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Perspectives in Imaginative Engagement with Fiction[*]

I take up three puzzles about our emotional and evaluative responses to fiction. First, how can we even have emotional responses to characters and events that we know not to exist, if emotions are as intimately connected to belief and action as they seem to be? One solution to this puzzle claims that we merely imagine having such emotional responses. But this raises the puzzle of why we would ever refuse to follow an author's instructions to imagine such responses, since we happily imagine many other implausible things. A natural response to this second puzzle is that our responses to fiction are real, and so can't just be conjured up in response to an author's demands. However, this simple response is inadequate, because we often respond differently to people and events in fiction than we would if we encountered them in real life. Solving these three puzzles in a consistent way requires the notion of a "perspective" on a fictional world. I sketch an account of this intuitive but frustratingly amorphous notion: perspectives are tools for organizing our thinking, which can in turn alter our emotional and evaluative responses. Cultivating a perspective can be illuminating, entertaining, or corrupting — or all three at once.

§1: The need for perspective

Three puzzles about our emotional and evaluative engagement with fiction have recently received a fair amount of attention in philosophy, although rarely at the same time. The first problem is how we can have emotional responses to fiction at all, given that as readers we realize perfectly well that the depicted characters and events don't exist. Many philosophers believe that emotions involve essential connections with 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 also seem that I cannot really hate or fear something unless I'm disposed to act in certain ways toward it. But these connections to belief and action seem to be absent in the case of fiction. This is the "puzzle of fictional emotions."[1]

One solution to this puzzle, endorsed by Walton among others, is that we don't really have emotional responses to fictional characters and events, but merely imagine doing so. But if that is right,

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

then 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 also arises for moral and aesthetic evaluations: why should we be unwilling or unable even to imagine that certain claims about what is right, or beautiful, or funny, are true, given that we happily play along in imagining many other highly implausible, even impossible, things, including alterations to fundamental laws of physics? This is what Tamar Szabó Gendler (2000) calls "the puzzle of imaginative resistance."[2]

It's natural to respond that the second puzzle only arises if we solve the first one 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's obvious that a full engagement with fiction requires actually *having* genuine emotional and evaluative responses to the characters and events it depicts. And that's just not the sort of thing that I can choose to do willy-nilly, in response to an author's demands.

But if that's right, then we confront a third puzzle: the responses we have to events and characters in fiction are often quite different from those we would have if the same events occurred 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 what Gregory Currie (1997, 65) calls "the problem of personality": very often we do happily adopt attitudes in response to fiction that diverge fairly dramatically from our normal ones.[3] So something imaginative must be going on here, which makes it look like our emotional responses to fiction can't really be real after all. And this seems to send us right back where we started.

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[2] As several authors have pointed out, this label encompasses a family of related puzzles. On the one hand, our 'resistance' may stem from either an inability or an unwillingness on our part to imagine something to be the case, or else from the author's failure to make it true in the fiction that something is so; this distinction will surface at several points below. On the other hand, emotions and evaluations aren't the only sources of resistance: Yablo (2002) generalizes the puzzle to shape properties, while Weatherson (2004) extends it to ontology and constitution. I focus on emotions and evaluative claims, because they interact in interesting ways with the other puzzles and with the notion of a perspective. I doubt that all cases of resistance call for precisely the same explanation, although they may be importantly related (see the discussion of the 'orthodox' explanation for imaginative resistance in §3 below). Gendler 2006**a** takes up all of these issues.

[3] See also Goldie (2003).

We need to explain our interaction with fiction in a way that handles all three puzzles: of emotional engagement, imaginative resistance, and alternative personality. I will argue that to do this, we need the notion of a perspective on a fictional world. A perspective requires more than just imagining *that* a set of propositions is true. Rather, it involves structuring one's thinking in certain ways, so that one finds certain sorts of things important or notable, and seeks certain sorts of explanations for them. It is this structuring of thoughts, I will argue, rather than actual belief or disposition to action, that underwrites genuine emotions. And in turn, different ways of structuring the same set of propositions can produce different emotional and evaluative responses to their contents. Given this, our responses to characters and events in a fiction will differ from our normal responses whenever the fiction leads us to structure our overall understanding of the narrated facts in a very different way than we normally would. Works of fiction can be morally illuminating — and dangerous — because they afford us an intimate, experiential access to alternative perspectives. Sometimes, though, whether because of authorial incompetence or because the intended perspective is too alien, we can't or won't structure our thinking as the author wants us to, and resistance sets in.

The intuition that perspectives, and not just propositions, play a crucial role in explaining our engagement with fiction is not new. Dick Moran is particularly explicit about the need for perspectives:

> 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).

Moran is not alone, however: Gendler (2000, 2006) 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), something that is best characterized as a "point of view" or a "way of looking." Likewise, Walton (1994), Currie (1997), Dadlez (1997), Carroll (2003), Goldie (2003), and Gaut (2007) all appeal to perspectives, outlooks, "seeing-as", or framing, in explaining our responses to fiction.

The problem is that it's not at all obvious just what a perspective is, let alone what it might mean to "try on" an alternative one. Perspectives are messy and amorphous — precisely that aspect of our

mental lives which eludes being pinned down in specific, propositional terms. Indeed, in discussing the role of "seeing-as" in the interpretation of metaphor, philosophers like Donald Davidson (1978) and Richard Rorty (1987) locate perspectives outside the realm of rationality altogether, on a par with birdsongs, thunderclaps, and bumps on the head in merely *causing* us to entertain or endorse certain propositions.

By contrast, talk about imagining propositions to be true is admirably clear. We have an *attitude*: imagined belief (or sometimes, imagined desire), toward a *content*: a proposition. This way of talking fits nicely into our broader model of the propositional attitudes; as Walton puts it,

> 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).

Few theorists, other than Pylyshyn (2003), would insist that imagining is always exclusively a matter of entertaining propositions. In particular, Walton himself emphasizes 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"; and he descries the "surprisingly prevalent assumption that imagining…can be only a clinical, antiseptic, intellectual exercise" (1997, 38). I believe that this assumption is so prevalent precisely because many philosophers do implicitly employ a propositional model of the imagination — or at least, of its cognitive dimension. And in particular, I think this leads them to ignore the role that perspectives play in imagination. Thus, unless we can articulate a tolerably precise notion of perspectives which captures the sense in which they exceed the specification of particular propositions, talk about "trying on perspectives" will seem like an illegitimate dodge into vagueness in lieu of a real analysis. And without an appeal to perspectives, I think our three puzzles will continue to appear puzzling.[4]

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[4] **[[**Some philosophers, like David Lewis (1978) and Alex Byrne (1993), expressly restrict their attention to identifying the principles that determine what is true in a fiction; and for these more modest purposes, it might seem that an exclusively propositional analysis is appropriate. Even this may be too strong, if one endorses a perspectival account of evaluative claims in the real world. But even if one adopts a fairly robust realism about evaluative propositions, it's plausible that we still need to appeal to perspectives in

§2: From Characterizations to Perspectives

2.1: Literal and Metaphorical Perspectives

Our first task, then, is to make the notion of a perspective precise enough to do real explanatory work. A natural way to start is by treating talk of "adopting a perspective" quite literally: in terms of Richard Wollheim's (1984, 74) notion of iconic, central imagining, in which I imagine a sequence of events in a dramatic manner, by placing myself at some location within the scene. It is fairly uncontroversial that such dramatic simulation is goes beyond merely entertaining propositions; and *prima facie*, it appears quite apt for explaining the way in which our imaginative engagement with fictions involves emotional and evaluative responses.[5] If I dramatically imagine living through a scene as myself, then it seems that I will naturally imagine responding with the same attitudes I would have if I really experienced that scene. Alternatively, if I imagine being someone else experiencing those events, then, to the extent that my imaginative project is successful, I'll imagine responding with their attitudes instead.

Broadly speaking, I think something like this 'simulationist' line is on the right track. However, such a simple account is clearly inadequate to explain the full range of our actual emotional engagement with fiction. First, my emotional responses to a character's adventures depend upon my beliefs about the fictional world as a whole, where this often includes facts of which that character is ignorant: for instance, I fear for the heroine fixing a late-night cup of hot chocolate precisely because I know, as she doesn't, that

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order to explain our epistemic access to the truth of those propositions, given that our intuitions about those propositions are often influenced by our larger perspectives. Thus, at the very least we need an account of perspectives in order to assess the reliability of our intuitive judgments relative to the evaluative facts in a fiction, and perhaps to fix the principles that govern fictional truth itself.**]]**

[5] Cf. Walton's (1990, 29) discussion of *de se* imagination; Moran's suggestion that the appropriate imaginative engagement with fiction is "dramatic" (1994, 104); Currie's (1995, 1997) descriptions of empathy in terms of simulation, "empathetic projection" or "imaginative role-playing"; and Murray Smith's (1995, 80) appeal to Wollheimian central imagining in engagement with film.

a burglar is hidden in the pantry, or that there will be a horrible gas explosion.[6] Second, and more generally, in reading fiction I very often don't, or don't only, locate myself imaginatively inside each successive scene, whether as myself or as another.[7] Instead, I adopt a perspective on the fictional world as a whole: as Peter Goldie (2003, 57) puts it, my perspective is acentral or *external*.[8] Finally, and most importantly, we need to explain how a single perspective can apply to multiple situations, or even multiple worlds, including the real world. So, for instance, 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, emphasis in original). To make sense of this sort of talk, we need to understand perspectives in a way that allows them to be extracted from particular characters and scenes and transported across worlds. But precisely because iconic central imagining is so intimately tied up with the particular scene being imagined, it cannot accommodate this.

I think we can achieve a clearer understanding of the relevant sort of perspective by directing our attention to a range of other cases that also employ imaginative play in a manner that invites talk of perspectives, but where this talk also cannot be taken literally — in particular, to the invocation of "seeing-as" in the context of metaphor. To get an inkling for why it might be useful to think of fiction as akin to metaphor, consider the following sequence of cases.[9] Suppose I tell you that Bill, a mutual acquaintance, 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. If so, I might introduce it by saying: "Here's what you need

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[6] See Carroll 2001 for a similar point; thanks to Dick Moran for discussion. Further, as Tamar Gendler pointed out to me, I can learn such things through a wide range of cues: most obviously, non-linearity and foreshadowing in narrative, but also through music in film, violations of genre expectations, and so on.
[7] This may be different for film, which does seem to involve locating oneself at the margin of the depicted scene. There also appear to be significant differences across individuals in the degree to which they cultivate an "internal engagement" with fictions, by putting themselves into characters' shoes.
[8] Often, my perspective approximates to that of the narrator, and narrators are indeed characters within the fiction. But they do not usually have an internal point of view in the relevant sense. Rather, they typically know the whole story in advance; and they often relate it to us in a somewhat non-linear way.
[9] I contrast these sorts of cases more extensively in my (2008). Gendler (2006) also identifies a parallel between metaphoric perspectives and perspectives in fiction.

to know about Bill", or "Bill's just the sort of guy who…". If I do tell the story in this spirit, then we can imagine, further, my adding something like the following 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 disclaimer, we've moved from fact to fiction. This has important ramifications for what information you should take away from my story, of course. But it doesn't much affect my basic communicative purpose, which is to lead you into the best overall way of thinking about Bill, to give you an overall sense of the kid of guy he is. Finally, we can move from fiction to metaphor: by telling you, "Bill is the quarterback in our department," I might inform you that he plays the sort of role in our department that quarterbacks play in football. In this case, whether or not Bill ever was a quarterback is irrelevant to my point, which is just about the kind of person he is, and how he interacts with those around him.

In all three of the latter cases, but not in the first, minimal one, 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 this phenomenon, I'll refer to it as *aspectual thought*: thought in which one mental representation organizes or structures another, much as a concept organizes perception in literal cases of seeing-as. And in order to have a theory-neutral expression for the mental representations, or ways of thinking about things, which I claim that aspectual thought operates on, I'll call these *characterizations*.[10] As a first pass, we might say that a characterization is a stereotype or schema, and that perspectives assimilate one's thinking about a particular subject (e.g. Bill) to a more general one (e.g. quarterbacks). But that's just a rough initial approximation. To develop a more adequate story, we need a more detailed account of characterizations, which in turn will provide us with the resources for an account of aspects and perspectives.

2.2: Characterizations, Aspects, and Perspectives

First, at their most basic, characterizations, like stereotypes, apply collections of properties to a subject. For instance, my characterization of quarterbacks includes their being natural leaders, affable,

[10] For a fuller account of aspectual thought and its application to metaphor, see my (2003).

and bit shallow. In addition to such general traits, characterizations also typically include more specific properties: for instance, I think of quarterbacks as having a certain sort of square jaw and straight sandy-brown hair. Some such properties, like certain ways of walking or talking, are so specific and experientially-dependent that we don't have established expressions for them, and can only refer to them demonstratively or metaphorically.[11] So far, this doesn't distinguish characterizations from stereotypes, or indeed from concepts. Unlike stereotypes, though, which are communally-shared ways of thinking about *types*, characterizations can also represent individual persons, objects, and events, such as George W. Bush, the White House, or Barack Obama's inauguration; although it obviously makes an enormous difference for other cognitive purposes, the sort and specificity of the entity that a characterization represents makes no difference to its internal structure and constituents. Characterizations also differ from both stereotypes and concepts in being potentially quite idiosyncratic: my characterization of quarterbacks may not match yours, and I might have a characterization of something the rest of the community doesn't notice, such as the route I walk to work. So stereotypes are merely a special case of the broader class of characterizations.

The second major feature of characterization, which starkly differentiates them from concepts, is that they don't always require a direct commitment to their subjects actually possessing the properties ascribed to them. Thus, I'm under no illusion that quarterbacks are really more likely to have square jaws and gleaming smiles. Still, there is a sort of commitment involved in my characterizing quarterbacks this way: I think those features are *fitting* for them. If I were casting a quarterback in a movie, for instance, I would look for an actor with those features. Conversely, just as I need not believe that the represented subject actually possesses all the features in my characterization of it, so too I may know that it possesses certain features which I marginalize as not really fitting. For instance, I might know that Bill is passionate about astronomy, but because this doesn't fit with my characterization of him as sociable and anti-intellectual, I might think he *shouldn't* love astronomy.

[11] I argue that metaphors sometimes provide us the only access to such properties in my (2006a).

Thus, although assessments of fittingness must be systematically grounded in how we take a subject to actually be, the two can come apart, in both directions. When they do come apart, it's often because we believe that an individual is exceptional or aberrant for its type, so that exception appears as a statistical aberration. However, I also believe that intuitions of fittingness typically have a normative, aesthetic component. Arthur Danto invokes what the relevant notion of 'fit' in a discussion of 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 (1981, 207).

If we were more fully rational thinkers, we would sharply distinguish what we take to be fitting from we believe to be actual or even probable. In real life, our failures to distinguish these can be highly problematic; in fiction, where our concerns are more with aesthetic satisfaction than with factual accuracy, fittingness can take on a more pervasive and less obviously insidious role.

The third major feature of characterizations, which will shoulder the bulk of the explanatory work in addressing our puzzles, is that characterizations don't merely consist in unordered collections of properties; rather, those features are structured in a complex pattern that varies along at least two dimensions of importance. Along the first dimension, some features in a characterization are more *prominent* than others. Prominence, as I understand it, 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 that possess it, 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. A feature is central in one's characterization to the extent that one thinks of it as causing, motivating, or otherwise explaining many of the subject's other features (cf. Thagard 1989, Sloman et al 1998). For instance, I think of a quarterback's being a natural leader as explaining more of his other features — why he's popular and confident; indeed why he's a quarterback at all — than his having a square jaw and gleaming smile do. 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 analogy with seeing-as helps to make vivid. Contrast the two ways of seeing Figure 1 below. On either way of seeing the figure, the role that each constituent element plays depends on the roles that are simultaneously played by many other elements. And when I switch from seeing the figure one way to the other, the prominence and centrality of those various elements shift dramatically. Further, this causes the basic elements themselves to represent different things: for instance, the same bump comes to be seen either as a nose, or as a wart.

Figure 1: The Old Crone/Young Lady

Much the same point goes for characterizations: the same property can take on different significances, depending on the overall structure in which it's embedded. If I take Bill to be at root a highly sociable

guy, then his teasing remarks will seem like harmless attempts at bonding; while if I take him to be motivated primarily by a desire to control others, those same remarks will seem malicious and manipulative.

Armed with this sketch of characterizations, we can now return to aspects. I said above that to a first approximation, aspectual thought involves assimilating one's thinking about a subject to a more general stereotype. I can now say, more precisely, that it involves using one characterization to structure another: for instance, using your characterization of quarterbacks to structure your characterization of Bill, or your characterization of Napoleon to structure your characterization of George Bush. I think this restructuring works in something like the way Dedre Gentner (1983, 2001) claims we understand analogies: roughly, by taking especially prominent and central features in the governing characterization (e.g., of quarterbacks) and seeking matches for them within the subject characterization (e.g., of Bill), and then raising the prominence and centrality of those features in the subject characterization.[12] Like characterizations themselves, the process of restructuring one characterization in light of another is holistic, intuitive, and largely unreflective: we come to 'see' Bill as a quarterback, much as we come to see an old crone in Figure 1, without knowing quite how we did it. When we do think of something under an aspect, our thinking about it gains an overall coherence. Often, this brings significant cognitive benefits, such as ease of navigation and an increased ability to predict further features that the subject might possess. But it can also have disadvantages, such as leading us to ignore properties that are genuinely important to it but which don't fit easily under that aspect.

Finally, I can now say what I take a perspective to be. We sometimes talk about aspects themselves as perspectives: for instance, I might say that discovering that Bill was a quarterback in high school provided me with a whole new perspective on him. But recall from §2.1 that for talk of

[12] See my (2005b) for further discussion of Gentner's view, and my (2003, ch. 4) for discussion of how my view differs from Gentner's. Because the restructuring process depends on both characterizations, aspectual thought produces different effects when the same governing characterization is applied to different subjects: for instance, if we think of Juliet or of Louis XIV as 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.

perspectives to do the explanatory work we need, they must be at least potentially applicable across multiple scenes, and even multiple worlds. That is, perspectives need to be an overall way of approaching and interpreting the world at large, and not just particular things in it. I think the best way to understand this is as a disposition to form certain sorts of characterizations of whatever particular entities cross one's path — in particular, to notice certain sorts of features, and so to treat them as prominent; to seek certain sorts of explanations, and so to assign certain structures of centrality; and to find certain collections of features appropriate, or fitting, for one another.[13]

2.3: Perspectives and Propositions

Suppose you accept, as a matter of psychological description, that we do employ the three sorts of mental structures I've just described: characterizations, aspects, and perspectives. In what sense are these structures non-propositional, such that they could provide an alternative to the purely propositional analyses of imaginative engagement with fiction that I criticized in §1?

Insofar as characterizations are ways of thinking about individuals or kinds and their properties, this can clearly be captured propositionally. We can also treat assignments of prominence and centrality, and perhaps even fittingness, as higher-order, context-dependent relations between individuals or kinds and properties. And as propositional contents, these relations can be evaluated for truth and falsity. However, this is compatible with considerable legitimate variation among characterizations. Different cognitive goals will render the same property more or less diagnostic, and may even make different properties more or less explanatorily central. Further, because the objective patterns that ultimately justify assignments of intensity and centrality are so complex and multi-dimensional, two thinkers may agree about all of a subject's lower-order properties while reasonably disagreeing about their relative fittingness, prominence, and centrality.

[13] Although Gendler doesn't specify exactly what she takes a perspective or a point of view to be, it seems that she would endorse at least the general outlines of my account. She describes "ways of seeing things" as "ways that focus on some elements of the situation while ignoring others," (2000, 69), and says that "framing things in certain ways activates certain behavioral dispositions and affective propensities" (2006, 151), with stereotypes constituting one instance of this phenomenon.

The more important sense in which characterizations are non-propositional has to do with the the play role in thought, rather than with their content. We rarely entertain higher-order propositions about fittingness, prominence, and centrality explicitly. But even if we did, explicitly entertaining or even endorsing such propositions isn't the same as characterizing the relevant subject in the relevant way. Rather, characterizing requires structuring one's thinking in accord with those propositions, so that the relevant lower-order features actually play an appropriately prominent or central role in one's thinking. In perception, there is a significant difference between actual "seeing-as" and mere "looking plus thinking" (Wittgenstein 1958, 197): for instance, I might know that *this* feature in Figure 1 represents the old crone's nose, and that *that* one represents a wart, and so on, without being able to see the figure *as* (a picture of) an old crone. So too in the case of characterizing something in thought. Suppose John tells me in detail about his characterization of Bill: which of his features he takes to be especially prominent, which explain which others, and so on. I might endorse all of these propositions, since I trust John's judgment, without ever managing to 'get', intuitively, how he characterizes Bill. Further, just as with seeing-as, getting the relevant propositions to play the relevant organizational role in my thought is partly, but not entirely, under my willful control: I can direct my attention to some facts while attempting to ignore others, but the 'click' of holistic understanding is something that either happens to me or doesn't.

The same point goes for aspects as well as characterizations. They, too, are crucially concerned with propositions — for instance, the proposition *that Bill is a quarterback* — but applying the aspect doesn't require adopting any particular attitude toward that proposition. Rather, it involves using the proposition to re-structure one's overall thoughts about Bill. As such, an aspect is more aptly described as a tool for thinking than as a thought itself: rather than giving us a new piece of information to add to our body of beliefs, it primarily gives us a new way to organize the beliefs we already had. Applying an aspect may indeed lead us to entertain or endorse new propositions, either about the prominence and centrality of features already in our characterization, or about new first-order features. But it need not do so: it might merely enable us to 'get', intuitively, how a collection of basic facts hang together in a

coherent whole — where this in turn might help us to understand why someone finds a particular descriptive or evaluative proposition compelling.

As tools for thinking, both aspects and perspectives are dynamic and extendible. Both give us intuitive principles for assimilating new information about a subject, for instance by setting constraints on centrality and diagnosticity. And both can have analogous applications to multiple subjects: for instance, if I am already thinking of Bill as a quarterback, I might come to think of George as Bill's wide receiver. But where aspects at least focus on a particular proposition, perspectives are not associated with any specific propositions. Rather, a perspective is a disposition, upon being confronted with something, to structure one's thoughts about it in certain ways. This disposition is what grounds the generation of the higher-order structural propositions implicit in characterizations, and so it cannot itself be captured in or reduced to a set of such propositions. Despite their non-propositionality, though, we can still make sense of the idea of endorsing or rejecting perspectives and characterizations. Endorsing a perspective involves willingly cultivating an ongoing disposition to structure one's thoughts in its terms. When one "tries on" a perspective, one merely cultivates that disposition temporarily. For theoretical purposes, we can analyze this as a temporary disposition to entertain, in a psychologically robust but implicit manner, certain higher-order structural propositions. If one ultimately endorses the resulting characterizations, then one comes to actually (though usually only implicitly) believe those propositions: one commits to this being the right overall way to characterize and to feel about those characters and events.

§3: Characterizations and the Puzzle of Fictional Emotions

With this machinery in place, we can now begin addressing our three puzzles about fiction. The puzzle of fictional emotions asks how we can have genuine emotional responses to fiction, given that we don't believe that the depicted events are real and cannot act toward them. Here, like many others, I want to maintain that we do have genuine emotional responses to fiction. Our emotional engagement with fiction and with real life are, in general, highly continuous: they display the same basic affect and physiology, the same basic interactions between thought and affect, and the same specificity and

directedness. Further, the case of fiction is not isolated. We respond emotionally to a wide range of non-fictional situations that we don't believe to be actual or toward which we can't act:[14] for instance, we may become angry imagining the possibility of being unfairly denied a promotion, or we may feel hope as we read the history of an endeavor we know to have failed.

Theorists are typically led to 'judgmentalism' — the view that beliefs are required for genuine emotions — by a desire to respect the cognitive dimension of emotion: the intuitions that emotions involve representations of things in the world, and not just brute feelings. And if our only choices for that cognitive dimension are either believing or merely entertaining propositions, then belief seems the better option: merely entertaining propositions is too 'thin' a cognitive state to provide the robustness or investment needed to engage the emotions. However, in addition to the problem of apparently genuine emotional responses in the absence of belief, there is also the problem that we are quite capable of entertaining beliefs about things, even about things we care about enormously, in a cool and dispassionate manner; so belief cannot itself be the essential trigger for emotion. A third option, one endorsed by philosophers like Walton and Currie, is dramatic rehearsal, since this seems to combine the cognitive investment needed to trigger emotions with the flexibility needed to encompass cases without belief. However, it seems phenomenologically implausible that we only respond emotionally to situations when we either confront them directly or actually rehearse the sequence of events in our imagination: mere attention to the basic facts of the situation may suffice, without the need to reenact how they unfolded. I will argue that characterizations offer us a better alternative, one that combines the robustness of belief with the flexibility of supposition, without being either as thin as mere propositional entertainment or as restricted as dramatic, imagistic rehearsal.[15]

[14] Moran (1994, 78) makes this point. 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. (Thanks to Dick Moran for emphasizing this point.)

[15] In addition to removing the primary obstacle facing a realist account of fictional emotions, characterizations can also offer assistance to the irrealist, by providing the resources for a more plausible account of the imaginative engagement that underwrites mere *quasi*-emotions. Insofar as the irrealist analyzes imagination in terms of entertaining propositions, he risks confronting a modified version of the

Various philosophers, including Amelie Rorty (1980), Ronald de Sousa (1987), and Cheshire Calhoun (1994), have advocated the view that the cognitive or representational dimension of emotions involves something like characterizations. For instance, Eva Dadlez (1997, 102) argues that

> [E]motions can be characterized as ways of entertaining or experiencing thoughts….Here, emotions are treated as selective ways of attending to the contents of one's thoughts. Emotions become modes of attending, each 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.

A view of this general sort can easily make sense of someone's being genuinely sad that a non-existent character like Anna Karenina commits suicide: this is true just in case she structures and attends to the imagined object of her Anna-Karenina-thoughts in the distinctive way that constitutes sadness.[16] On my specific account, knowing that the object of a characterization does not exist doesn't prevent us from employing that characterization in substantive imaginative projects. For instance, with metaphor, we can describe someone as 'a Merlin' as easily as calling them 'a quarterback' or 'an Einstein'. Similarly with fiction, we can constellate a complex collection of features as belonging to an individual named 'Anna Karenina' as easily as we can for someone named 'George Bush'; the same basic cognitive machinery operates in the same way in both cases.

The crucial feature of characterizations, which provides them with the right sort of cognitive robustness, is that they require actually structuring one's thoughts in a certain way. As we saw in §2.2, this involves a robust form of intuitive engagement that is not fully under our voluntary control. We can take in the relevant basic-level facts, and even consciously attend to certain facts rather than others while trying to impose a specific interpretation on them, without getting the characterization to click intuitively

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original puzzle: why should someone become quasi-emotional about a set of propositions they don't believe to be true? Quasi-emotions are postulated to be physiologically identical to real emotions; they merely lack doxastic commitment. But because physiological responses are generally not voluntary, an author cannot prescribe having them; instead, they must be aroused in the reader by way of her imagining basic-level propositions to be true. And we often entertain even quite complex sets of propositions without emotional response, most notably in planning. So something more than entertaining propositions is required even to explain quasi-emotions; but the leading candidate — dramatic rehearsal — seems unduly restrictive.

[16] What are Anna-Karenina-thoughts? Even if there no singular thoughts of this type, it is perfectly possible to have quantificational thoughts about someone called 'Anna Karenina', collected together in a single mental file.

into place. That is, characterizing involves the same sort of 'willing passivity' — of opening one's attention to the facts of a situation while allowing an intuitive cognitive structure to impose itself on those facts — that is required for emotional engagement. Characterizing a subject doesn't by itself automatically produce an emotional response: we can characterize many subjects, such as philosophical views, without feeling any emotions towards them.[17] But the possibility of someone who has rich, complex, intuitive characterizations of the sorts of things that normally arouse emotions in real life, and who is actively attending to those subjects via those characterizations, but who fails to respond emotionally to them, seems genuinely pathological in a way that someone who merely contemplates, or has beliefs about, the same bare set of first-order facts in the absence of emotional response does not.

Further, the connection between characterizations and emotions is tighter than just that both involve the same type of intuitive, holistic, and engaged attention to their subjects. Different ways of characterizing the same basic set of facts will produce, and be produced by, different emotional responses, by influencing which features we attend to and what significance we assign to them. For example, if I am angry with Bill because he is late for our meeting, then other occasions on which he has done similar things will be especially prominent in my memory and I am likely to interpret those occasions as being explained by Bill's negligence or self-centeredness. By contrast, if I think his actions are explained by confusion and an overcommitted desire to please everyone, then I will recall a different set of past situations, and will feel more pity than anger.

Further, these connections between characterizations and emotions are not just causal, but normative:[18] it is appropriate for me to be angry with Bill if I think his lateness is explained by an overall central feature of self-centered manipulativeness but not if I think it is explained by confusion and desire to please. 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

[17] Thanks to Ishani Maitra for pressing the need for more than just characterizations.
[18] It also affects what we remember: Lee-Sammons and Whitney (1991) show that readers' recall of facts in a narrative is significantly influenced by the perspective they adopt: for instance, whether they read a story about a "fine old home" from a homeowner's perspective or a burglar's.

conditions we are under." Conversely, we also typically justify our emotional responses to others by attempting to convey an overall characterization of the situation to them, rather than just pointing to one or two isolated elements.

Finally, it is plausible that characterizations stand in similar justificatory relations to moral and aesthetic evaluations. At the one extreme, a strongly perspectival view of evaluative talk would maintain that such talk is merely a way of advocating a characterization, and that one only really grasps the significance of an evaluative claim if one is able to employ the relevant characterization in one's thinking about that situation or individual (cf. McDowell 1988, Kupperman 2000). At the other extreme, even a strongly realist view might assign characterizations an epistemological role, as helping to explain how we know that an evaluative proposition is justified. In between, a moderate realism might maintain that evaluative talk entails a commitment to the goodness or badness of a situation or individual independently of one's perspective on it, but that this goodness or badness itself depends on objective patterns of properties and causal and explanatory structures which significantly constrain the appropriateness f one's characterizations, and that a full appreciation of evaluative claims involves a grasp of an appropriately supporting characterizations. Although the relation between characterizations and evaluative claims is an important topic in its own right, I want to remain neutral among these various possibilities here, and simply suggest that in practice, characterizing and evaluating are intimately related.

In the context of fiction, these causal and normative relations among characterizations, (quasi)-emotions, and evaluative attitudes produce one important source of imaginative resistance (I'll discuss others in §5). We can only adopt, or actively imagine adopting, attitudes that are appropriate to our overall characterization of a given character or event. And this is not something an author can bring about just by stipulating that a particular evaluative proposition, such as *that Bill's action was wrong*, is to-be-imagined-true. Rather, the author must provide a body of lower-order facts that support a coherent characterization which is appropriate for — or at least doesn't preclude — that attitude.

This is the source of imaginative resistance closest to what Gendler calls the "orthodox" explanation offered by Walton (1994, 2005), Weatherson (2004), and Yablo (2002). Roughly, they hold

that resistance arises when an author prescribes the truth of a proposition which supervenes on (Walton), or holds in virtue of (Weatherson and Yablo), a set of lower-order propositions, but there's no way to "match up" the higher-order proposition with an appropriate set of lower-order ones. As Weatherson (2004, 22) says,

> 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.

A breakdown in authorial authority with respect to a higher-order concept or proposition may arise either because incompatible lower-order propositions are explicitly prescribed, or because any way of specifying the relevant lower-order propositions will conflict with the higher-order one.

Like Walton, Weatherson and Yablo, I want to explain this source of imaginative resistance in terms of a mismatch involving lower-order propositions; but where they appeal directly to a mismatch with higher-order propositions, I appeal to characterizations, which in turn produce emotional and evaluative attitudes. Both Walton and Weatherson stress the importance of distinguishing the question of when a higher-order proposition really is true in a fiction from when we are either unwilling or unable to imagine it to be true. Their analyses are couched in terms of what is fictionally true, but they use them to explain why we can't *imagine* the higher-order proposition to be true: because there is nothing there to be imagined. I believe that precisely because the two questions are distinct, and specifically because our imaginative resources don't reliably track either metaphysical possibility or conceptual coherence, fictional truth, by itself, is the wrong place to seek an explanation of imaginative resistance.[19] By contrast, because characterizations are psychological phenomena, they are better positioned to underwrite an account that predicts when inter-level incoherence will engender resistance.

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[19] Stock (2003) also argues that certain scenarios are impossible to imagine because they involve conceptual incompatibilities. Gendler (2000) argues that we can at least sometimes imagine conceptual possibilities, if they are presented in such a way that we can focus on distinct components or employ distinct modes of presentation at different times. See my (2004) for discussion of disparities between conceptual possibility and our ability to imagine scenarios in the context of cross-categorial sentences and thoughts.

On the one hand, the relation between characterizations and lower-order propositions is looser than either supervenience or constitution, both because the same set of lower-order propositions may be compatible with multiple characterizations, and because the set itself need not be internally consistent, if one or more of the inconsistent propositions is marginalized as unfitting. As a result, my account predicts that we'll sometimes go along with the author in imagining metaphysically incoherent situations or characters; I take 20th century fiction provides ample evidence that this is so. On the other hand, the relation between characterizations and lower-order propositions is also more restrictive than supervenience or constitution, insofar as a metaphysically and conceptually coherent set of lower-order propositions may not be psychologically coherent, and so not amenable to being brought together in a single characterization. Evidence for this claim is less widespread, since authors do not usually write psychologically incoherent fictions, but I suspect readers can construct their own examples without too much effort. Thus, I conclude that imaginative resistance as a result of inter-level mismatches is better explained by appealing to characterizations. Many inter-level mismatches will indeed fit the orthodox explanation, but I believe that this is so because the higher-order propositions in question cannot be grounded in an appropriate mediating characterization.

§4: Perspectives and The Puzzle of Alternative Personality

As we read a work of fiction, our attention is largely focused on each of the characters and situations we encounter, generating increasingly rich and nuanced characterizations of — and emotional responses to — them. However, our characterizations of these particulars are not isolated; they themselves hang together in a characterization of the overall fictional world, as a place inhabited by certain sorts of people, objects and events, which are governed by certain explanatory patterns, and where certain sorts of things are especially interesting or surprising. We bring to our initial encounter with most fictions at least some general expectations about the kind of world it will depict, based on our general knowledge of the genre, author, and work. As we read, we refine these general expectations to fit the specific contours of the fictional world. Actions and qualities that would be shocking or impossible in a

Jane Austen novel, say, are unremarkable in the world of Phillip Roth. People in the two worlds are driven by very different kinds of motivations, and we realize that we are expected to respond to them in very different ways. This growing sense of the fictional world as a whole in turn manifests itself in an increased ability to form, on the basis of a few initial details, characterizations of particular individuals that are appropriate, in the sense that they won't need radical revision as new information comes in. In short, that is, we begin to develop a perspective on the fictional world, in the sense specified in §2.2: a general disposition to characterize particulars as we encounter them.

This, I claim, is the explanation for the phenomenon of alternate personality. As we read, we cultivate a genuine but temporary disposition to characterize things in accord with the general assumptions governing that fictional world; where these assumptions differ significantly from our own usual ones about the real world, this will in turn generate different emotional and evaluative responses. This explanation also allows us to make some initial headway on the relationships between alternate personality and our other puzzles. First, because the characterizing disposition is one that we "try on" only temporarily, there is an important sense in which our emotional and evaluative responses to fiction are merely imaginative, just as the irrealist about fictional emotions maintains. But second, even imaginatively having those responses requires actually cultivating the disposition to structure our thoughts so that certain sorts of features jump out at us as especially important, surprising, or explanatory. And this is not something that we can just adopt willfully, in the way that we can willfully imagine certain first-order facts to be true. As a result, if the assumptions that govern the fictional world depart too radically from our own natural characterizing dispositions, we will be unable or unwilling to adopt the relevant characterizations, *even* in cases where the author specifies an appropriately matching collection of first-order facts.

Gregory Currie (1997) offers a simulationist explanation for the phenomenon of alternate personality that is importantly similar to my own view; in particular, he argues that engaging with fictions typically involves "making adjustments to your own mental economy." More specifically, he claims that this includes not just simulating an alternative set of beliefs and desires, but also temporarily adopting the

sorts of “relatively long-term, stable, and personality-fixing preferences” (1997, 72) that constitute a “perspective” or “outlook.” However, there are also significant differences between our accounts. First, I am much less confident than Currie that simulation, understood as a distinctive and modularized cognitive operation, plays a central role in our everyday understanding of other people.[20] In particular, while Currie (1995, 258) acknowledges that the barrier between our own and a simulated mental economy is “to some degree a permeable one,” he explains this permeability in terms of faulty inhibitory mechanisms which result in accidentally bringing a merely simulated belief or desire “on-line”; as I’ll discuss in §5, I believe the permeability is considerably more intimate and subtle. Because this disagreement is really a difference in predictions about future discoveries of cognitive science, it is not central to our three puzzles per se. But it is closely connected to a second, more substantive difference: that Currie is committed to analyzing the sort of imaginative activity that explains perspectival differences in terms of iconic, central imagining.

More specifically, Currie claims that we respond differently to situations in fictions than we would in real life because we take up an “empathetic re-enactment” of those situations through the eyes of characters within them” (Currie 1995, 256). While we surely do empathize with particular characters, as I argued in §2.1, this can’t explain the full range of cases. We also often take up an external perspective on the fiction as a whole; and this is something that characters cannot do, precisely because they are embedded within their situations. In his later (1997) discussion, it seems that Currie is sensitive to this point: he allows that the character may be the narrator, who does typically have a perspective on the entire range of fictional events. Moreover, he acknowledges (1997, 76, fn. 16) that a fully general analysis

[20] Weinberg and Meskin (**XX**), Egan and Doggett (**XX**), and others endorse related simulationist accounts, although they state them in terms of an ‘imagined belief (IB) box’, and don’t appeal to perspectives in the way that Currie does. Although I think these accounts are right to opt for a more cognitivist, less iconic notion of imagination than Currie, they tend to go too far in the other direction, by employing a simplistically propositionalist model of cognition. Weinberg (2008) comes closest to endorsing my notion of a perspective with his talk of the “configurational features” of the imagination, which “bring to the fore” and “downplay” various assumptions and beliefs. However, his only stated resources for explaining these configurations are IB, understood as purely propositional, and various other modules, like morality, with sub-components. This doesn’t provide enough moving parts. – or else, if allows within IB, amounts to my story.

would include cases where we take up the perspective of the implied author. However, where Currie seems to think these cases are rather marginal, I believe they are the norm. As we read a fiction, I claim, we cultivate the interpretive dispositions and responses that the implied author seems to be adopting and prescribing for us to adopt toward the narrated events and characters.[21] When we do adopt the perspective of a character within the fiction, I think this is because the author has 'deputized' that character, typically by having the narrator present that character in a sympathetic and central light.

Whether authorial perspective-taking is the norm or the exception, it's hard to see how Currie's simulationist account can explain it. For as I said, Currie's model of the relevant imaginative activity is one of iconic, central rehearsal. This model has clear application when it comes to the "empathetic re-enactment" of a character's involvement in a particular scene: as I imagine being Alex walking down the dark alley, for instance, on alert for sounds of the malicious killer, my pulse races and I wonder if anyone would hear my cries for help. But precisely because the implied author is not located within the particular situations she describes, there are no specific situations where she plays a role we can empathetically re-enact. Thus, Currie needs a more abstract, less dramatic notion of simulation in order to make sense of our taking up the sorts of 'external' perspectives that are offered by authors — or indeed, by most narrators.

Because my account of the relevant sort of perspective-taking is not based on dramatic rehearsal, it doesn't face this objection. Still, someone might raise a closely related worry. I claim that the phenomenon of alternate personality arises because we cultivate temporary, alternative dispositions to structure and interpret our thoughts about the depicted events and characters. But dispositions to characterize are themselves so highly abstract that we might wonder how we as readers manage to pick up and cultivate alternative perspectives as easily and intuitively as we do?

If, in reading a fiction, we had to pick up general dispositions to characterize just from the sets of basic-level propositions that the author has explicitly made fictional about the characters and events in the

[21] Throughout, unless otherwise noted, by 'author' I mean the implied author, who is constructed or postulated as the producer of this fiction, and whose views may diverge from those of the actual historical writer. On the notion of an implied author, see e.g. Booth (1961), Nehamas (1987), Eco (1992).

story, it's hard to see how we could succeed. The number of such propositions is relatively small; the author expects us to fill them out with other appropriate basic-level propositions, based on our intuitions about the sorts of features that are likely to co-occur in this world. But these intuitions are precisely the sort of thing that we need a perspective to generate in the first place. Further, as I argued in §2.2, there will often be multiple distinct metaphysically and psychologically coherent ways of characterizing the same set of basic-level facts. Different general assumptions about diagnosticity and explanatory structure will generate markedly different assignments of prominence and centrality, and hence quite different characterizations.

But of course, a fiction does not consist exclusively in specifications of propositions to be imagined: it also includes the way in which the author presents those propositions. In our actual encounters with other people, we glean their perspective on the world as much by observing the way that they talk and carry themselves as we do by hearing their actual opinions. Such presentational or stylistic features provide a concrete, tangible manifestation of an underlying personality. This is what Iris Murdoch (1956, 39) calls a "texture of being", which intertwines non-representational features like one's pattern of speech with the representational dispositions that constitute what I've called a perspective. As Murdoch puts it,

> When we apprehend and assess other people…we consider something more elusive which may be called 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, which may be overtly and comprehensibly displayed or inwardly elaborated and guessed at, constitute what, making different points in the two metaphors, one may call the texture of a man's being or the nature of his personal vision.

When we spend sustained time with someone in ordinary life, we often feel ourselves adopting their "texture of being." This is especially true when this person has a forceful vision of life which they want to communicate to us; indeed, we often enough find their perspective insinuating itself into our minds despite our best efforts to resist it.

Much the same points apply to the personalities we encounter in reading fiction. In this case, we lack access to a person's physical style. Instead, we gain the sort of sustained access to someone's inner thoughts that we otherwise encounter only in our most intimate relationships. We also gain a much more attentively cultivated verbal style. This includes the author's choice of words, but also the particular sorts of syntactic structures, rhythms, assonances and disruptions, and levels of formality that she employs. 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." Thus, by putting human flesh on a perspective's abstract bones, the personality projected by a fiction gives us the imaginative resources we need to understand, and so to adopt, its perspective.

The fact that a perspective is concretely manifested in an author's verbal style explains how we can pick it up. However, it also raises a second worry. The claim that in reading fiction we take on a different personality seems rather extreme, all too reminiscent of Plato's claim that in listening to poetry we are temporarily possessed. Even when we are most under the sway of a fiction's perspective, we don't actually *become* the personality that grounds it. Even if I become more Nabokovian while reading *Lolita*, I certainly don't turn into Nabokov — or even Humbert Humbert. Part of Nabokov's greatness lies in his ability to actively construct this and other fictional worlds and engaging plots within them; I merely follow his pointers in how to characterize the particular characters and events he describes.[22] And while I may find myself feeling much more sympathetic to Humbert Humbert than I would to a pederast in real life, I still find aspects of his actions and self-justifications deeply unsettling.

Perhaps, then, talk of alternate personalities and perspectives is enough of an exaggeration that we should seek a less radical explanation for the differences in our emotional and evaluative responses to fiction and to normal life. After all, aren't our actual perspectives deeply entrenched in our real personalities — in addition to embodying commitments to ways the world is and should be? Maybe we

[22] Further, although I may well slip into Nabokovian rhythms and patterns of speech, I certainly don't gain the ability to construct his rich verbal tapestry. Thanks to Eileen John for emphasizing this point.

aren't as willing, or able, to abandon our ordinary dispositions and commitments in engaging with fictions as I have suggested. Maybe something like a "Reality Principle" holds for characterizations, so that we import our normal real-world assumptions and dispositions about prominence and centrality into the fiction. This would fit nicely with the view, articulated by Weatherson (2004) above, that authorial control extends to specifying the basic-level facts in the fiction, but not their interpretation.

A defender of the Reality Principle still needs some explanation, though, for the fact that our emotional and evaluative responses to fiction so often differ from those we would have in real life. The simplest explanation points out that fictions constrain our attention in ways that the actual world doesn't. As Dadlez (1997, 95) puts it, a fiction "manipulates our attention in such a way that making certain construals is virtually a foregone conclusion…[A] pattern of attention...is guaranteed, since those are the only situations we get, and there is little else to attend to." On this view, we might say, a fiction offers us a lens onto a fictional world; and we can only attend to what passes before the lens. When what we're presented with differs considerably from what we would notice if we got to look around for ourselves, then our emotional and evaluative responses will naturally differ as well. This simple explanation accords the author a merely causal role in manipulating our attention: the fiction controls *what* we get to see, but we see the portions of the fictional world that do appear with our own eyes and respond with our own characterizing dispositions.

What a fiction offers for us to attend to clearly does make an enormous difference to our characterizations. In watching *The Three Stooges*, we see their pratfalls and hysterical gestures, but not the blood and scars that those actions would actually produce; this makes it more likely that we'll experience the scene as funny than cruel. In reading *Gone with the Wind,* we spend more time attending to the joys and travails of the white aristocrats than to the indignity and suffering of the black slaves; this makes us more likely to root for Tara's resurrection than for the construction of a just society.

According to the causal view of authorial manipulation, if we know that some facts obtain in the fictional world which we've only fleetingly glimpsed, then we *ought* to assign those facts the same prominence and centrality we would if they were real. It might take some effort to resist the author's

control, but we should resist: the Reality Principle implies that the author only gets to control *what* is true in the world, not how it should be characterized and evaluated. In particular, because we know that there are slaves in the world of *Gone with the Wind* who do hard labor without due compensation, we ought to acknowledge their circumstances, and root for the construction of a just society rather than for Tara's resurrection.

Some fictions may merely present us with an open aperture to a fictional world in this way. However, I think that most fictions demand more of us, and that most readers give more of themselves over to the fiction, than this view allows. At a minimum, it should be fairly uncontroversial that the author's fictionalizing powers extend beyond just the basic first-order facts, to include a determination of how common or noteworthy certain sorts of properties are in the fictional world, and probably also what sorts of causal structures obtain. So even if we want to insist that the author can't simply stipulate the truth of higher-order evaluative propositions, she can still impose significant constraints which may require readers to depart dramatically from their normal characterizing dispositions.

More importantly, as readers we recognize that the depicting lens is held *by* someone, who purposely focuses the lens on some features and not others, and who does so *because* this captures her own views about what is important, explanatory, and praise- or blame-worthy. At a minimum, the author presents the fiction to us with the intention that we recognize *that* she characterizes things in this way.[23] But typically, she also offers it with the intention that we adopt those characterizations for ourselves, because they reflect what she takes to be the best — the most accurate, illuminating, uplifting, and/or entertaining — way of construing the depicted characters and events. In effect, that is, the author presents her characterizations with the sort of reflexive Gricean intention that's distinctive of communication.[24]

We may legitimately disagree with an author's characterizations, if we decide that she has

[23] There may be an important contrast between film and fiction here; I am focusing on fiction. 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. I think these cases are interesting, but also exceptional: the author is combating readers' established expectations of the authorial role.
[24] We find the same contrast in theories of the role that perspectives play in metaphor: Davidson (1978) claims that metaphors merely cause a new perspective on the subject, while more Gricean views (e.g. Camp 2003, Reimer 2008) claim that the metaphor may commit the speaker to a perspective.

inappropriately neglected certain facts, as Gore Vidal claimed that Henry James did with his character Charlotte Stant (Moran 1994, 99).[25] Thus, in particular, it seems plausible in which there is *a* sense in which we should indeed attend to the plight of the slaves in Mitchell's novel, insofar as Mitchell hasn't described the basic-level facts in a way that justifies her allocation of attention, or the higher-order propositions about prominence, centrality, and morality to which they commit her. More generally, there are a variety of ways in which it can be aesthetically, critically, and morally worthwhile to read "against the grain," by systematically attending to features that are present in the fiction but neglected by the author.

However, it's important to recognize that reading in these ways is reading *against* the grain. Reading a work of fiction is, in the first instance and to a large degree, a matter of engaging in the imaginative project that its author proposes. Insofar as we are engaged in this project, we do and should strive to adopt the author's characterizations of the individuals and events she describes. We may not always succeed; or we may conclude that we shouldn't be engaged in this project in the first place, that another project is better or more interesting. The vast majority of the time, though, we do go along with the author's proposals, both in imagining the lower-order fictional facts and in characterizing them. And to the extent that we do successfully adopt the author's characterizations, we also tend to respond with the emotional and evaluative attitudes that are appropriate to them.

The minimal, causal explanation of alternate response is committed to claiming that when our characterizing dispositions differ markedly from the author's, we should wrest our attention away from the events the author points us toward and devote it to those she marginalizes. For *Gone with the Wind*, this entails that the appropriate reception of Mitchell's novel — the imaginative game the ordinary reader plays while reading the novel — should be much closer to Alice Randall's parodic retelling from the slaves' point of view, *The Wind Done Gone* than to the response Mitchell intended. I believe this departs too radically from our ordinary practices of reading and evaluating fiction to be plausible.

[25] Likewise, Wayne Booth (1961, 79) says that D.H. Lawrence misinterprets his own characters and events in *Lady Chatterly's Lover*, despite his 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."

A defender of the Reality Principle may counter, however, that my view has the unpalatable consequence that we ought to care more about the aristocrats' comfort than the slaves' unjust conditions. Perhaps we can avoid this consequence and hold on to the core of the Reality Principle while

without concluding that we ought always to imaginatively rewrite the operative characterizations of novels whose perspectives differ dramatically from our own, by allowing the lens's focusing effect to play more than just a causal role. Specifically, one might grant that by focusing on certain situations and features, the author does determine what we should be paying attention to, but insist that it is up to us to explain and evaluate those focal elements for ourselves.[26] In effect, this explanation would grant that the author can legitimately control the relative prominence of first-order facts in the fiction, but would still abjure the more complex machinery of centrality, fittingness, perspectives, and personalities.

Although the defender of the Reality Principle can doggedly insist that this *should* be how we read fiction, I think it still departs too dramatically from our ordinary imaginative and critical practices to be plausible. If it were true that the fiction merely controls *what* we see while leaving us to see it for ourselves, then we should predict that when a neglected situation or feature is brought into focus, our normal dispositions to characterize and evaluate should straightaway reestablish themselves. But this isn't what happens. Further, as we saw earlier, the author doesn't just decide what to depict, but in what terms to do so. Not just determining higher-order facts, also advocates certain interests and cognitive goals.

First, very often we happily go along with an author or narrator who actively focuses on and celebrates the very features that we would find troubling in real life. Examples include Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian*, which describes an adolescent boy in the Wild West who falls in with a malevolent bunch of bounty hunters out to scalp Indians; and V.C. Andrews' *Flowers in the Attic*, which

[26] Thanks to Ishani Maitra for extensive discussion here; thanks also to Francis Howard-Snyder and Sarah McGrath for emphasizing the role that focus does, and perhaps should, play in our cognitive and moral engagement with real life.

describes a passionate romantic and sexual relationship between abused twins.[27] In these cases the authors clearly want us to characterize the focal details in a way that departs markedly from our own default propensities, but we still go along with them, partly (in the case of *Blood Meridian*) because the author's voice is quite seductive, and partly (in the case of *Flowers in the Attic*) because the plot is so engrossing.

Second, there are cases in which the author implicitly signals that the explicitly focalized events and details are not intended to be taken as the genuinely most important or explanatorily central ones. Thus, we might imagine a parody of *Gone with the Wind* along the lines of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, in which the spotlight remains relentlessly on Scarlett's romantic travails, but the author conveys that the truly profound conflicts over human dignity and liberty are transpiring in the shadows.[28] The focalized events and even the details here might be virtually identical to those in *Gone with the Wind*, but the appropriate characterizations will be very different, because we are given to understand, in one way or another, that the view afforded by the spotlight is highly myopic. The most obvious, but not the only, way for an author to accomplish this is to employ an unreliable narrator, such as Maria in Joyce's "Clay" (in *Dubliners*), Benjy Compson in Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*, or Charles Kinbote in Nabokov's *Pale Fire*. In these cases, the narrator's characterizations reveal psychological implausibilities and incoherencies that are blatant enough that we conclude that the author wants us to look 'through' them to form alternative characterizations of what is genuinely important.

Third, as a combination of the first two cases, there are fictions in which the events and details which are in focus are indeed supposed to be the important ones, but the narrator and the author, or multiple narrators, have sharply conflicting characterizations of them; Nabokov's *Lolita* and Kurasawa's *Roshomon* are obvious examples here. In all of these cases, a reader who merely attends to the situations and details that are the novel's explicit focus, and construes them in accord with her own characterizing propensities, will miss out on much of the novel's richness and interest. Authors, especially but not

[27] Thanks to Christina Van Dyke for reminding me of this novel in this context.
[28] Thanks to Andy Egan for suggesting this example.

exclusively modern and contemporary authors, invest enormous energy in playing with conflicting characterizations, in a way that goes well beyond shifts of focal attention.[29] If we as readers want to engage fully in the imaginative projects that such authors propose — as most of us do enjoy doing — then we need to be sensitive to these complexities. Again, an author's interpretive intentions don't always trump in determining what is important, or explanatory, or good or bad in a fiction; the intention must be implemented in a coherent way and supported by appropriate lower-level propositions. And of course, it can be a delicate interpretive task to decipher who — the protagonist, the narrator, the implied author, even the apparently implied but in fact unreliable author — characterizes what, and how. My claim here is just that in order to explain these complexities in our emotional, evaluative, and interpretive responses to fiction, we need more than just an account in terms of what is true and focalized in the fiction; we also need to appeal to various perspectives *on* what is true and/or focalized.

§5: Perspectives, Resistance and the Real World

We've now seen that even a fairly weak version of the Reality Principle for perspectives is incompatible with the phenomenon of alternative personality: it predicts and/or mandates resistance in too many cases where we neither ordinarily do, nor reflectively believe that we should, experience it. At the same time, though, some version of the Reality Principle appears to offer the best hope for explaining imaginative resistance. Perhaps we don't need it to explain the sorts of cases I mentioned in §3: those where we resist the author's imaginative demands because she has failed to specify a coherent set of lower-order facts which would support either the particular characterizations she offers, or a coherent overall perspective on the world as a whole. The more interesting cases, though, are those where there is a coherent perspective which could be adopted, and which is supported by a plausible authorial personality, but which we still don't take up imaginatively. These are cases of genuine imaginative

[29] In addition to fictions with unreliable narrators and multiple narrators, there are also fictions without narrators, like plays, in which the characters all speak only for themselves, possibly manifesting conflicting perspectives. In a traditional fiction with a reliable narrator, the implied author implicitly "deputizes" a like-minded narrator to characterize individuals and events in the fictional world for her. But as these cases demonstrate, not all fictions fit this mold.

resistance, as opposed to imaginative incapacity brought on by authorial incompetence; and although Walton (2005) and others want to claim that all cases of imaginative resistance are of the former, boring kind, I think Gendler is right that there are cases of the latter sort — indeed, some of our best and most disturbing contemporary novels fall into this category for many readers. A plausible explanation of these cases is that we resist because we think the author's perspective is wrong, in the sense of mischaracterizing the basic facts. But if we assume that the perspective can be coherently applied to the basic-level facts within the fiction, then it seems that our intuition of error must lie in a mismatch between the author's pattern of characterizations and our own normal dispositions to characterize things in the real world. So how can we explain the phenomenon of interesting imaginative resistance, if we can't appeal to even the highly weakened versions of the Reality Principle we considered in the last section?

Tamar Szabo Gendler (2000) appeals to a version of the Reality Principle that has been weakened in yet another way. As we saw in §2.1, she too invokes perspectives, "points of view" or "ways of looking" to explain imaginative resistance. And she recognizes that there can be no Reality Principle in general operation for importing perspectives from the real world to fiction, because often enough we do go along with a fiction's perspective even when it differs from our own. Specifically, she claims that we are typically willing to go along with the author when the fiction is obviously "distorting": when the author employs "distancing mechanisms" to signal that the evaluative principles that govern the fictional world are not intended realistically (2000, 78). The subclass of fictions with alien perspectives that do evoke resistance, she thinks, are those "where the reader feels that she is being asked to *export* a way of looking at the actual world" (2000, 77, emphasis added); the primary reason we resist in these cases seems to be that we have "a general desire not to be manipulated into taking on points of view that we would not reflectively endorse as authentically our own" (2000, 56). In effect, then, these are cases where we think that the author is presupposing a Reality Principle for perspectives, but we reject the perspective she employs.

Gendler is clearly right that authors can intend for us to export perspectives from fiction. In those cases, we might say, as Danto (1981, 172) does, that the fiction "becomes a metaphor for life and life is

transfigured."[30] And clearly this is sometimes a source of resistance. I believe the discussion of §2.2 allows us to make more precise sense of what Gendler's appeal to "way of looking" here amounts to (or at least, should amount to): it is a general propensity to find certain features notable, expected, or surprising; to assign certain sorts of explanatory structures; and to respond affectively and evaluatively in certain ways. The discussion also allows us to diagnose the source of the 'puzzle' of imaginative resistance: why we should be so much less willing to go along with the author's departures from reality for evaluative propositions, even compared to other higher-order propositions which are appropriately supported by lower-level facts. What is distinctive about the evaluative cases, I claim, is that they are intimately bound up with characterizations and emotions, and hence imaginatively entertaining them in the relevantly robust sense requires, not just that we imagine that the fictional world is a certain way, but that we actually alter the way we intuitively structure our own thoughts. That is, they require a kind of imaginative engagement which is both, as Gendler says, "in some difficult-to-pin-down way self-involving" and also "actual" (2006, 150), even if only temporary. Further, just as in genuinely perceptual cases of seeing-as, getting the relevant structure to 'click' into place is something that is only partly under our voluntary control: we can direct our attention in certain directions and not others, and entertain certain thoughts while directing our attention there, but that may still fall short of being able to cultivate the relevant evaluative attitude with its attendant characterizations, even just in the imagination.

Thus, I agree with Gendler in many respects. However, I think that insofar as she is indeed committed to claiming that exportation is what generates resistance, even this restricted role for the Reality Principle still accords too much systematicity to our willingness and resistance to engaging with alien perspectives in fiction. On the one hand, whether the fiction is intentionally "distorted" doesn't

[30] Cf. Wayne Booth: "It seems to me self-evident that the implied author of any *didactic* work, at least…would be distressed if, after I put down the work, I said to myself, 'Well, now I can go back to my previous beliefs about overweening pride or about how the ways of God are to be justified.' But is it not equally true that some of the norms of even the most fully purified *non-didactic* works are clearly seen by the implied author as not simply taken up for the duration and then dropped?…[S]ome beliefs and norms are for the implied author fixed…he implies that some not only can be applied in the real world but should be (e.g. in *Ulysses*, sensitivity to delicate distinctions of verbal tone is important, and that sensitivity is not to be shucked off when we stop reading)" (Booth quoted in Iser 1993, 59).

always determine whether we resist — or indeed, whether we end up projecting its perspective onto reality. It's true that we're usually more willing to play along with a narrator's alien perspective if we think that the author doesn't himself endorse it, as in Nabokov's *Lolita*. But resistance doesn't always disappear when the perspective is intentionally distorted. Nor is it clear that it should. "Trying on" a perspective, even just on a fictional world, involves genuinely cultivating those propensities to find certain things notable and to seek certain sorts of explanations. Some distorting distopias may be so dark, and some distorted perspectives so demonic, that we really should balk at taking up those perspectives, even temporarily, and even just on the fictional world. We may simply find the perspective too inherently repugnant or distasteful, or we may worry that adopting it even momentarily will pervert us more generally.[31]

On the other hand, we don't always resist *non*-distorting fictions which advocate emotional and evaluative attitudes that "we would not reflectively endorse as authentically our own" (Gendler 2000, 56). Sometimes we fail to resist because our reflective evaluative judgments are out of kilter with our gut imaginative and emotional responses; for example, I have staunch feminist friends who relish the guilty pleasure of a Harlequin romance. Sometimes we are tricked into adopting morally repugnant perspectives by a manipulative author, so that we do ultimately resist, but too late. But beyond these cases lie those where we are genuinely moved by deeply alien perspectives which the author intends realistically.[32]

In these latter cases, the psychological plausibility of the underlying personality is crucial. We are doubly sensitive to miscues and inconsistencies here, because we cannot just fill in the 'off' parts of that personality with our own texture of being and characterizing dispositions. It's also crucial that the perspective not be radically alien across the board. We need to share some common values, both to help us bridge the perspectival gap and simply to give us some motivation to keep reading. For instance, we may be more willing to engage with a morally repugnant perspective with which we

[31] Walton (2005, 5) briefly mentions both of these possibilities.
[32] In addition, as Marc Moffett pointed out to me, we may resist because the perspective and/or the depicted individuals and events are not distorting *enough* — because they are too painfully close to our own reality.

share an aesthetic sensibility, or a common excitement in mystery and suspense. Finally, the more alien a perspective is, the more work it takes on the author's part to support that perspective with an appropriate set of lower-order facts and mode of presentation, and to draw us into cultivating the relevant dispositions to characterize.

When all of these conditions are met, though, we may well be able to take up deeply alien perspectives that are also psychologically plausible, richly textured, and keenly observant. For instance, I don't much like the implied author of *Blood Meridian*; I certainly don't endorse his "unapologetic, bleak vision of the inevitability of suffering and violence" in which "victims and their antagonists become indistinguishable," and in which murder and genocide flow freely.[33] This is an alien perspective for me. Nevertheless, because the fiction advocates that perspective so forcefully, in a way that fully intertwines expressive style and fictional content, I do manage to adopt it temporarily, and to some substantial degree. It's certainly more of an imaginative stretch than it would be if the underlying personality were more like my own. But I don't *resist*: I willingly cultivate it as best I can, and I succeed to some substantial degree.

So I think we need to abandon even Gendler's restricted version of the Reality Principle for perspectives. However, at some points she appears to offer a rather different explanation of imaginative resistance, one that doesn't depend on exportation or reflective endorsement at all, but rather on an unwillingness to add certain perspectives to our "conceptual repertoire" (2000, 77) at all. We are unwilling to even entertain these perspectives, she claims, because, like the aspects involved in metaphor, they "emphasize similarities we prefer to overlook" (2006, 151), such as the similarity between Aunt Ruth and a walrus (2000, 80), or between kindergarteners and cockroaches (2006, 151). Once we have noticed those similarities, we cannot go back and unnotice them, or even deny that they exist; we are left

[33] From http://www.cormacmccarthy.com. One might object that this fiction's perspective is in fact intentionally distorted. While I admit that the fictional world is intended to be more extreme than the real one, I do think the implied author views the real world in a similar light. Several people have suggested to me that several of Philip Roth's novels offer another clear case here.

stuck with a way of thinking that we abhor, but cannot reject or get out of our heads.[34] Thus, entertaining such perspectives merely within the confines of a fiction is still "dangerous," just as Hume thought, because doing so "may render these undesirable patterns of response available even in the contemplation of actual [scenarios]" (2006, 153).

This explanation clearly doesn't invoke any form of a Reality Principle; rather, it relies on the crucial feature of perspectives that I've been emphasizing: that they require actually configuring our thoughts and responsive dispositions in the relevant ways. I certainly agree with Gendler, and with Hume and Plato before her, that this can make it dangerous to cultivate an alternative perspective in imagination. Indeed, I would emphasize that the perspectives we get from fiction are especially dangerous because they are general dispositions to characterize, and so they affect our thinking much more broadly than the single-subject aspects involved in metaphor do. Further, precisely because they are subject-general and ongoing, such perspectives can end up changing us in ways we may not fully recognize. Perhaps in some cases, we may manage to keep our own mental economy scrupulously segregated from the fiction's; Stacie Friend (2003) says that this was her experience in watching *JFK,* knowing that Oliver Stone's depiction of the events is highly distorted. But in many more cases, there is some leakage, conscious or not, across the boundary.[35] As I've been emphasizing, this leakage may not involve any clear shift in propositional beliefs; rather, it may consist of more subtle changes in my predilections to notice, explain, and respond to certain sorts of features in certain ways. But these subtleties can ramify into significant — and lingering — evaluative differences.

However, I don't think it necessarily follows, as Hume claims, that I should be "jealous" of my moral standards, and refuse to "pervert the sentiments of [my] heart for a moment in complaisance to any writer whatsoever." Even apart from the possibility that we might value the fiction's aesthetic pleasures

[34] Gendler mentions here 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).
[35] Indeed, there is empirical evidence (e.g. Gerrig 1993) that reading fictions alters the rapidity and confidence with which we judge the truth-values of propositions which we fully know to be true or false, such as "The speed limit is 65 m.p.h", or "John F. Kennedy was assassinated." See also Gendler 2006b for discussion of "imaginative contagion."

enough to go along with a morally alien perspective, there is too much that such fictions can teach us about the moral realm. They can enable us to comprehend an alien perspective in a lived, experiential way, thereby expanding our understanding of the range of human possibility.[36] Understanding that perspective may help us to interact more effectively with those who embrace it, and perhaps thereby to bring them around to our point of view. We may even ultimately embrace that perspective for ourselves, having decided that our earlier rejection of it was sheer prejudice. Refusing to try on alternative perspectives precisely because they are alien will protect us from the risk of moral perversion, but at the cost of cutting us off from the potential for moral growth. We can't have one without the other.

The subject-general, open-ended nature of perspectives makes the decision about whether to indulge an alien perspective is especially difficult. Although genre expectations and our first encounters with a fiction's particular characterizations and authorial style do provide us with some initial sense of its perspective, we can't really know what a fiction's perspective will be until we are deep in its midst. But by then, it may be too late: we may have been altered by our experience, and in ways we cannot fully recognize or evaluate. Alexander Nehamas (2000) argues that this is precisely what makes art in general so attractive, but also so dangerous:

> Like everything that beckons, beauty is risky and dangerous. It may disappoint and hurt. Worse, it may cause harm by fulfilling its promise….Spending time with such a thing, with other things like it, with other people who like it as well will have an effect on me which I cannot predict in advance. Once that effect is in place, I may have changed into someone I would not have wanted to be before I began. But I may now no longer be able to see that what I am, perhaps, is perverted. How can I tell if I have followed the right course? Which standards should I apply to myself?

An author initially convinces us to spend time with her by inviting us into a compelling alternative world. We may think that we are confining our commerce with her to just that world, and she may ask no more of us than this. But even such limited engagements can have broader and deeper effects upon us than we realize. As with any friendship, its ultimate influence may be for the better or for the worse. Which it is we cannot determine in advance, and may not be able to recognize after the fact.

[36] Kieran (2003) argues that this may even lead to our moral improvement.

The disappointing ultimate lesson, I think, is that there are few systematic conclusions we can draw about when we either do or should resist imaginative engagement with fictions. Many morally alien fictions are fail to support their repugnant perspectives with a relevant set of first-order facts on the fictional ground. But some morally alien fictions present coherent, well-supported perspectives that are supported by compelling authorial personalities. These fictions may draw us in through their other virtues; and we may on reflection decide that the moral risk was well worth it. Some of them may offer perspectives which would in fact be morally illuminating for us, but we may lack the imaginative resources needed to reconfigure our patterns of thought in the relevant way. Others may be morally corrupting in a way that we should resist; but we may figure this out too late. The difficult thing about being an adult in charge of our own moral and aesthetic management is that we must figure these things out for ourselves, and on a case-by-case basis.

6. Conclusion

What, in the end, do we gain 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).

Recall Arthur Danto's apt reminder that one fundamental function of artistic engagement is to adopt perspectives that lead us focus selectively on certain features of our environment: 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' (Danto 1981: 167).

We should now have a better understanding of what sort of "conceptual knowledge" this might be. As Putnam says, it's not knowledge that a certain proposition is, or even could be, true.[37] Of course, we may well export some propositions from fictions to the real world. But fictions rarely offer us what

[37] 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).

Weatherson (2004, 7) calls "simple direct invitations to imagine" isolated evaluative propositions like "Love does not exist," or "Killing babies is justified"; and if they did, we would just accept or deny them outright, according to our established views. Gendler on pop-out[38] Rather, to the extent that a fiction does advocate such general claims, they are typically embedded within, and emerge out of, a complex nexus of patterns of thinking about and evaluating particular individuals and situations. So long as we restrict our attention to isolated propositions, the depth and complexity of our emotional and evaluative engagement with fiction will seem puzzling. The principles of generation that govern *which* propositions are to-be-imagined are just not rich enough to explain either why we have such robust emotional responses to fiction, or how those responses can depart so dramatically from our normal ones.

Rather, the perspective a fiction acquaints us with is cognitive or conceptual in much the way a metaphor can be: as a tool we might decide to use for organizing our thoughts. The fiction invites us into a highly particular world of characters and events, and acquaints us with the personality of someone who characterizes and responds to those particulars in a very specific way. The fiction's perspective is embedded in a personality, which is itself embodied and expressed in the text's language and style; as a result, that perspective is tangibly accessible, and seductively all-encompassing, in a way it could not be if we simply heard a recitation of the implied author's metaphysical and moral views.

[38] Further, when we do find such pronouncements, like "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife," or "All happy families resemble one another, but each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way," the actual events of the fiction often complicate those pronouncements.

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