch says: "When we apprehend and assess other people…we consider…their total vision of life, as shown in their mode of speech or silence, their choice of words, their assessments of others, their conception of their own lives, what they think attractive or praiseworthy, what they think funny: in short, the configurations of their thought which show continually in their reactions and conversation. These things…constitute what…one may call the texture of a man's being or the nature of his personal vision." Currie (2010, ch. 7) provides concrete illustrations of specific ways in which verbal style expresses personality and perspective; Moran (1994) and Goldie (2003) also emphasize the importance of expressive features in regulating emotional response.

[27] As Jenefer Robinson (1985, 227) puts it, "the verbal elements of style gain their stylistic significance by contributing to the expression of [a] personality, and they cannot be identified as *stylistic* elements independently of the personality they help to express."

with those from Philip Roth's *Sabbath's Theater*:

Either forswear fucking others or the affair is over.

This was the ultimatum, the maddeningly improbable, wholly unforeseen ultimatum, that the mistress of fifty-two delivered in tears to her lover of sixty-four on the anniversary of an attachment that had persisted with an amazing licentiousness—and that, no less amazingly, had stayed their secret—for thirteen years. But now with hormonal infusions ebbing, with the prostate enlarging, with probably no more than another few years of semi-dependable potency still his—with perhaps not that much more life remaining—here at the approach of the end of everything, he was being charged, on pain of losing her, to turn himself inside out.

These paragraphs *tell* us a lot about their represented worlds, of course, both explicitly through their represented content and implicitly through their choice of words. These brief excerpts already inform us that the two worlds differ considerably, in terms of who their inhabitants are and what sorts of things are likely to happen to them. But they also differ considerably in their expressive styles. Austen tends to employ sequential, independent syntactic structures, for instance, while Roth prefers multiple dependent clauses and appositive phrases. Partly as a result, the rhythm of Austen's prose is brisk and crisp, while Roth's is open and gamboling. And Austen employs a proper, polite discourse register, while Roth can be aggressively improper. In turn, these formal features underwrite larger-scale psychological qualities, such as Austen's comparatively detached description of Emma as opposed to Roth's immersion in Sabbath's thoughts, and Austen's focus on broad social dynamics versus Roth's interest in concrete physical and emotional details. Finally, the sorts of people who would express themselves in these different ways are also likely to be at home in very different worlds. As a result, we expect these authors to construct worlds whose objective properties fit the perspectives manifested by their styles. In this way, we might say that authorial style puts rhetorical flesh on a perspective's abstract bones. In so doing, style helps us both to pick up on the author's overarching cognitive concerns and characterizing dispositions, and also offers us a guide to the fictional world's global patterns of property distribution and causation.

§4: The Puzzle of Fictional Emotions

At long last, we can return to our initial puzzles, beginning with fictional emotions. It will be useful to divide this puzzle in two: first, why does fiction arouse physiological and affective responses

characteristic of emotion; and second, do those responses count as genuine emotions? The first question is more psychological, and concerns the causes of fictional emotions; the second is more philosophical, and concerns their proper classification.

The first, psychological question stands regardless of whether one thinks fictional emotions are real. As I mentioned in §2.1, empirical research suggests that reading fiction typically provokes physiological and affective responses characteristic of emotion; and anecdotal evidence suggests that those responses are often quite robust. However, physiological and affective responses are not the sorts of things that most readers can generate at will, simply in response to an author's instructions. Further, the mere hypothetical supposition of a proposition often fails to arouse robust affective response: philosophers engaged in thought experiments, for instance, regularly contemplate horrific scenarios— crashing trolleys, nuclear apocalypse—in cool, dispassionate terms (Moran 1994, Nichols 2004). So what is it about reading fiction that elicits such robust responses?[28]

One standard answer is dramatic rehearsal: iconic imagination is sufficiently vivid and self-involving, the thought goes, and sufficiently resembles an actual experience of the represented situation, that it triggers the affective responses one would have if that situation were real. However, while dramatic rehearsal clearly can facilitate affective response, there are many ordinary cases where one occurs without the other. For example, we often have occurrent affective responses to people and events without consciously rehearsing specific scenes: just overhearing a mention of my erstwhile roommate might raise my pulse, without my needing to detail her sins explicitly even to myself. At the same time, we can rehearse many scenes, even emotionally sensitive ones, in an iconic and central but dispassionate manner: thus, a detective investigating a serial killer might work out the logistics of the most recent murder by rehearsing the murderer's beliefs, desires, and intentions; and he might remain calm and cool throughout despite believing that the murderer is heinously perverse. (That same detective might weep reading a novel while off duty, however.) Indeed, children regularly engage in complex, sustained games

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[28] Walton (1978, 14, fn. 10) admits that he lacks an answer to this question.

of make-believe about quite gruesome topics—kidnapping, torture, decapitation, and so on—with remarkable cheerfulness and lack of overt correlative physiological or affective response.

Imaginative engagement with fiction differs from these cases of relatively low-affect imagination in at least two crucial respects. First, reading fiction is a narrative experience, of being led by an author through a structured sequence of thoughts and events, rather than being left to construct it on one's own. This makes the imaginative experience considerably more like the experience of everyday life, in that it *happens* to us: we are taken by surprise, have our suspicions confirmed, and wonder what will happen next. Many emotional responses—fear, hope, anger, dismay—depend crucially upon this sort of epistemic uncertainty, which is difficult to achieve in self-directed imagination. Further, unlike a narrated story about real life, the events in fiction are not merely presented, but intentionally constructed to produce these epistemic and emotional cadences. Finally, because people read fiction in relative isolation from their practical needs and desires, they are free to devote attention to cultivating a wide range of possibilities and implications from the train of thoughts the author leads them through. This can make the experience of reading fiction cognitively richer than many cases of self-generated imagination.

In addition to being narrated to us, a fiction's contents are also presented in stylistically expressive language, which enriches the imaginative enterprise by contributing the relevant expresssions' associated characterizations. In particular, many of these characterizations are affectively laden: for instance, 'svelte' suggests a kind of semi-erotic appreciation, while 'ghastly' suggests horror and 'terrorist' suggests fear. And considerable empirical evidence demonstrates that even brief, isolated exposure to charged verbal cues arouses the correlative affective responses to a measurable degree, in ways that alter the rapidity and content of subjects' subsequent emotional and evaluative responses.[29]

These two broad factors, of narrativity and stylistic expression, together go a significant way toward explaining readers' robust responses to fiction. In reading fiction, we are bombarded with a constant stream of affectively and experientially evocative words, woven together in an intentionally crafted expressive style. Further, these words are employed in the service of a coherent, sustained

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[29] See Musch and Klauer 2003 for an overview of affective priming.

imaginative project which includes both propositional and dramatic imagination, and which is presented to us with the sorts of epistemic uncertainty and structural cadences that are crucial to emotional response. Taken together, these factors can help to amplify the small-scale affective effects generated by isolated expressions and their denoted contents into fairly intense reactions.

I think this sheds considerable light on the mystery of why fiction often arouses robust affective and physiological responses. But should these responses be classified as genuine emotions? On the standard model, we face a stark tension between those responses' palpable reality, along with ordinary readers' vehement self-descriptions as experiencing fear, pity, and hope; and on the other hand, readers' admitted lack of belief about the purported objects of those emotions. This tension is especially stark if one focuses exclusively on propositional imagination: if merely entertaining a proposition fails to produce robust affective response, it is natural to think that the epistemic commitment of belief provides the necessary causal and normative 'oomph' for emotional arousal. The result is 'judgmentalism': the view that emotions are, or essentially require, beliefs (e.g. Solomon 1980, Nussbaum 2001). In my view, however, judgmentalism is both unduly stipulative and inherently implausible: aside from the question of fictional emotions, it cannot explain the fact that we can actively entertain genuine beliefs about subjects that matter to us in a cool, dispassionate way, as the detective investigating the serial killer does.[30]

Adding dramatic rehearsal to the model partially alleviates the causal puzzle. But it also intensifies the normative pressure to classify readers' responses to fiction as unreal, because what it adds is entirely within the scope of imagination. Simulationist theories of imagination demonstrate this consequence especially clearly. According to simulationists, imagination is a functionally encapsulated module, operating with propositional attitudes and perhaps imagery interacting via the usual cognitive principles and heuristics but "off-line," disconnected from actual perception and action.[31] The appeal to encapsulation entails a robust *quarantining* of imagination from the rest of one's psychology (Goldman

[30] See Greenspan 1988 and Stocker and Hegeman 1992, among others, for criticism of judgmentalism.
[31] On some models this includes just the attitude of belief; sometimes it also includes desire. See e.g. Goldman 1992, Currie 1995, 1997, 2002; Walton 1997; Nichols and Stich 2000; Nichols 2004, 2006; Weinberg and Meskin 2006; Weinberg 2008; Doggett and Egan 2008.

1992, 26), both in the sense that one does not import one's actual beliefs and desires into the simulation, but also in that one does not export the results of the simulation back into one's actual psychology. Simulationism thus predicts that once a simulation has ended, as Nichols and Stitch (2000, 120) put it, "the events that [occur] in the context of the pretense have only a quite limited effect on the post-pretense cognitive state of the pretender."[32] In this way, all of the action in our engagement with fiction, including emotional response, is sequestered within the imagination. It follows that any lingering psychological effects of the simulation, other than predictions delivered as output, must be the by-product of faults in the inhibitory mechanisms responsible for ensuring encapsulation (Currie 1995, 258).

In actuality, however, the postulated inhibitory mechanisms turn out to be so faulty as to undermine the model's plausibility; mere imagination does have significant cognitive and affective effects which persist after the pretense ends. Among other results, reading even very short fictions lowers the rapidity and confidence of subjects' judgments about things they manifestly know to be true, such as the speed limit or how J.F.K. died (Gerrig 1993). Subjects who imagine or think about certain types of people (professors, soccer hooligans, the elderly) behave more like them on unrelated tasks (Bargh et al 1996, Dijksterhuis and Van Knippenberg 1998, Banfield et al 2003). Subjects who imagine being in a large group even exhibit 'bystander apathy', to a degree proportional to the size of the imagined group (Garcia et al 2000). Although many of these effects are fairly transitory, the perspective that subjects adopt on an imagined scene can significantly affect their later recall and evaluation of it (Pichert and Anderson 1977), with the strength of the perspective's effect depending on how heavily the text burdens the reader's "working memory span" (Baillet and Keenan 1986, Lee-Sammons and Whitney 1991).

These results about cognitive and imaginative "contagion" are aberrant on a model that sequesters imagination within an encapsulated module, since they demonstrate pervasive failures of quarantining.[33]

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[32] Friend 2003 endorses the same conclusion, though she does not explicitly endorse a simulationist model.
[33] See Gendler 2006b for philosophical discussion of recent empirical research on imaginative contagion. I am also skeptical of simulationism's explanatory usefulness on general grounds. One reason is that insofar as the person being simulated has a very different psychological make-up, determining the appropriate 'start state' for simulating their responses requires detailed input from a representation of their

And if our only explanatory resources are propositional attitudes like belief plus dramatic rehearsal, then they seem to suggest that imagination regularly produces false or conflicting beliefs.[34] By contrast, if we allow that imagination also often involves temporarily restructuring one's actual patterns of thought, then these results make much more sense. As I argued in §2.2, characterizing a subject does not require believing that it possesses the attributed features, or even that the subject itself exists: one 'tries on' a characterization by temporarily structuring a collection of features together into an intuitive pattern of prominence and centrality.[35] At the same time, however, our characterizations of imagined propositions and experiences are not themselves merely simulated. While we are absorbed in reading a fiction, certain things really do jump out at us and others pass as mere filler; and we really do link individual features and facts into patterns which govern our inferential and associative trains of thought, which make certain explanations and future developments seem natural, and which trigger certain affective and physiological responses. Once these characterizing structures have been activated, either by being raised from long-term memory or by being constructed in the course of reading, they become part of our integrated mental economy, and persist at least temporarily after the imaginative episode has ended.

Characterizations and perspectives thus enrich our theoretical model of imagination by providing a non-simulated, causally efficacious representational mental state that is actually activated in reading fiction. In addition, we have good theoretical and empirical reasons to connect characterizations closely

psychology, including just their beliefs and desires, but also their characterizing dispositions and other aspects. But then much of the work is being done prior to, rather than within, the simulation, in a way that undermines a sharp distinction between simulation and "theory theory" (cf. Saxe 2005, Gaut 2007, 150). A second reason for skepticism is that subjects make systematic errors in predicting others' behavior of a sort that suggest they are not simply pretending to undertake the relevant action themselves, but are relying at least partly on folk psychological assumptions (Saxe 2005).

[34] Not all simulationists admit only propositional attitudes and simulated counterparts. In addition to imagistic dramatic rehearsal, Currie (1997, 72) explicitly allows for the simulation of "relatively long-term, stable, and personality-fixing preferences" in addition to beliefs and desires. Weinberg (2008) also allows for "configurational features" in imagination, which "bring to the fore" and "downplay" various assumptions and beliefs, through the interaction among distinct encapsulated modules, including most saliently between "IB" (imagined belief) and morality. However, Currie and Weinberg are still committed to the quarantining of what is imagined.

[35] Presumably one cannot have (non-empty) singular thoughts about nonexistent subjects; but one can collect multiple quantificational thoughts about someone with a certain name into a single mental file. As I said in §2.2, whether that characterization is of a genuine individual or a type makes no difference to the characterization's internal structure and content.

to emotions as philosophers and others have traditionally understood them. Many philosophers have argued that emotions impose an intuitive, coherent 'gestalt'—that is, a characterization—on a field of constituent features.[36] Considerable empirical evidence confirms the interdependence of perspectives and emotions: on the one hand, priming for a certain emotion (e.g. sadness versus anger) affects both which features subjects notice in a presented situation and also what causal explanations they assign to those features;[37] and on the other hand, different ways of framing, construing, or appraising the same situation tend to produce different emotional responses.[38] Finally, these connections are normative as well as causal: as Danto (1981, 169) says, "like beliefs and actions, …emotions…are embedded in structures of justification. There are things we know we ought to feel given a certain characterization of the conditions we are under." In ordinary life, disagreements over how it is appropriate to feel about a situation often turn on differences in characterization rather than bare differences of fact; and we often attempt to convince others to share our emotions by inducing them to share our characterizations, for instance by arguing that certain features are especially diagnostic or explanatory.

Of course, even if we allow that characterizations are causally and normatively connected to emotions and are active in reading fiction, this doesn't establish that fictional emotions are genuine. Everyone should agree, I think, that in engaging with fiction, we imagine certain propositional and experiential contents, and actually characterize them in ways that arouse affective responses characteristic of emotion. The realist about fictional emotions can insist that characterizations and affective responses together constitute genuine emotions, and so that emotions can be directed toward characters and events we know to be fictional.[39] But the anti-realist can point out that normally, characterizations are also

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[36]For instance, Noël Carroll (2001, 224) says that "[t]he emotions focus our attention. They make certain features of situations salient, and they cast those features in a special phenomenological light. The emotions 'gestalt', we might say, situations." Cf. also e.g. A. Rorty 1980, de Sousa 1987, Greenspan 1988, Calhoun 1994, Robinson 2005, and Currie 2010, 98.

[37] Keltner et al 1993, Tiedens and Linton 2001, Lerner et al 2002, Small et al 2006, Dasgupta et al 2009.

[38] Wallbott and Scherer 1986, Ortony et al 1988, Smith 1989, Mauro et al 1992.

[39] For instance, Eva Dadlez (1997, 102) holds that emotions just are "ways of entertaining or experiencing thoughts," and so can be directed toward real as well as fictional subjects: "emotions are treated as selective ways of attending to the contents of one's thoughts. Emotions become modes of attending, each

causally and normatively grounded in beliefs about how the subject really is, and insist that these

existentially-committing beliefs are partially constitutive of genuine emotions.

My own view is that our cognitive and affective responses to fiction are sufficiently continuous

with our ordinary emotions to warrant being classified as real. They display the same basic affect, the

same basic interactions between thought and affect, and the same specificity and directedness. Further, as

various theorists have pointed out, we respond emotionally to a wide range of non-fictional situations that

we don't believe to be actual and/or toward which we can't act: we become angry imagining the

possibility of being unfairly denied a promotion, or feel hope as we read the history of an endeavor we

know to have failed, or feel fear on encountering an old nemesis we know to be powerless.[40] Anti-realists

about fictional emotions don't usually want to treat all such cases as unreal. They also typically allow

that we can have genuine emotions about *types* of situations in reading fiction.[41] Thus, I would argue that

we lack the sort of principled, causally and normatively relevant distinction that is needed to override

ordinary readers' commitment to the reality of their emotional responses to fiction. But I also think that

once we've gotten clear on the relevant causal and normative connections, so that fictional emotions are

no longer puzzling in themselves, then the remaining issue is largely terminological.[42]

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of which is governed and informed by a different conception of salience and each of which involves a
focus on a different set of characteristics."

[40] Moran 1994, 78; Goldie 2003, 56. Some specific emotions may require a direct connection to belief
and/or action; fear *of* some object *for* oneself seems like the most plausible candidate here (thanks to Kent
Bach for discussion). But many other emotions, like irritation or awe, don't seem to involve any direct
connection to belief or action. Moran (1994, 81) emphasizes the variety of relations between emotion and
belief and action; see also D'Arms and Jacobson 2003.

[41] E.g. Walton 1997, 38. Thanks to Richard Eldridge for emphasizing this point.

[42] Walton (1997, 46) almost agrees. A related puzzle is whether it can be rational to respond emotionally
to fiction (e.g. Radford 1995, Gendler and Kovakovich 2005, Matravers 2005). Here, we can say that an
emotion is rational (or fitting, in D'Arms and Jacobson sense) to the extent that it is grounded in an
appropriate correlative characterization, which itself accurately reflects the represented facts. Emotions
toward fictional characters and events are not irrational in this sense, so long as they fit the situation as
described. Nor is it irrational to engage emotionally with fictions as a whole, even to have affectively
negative emotions toward fictions, insofar as doing so helps one to become a richer person, and as it is an
integral part of our overall pleasure in engaging with the fiction. (Further, Gendler and Kovakovich
(2005) argue on empirical grounds that practical decision-making requires emotional (or affective)
response to situations which are known to be non-actual.) Perhaps there is a sense in which it is irrational
to care about something to which we have absolutely no practical connection, even a future one. But

§5: The Puzzle of Disparate Response

      Recent philosophical discussion of fiction has focused on imaginative resistance, specifically on cases where we hold fast to our moral compass and refuse, as Hume says, to "pervert the sentiments of [our] heart…in complaisance to any writer whatsoever." As we saw in §1, a range of theorists hold that when it comes to interpretation, especially moral evaluation, the author's opinions are "just…their own personal moral sentiments; we are free to disagree, even though it is the moral nature of the fictional world, not the real one, that is in question" (Walton 1994, 39).[43] Authorial authority, on this view, extends only to specifying the world's base-level facts; the question of how to characterize or evaluate those facts is entirely up to us (Weatherson 2004, 22)—where the "us" in question is us *as we are*: how we are represented as reacting, or invited to react, has noting to do with it" (Yablo 2002, 485). The result is the view that authors lack the ability to make fictional worlds different from the real one in moral or other high-level respects.[44]

      Against this "Fixed Reality Principle," it is important to recognize how often readers do go along with cultivating alternative evaluations and emotions.[45] Specific examples are likely to be controversial, but many people cite *Lolita, Triumph of the Will, Natural Born Killers*, *Pulp Fiction*, *The Stranger*, and many of Philip Roth's novels as fictions that successfully induce many readers to respond, both emotionally and morally, in ways that depart dramatically from their ordinary standards. (Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian* is my own favorite example.) And the literary canon is rife with less radical cases: the *Iliad*, Augustine's *Confessions*, the *Divine Comedy*, *Paradise Lost, Brideshead Revisited* and

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from this perspective, much of our emotional, imaginative, and cognitive lives are irrational. Thanks to Andrew Cortens for pressing me to address the question of rationality.

[43] Moran (1994, 99) makes the same basic claim in more moderate terms: "We seem, then, to accept a role for the reader's (or audience member's) own sense of what is blameworthy or admirable in determining what is true in the fiction." However, he does allow that readers can shift their evaluative responses by taking up alternative perspectives.

[44] I focus on moral response, because it is the most most discussed; I believe similar results hold for other forms of evaluation, including beauty and humor, though I won't attempt to establish that here.

[45] Currie (1997), Dadlez (1997), Posner (1997), Goldie (2003), Kieran (2002, 2003) and Nichols (2006), all draw attention to disparate response.

Pride and Prejudice all evoke emotional and evaluative responses which differ significantly from those that contemporary readers would have in real life.

Nor are these effects isolated to fiction. In §4, I cited evidence that different characterizations of the same situation can produce and be produced by different emotions. Similar effects also obtain for evaluation, specifically for assessments of risk, value, and moral responsibility. Following Tversky and Kahneman's seminal work on "framing effects" (1981), a range of empirical studies show, for instance, that order and vividness of presentation, along with explicit comparison to other quantitative options, affect subjects' willingness to accept consequentialist trade-offs as morally acceptable or appropriate (Bartels 2008, Bartels and Medin 2007). I mentioned in §4 that priming for specific emotions affects subjects' attributions of causal connections; it also modulates their tendency to assign individual blame (Keltner et al 1993, Small et al 2006), and influences the valence and intensity of their evaluative judgments by affecting which elements within a stereotype they employ in their evaluation of an individual or group (Forgas 1990).[46]

These empirical findings about the malleability of emotional and evaluative response to the same person or situation are aberrant on a model that accepts a Fixed Reality Principle for evaluation and other interpretive responses. One option would be to abandon the Fixed Reality Principle, and instead locate evaluative responses to fictional events and characters within the scope of imagination. This is what "ecumenical" simulationists like Currie (1995, 1997) and Weinberg (2008) do.[47] In particular, because simulationists treat emotional responses toward fiction as merely imagined, and because both empirical evidence and theoretical reflection suggests that emotion is closely connected to moral evaluation,[48] ecumenical simulationists have a natural, internally consistent explanation for the phenomenon of

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[46] See Levin et al 1998 and Iliev et al 2009 for overviews of framing effects, especially in moral contexts.
[47] Currie and Weinberg also include more subtle "configurational features," much like characterizations, among the psychological materials simulated by imagination, although they do not spell out in detail what these amount to.
[48] For recent theoretical discussion of the connection between emotion and moral evaluation, see D'Arms and Jacobson 2000. Some theorists also posit a direct connection, relatively independent of emotion, between characterizations or perspectives and moral evaluation; see e.g. McDowell 1988 and Kupperman 2000. Harrison 1960 proposes a similar connection for aesthetic evaluation.

disparate response. However, as we saw in §4, they lack the resources to explain the fact that our emotional and evaluative responses to *reality* are also malleable in much the same way.

By contrast, these phenomena are easily explained if we take seriously the fairly obvious fact that people's responses to both fiction and reality depend, not just on what situations they represent, but also on how they characterize them, where characterizing is itself a complex cognitive state which is only partly under conscious control. Empirical psychology strongly suggests that intuitive thinking in general, and emotional and moral responses in particular, are governed by characterizations: that is, by holistic, context-dependent, and affectively- and imagistically-laden patterns of attention, motivation, and association. Given that relatively minimal priming in a laboratory significantly alters people's causal and moral judgments and emotional responses, we should expect that in reading fictions, where readers intentionally allow their attention to be guided by the author, and where they intentionally cultivate a wide range of intuitive associations for primarily aesthetic ends, those judgments and responses should shift even more dramatically. Fictions are in effect highly sustained, intense, cleverly designed priming experiments, which readers participate in willingly and knowingly, and often at least in part for the purpose of trying on alternative perspectives.

The fundamental conflict between the Fixed Reality Principle and the reality of disparate response arises from the fact that the Principle assumes a clear distinction between description and interpretation which is implausible for fiction. In the real world, the robust intersubjective accessibility of objective facts lends real traction to this separation. But the distinction is much murkier in fiction, where our only possible access to the fictional world is via the author, who is also its creator. Much of a fiction's interest lies in how an author interprets her world; and authors create worlds to fit their driving cognitive interests and concerns. As a result, any attempt to systematically hive off interpretation from description is likely to make the remaining world appear unmotivated, even bizarre.

A clear separation between description and interpretation is implausible in fiction for several reasons. First, a fiction's base-level facts have no independent reality apart from the author's presentation of them; and as we've seen, authors typically employ evocative, characterization-rich language to specify

those facts. Further, an author does not simply enumerate a set of base-level facts as to be imagined. Rather, she directs her attentional lens among them to motivate certain characterizations, reflecting what she thinks should be surprising, diagnostic, or explanatory for her readers. And in turn, those local characterizations reflect a broader profile of cognitive concerns which structure the narrative as a whole. These structuring concerns are such an integral aspect of the fictional enterprise that a reader who refuses to take them seriously doesn't just differ in his interpretation of the basic facts; he rejects, or at least departs from, the fiction as a whole in a fundamental way. Thus, a reader of *Pride and Prejudice* who insists on focusing his attention on the course of the Napoleonic War rather than on the local parishioners' social foibles is not engaging in the imaginative project Austen proposes in her novel—even if there is a sense in which war is objectively more important than matchmaking. Similarly, a reader of *Gone with the Wind* who focuses primarily on the plight of the slaves, refusing to treat the novel as a romance and an exploration of women's roles in the aristocratic South, is effectively engaged in rewriting Mitchell's novel as *The Wind Done Gone*, Alice Randall's parodic retelling. Once we accept the concerns that do structure these novels as they are actually written, however, then both their local characterizations and their prescribed emotional and evaluative responses seem much more appropriate.

Moreover, in well-crafted fictions, the author's proposed characterizations of the local base-level facts are grounded in aspects of the fiction for which proponents of the Fixed Reality Principle do acknowledge authorial control. The fiction's 'objective' facts include at least the global distribution of properties and at least some aspects of causal structure. But these global facts significantly constrain which local assignments of prominence and centrality are warranted. In *Gone with the Wind*, for instance, it is a background assumption that the black slaves fully accept their social position. Because they are uneducated, and perhaps lacking in innate intelligence, they are incapable of finding and performing more sophisticated jobs. They also sincerely care about at least some of the aristocrats. Many readers will not want to imagine that these things *are* true. But again, once we grant their fictionality, it becomes much more plausible to treat slavery as an inevitable, rather uninteresting part of the social world, and to focus on Scarlett's travails instead.

Of course, authors aren't totalitarian dictators: for one thing, an author's characterizing intentions are unlikely to be fully determinate; they function more like invitations to improvise on a common theme than instructions for the construction of an exact model.[49] Further, as I'll discuss in §6, both the objective local and global facts and the author's overarching perspective need to be internally consistent and mutually fitting. Finally, it can sometimes be worthwhile to read "against the grain," by systematically attending to features of the fiction that the author neglects. But more than a few such disagreements eventually add up to disengagement with the fiction's project as a whole.

Once we take into account all of the imaginative alterations to their ordinary sense of reality that readers must undertake to engage fully with many fictions, the puzzle of disparate response becomes both more difficult to state and also less puzzling. On the one hand, it is no longer straightforward to identify what counts as encountering "the same situation" in real life and fiction, given all the required shifts in operative cognitive concerns and background patterns of property distribution and causation. But this also makes it less puzzling that readers often respond differently to the same situation "narrowly construed." Yablo says that the concepts that engender imaginative resistance "depend[] on how the situation does or would strike us…*as we are*". However, the empirical evidence on the malleability of cognitive, affective, and evaluative response suggests that "who we are" is less stable, even in reality, than many philosophers—and ordinary people—like to think.[50] When it comes to fiction, the difference is even more dramatic between, as Wayne Booth (1961, 137) says,

> myself as reader and the often very different self who goes about paying bills, repairing leaky faucets, and failing in generosity and wisdom. It is only as I read that I become the self whose beliefs must coincide with the author's. Regardless of my real beliefs and practices, I must subordinate my mind and heart to the book if I am to enjoy it to the full.

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[49] Further, the degree of authorial control varies. Eileen John (1998) argues persuasively that some authors want their readers to come up with their own interpretations, and refuse to advocate any single characterization.

[50] Currie (2010, ch. 11) raises similar worries about the stability of personal character, and draws dire conclusions for the usefulness of fiction for comprehending reality. He does not, however, mention "fundamental attribution error" or "correspondence bias" (Jones and Harris 1967, Ross 1977, Gilbert and Malone 1995): the widespread bias toward explaining behaviors of others by appeal to persistent character traits, while explaining one's own behavior in terms of contextual features. If the bias for stable characters structures our understanding of reality as well as fiction, and if it is also a sufficiently adaptive interpretive strategy, we may need to adopt a fictionalist stance toward character across the board.

No author can force us to "subordinate [our] mind and heart" to their novel; we are always *free* to disagree, as Walton says. The author has merely proposed a certain imaginative project, with which we can do what we will. But *pace* Hume, Walton, Weatherson, and Yablo, many ordinary readers are remarkably willing to follow authors' interpretive leads. And the fiction's 'objective' facts and its interpretive responses are so intimately integrated that when readers do resist, this often takes the form of disengagement with the novel as a whole, rather than a systematic difference of opinion about a common set of base-level facts.

§6: The Puzzle of Imaginative Resistance

On the face of it, there should be no puzzle about why readers sometimes resist taking up the imaginative projects that authors propose: creating a fiction that engages a wide range of readers is a complex, hard-won achievement, which can fail to come off in all sorts of ways. In this section, I argue that few if any content-based principles explain when imaginative resistance occurs. Resistance depends, not primarily on what authors claim to be true, but on how skillfully they ground those claims within a larger imaginative project, and on how motivated readers are to enter into that project.

As I argued in §3, a successful fiction must do much more than just prescribe imagining a set of propositions and experiences. At a minimum, the objective local and global facts need to be internally consistent and fitting, and presented in a way that enables readers to form intuitive characterizations of robust individuals and events. Further, the author's overarching perspective and expressive style must fit together into a psychologically coherent personality, from which readers can extrapolate the fiction's implicitly operative principles of generation and characterization.

Fictions may trigger resistance by being inconsistent in one or more of these ways. In particular, a fiction may be interpretively inconsistent even if all of its objective facts are consistent—for instance, if the author explicitly stipulates an evaluative proposition as true without grounding it in commensurate characterizations of the base-level facts. Thus, many critics accused Oliver Stone in *Natural Born Killers*

of preaching the message that media sensationalism promotes violence even as his presentational style glamorized such violence. Such interpretive inconsistency might be intentional: the explicit moralizing may provide a fig leaf for indulging prurient interests; or the author may want to 'seduce' her readers into indulging those interests to bring home how dangerous they are (Gaut 2007). Unless the reader can discern some coherent interpretive plan for the fiction as a whole, however, objective or interpretive inconsistencies are likely to shake his trust in the author and encourage resistance. For instance, Wayne Booth (1961, 79) says that D.H. Lawrence misinterprets the characters and events in *Lady Chatterly's Lover* in ways that distort the plot, despite his own voluble insistence that it is immoral for the author to "put his thumb in the scale, to pull down the balance to his own predilection."[51]

Fictions can also provoke resistance in the absence of any internal inconsistency. The more radically the fiction's operative assumptions, perspective and style depart from the reader's own defaults, the more likely it becomes that some sort of resistance will occur, because the reader lacks the ability or desire to alter his ordinary cognitive dispositions as the author intends. (Conversely, a fiction that too closely mimics a reader's assumptions and perspective risks either failing to pique his interest or reminding him too painfully of reality.) In particular, because perspectives are ongoing, intuitive dispositions to characterize, and are only partly under conscious control, readers must be trained into them gradually, through immersion in an expressive style and by application to specific individuals and events. In addition, getting readers to go along with high-level interpretive judgments requires building up a rich body of factual assumptions, including facts about the global background of properties' distribution and causal structure, as well as enticing the reader to share the fiction's structuring concerns.

Given all this, we should not be surprised if short, stylistically unexpressive fictions which explicitly stipulate contrafactual interpretive propositions—what Weatherson (2004, 7) calls "simple direct invitations to imagine," of the sort philosophers have typically employed in discussions of

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[51] Similarly, in his Preface to *The Golden Bowl,* Gore Vidal accuses Henry James of consigning his character Charlotte Stant to an inappropriate fate (cited by Moran 1994, 99).

imaginative resistance—often provoke resistance.[52] The likelihood of resistance also appears to increase

the more dramatically those propositions depart from a reader's ordinary commitments: thus, it may be

easier to get contemporary readers to characterize out-of-wedlock birth as shameful, say, or to root for a

protagonist to revenge his father's murder, than to take female infanticide to be warranted. But even if

resistance is more likely for more radically contrafactual propositions, this does not show that readers

generally reject the possibility of those propositions ever being fictional. Indeed, some well-known

works—*Juliette, Triumph of the Will,* or *V for Vendetta*, say—do elicit dramatically alternative

evaluations in a significant number of readers. Rather than having a fixed moral compass, we might say

that readers have a moral center of gravity, with more effort required to displace their judgments further

from their natural equilibrium—and with some readers (perhaps especially philosophers interested in

morality and modality) requiring more energy to produce significant displacement than others.

Yablo (2002) and Weatherson (2004) argue that imaginative resistance can also arise with respect

to a range of non-moral topics, such as shape and ontology: for instance, it is difficult to imagine fictions

in which it is plausibly true that maple leaves are both five-fingered and oval (Yablo 2002, 485), or that a

knife and fork are observationally indistinguishable from a television and armchair (Weatherson 2004, 5).

Here, a Fixed Reality Principle seems considerably more plausible; in some such cases, we might even

doubt that there is any thought there to be imagined. Nevertheless, I think we have grounds to reject the

Fixed Reality Principle in these areas as well. If there are fewer cases of disparate response for

metaphysical than for moral judgments, this may simply reflect the fact that most topics about which

people actually diverge in their interpretive opinions, and which are also sufficiently engaging to feature

in a novel, are moral, or at least evaluative. It may also reflect contingent limitations in readers' current

imaginative capacities. Established literary tropes and genres—time travel, say, or shape-shifting or

magic—expand authors' and readers' imaginative horizons, by offering practice in imagining the details

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[52] Weatherson (2004, 17) explicitly restricts his conclusions about puzzling fictions to such invitations.
Note also that Walton, Weatherson and Yablo all argue for the limitations in imaginative ability and
fictionality by appeal to isolated, artificially constructed examples. Extrapolation from such limited sets
of samples is clearly methodologically questionable.

of a certain class of remote possibilities. For a genre to become established, a significant number of

authors and readers must find those possibilities interesting enough to warrant their time and effort. But

once a genre begins to grow, there is little predicting where it will end. For instance, math nerds might

take inspiration from *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions*, and begin exploring what it would be

like to inhabit alternative mathematical spaces. Relative to a world governed by topological rather than

geometrical principles, readers might well be willing to accept that the outline of a five-fingered maple

leaf was a circle, because it is a continuous closed one-dimensional space. Similarly, for extremely small

or extremely large creatures, a knife and a television might be observationally indistinguishable. More

generally, the history of science and philosophy provide many examples of propositions that were once

taken to be inconceivable, even nonsense, but that later come to be widely accepted: for example, the

claims that light is both particle and wave, that a blade of grass could be produced by purely physical

processes, or that mental states might be brain states. Thus, I believe we should be suspicious of any

general, *a priori* limitations on what we might be able to imagine, given sufficient interest, knowledge,

and cognitive and imaginative effort (Camp 2004).[53]

So far, I've been focusing primarily on readers' responses to fiction. But of course, the mere fact

that readers intuitively judge certain propositions to be true in the fiction does not show that those

propositions actually are fictional. In real life, many philosophers grant that ordinary people's intuitive

moral judgments depend upon their perspectives, but reject relativism about moral truth. So too, a

proponent of the Fixed Reality Principle might insist that when authors induce readers to treat

contrafactual moral, ontological, or other high-level interpretive propositions as fictional, this is because

they have manipulated them into endorsing those propositions, not because they have genuinely justified

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[53] Some of these cases may better be described as instances of change in the concepts themselves rather
than in the domain of application of a fixed concept. Distinguishing between the two classes of cases is a
delicate matter, with vague boundaries. But the fact remains that both in the history of science and in
fiction, there is continuous evolution under a constant label from an original, narrow domain to which
ordinary people are willing to apply the relevant concept, to an expanded domain which includes
instances that were inconceivable from the earlier vantage point.

their fictionality.[54] We do need to allow that mutual belief by an author and her readers does not suffice for fictionality: in particular, both parties might be so prejudiced that they turn a blind eye to the sorts of internal inconsistencies that I've pointed to as undermining a higher-order proposition's fictionality. However, the broader the range of readers that an author successfully induces to accept such judgments, and the greater the level of detail with which both authors and readers can justify those judgments with facts internal to the fiction, the less plausible it becomes to dismiss them. The phenomena of disparate response and judgment are so pervasive that the Fixed Reality Principle can be saved only by proposing a massive error theory about many readers' responses to fiction. But it is unclear that the Principle is sufficiently well-supported on independent grounds to warrant such an error theory. By contrast, a model that appeals to perspectives has the resources to explain both the pervasiveness of disparate response and the particular profile of cases in which imaginative resistance is most likely to arise.

I conclude that we should reject the Fixed Reality Principle, both as a general account of ordinary readers' responses to fiction and as an account of what is actually true in fiction. Readers are often willing and able to go along with fictions that depart significantly, both substantively and interpretively, from their ordinary sense of the real world. And when they do resist, this often depends as much on nuanced psychological and aesthetic factors of motivation and presentation as it does on what contents readers are asked to imagine.

Nonetheless, even if readers are often *capable* of imagining the contents prescribed by alien fictions, especially morally alien fictions, we might still think they have good moral or aesthetic reasons not to cultivate alien perspectives in fiction. Participating imaginatively in a morally alien fiction can be morally risky, because trying on a perspective involves genuinely cultivating a propensity to find certain things notable, to seek certain sorts of explanations, and to respond emotionally and evaluatively in certain ways. Tamar Szabó Gendler articulates the risk nicely: like the aspects in metaphor, perspectives

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[54] For example, Weatherson (2004, 21) claims that a story which describes a man as moral for giving meat to villagers fails to make that claim true within the fiction, given the assumption that gratuitous meat-eating is immoral in reality, even though he grants that the story won't arouse resistance in most readers.

in fiction may "emphasize similarities we prefer to overlook" (2006, 151); and once we have noticed

these similarities, we cannot go back and *un*-notice them, or deny they exist.[55] Trying on a perspective,

even just within the context of fiction, adds that perspective to our "conceptual repertoire" (2000, 77), and

may thereby "render these undesirable patterns of response available even in the contemplation of actual

[scenarios]" (2006, 153).[56] The open-ended nature of perspectives makes the decision about whether to

even attempt to engage with an alien fiction especially difficult, because we can't know exactly what we

are being asked to try on until we are deep in the fiction's midst. However, although the risk is genuine, I

don't think it warrants across-the-board resistance. Morally alien fictions can offer important knowledge,

by enabling us to comprehend an alien perspective in a lived way.[57] This can help us to interact more

effectively with those who embrace it. More importantly, we may ultimately embrace it for ourselves,

deciding that our earlier rejection was prejudicial. Refusing to try on alternative perspectives protects us

from the risk of moral perversion, but at the cost of cutting us off from the potential for moral growth.

Morally alien fictions are also aesthetically risky, insofar as they require readers to expend

imaginative effort in ways that are likely to be unpleasant or even harmful. Various theorists have argued

that morally alien fictions are *ipso facto* aesthetically flawed, because they demand imaginative responses

which "morally sensitive" readers are psychologically unwilling or unable to indulge (Walton 1994;

Carroll 2001), or which it would be immoral for them to cultivate (Gaut 2007). Here too, I agree that

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[55] Gendler connects perspectives in fiction here with Moran's (1989) discussion of the 'compulsion'
involved in metaphorical perspectives; as he puts it, "If someone is described as having all the charm of a
damp kitchen sponge, it's no good simply to *deny* it, after he or she has registered an appreciation of the
phrase" (1989, 91). In my (ms.), I spell out and defend Moran's claim (along with that of Wayne Booth
and Ted Cohen) that this 'compulsion' lends metaphorical insults a distinctive rhetorical power.
[56] Gendler's primary explanation of imaginative resistance centers on the notion of 'exportation'. She
argues, against Walton and others, that readers typically are willing to engage with morally alien fictions
that are "distorting": that is, where the author employs "distancing mechanisms" to signal that its
evaluative principles are not intended realistically (2000, 78). Rather, she claims, fictions produce
resistance when "the reader feels that she is being asked to export a way of looking at the actual world"
from the fiction (2000, 77) that she "would not reflectively endorse as authentically [her] own" (2000,
56). This explanation cannot work as a general explanation of resistance: as we have seen, many readers
are genuinely moved by alien fictional perspectives which the author intends realistically, even
didactically, as in Augustine's *Confessions* or *Paradise Lost*. Many people are also willing to try on
alternative perspectives outside the confines of fiction, either reading non-fictional narratives like the
Confessions, or in the context of political and ethical debate.
[57] Kieran (2003) argues that this can constitute an aesthetic, and not merely instrumental, merit.

alien perspectives raise the aesthetic stakes, but I deny that this entails any systematic conclusions about

aesthetic merit. Readers and critics regularly acknowledge that aesthetically meritorious works of art can

be challenging along other dimensions: in virtue of employing disruptive language, say, or eschewing

traditional harmonies. If the challenging feature is not gratuitous, but sufficiently integral to the work—if

it is "incorrigible," in Daniel Jacobson's terms—then we often don't count it as an aesthetic deficit

(Jacobson 1997, 191).[58] Indeed, one might argue that the ability to draw at least some readers into trying

on a morally alien perspective constitutes an aesthetic virtue: precisely because an author who presents an

alien perspective must support it with a body of local and global facts, train her readers into a new way of

characterizing those facts, and provide them with sufficient motivation to temporarily displace their own

perspectives and commitments, creating an engaging morality fiction takes additional skill. We shouldn't

be surprised if many readers are unwilling to invest the extra effort required for engagement, preferring to

spend their time with more 'comfortable' fictions. Instead, we might decide to be impressed that it pulls

in as many readers as it does.

§7: Conclusion

What, in the end, do we learn from fictions? Putnam says that in reading Celine's *Journey to the*

End of the Night,

> I do *not* learn that love does not exist, that all human beings are hateful and hating (even if—and I
> am sure this is not the case—those propositions should be true). What I learn is to see the world as
> it looks to someone who is sure that hypothesis is correct…Being aware of a new interpretation of
> the facts, however repellent, of a construction…that can be put upon the facts…is knowledge of a
> possibility. It is *conceptual* knowledge (1978, 89-90, emphasis in original).

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[58] Further, it is unclear how to determine when a fiction is aesthetically flawed because inaccessible:
inaccessibility to a particular reader might just reflect lack of imagination, or prudentially warranted but
aesthetically irrelevant caution. As Jacobson (1997) argues, it would be question-begging to assume that
emotional or evaluative responses to fiction are aesthetically unmerited simply because they are immoral:
they might still be *fitting*, in D'Arms and Jacobson's (2001) sense of appropriately matching their target.

We now have a better understanding of what sort of "conceptual knowledge" this might be. As Putnam says, it's not primarily knowledge that a certain proposition is, or even could be, true.[59] Rather, the perspective with which a fiction acquaints us is conceptual or cognitive in the sense of being a tool for thought: it structures and colors our thoughts by determining what we notice and dismiss, what sorts of explanations we seek, and what emotional and evaluative responses come naturally to us. "Trying on" a perspective requires actually, albeit temporarily, structuring one's thinking in these ways. In some cases, we may drop these characterizing dispositions soon after we close the book. But often, there is at least some lingering effect—perhaps not a direct shift in propositional attitudes, but rather more subtle changes in predilections to notice, explain, and respond. These subtleties can eventually ramify, however, to alter our interpretive judgments of analogous situations in the real world.

The standard philosophical model, on which imagination is the propositional or experiential representation of contents as if they were real, makes this kind of learning through fiction mysterious. It also makes mysterious why readers sometimes resist and other times happily go along with emotional and evaluative responses that depart significantly from those they would have in ordinary life, and why our responses to reality also display the same sort of malleability.   By contrast, a model of the mind which acknowledges that emotion and evaluation are intimately bound up with perspectives, and that perspectives are only partly under our conscious control, renders all of these phenomena much more comprehensible. Fictions are complex imaginative enterprises, in which plot, characterization, perspective, and style are integrated into a cohesive whole. A fiction must earn its perspective by embodying it in a fitting expressive style and by applying it consistently to the local and global facts; but when it does, a well-crafted fiction can elicit significantly alternative responses from many readers.

Perspectives fit uneasily within the standard representational theory of mind. Although they are not part of content as traditionally understood, they are a pervasive and normatively-governed aspect of

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[59] He goes on: "To think of the novel itself as presenting us with some kind of nonscientific knowledge of man is making it all somehow too much like propositions" (1978, 91). Similarly, Danto (1981, 167) says that it is "one of the main offices of art less to represent the world than to represent it in such a way as to cause us to view it with a certain attitude and with a special vision." Cf. also Michael Tanner (1994, 58).

our mental lives. Different perspectives can make it more or less easy to access and assimilate different facts, and can warrant distinct evaluations of the same set of facts. Imaginative engagement with fiction brings out the role of perspectives especially clearly, because trying on a new perspective is such an integral part of what makes many fictions compelling. However, once we see how perspectives function in fiction, we can also observe them at work in our mental lives more generally: scientists and historians regularly try on and advocate alternative perspectives in the course of their investigations; and political and moral debate is in significant part a matter of dueling perspectives. To make systematic sense of discourse in these areas, we need a principled account of perspectives, of the sort I have attempted to articulate here.

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